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The Forms, the Architect, and the Act of Doing Architecture

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ABSTRACT. The paper develops a reflection on the act of doing architecture under an ontoepistemological structure. The analysis is focused on how both experience and conception must be considered in the architect's being evolution to develop significative and sustainable architectural design process activities. Under the *subjectobject* existentialism, the direct realism from John R. Searle, the concept of 'gesture' from Vilém Flusser and the phenomenological thought from Juhani Pallasmaa, it was identified that there is an interdependence between experience and conception in the architect's work, even when he is not directly in an architectural design process mode. The main conclusion is that the architect's activity, despite the progressive "disconnection from the world" – potentiated by the society of information –, should be a product of his expression of *being-in-the-word*.

1. Introduction

With *The Forms, the Architect, and the act of Doing Architecture* it is intended to understand how the relation between experience and conception can support the architect's ability to project buildings, even when he is not directly in an architectural design process mode. For this approach, there are presented some observations/analysis on how an architect can do his complex activity through the scrutiny of some *form* expressions (*idea-form*; *project-form*; *physical-form*) that can justify qualitative interferences (in)directly in the architectural design process considering how we organize knowledge due to our embodied relations with the world: mind→body→world and world→body→mind. The paper is organized in three main parts: 'Form' and the *forms*; About the architects' idiosyncrasies; How *to make* in the act of doing

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architecture. The first pretends to contextualize the 'form' concept as things' *appearance* and *structure*, and how this can contribute to the act of *making* architecture as an act of *freedom*. The second is a summary about how the architect emerges from the builder and how he establishes a new relation with the act of *making* the building. The last one is where is developed the statement that even today it is possible to understand the architectural project design not only as an act of doing, but also as a process of *making* something.

2. 'Form' and the *forms*

> Few terms have been as durable as 'form': it has persisted since the Romans. […] From the outset the Latin forma replaced two Greek words: μορφή [morphé] and εἶδος [eidos]; the first applied primarily to visible forms, the second to conceptual forms. This double heritage has contributed considerably to the diversity of meanings of 'form'. (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 220)

The Greek words μορφή (*morphé*) and εἶδος (*eidos*) are the word 'form' root, and they can be used as a conceptual departure to the world interpretation, to inquiry it's truth. In architecture, the term 'form' is relevant to the discussion about the architects' work, especially based on the truth of form and its essential and internal structure.[2]

Truth is fundamental for knowledge. Truth is one of the central subjects of philosophy and is fundamental to knowledge when we seek to articulate the *appearance* and *structure* of things, under the complexity of the world. (Morin, 2017, pp. 20-23). The *appearance* corresponds to what is material and has a physical nature. *The structure* corresponds to what is not palpable, which is beyond physics but, under thought guidance, it is possible to get understandings about its natural or artificial ontologies.

In a world as an inseparable whole, the appearance and structure are indispensable parts in physical and metaphysical contexts, allowing to amplify their things ontologies recognition,

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[2] This perspective has reference to the critical perspective of Josep Maria Montaner, in *As Formas do Século XX*, in the thought of Henry Focillon, in *The Life of Forms In Art*, or even in the philosophy of Aristotle, in *The Metaphysics*.

especially under the unitary spectrum of mind-body scrutiny.[3] This integrity enhances the establishment of a greater organic relationship between subject's subjectivity and things' objectivity that exist independently of any human experience.[4] Therefore, the building objective ontology can be developed through a plurality of approaches, under the guidance of our subjective ontology. In this context, the concept of "form" and its conceptual structure is decisive.

When inquiring about the forces that organize a mountain or those that structure a building, it is possible to develop the following considerations: in the mountain, we can recognise that it justifies *physical-form* as *essential-form* – or essential substances expressed through matter when is strictly related to nature's laws –, which in this case, is prior to any human action; in the building, we can recognise that forces determine *physical-form* as the articulation between the *essential-form* – from which all the raw materials come – and the *idea-form*, associated to the thought and to the culture – as an immaterial factor with the inherent potentiality to transform reality.

Man is not the only animal to produce actions in nature, however, it is exceptional if we consider that the intentional action of *making things* is related to beliefs, desires and hopes, that are derivative intentions, thus linking it to the complex thinking/culture. By *making*, Man transforms pre-existing physical forms (natural or artificial) into different ones. Through *making*, we humans have asserted ourselves for millennia as producers of artificiality, where the ontology of *physical-form* passes from a *pure* state – in which matter remains in its natural definition – to a *contaminated* state – in which matter is shaped through thought that takes place between intentional actions. For example, the conversion of stone into ashlar represents an intentional action, but not isolated in a context of coherent organization that is intended to be projected into space, an ashlar makes sense as a component together with other components that are articulated into a whole, configuring an ordered and hierarchical form, as occurs in the

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[3] This statement does not intend to formulate a type of theory of truth. It simply seeks to recognize that, because the worlds complexity, there are different ways of constituting knowledge, however, we intend to highlight the potential of the truth quality if we consider the mind and body as inseparable against the dualist conception.

[4] John R. Searle, in *Seeing Things as They Are*, shows how perception – considered as veridical experience – is framed by two different phenomena: "[…] an ontologically objective state of affairs in the world outside your head and an ontologically subjective visual experience of that state of affairs entirely inside your head. The former causes the latter, and the intentional content of the latter determines the former as its condition of satisfaction" (Searle, 2015, p. 17).

Tomb of Newgrange or in the Stonehenge site. Intentional action is, therefore, one action among several, which in their entirety could be synthesized in the act of building the *idea-form* or *making* a *thing*.

When searching for *What is Architecture?*, through Demetri Porphyrios, we find that the building is the synthesis expression between "necessary and freedom".[5] The *idea-form* is the departure point to achieve *freedom* within the world adversities. *Freedom*, here, is a kind of liberation from the necessities strictly related to our survival condition. To achieve that liberation, humans, through their complex thought and action in the world, recognized or conferred "specialness" to some objects, using the ability of what Ellen Dissanayake named as "making special"[6]. As a cultural expression, the objects that have "specialness" bring together intentionality and meaning to human existence.

Architecture can be a product of this "making special" since ancient cultures, because beyond *necessary* – as an expression of *utilitas* and *firmitas* – there is *freedom* – as an expression of *venustas*. Here the aesthetics requirements introduced an important contribution to the *build-form* meaning.

3. About the architects' idiosyncrasies

Perhaps the being-architect genesis is related with our necessity to build objects to survive under an intentional action of *making special* and, thus, seek to attribute relevant meanings to the built form.[7]

At the beginning of Humanity, the action of making was based on practical knowledge or *phrónēsis*, and those humans who organized and structured their inhabited spaces became progressively more capable of producing artificiality, even immersed in nature.

Later, in the classic antiquity dawn, *phrónēsis* gave place to *technē* in the structure of

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[5] "It conveys a sence of the necessary because order is delimited by the form-giving capacity of the materials used; and a sence of freedom because it is bound by rules which are made as tokens of recognition of ourselves as *homo faber*" (Porphyrios *in* Ballantyne, 2001, p. 137).
[6] The "making special" is associated with the "[…] metaphor in that it is saturated with symbolism, the creation of another world in which once ordinary things acquire the potency of standing for extraordinary things" (Dissanayake, 1990, p. 89).
[7] In this case, it is important to understand the meaning within the scope of what architecture can enhance for everyday experiences, when the form of the building is constituted – in reality. (Español, 2007, pp. 105-113).

making. At this point, in Greece, the *Tekton* used several ways to objectively transmit his ideas to the *tektonai*. The act of *making* a building became an act of *doing* through the project activity, supported by many and possible analogic representation mechanisms: drawings[8], or real models[9]. These mechanisms of thought support, which can be also understood as products of *entelechy*[10], can be called as *project-forms*. They represent some process parts that express the intention to transform what was merely in potential (matter) into 'appearance' (building). It is important to mention that both the drawings and the real models are constituted by the direct movement/action of the body in space to register them on certain material supports.[11]

The physical proximity between subject and object throughout the process of *making* undergone changes with ancestral *technē* transformations when it became divided in "liberal arts" and "vulgar arts". The *Tekton* became the *architectus* who, in the context of the "liberal arts", dominates the theoretical principles to transform reality. The form ontology ceased to be centred only on the practical wisdom rationality, depending on theory and its universal knowledge. In this circumstance, to the *architectus*, the *how to do* the building became central.

Later, after the medieval interregnum, the Renaissance allowed the *architetto* to realign with the Roman classic culture, and with a humanist stance, became the first expression of the architect activity as we know it today. In this context, the building prefiguration, through the *project-forms*, acquired a relevant roll in the building process. The *project-form*, inherently a communication mechanism, also became a capital interface between the immaterial abstraction and the world material complexity.

Architecture, as a synthesis between construction and meaning, is the result of a process that integrates the constraints of idealism and materialism, and, therefore, reveals the importance of grounding the *idea-form* itself, as Mark Gelernter shows in *Sources of architectural form*. The architectural project process is influenced by epistemological structures under the subject-object duality, which guarantees the architectural forms the

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[8] "Their use [the drawings] was most probably limited to architectural details, while the architectural concept would be taken for granted, though a series of building types that changed very slowly over time" (Koutsoumpos *in* AA.VV., 87, 2020).

[9] See *The Dancing Column* (Rykwert, 1999, pp. 190-192).

[10] *Entelechy* is one of the five concepts that Władysław Tatarkiewicz research in his *A History of Six Ideas* (Tatarkiewicz, 1988, pp. 253-278).

[11] This movement is intrinsically related to our existential space: "Our hands move almost constantly. If we were to record the lines the hands draw back and forth, for example, on video, we would have an image of our being in the world. And we do actually have access to such a video: the world of culture" (Flusser, 2014, p. 34).

possibility of being interpreted as "creation" or as "knowledge". The architect, as a scholar, must deal with this duality. Gelernter hypothesizes that the architectural design process is associated with both parts, however, he recognizes that in architecture history they have not been associated (Gelernter, 1996, pp. 28-29).

4. How *to Make* in the Act of Doing Architecture

The subject-object problem identified body and mind as two autonomous domains, however, more recent neurosciences studies showed that both are interdependent.[12] The recognition also allows to consider the subject/world interdependence through mind-body integrity, which highlights the existential complexity of the subject. In this way, the body – as a physical totality that includes the brain – is a psychobiological unit, whose ontological essence is important to structure the knowledge of the World. Something that motivates the revision of the Gelernter scheme (Fig. 1).
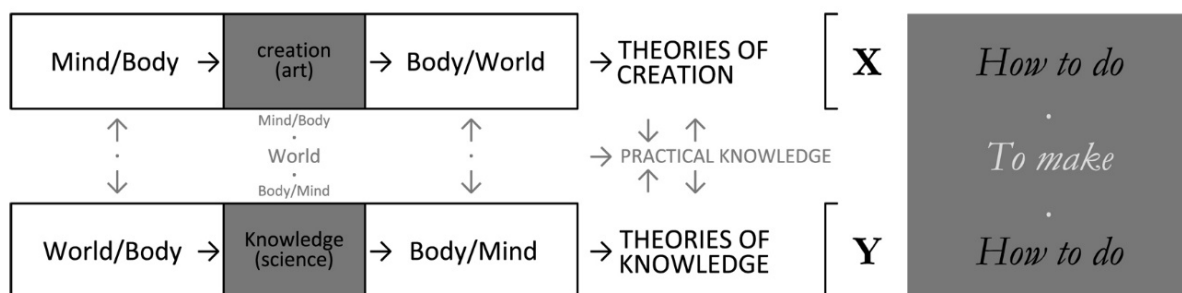
Figure 1. Review of Mark Gelernter's theoretical scheme.

The new perspective is articulated by John Searle's theory of perception, where the world ontology exists independently of any human experience. These highlights practical thinking, in which its pragmatism stems from the relationship between perceived objects (ontologically objective) and the subject´s experience (ontologically subjective). In this circumstance, matter, form, and space are unavoidable constituents for a well-balanced ontoepistemological system, which can be called as *subjectobject* (Fig. 2).

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[12] "Taking into account its totality – from the thin mantle of gray matter scrunched along the inside cavity of the cranial vault to the nerve cells in our feet – the brain is a fully embodied entity. It is a physical entity but at the same time its whole is greater than the sum of it electrical and chemical events" (Mallgrave, 2011, p.2).
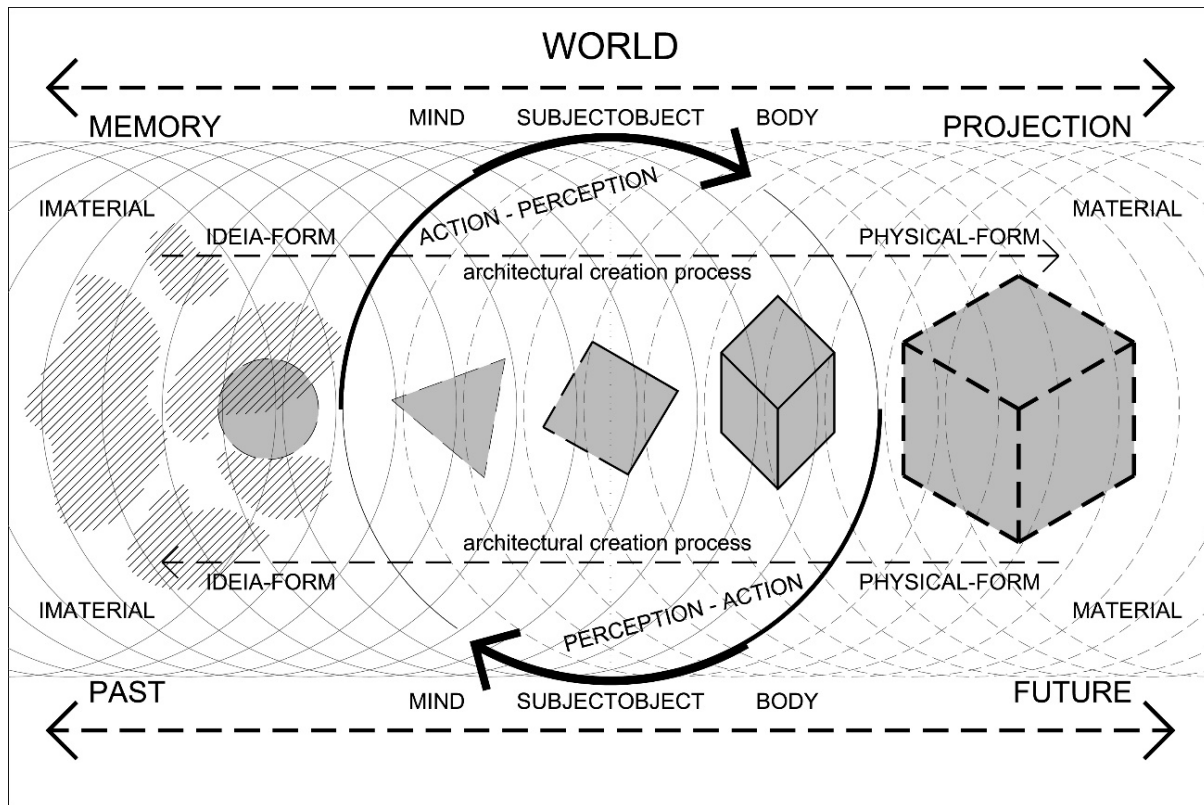
Figure 2. Ontoepistemological complexity of the *subjectobject* system (dynamics of the creative process in space-time).

Today, the architect is no longer the builder,[13] so the *subjectobject* system can only be a heuristic referential to some architect's project design methodologies. In this circumstance, a significant contribution is to integrate, for example, phenomenological and existential thinking in the architectural design process investigation of the process itself. Examples of this type of approach are the research processes of Peter Zumthor or Steven Holl.[14]

The *subjectobject* system presented here seeks to introduce a greater balance in the ontoepistemological unity in the context of the current processes of doing architecture, above all, contextualizing a greater contribution of practical knowledge – associated with artisanal

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[13] Like in Antient Greece (*Tekton*) or in the High Middle Ages (Master Builder).
[14] "Without a doubt, this interpretation of the last twenty-five years, one of the greatest innovations and contributions in architecture was the gradual importance given to the senses, perception and human experience" (Montaner, 2015, p. 52).

know-how. Because today, "seeing with your mind's eye" is valued, any attempt to implement an almost artisanal approach to architecture would certainly have few consequences in terms of efficiency and productivity.[15] Even so, today it is possible to establish the *intertwining* between *making* and doing actions within the architecture project design process. Although it appears to be a paradox, the *intertwining* may be constituted through the project design development in its distinct structures of thought, but under the direct body contribution in the respective cognitive processes. This contribution results from the movement of the body in space to develop and to read palpable registers (drawings and real models), necessarily, define ways of calibration between our subjectivity and the objectivity of the world. Therefore, the contribution of the body is essential for the *idea-form* conversion into *project-form* and, *vice versa*, since from drawings and models a critical perception is established enhancing dynamics of greater awareness about certain objective ontologies that are intended to be achieved.[16] The embodied experience of the *project-form* is, therefore, a fundamental exercise, especially for those who produce analogue registers – because, these *forms* are like the several metamorphoses that clay undergoes in the potter's hand, and which permit permanent "material consciousness" while revealing the *thing* brought from the *idea-form*.[17]

To produce a certain well-balanced architectural design process (as a process that will produce an *extraordinary thing*), the architect's body/mind cohesion is necessary. It is an organic cohesion that is guided through different types of intentionality throughout several *gestures of making*, using Vilém Flusser's concept.[18] These *gestures* should produce analogue *project-forms*, which will express the externalization of something that is subjective into

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[15] Most human activities have come to depend on an elaborate series of management procedures that turn labor chains into a complex and interdependent structure between different, very specialized areas and, alongside this, over the last fifty years, we have also witnessed a progressive massive information digitization.

[16] Examples of the identities of the thing intended to be constituted are questions of *form*: 1. in a rigorous drawing, drawing a 20 centimetres straight line by hand with an *gesture* – coordinated between hands, arms, torso, head and eyes – establishes a proportional analogy between the real world (body) and thought (mind); 2. in a model, positioning the body in a certain orientation to understand a specific perspective point of view and, thus, in this case, again by analogy, projecting the imagination for the experiential simulation of the space to be built.

[17] For Richard Sennett, in *The Craftsman*, this condition is related to the fact that the craftsman is "[…] engaged in a continual dialogue with materials" (Sennett, 2008, p. 125).

[18] "The gesture of making has a complexity that defies description. But for didactic purposes, the gesture can be divided into simple phases. Simplified in this way, the gesture of making may be described something like this: both hands reach out toward the world of objects. They grasp an object. They tear it from its environment. They press on the object from two sides. They change its form. The simplification consists solely in focusing attention on the hands. For the whole body (and, on another ontological level, the "mind" as well, when it becomes impossible to ignore) surely participates in the gesture of making" (Flusser, 2014, p. 34).

something that aims to be objective – existentially – more accurately.

Considering the last arguments, anchored in the concept of 'gesture', it is possible to say: while we are doing architecture, we are also *making* it whith our body. With this *making*, by producing and managing *project-forms* under what Juhani Pallasmaa calls "the thinking hand", the architect is a kind of craftsman, who tries to directly articulate his subjective ontology with the object's ontological objectiveness when he is creating it. This perspective of doing architecture is related with what Pallasmaa refers to "embodied thinking" and more precisely with "existential knowledge". To clarify this within architecture, he recurs to the poet words:

> For verses are not, as people imagine, simple feelings […] they are experiences. For the sake of a single verse, one must see many cities, men and things, one must know the animals, one must feel how the birds fly and know the gesture with which the little flowers open in the morning. […] And still it is not yet enough to have memories. One must be able to forget them when they are many and one must have the great patience to wait until they come again. For it is not yet the memories themselves. Not till they have turned to blood within us, to glance and gesture, nameless and no longer to be distinguished from ourselves – not till then can it happen that in a most rare hour the first word of a verse arises in their midst and goes forth from them" (Rilke *in* Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 120).

Rilke's poetry emphasizes the density and depth of feeling associated with "existential knowledge." To reveal the essence of things that exist in the world, the act of experiencing is the necessary condition, however, using Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, this experience must be "incarnated"[19]. The power of the words highlights the importance of the intensely lived space, because only in this way can any experience develop a greater possible approximation between the objectivity and subjectivity of the ontologies involved in the action. This condition of "embodied experience" reveals the importance of Vilém Flusser's "phenomenology of gestures," especially what the body movement in space means for the evolution of the subject throughout its existence. The meaning of space is the expression from our relation with space

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[19] "For Merleau-Ponty phenomenology made possible the recognition that the body is not an object amongst objects, to be measured in purely scientific or geometric terms, but a mysterious and expressive mode of belonging to the world through our perceptions, gestures, sexuality and speech. It is through our bodies as living centres of intentionality, he consistently argued, that we choose our world and that our world chooses us" (Kearney, 1994, pp. 73-74).

(and with all the *things* in it), the way in which we move in it and, thus, constitute and manifest our existence through body-mind integrity in space-time. This observation will be more pertinent if we associate the following epistemological condition: "Knowledge is any state in an organism that bears a relationship to the world" (Plotkin *in* Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 116). Therefore, the manifestation of existence in space is also in itself the support of thought. According to Pallasma:

> The dancer and the soccer player 'think' with their body and legs, the craftsman and sculptor with their hands, and composers with their ears. In fact, our entire body and existential sense participate in all processes of thinking (Pallasmaa, 2009: 116).

In the case of the architect, how important can this ontoepistemological context be?

As we have seen, the architect's work process can be the expression of *making* things with his hands, just as the potter transforms the clay shapeless mass into ceramic objects. However, we also recognize that this metaphor, although partially possible, in the architectural design process heuristics context, has its limitations in contemporary times, due to the labor structures assumed by society and the digitalization of information dynamics, which shows a progressive "disconnection from the world"[20].

The architect, as a creative subject who does not produce directly his work-objects, has at his disposal mechanisms that allow him to effectively communicate the product of his thought about the buildings he intends to create. Even so, and despite recognizing the value of some *project-forms*, we cannot ignore the major contribution from the existential dimension of embodied memory to the architectural design process.

> Remembering is not only a mental event; it is also an act of embodiment and projection. Memories are not only hidden in the secret electrochemical process of the brain; they are also stored in our skeletons, muscles and skin. All our senses and organs think and remember. (Pallasmaa, 2020, p. 94).

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[20] The 'disconnection from the world' is a concept contextualized in André Barata view about 'the limits of the human': "Without a body, or at least without a specific, intimate body, without death, or at least without the certainty of its arrival, we could reasonably expect the more basic conditions of existence – our place in time and space – are being or will soon be transformed" (Barata, 2017, p. 154).

The embodied memory represents a heritage of experiences and knowledge. For the architect who deals with the space organization, this memory should not be ignored, because it improves the qualification of any *idea-form* meaning that is intended to be transformed into a *physical-form*. In other words, the way the world is experienced interferes with the world that is intended to be transformed. An architect is not expected to experience all the humanized spaces and buildings in the world and, only then, he is able to do architecture. Such a radical condition would be impossible. But, on the other hand, it is possible to consider that the experiences of several different spaces are significant and should have great embodied meaning for an architect. For example, when comparing the experiences from visiting the Rietveld Schröder House (1924), the Villa Savoye (1928) or the Villa Müller (1930), all the three houses space concepts are not abstract, although, after experiencing the buildings, we can conceptualize them. The confrontation with the dimensional, material and environmental realities of space contributes decisively to a greater awareness of its existential condition. Because, these components, structured by topological schemes, will constitute a kind of referential matrices to the subject organizing subjectively what objectively may exist outside his body. Therefore, they contribute to the organization of potentially deeper knowledge about the real complexity. In this sense, we understand space as a system of relations that derives from our positioning relative to *things*, as Norberg-Schulz observes:

> In our daily life we hardly talk about "space", but about things that are "over" or "under", "before", or "behind" each other, or we use prepositions such as "at", "in", "within", "on", "upon", "to", "from", "along", "next". All these prepositions denote topological relations. (Norberg-Schultz, 1996, p. 420).

For an architect, the 'positioning relative to things' is simultaneously the starting point, but also the point of arrival, because body contributes to the thought structuring, and it is precisely from thought that the body structures any *gesture*, including the act of *making* architecture through the support of the analogue *project-form*. The architect's relationship with the real world is

something that should not be questionable, even considering the virtual world existence.[21] Therefore, one cannot disregard the entire heritage of experience stored in body memory to use it in the production of information, in order to guide transformation actions in the existential space. This allows to manage one own physical-intellectual identity in a well-balanced way through the *gestures of making* – even if the actions of *making* products are not precise and rigorous, they allow the architect to be-in-the-world.

The architect is a world *maker*. However, while the potter transforms the clay, the architect's transforms the support of human artificiality itself: the *dweling*.[22]

5. Conclusion

The architect, being the *maker* of the world, more than 'thinking' with his hands, he must 'think' with his entire presence in the world: body-and-mind. It is the ontological totality (objective and subjective) that allows him, through the interdependence between experience and conception, to project buildings, even when he is not directly in an architectural design process mode. From the simple experience in his everyday life (as crossing the same street near his office or cooking in his kitchen) to a more exceptional one (as visiting the Sagrada Família or the Louvre Museum) he is getting important knowledge to his main activity: the architectural design project. This kind of knowledge is significative, perhaps more relevant than the one that can be in texts, photographies or other supports. With space experience the body contributes to the thought structuring and, by that, the thought, using embodied memories, can contribute to the body movements in order to structure any *gesture of making*, including the act of *making* architecture. The basis for the mutual structuring derives from our positioning relative to *things*,

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[21] Simulations of forms in digital space cannot replace real space to carry out the *gestures of making*, as happens with analogue *project-forms*, where, for example, the *gestures* of *construction*, *examination* and *decision*, play a fundamental role in guaranteeing ontological affinities between the creator and the represented object. For this purpose, Marco Frascari observes: "During the use of today's mass-marketed digital modeling, drafting, and designing tools, there are no tasks that require more than a negligible conscious attention. The monotonousness of the long processes of hatching, cross-hatching, scribbling, and stippling have been removed and replaced by the click of the mouse. [...] The result is efficiency. Yet, it eliminates part of the original experience. No longer is there time for a mind to wander, no more a daydream appears during the rendering of the surface of a facade with whirling, scribbling, or cross-hatching shadow. The time to dream over a drawing has been efficiently, almost surgically, eliminated" (Frascari, 2011, p. 153).
[22] Andrew Ballantyne when trying to answer the question 'what is to dwell?' through Heidegger's philosophy, he observes: "One dwells when one is properly engaged with one's place in the world, having a sense of the heaven and the earth, gods and mortals. [...] And learning to dwell is primarily about thinking, rather than having a house" (Ballantyne, 2001, p.16).

or topological relations. The way each one lives the experiences and articulate the objective and subjective ontologies derives from each person's sensitive nature. When the architect is in an architectural design process mode, the act of transforming the *idea-form* into a *physical-form* can be a kind of doing architecture by *making* it. He is able to exteriorize his abstract knowledge through special *project-forms*: analogue drawings and real models. These palpable documents, made by the *gestures of making*, are important components for well-balanced architectural design process, that potentiate an *extraordinary thing*. It can happen because this architectural design process has a heuristic based on a well-balanced ontoepistemological structure: the *subjectobject* system.

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Notes on Aesthetics in Architecture

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ABSTRACT. This article is written from the viewpoint of an architect, which I am. My analysis of the role of aesthetic judgments in what architects do and how they do it considers and discusses the constraints imposed by the so-called Principle of Acquaintance within the framework of the Architectural Project. The specific work of a professional architect encompasses all the resources necessary to solve architectural problems, effectively defining both what they do and how they do it. This 'set of all resources' fulfils the condition of 'what the architect does' but also allows for an examination of 'how they do it' in each case. I will argue that aesthetic judgments operate on this set of resources and involve all participants in the architectural design process. The functions of imagination and understanding within this process, as described by Kant in 1790 as 'the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties,' are considered in a contemporary context. The expected conclusions regarding aesthetic judgments within the architectural design process should enable us to understand the role of aesthetics in architecture, specifically in terms of what architects do and how they carry out their work.

1. Foreword

This short essay, prepared for the proceedings of the ESA 2023 Conference, served as the foundation for our abstract submission and as a complementary perspective to our synoptic presentation scheduled during the conference. Its primary purpose is to contribute to a thematic synthesis forming the basis of the discussion panel, which focuses on the role of aesthetic judgments within the specific realm of 'architectural work.' This presents a significant challenge in light of the evolving *Principle of Acquaintance* throughout the history of philosophy. With these philosophical lineages in mind, this essay aims to present its structure

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with minimal exposition for broader acceptance.

The choice of title structure depended on the specific context and the intended emphasis for a panel discussion on *architecture* and *aesthetics*. 'Aesthetics in Architecture' serves as a contemporary and precise choice when addressing the role of aesthetics within the field of architectural practice. The use of the preposition 'in'—Aesthetic Judgment *in* Architecture/Aesthetics *in* Architecture—is intentional: it confines its use to a specific context, that of the work of architects. Phrases like 'Aesthetic Judgment in Architecture' or 'Aesthetics in Architecture' restrict my focus to the framework of architectural work. Considering this perspective, it can only limit itself to *notes mapping the territory* which defines the research. Perhaps even *annotations on notes* that reference relevant domains, emphasizing what an architect does and what makes them an architect.

General topics that condition the structure of the essay:

1. The question of *aesthetics in architecture* extends beyond *artistic* judgment.

2. When critically analyzing aesthetic considerations within the realm of architecture, we are exclusively focused on *aesthetic judgments* and their role *in the architectural production process*, as carried out by architects.

3. The work of architects, encompassing what architects do and how they do it—*architecture* itself—can be distilled, in this hypothesis, to what we refer to as the *Architectural Project*. This concept encompasses all material and immaterial aspects recognized as necessary and sufficient for the fulfilment of their professional obligations.

4. As an architect and philosopher, my challenge was to explore *the Acquaintance Principle* within the framework of architecture. This essay intends to delve into this challenge and shed light on how it can be achieved.

I will unfold it into two parts: [1] *Aesthetic Judgment and the Principle of Acquaintance*, and [2] *The Architectural Project: what architects do and how they do it*, along with any relevant subtopics. Additionally, it will include a *Foreword*, sections for *Bridging* the content of the two parts, plus *Conclusions* and *References*.

Who is who by what they do and how they do it in the complex production of the built environment calls us to *analyze the processes* and their *action dynamics*.

Finally, a reference to the film *Two Hands to Philosophize*,[24] which we presented during the Aesthetics of Architecture panel at the Budapest ESA Conference 2023. The film is not only complementary but also an integral part of the argumentation discussed in this essay.

The film we created has two versions[25]. The first, the original, premiered at the University of Patras and is approximately 20 minutes long. The shorter version presented in Budapest is 10 minutes. What was 'cut' in the Budapest short-version were the frames that demonstrated how to expand the context beyond the 'specific work of architects' and to theorize or hypothesize about the connection between 'motility' and human-animal capabilities. The shared excerpts relate to the themes to be discussed, specifically focusing on the role of aesthetic judgments in the work of architects.[26]

Figure 1. *Introduction* and *logical-linguistic presentation*. Still from *Two Hands to Philosophize* (2023).

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[24] At a recent symposium at the University of Patras, Greece, centred on the theme 'Architecture in the Age of Digital Media,' held from May 25 to May 27, we presented the film *Two Hands to Philosophize*. Then and now, the respective essays serve as counterparts, engaging in counterpoint with the presentations. The approach envisioned for addressing the subject, much like the evolution of any project, went through various stages and modes of development.

[25] For those who want to see the films in full, they can be accessed on the MLAG website https://mlag.up.pt/ or requested to af.autofocusproject@gmail.com.

[26] For me, there are other connections between the two presentations, which the film or films mediated, and Sofia Miguens, during the ESA panel, immediately grasped. Since I am the author of both presentation scripts, I can confidently state this. Perhaps I can put these connections into perspective by envisioning them as two parts of the same whole.

Figure 2. Introductory presentation of the film: showcasing the hands of the architect-authors as analogue instruments. *Emphasis on the art of hand drawing.* Still from *Two Hands to Philosophize* (2023).

The *inexpressible*[27], conveyed by images, which is visually communicated information, aims to highlight one of the research directions that the panel intended to explore: the correlation between *action* and *thought* in the realm of architects' work. This involves the presumed and verified interaction between the *mind*, *language*, and *action*.

For example, possibly anticipating a comment on the characterization of the possibility of knowledge: the core of human-animal motor skills or capabilities—*motility*—lies beyond the stimulus-response model that predominated in the first half of the 20th century. Whether these motor skills are global or specific, they underpin the faculties exhibited by the human animal.

In a more specific manner, our notes on the subject—*Notes on Aesthetics in Architecture*— aim to confine the topic within the specific domain of architects' work, a segmented section cut from the process that characterizes their professional work.

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[27] The *inexpressible*, more precisely, *what cannot be said*, is often referred to as 'the unspeakable', conveys the idea that something is *beyond the capacity of words to express*.

2. Aesthetic Judgment and the Principle of Acquaintance

There will be no domain within what we currently designate as philosophical discourse – particularly concerning the nature of the human-animal – that does not intersect with our matrix, which is rooted in Greco-Latin culture. Aristotle and Plato could serve as reference points, even preceding the coining of the term 'Aesthetics'. [28]

After providing these historical references, I will now shift our focus to the more formal domain of post-eighteenth-century Aesthetics, a field originally initiated by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) who co-opted the term and shaped the discipline. In particular, I will delve into the lineage that started with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), which operates independently from Baumgarten's Aesthetics. Therefore, our point of departure is Kantian Aesthetics.

What should be considered as 'aesthetic judgments,' and what role do they play in the architectural design process?

Following the Kantian proposal presented in the *Critique of Judgment*[29], Bertrand Russell's analysis in *The Problems of Philosophy*, and the coining of the term 'Acquaintance Principle' by Richard Wollheim, aesthetic judgments are attributed to *experience*. The common feature among the three proposals is *experience*, considering this 'experience' in a brief, simple, and common way, as *the process of gaining knowledge or skill through actions, observations, or sensory perceptions*.

The analysis of the role of *aesthetic judgments in what architects do and how they do it* considers and discusses the potential restrictions imposed by the Principle of Acquaintance. I will argue that, within the scope of the *Architectural Project*, it is necessary to consider the *imagination* and *understanding* of all participants, as this involves the summoning of aesthetic judgments. The specific work of a professional architect is presumed to encompass the entirety of resources required to solve architectural problems. I will assert that aesthetic judgments operate on this set of resources and involve all participants in the architectural design process. The functions of *imagination* and *understanding* within this process are assumed to be in line

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[28] The word 'aesthetic' from the Greek *aiesthesis*, having to do with *the senses*.
[29] *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, or *The Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* (1790), often translated as *Critique of Judgment*, is the third of Kant's three published *Critiques*. It introduces and discusses the concept of 'aesthetic judgments'.

with contemporary standards. The expected conclusions regarding *aesthetic judgments* within the architectural design process should help us comprehend the role of aesthetics in architecture, specifically in terms of what architects do and how they carry out their work.

Aesthetic judgments correspond to the continuous process of decision-making in the *course of action*[30]. That is, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and other cognitive resources we use, whether consciously or not, to determine the course of processes.

3. Philosophical lineage

Concerning *aesthetic judgments*, our arguments will follow the lineage of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* (1790). We will also reference the treatment of epistemology—involving *knowledge by acquaintance* and *knowledge by description*—as presented by Bertrand Russell in *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912). Additionally, we will discuss the development of the *Acquaintance Principle* within the context of Richard Wollheim's essay on Aesthetics, *Art and Its Objects* (1968).

Throughout this discussion, we will assess the present state of the field of Aesthetics, referencing and acknowledging developments put forth by contemporary authors in various domains.

3.1 Notes on what Kant wrote[31]

> *A singular empirical judgment*, e.g., the judgment made by someone who perceives a mobile drop of water in a rock crystal, rightly demands that anyone else must concur with its finding, because the judgment was made *in accordance with the universal conditions of the determinative power of judgment under the laws of a possible experience in general*. In the same way, someone who feels pleasure in the mere reflection on the form of an object, without any concern about a concept, rightly lays claim to everyone's assent, even though this judgment is empirical and a singular judgment. For the basis of this pleasure is found in the **universal**, though **subjective**, condition of reflective judgments, namely, the purposive harmony of an object (whether a product of nature or of art) with the mutual relation of the **cognitive powers** (**imagination** and **understanding**) that are **required for**

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[30] *Course of action* that we also call, especially in our domain, *process*.

[31] A relevant source for reading Kant's *Critiques*, especially the third Critique, is the one that makes up the 'General Editors' Preface' and the 'Editor's Introduction' to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer, and translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Mathews (2000).

> *every empirical cognition*. Hence the pleasure in a judgment of taste is indeed dependent on an empirical presentation and cannot be connected *a priori* with any concept (we cannot determine *a priori* what object will or will not conform to taste; *we must try it out*); but the pleasure is still the basis determining this judgment, solely because *we are aware that it rests merely on reflection and the universal though only subjective conditions of the harmony of that reflection with the cognition of objects generally, the harmony for which the form of the object is purposive*. (Kant, 1790, p.31)[32]

Extending beyond the map of cognitive capabilities mentioned in the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* would have been a significant demand, considering the state of the field during Kant's time. *Cognitive sciences* and *neuroscience* were still in their infancy. Kant wrote as a *natural philosopher*, closely attuned to the broadest sense of reality that could be considered at that time.

However, when we consider these topics and recognize that Kant is not the founder of modern aesthetics as a discipline, it is in the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* that we can anchor discussions on judgments of taste, the consideration of beauty within them, and the hypothetical dissociation that such judgments present when compared to moral and ethical judgments. The latter are formally tied to a logical and *a priori* structure, ideally free from sensuality.

Setting aside psychology, we can ask whether these judgments should be integrated into the structure of human beings as they face the reality of which they are a part. This goes beyond Hegel's proposal to reduce it to 'Art.' In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant provides a more physically precise foundation for critical analysis and philosophical inquiry. While Kant's map may lack precision in detail, he recognized the territory and left information that would enable others to navigate or blaze a path.

Starting from the Kantian foundation also entails selecting specific topics from his myriad arguments that can potentially configure and justify our hypotheses, even if only to a minimal extent. To avoid being misled by interpretations beyond these boundaries, we should make our decisions, summarized in conceptual terms. After choosing a representative excerpt, we can proceed with conciseness, following Kant's words.

What needs to be emphasized in Kant's meticulous analysis is his outright rejection of

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[32] Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgement* (1790), VII, On the Aesthetic Presentation of the Purposiveness of Nature. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar (1987) [my emphasis (bold, italics)]

admitting two types of judgments while maintaining the condition of *universality* in the *subjectivity* of judgments, as they are determined by the unity of the cognitive powers of *imagination* and *understanding*. In conclusion, this hypothesis grants to the evaluation of particular objects by each subject the possibility of *a priori* conditions for judgment. This expanded conception of the *capacity and inevitability of judgment*, along with our *representation of reality*, endows Kant with the scientific and philosophical originality of the *Critique*.

The comprehensiveness of what is intended to be universal and the subjectivity exhibited by each judge will be ensured by *the nature of the cognitive powers* that determine the agent and their agency.

To look further into the structure and development of Kant's thought and text – again, how to approach Kant in these specific areas – we must refer to editor Paul Guyer's Introduction entitled 'Background: The Possibility of a Critique of Taste and Teleology,' in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (2000). Significantly, within this context, we encounter an alternative title for the work, penned by Kant himself: The *Limits of Sensibility and Reason*.

Kant's text discusses types of judgments: *empirical* and *judgments of taste*. In the case of empirical judgments, they require *universal* agreement when based on objective conditions. Judgments of taste, on the other hand, relate to *subjective*, universal conditions of harmony between *imagination* and *understanding* in the perception of *an object's form*. The pleasure in a judgment of taste is rooted in the *subjective*, *yet universal*, harmony of *reflection with cognitive powers*. This pleasure depends on empirical experience and can't be determined *a priori* for *specific objects*, but it's the foundation of such judgments due to its reflection and universal subjective conditions.

3.2 Notes on what Russell wrote

It was Russell's role to propose alternative pathways and determine bifurcations. In this story, it was up to Bertrand Russell to propose the methodologically positivist critical analysis that would, in the history of epistemological thought, bifurcate the path of knowledge. On one side, a logical path would open up, and on the other, a sensual path due to sensory experience.

Starting from *The Problems of Philosophy*[33], the map of reality provided a new account of alternative pathways, determining one of its bifurcations. In the horizon, or within the critical horizon, of *aesthetic judgments*, taste, and beauty, a structure, *epistemologically problematized structuring*, was added.

Russellian foundationalism requires us to embrace the path defined by our *firsthand experience*—what we supposedly know better—and contrasts it with the information that comes to us indirectly, through communication, demanding our testimony and acknowledging the potential for fallibility.

> We may therefore sum up as follows what has been said concerning acquaintance with things that exist. We have acquaintance in sensation with the data of the outer senses, and in introspection with the data of what may be called the inner sense—*thoughts, feelings, desires*, etc.; we have *acquaintance* in *memory* with things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense. Further, it is probable, though not certain, that we have *acquaintance with Self*, as that which is *aware of things* or has *desires towards things*. (Russell, 1912, Chapter V)[34]

We will, therefore, involve a broad spectrum of points or contact surfaces encompassed by the 'acquaintance' condition: *things that exist*; *sensations*; *introspections, including 'inner senses' such as thoughts, feelings, desires*, etc.; *memory*; and, likely, *Self* (which is aware of things or has desires towards things).

What remains significant for our conceptual genealogy of the principle, and beyond the adoption of the term 'acquaintance,' of course, is the dichotomy concerning the *matrix of knowledge*, expressed in the terms that shape the chapter (V) dedicated to the theme: Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description. *Knowledge*, after all, according to Russell's proposal.

'Analytical realism,' as defined by Bertrand Russell, coincides with the period [1905-1914][35] of his redaction of *The Problems of Philosophy*, which places a strong emphasis on the

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[33] Russell, Bertrand, *Problems of Philosophy* (1912)
[34] Russell, Bertrand (1912), *The Problems of Philosophy,* Chapter V: 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description' Project Gutenberg. [My emphasis, my italics].
[35] Russell, Bertrand (1905), "On Denoting," *Mind* 14, pp. 479-493; (1910), "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* 11, pp. 108-128.; (1997) [1912], *The Problems of Philosophy*, ed. John Perry, Oxford: Oxford University Press; (1993) [1914], *Our Knowledge of the External World,* New York: Routledge.

analysis of terms in language. This conceptual framework asserts the existence of an independent reality separate from the subject's thoughts, particularly concerning non-mental entities relating to the subject's cognitive attributes. The connections are established within *the realm of language* and, in this philosophical, specifically epistemological, context, lead to the emergence of analyses suggesting *knowledge through acquaintance* and *knowledge by description*.

3.3 Notes on what Wollheim wrote[36]

In a passage from *Art and its Objects*, Richard Wollheim (1923-2003) wrote:

> *Realism* acknowledges a well-entrenched principle in aesthetics, which may be called *the Acquaintance Principle*, and which insists that *judgments of aesthetic value*, unlike judgments of moral knowledge, *must be based on first-hand experience* of their objects and are not, except within very narrow limits, transmissible from one person to another. (Wollheim, 1980, p. 233)[37]

From the expressed viewpoint, philosophy acknowledges the *realism* that serves as the *conceptual framework* for articulating the principle.

4. Formulation of a Principle[38]

Deriving it from the previously quoted passage, one can formulate a principle succinctly:

> [T]he Acquaintance Principle [...] insists that judgments of aesthetic value [...] must be based on first-hand experience of their objects and are not, except within very narrow limits, transmissible from one person to another. (Wollheim, 1980, p. 233)[39]

In an earlier version – *Art and its Objects* (1975) Peregrine Books (Penguin Books) (Reprinted 1978) – Wollheim had written:

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[36] Richard Wollheim's Aesthetics. *Art and Its Objects: an introduction to aesthetics* (1968).
[37] Wollheim, R. *Art and its Objects* (1980) [my italics in the quotation]; 1st Edition by Harper & Row, 1968.
[38] The *Acquaintance Principle in Architecture* was the challenge and my primary focus for the 'Aesthetics of Architecture' panel at the ESA 2023 Conference.
[39] Wollheim, R. (1980) *Art and its Objects* [my italics]

> In the preceding section I have indicated some kind of scheme of reference, or framework, within which a *work of art*[40] can be identified. This does not, of course, mean that any spectator, who wishes to identify something as a *work of art*, must be able to locate it at its precise point within such a framework. *It is enough that he should have an acquaintance* with that local part of the framework where the work occurs: alternatively, that he should be able to take this on trust from someone who satisfies this condition. (Wollheim, 1975, Section 61, pp. 162-163) [my italics in the quote]

I take this version as the one later reformulated as *the Acquaintance Principle*. And I emphasize that the 1980 version seems the more radical one. I also note that the first edition of the essay *Art and Its Objects: An Introduction to Aesthetics,* dates back to 1968[41] as written by Wollheim in the preface of the second edition of the essay *Art and Its Objects*:

> This essay is an expanded version of an essay originally written for the *Harper Guide to Philosophy*, edited by Arthur Danto. For the second edition I have kept the original text, and appended six additional essays. I have made changes in and additions to the bibliography. (Wollheim, 1980)

In this way, I intend to emphasize the gestation period of the principle in its assertive and stabilized formulation—1968-1980—place it within the framework of what I call *Richard Wollheim's Aesthetics*, and, above all, position it in the era when this approach is developed.

As I endeavoured to characterize it, the *Acquaintance Principle* gained potency within the epistemological framework of the Kantian revolution, underwent a revival during the Russellian *linguistic turn* in the 1910s, and was subsequently updated during the *cognitive shift* of the 1950s, with support from Wollheim, who coined the principle and its synthetic formulation. Over more than two hundred years, it has remained both implicit and explicit, actively influencing philosophical formulations and discussions, notably serving as a cornerstone for theoretical articulation in Aesthetics.

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[40] I emphasize the categorization 'work of art' in contrast to the limitation I imposed on myself. While this is indeed the explicit subject of Wollheim's essay, it does not cast it beyond the broader scope of 'what architects do,' nor does it contradict my notation explicitly stated in the *Foreword* (1): *The question of aesthetics in architecture extends beyond artistic judgment.*

[41] Wollheim, Richard (1968), *Art and its objects: an introduction to aesthetics*. First published, New York & London: Harper & Row; Published in Pelican Books (1970); Reissued in Peregrine Books (1975)

5. Bridging

The bridges that connect the seemingly separate disciplinary domains we use as references are, in reality, *intersections*. Within these intersections, hypotheses derived from research converge and take shape. These hypotheses, whether they belong to the realms of *architecture*, *philosophy*, or the *sciences*, formally structure investigations that revolve around the concepts of *action*, the *mind*, and, perhaps, in a manner that is somewhat less obvious, *language*. This is because, within these intersections, *language* itself serves as a *form of action*, working alongside selected communication models to facilitate the crossing of domains.[42] About halfway across the bridge, with little hesitation, I will attempt to connect these domains.

6. Complex Systems[43], Architectural Design Process, and Architectural Project

The work of architects, regardless of the time and place, falls within what we formally and informally refer to as 'economy.' In a more restrictive designation, we call it a 'productive process.' As such, we adopt the term, expression, 'technological production modes' to categorize the work of architects.

A linear view, a cause-and-effect model of the world, will always fall far short of what understanding first and knowledge later demand. Without the assumption of a complex model, we will always be limited in our conclusions. Failing to consider relevant premises only leads us to erroneous and often incorrect conclusions. The processes we subject to our critical analysis are *systems of complex processes*.

The subject of investigation and reflection in this essay is the *action*, exemplified by *what architects do*—the *Architectural Project*: what architects do and how they do it. It resides at the intersection of philosophy in general, particularly the philosophy of action, and the field of

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[42] *Language*, *words*, *understanding*, and *knowledge*. The ultimate decision regarding what to do with words always lies with each of us. Merely seeking origins or essences is insufficient, as our reliance on their usage and their repeated effectiveness or satisfaction in communication is what truly matters. In other words, words depend *on us and others.*

[43] Some terms/phrases can help map the domain: *Complex Systems*, *Complex Adaptive Systems*, *Multi-agency*, *Non-linearity*, *Emergence*, *Spontaneous Order*, *Feedback Adaptation loops*, *Feedback cycles*, for example. Perhaps the most evident, in everyday expressions, could be broadly referred to as the *Economy*, the economic system.

sciences, primarily within the subdomain of neuroscience. This is why, in addition to Kant, Russell, and Wollheim mentioned in [1] '*Aesthetic Judgment* and the *Principle of Acquaintance*,' we also consider authors who explore these topics from a philosophical perspective, as well as those who approach them from related fields. In this broad spectrum, we include Arbib, Buzsáki, Damásio, Dissanayake, Newell, Reitman, Simon, and, specifically for our argument, for example, Vittorio Gallese.[44] Nevertheless, it's important to remember that the field of architecture also generates its theoretical material.[45] As the relationships woven at the various intersections, we are referring to demonstrate. A guide for crossing bridges was, without a doubt, Juhani Pallasmaa.

> The consistent rendering of *Urteilskraft* as "power of judgment," rather than the familiar "judgment," makes it unambiguous when Kant is talking about judgments and when he is talking about the capacity to make them. It is to be hoped that this will discourage the misconstrual of Kant's distinction between (using Guyer and Matthews's terms) the [End Page 594] "reflecting" and the "determining" *powers* of judgment as a distinction between two varieties of *judgments.*'[46] (Rind, 2001, pp. 594-596).

The distinction between 'judgment' and the 'power to judge' is inscribed in the translation of the original German.

The complex Kantian framework has generated ripples that span authors and eras to the present day. In the genealogy we mentioned earlier—spanning from the late 18th century to the early 20th century—and for the specific question we intend to address, Bertrand Russell allows us to underscore the significance of the concept of 'representation' introduced by Kant. It remains a vital subject of both philosophy and the sciences to this day. Within the scope of our *analysis of action*, we must connect it in a way that we will describe as inseparable from *representation.*

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[44] All of them are included in our list of references. For an innovative approach to the relationship between neurosciences and philosophy, particularly the Kantian model, see, for example, Buzsáki, György (2019) *The Brain from Inside Out.*

[45] Specific references will include the seminars and conferences held in Helsinki since 2013 under the auspices of the Tapio Wirkkala-Rut Bryk Foundation, see *References*, the work carried out by the Academy of Neuroscience For Architecture, the ANFA-Center for Education, and our Autofocus seminars (MLAG/IF), especially since 2016, https://mlag.up.pt/events/autofocus-seminars/

[46] Rind, M. (2001), 'Review of the book Critique of the Power of Judgment', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 39(4), pp. 594-596.

Representation as 'reality for us' doesn't assume 'another reality,' but rather the way we perceive it, how it is possible and current for us.

The power to judge is an innate cognitive 'capacity.' The 'faculty of judging' is the same as the 'faculty of thinking.' Every mental and conscious 'representation' is already an evaluation, a form of judgment. And, like *thinking*, it's a spontaneous and characteristic cognitive capacity of the human animal. Innate qualities are based on procedures and comprise an *a priori* active readiness to implement *transversal* and *universal normative rules of synthesis*, which we assert depend on our mind.

In this regard, we can once again return to Kant about our cognitive capacities and distinguish between 'understanding' and 'sensitivity' served by the faculty of 'imagination', conceiving it as a source, innate, and therefore as a basic 'mechanism' of all types of synthesis.

We can then assume that in our days the *normative rules of the mind*, as *philosophy* has always discussed them, find in *Neurosciences* a new source for their investigation and an increased result for their knowledge, and in the *decision theories* inherent to all processes an exploratory complement.

It will be from this schematic and very succinct frame of reference of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, a Kantian thread, that we will arrive at Bertrand Russel's epistemological formulation synthesized here from *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) Chapter V, Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description. What will be relevant for the future articulation and discussion of the *Acquaintance Principle* will be the *types of knowledge.*

A bridge with several footholds between Sciences and Philosophy, especially Biology and Neuroscience, with intersections relevant to our theme, Architecture.

7. The hypotheses we put forward

The foundation of the hypotheses we present is a 'naturalistic' perspective on the *mind*, *language*, and *action*.[47] This 'naturalistic perspective' is invoked by examining the current relationship between *philosophy* and *science*, with a focus on *cognitive sciences* and *neuroscience*.

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[47] On the philosophical ground: Putnam, Hilary (2016), *Naturalism, Realism and Normativity* (Edited by Mario De Caro) Cambridge MA, &London UK: Harvard University Press, 2016. [Introduction: Putnam's Philosophy and Metaphilosophy by Mario de Caro]

The concept of 'Nature'—a categorization or ontology—can provide a framework for revising our understanding of the 'economy' from an epistemological perspective. In other words, it offers a timely and compelling description of how the relational structures it seeks to uncover and critically analyse relate to our understanding and knowledge of the economy. This approach sets aside the analogies and metaphorical language often used in descriptions, viewing 'Nature' as akin to 'an Economy'.

If we consider the revolutions in scientific progress and their technical counterpart over the past 150 years, we can observe their significant impact on the fields of philosophy of mind and action, as well as in the domains of cognitive sciences and neuroscience.[48] These, in turn, have revitalized philosophical research and debates. These issues, along with those related to the *philosophy of language*, are crucial for establishing a comprehensive and well-founded framework. With its foundations in neuroscience, *philosophy of action* forges new connections with *language* and, more broadly, with the *'body/brain/mind' problems*, reshaping these relationships and their implications for enduring philosophical questions, whether they are related to ontology, epistemology, or other domains.

What we term 'aesthetics' or 'aesthetic judgments' may thus correspond to a form of 'natural rationality' when considering our cognitive abilities and our evolutionary history as human animals.

In terms of the developments, we observe in current literature, a substantial amount of work has been produced in various fields and at different research levels, building upon the legacies of Kant, Russell, and Wollheim. It's worth noting, however, that the overwhelming majority of this work, particularly within the realm of 'philosophical aesthetics,' is situated within *the art world*. Therefore, our objective here encompasses a different domain, a distinct subject, and a complementary yet unique critical analysis.

For this specific subject, we will need to consider the vein of those who, while not forgetting the philosophers, venture down alternative paths. We acknowledge their contributions to our discourse, within the text, and in the accompanying references.

Naturalism, *Realism*, and *Normativity* are philosophical topics that intertwine clearly in

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[48] The 'cognitive turn', which has influenced philosophy and the sciences since the 1950s, continues to guide us in investigating the nature of the human-animal. Building on this foundational perspective, we can explore various aspects, such as the discussion of the *mind's representational character and functions*, its *corporeality* and *operation*, and how these elements underpin the *processes of judgment*, *decision-making*, *action*, and *behavior*.

the overall structure of the essay, as well as in their specific themes, whether in the domains of *aesthetics*, the *mind*, *language*, or *action*.

In his time, a neo-Kantian, Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944), managed to structure a possible answer by coining the technical term/concept of *Umwelt* to refer to the *worlds of subjective experience*.

> The impressions received by the subject always consist of sense-qualities, which it then arranges and connects into unities, which we call objects. Accordingly, we have to distinguish in every object between two things: — (1) the sense-qualities, which Kant called the *material*, and (2) the arrangement imposed on them by the mind, which he called the *form* of knowledge. (Uexküll, 1926, p. XVI)[49]

8. The *Architectural Project*: what architects do and how they do it: The Architect, the Architects, and the Professional Architect

The Architect, directly designated in Greek as ἀρχιτέκτων (arkhitékton), was the sole agent who earned their *designation through their actions*. Similar agents, never directly designated as such, will include all those who have done or will do what the Greek architect did to earn such a designation. This story of 'being an architect' from the beginning of time to our days, especially in our Greco-Latin culture, continues to evolve and adapt.

The *professional architect* is a specific case that becomes significant only in societies, times, and places where this pursuit has primarily aligned itself with the *economy*.

What we will understand as the *Architectural Project* encompasses *what* the architect does and *how* they do it. We will need to disambiguate it in the broader context of *design processes* and even *architectural design processes*.

The *architectural design process* is based on *procedural reason* and *methodology*: *what* to do, *how* to do it, *when* to do it, and *why to do it* (the *ethos* of doing).

Design Process	Architectural Design Process		Architectural Project

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[49] Uexküll, Jakob von (1926) *Theoretical Biology*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc., London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.

Figure 3. The Design Process.

> Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones. The intellectual activity that produces material artifacts is no different fundamentally from the one that prescribes remedies for a sick patient or the one that devises a new sales plan for a company or a social welfare policy for a state. Design, so construed, is the core of all professional training; it is the principal mark that distinguishes the professions from the sciences. Schools of engineering, as well as schools of architecture, business, education, law, and medicine, are all centrally concerned with the process of design. (Simon, 1969, p.5)[50]

What architects do and how they do it — the act of doing—brings the architect's actions closer to the realm of pragmatics and, in a sense, connects it with philosophy through hermeneutics. Regardless, it distances this action from the confines of strict science or the pursuit of absolute certainty within the scientific domain.

What architects do involve the *production of visual information*, including drawings, sketches, models, and more. This production and communication process is central to the work of architects and implies associated *rhetoric*. It serves as a means of intrapersonal and reflective production by the architect (*subjective*) and facilitates interpersonal communication (*intersubjective*). Regardless of the categorization in use at any given time and place concerning the work of architects, their actions shape *technical processes. What to do and how to do it* will indeed be a hybrid, methodologically decomposed. Nevertheless, distinctive traits can be identified here whether in the operative sequence or their respective contents. First, of a theoretical nature, generated from both general and specific knowledge, followed by *experiential*, *technical*, and *operational knowledge*. 'What to do' corresponds to determining which characteristics of the object/solution should be considered and prescribed (as necessary and sufficient) to fulfil the goals of the architectural project.

How architects do it, by utilizing all the necessary and sufficient resources and means, especially the technical ones, to determine the functional and formal characteristics of the different alternatives and objects/solutions to be prescribed, *represents a unique and individual approach* to accomplishing what needs to be done.[51]

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[50] Simon, Herbert A. (1969), *The Sciences of the Artificial.*
[51] *How to do*, potentially but not necessarily, allow for artistic production inherent in the objects created during the project process, as prescriptions.

I will argue that within the realm of the *Architectural Project*, it is essential to take into account the *imagination* and *understanding* of all those involved in the process, as they all engage *necessarily* in *aesthetic judgments*. The functions of *imagining* and *understanding within the process*—"the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties" [Kant, 1790] as lineage—are assumed in an updated state of the art.

> […] imagining is a form of *simulation*—a mental simulation of action or perception, using many of the same neurons as actually acting or perceiving. (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005, pp 456-457)[52]

> *Imagining and doing use a shared neural substrate.* (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005, p.456]

> *The same neural substrate used in imagining is used in understanding.* (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005, p.456) [italics in the originals]

The possibility of *understanding* contrasts—conceptually—with that of knowing—*knowledge*—even though both hypotheses have their origin in the Greek *episteme*. The bifurcation is evident, as well as the successive phase changes. The Greek *episteme*, having bifurcated into *understanding* and *knowledge*, bequeathed us the possibility of debates, and the investigations that support them.

9. *The Architectural Project*

Perhaps the phrase "*cause or reason to move forward*" serves as a foundational concept for understanding the intended meaning of the term 'project,' whether used as a verb or, subsequently, as a noun. The term 'Architectural Project,' or 'Project of Architecture,' is hereby defined, specified, and contextualized within the framework of the activities collectively referred to as what architects do—their specific professional work. While this domain is not exclusive to architects, they typically assume a leading role in the process, which may involve a broader range of agents. All of these participants contribute to shaping the specifications of the *Architectural Project*, with the architect primarily responsible for guiding

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[52] The authors also refer to the original work by Gallese, Vittorio (2003), 'The manifold nature of interpersonal relations: The quest for a common mechanism", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, B, 358, pp. 517–528.

the process.

The specific work of a *professional architect* is assumed to encompass the entirety of resources required to address the *architectural problems* they encounter, encompassing both *what* they do and *how* they do it. These resources commonly include the set of all the resources: [a] *schemes*, *sketches*, *drawings*, and a diverse range of *visual graphic productions*, *photographs*, *models*, *digital simulations*, and more—essentially, devices specifically designed to present *architectural solutions*. These resources are often associated, though not always, with [b] other information and communication tools, such as *conversations*, *speeches*, *texts*, and *discourse*. In this context, we can refer to these as *rhetoric* or even the *architect's rhetoric*. As stated in my approach in 'How the Architect Does Things with Words' (de Araújo, Helsinki, 2021), 'discourse' encompasses the rhetorical nature and use of language. *Discursive capacities* reveal the structure of our thinking about the world and serve as the foundation for communication within a broader spectrum of phenomena.

The set of all these resources meets the criteria of 'what the architect does' and allows for the examination of 'how they do it'. I will argue that aesthetic judgments are employed by all agents involved in the *architectural design process* to interact with this set of resources.

The set of all resources operates within two domains: *intrapersonal*, in terms of the architect as an author who provides solutions and engages in self-assessment, and *interpersonal* when it involves all the agents participating in the process. *Information* and *communication*, both *intrapersonal* and *intersubjective*, play an active role in these processes.

Figure 4. The *architect at work* draws analogically: the *fusion tool* [mind-eye-hand] plays a crucial role in *creative work*. 'Drawing by hand' is an architect's way of philosophizing. Still from *Two Hands to Philosophize* (2023).
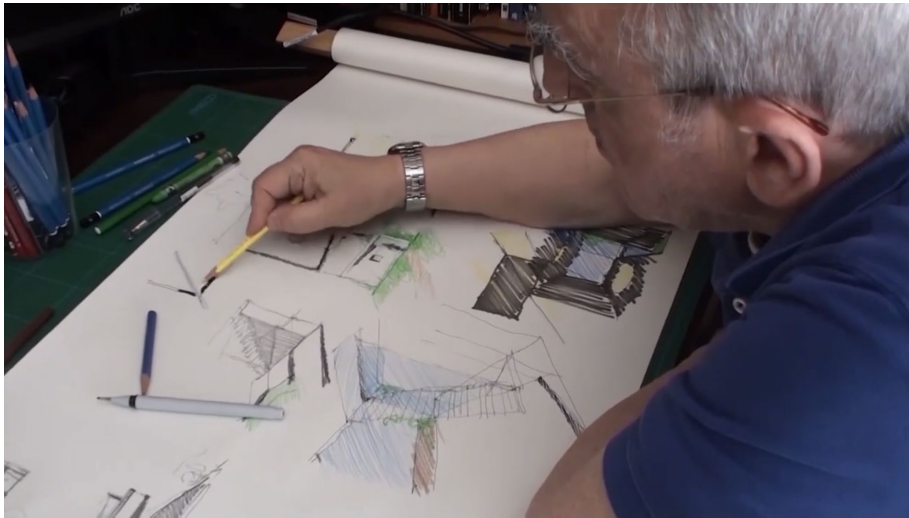
Figure 5. The *memory-imagination-intelligence-creation* interaction in the specific work of the architect. *The architect's way to philosophy.* Still from *Two Hands to Philosophize* (2023).

10. Architectural Problems

'Problems' represent instances, states of affairs – situations of adverse stimulation: *lack*, *deprivation*, and *conflict*. Whatever the cause.

> A system has a problem when it has or is given a description of something, but it doesn't have that can correspond to that description. (Reitman, 1965)[53]

> A problem exists whenever a problem solver desires some outcome or state of affairs that he does not know immediately how to attain. Imperfect knowledge about how to proceed is at the core of the genuinely problematic. (Newel, 1959, p.1)[54]

Every *problem* triggers a *process*.

Every *problem* triggers a [*design*] problem.

Every [*design*] *process is triggered by a problem.*

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[53] Reitman, Walter R. (1965), "Cognition and Thought: an information-processing approach" [my italics in the quote]

[54] Newel, Allen (1960), "Report on a General Problem-solving Program" [my italics in the quote]

Architectural projects are triggered by *architectural problems*.
Architectural problems trigger *architectural projects*.

11. Process/Design/Project

The dissociation between the *project process* and the *act of construction*—the construction/the constructed objects—segments the process under analysis. In the *Architectural Project*, the role of *imagination* is confined to the process as *a prescription*, as are the roles of *aesthetic judgments* in decision-making and aesthetic judgments on the *imagined production* (visual information /communication) as one of the foundations of *decision-making*. The work of architects is referenced to *imagination* and *prescription*—drawings, sketches, etc., which increasingly serve as the expression of this work today—and at another level, the result of these prescriptions, the built environment, modified structures, buildings, and *constructions*.

The interaction between *imagination* and *possibility* requires that the object of aesthetic judgment in the architect's work process be *conceivable*. From our perspective, it is also necessary to disambiguate images from mental images [Pictorialism vs Descriptionalism, Mental Representations vs Descriptions] in the work process of the architect and those involved in the process called the 'architectural design project'. This necessitates *experience with* or *of* imagined objects.

On the fringes of the *art world*, both within and beyond, it is crucial to recognize that this domain focuses on a variety of potential problem lineages, accompanied by corresponding critical analyses and arguments. In the field we aim to explore, while we must consider *epistemic* issues, the primary emphasis is also on *didactics.* The material production subject to judgment acts as a mediator within the realm of imagination. It complements the rhetoric of various discourses through language, drawings, models, and various other means, leaving behind traces of the imagination of those under evaluation. These traces serve as reflective testimonies that are both *subjective* and *authored*, open to *interpretation by the community of recipients*. Once again, they are subjectively interpreted, but this time within the context of intersubjectivity, which will influence the respective judgments. The project process itself, as well as the work of architects, ultimately depend on these factors.

The argument regarding intersubjectivity as a facet of the world and reality permeates the discourse and critical analysis offered by Sofia Miguens. This is exemplified in the

'common language of speaking animals, humans,' within the analytical philosophical tradition, including Wittgenstein, Austin, and others. More recently, it pertains to her work on Stanley Cavell's philosophy, particularly concerning 'Aesthetics in the future of Philosophy', as discussed in *Arte Descomposta* (2022) [Uncomposed Art] (see References). We will refer to the ongoing critical examination of intersubjectivity as 'future' or 'progress,' challenging Kantian intuition and embracing Sellars' categorization of images of the world, whether they are scientific or manifest, for our benefit.

12. Conclusions

Anticipated conclusions regarding aesthetic judgments within the architectural design process should allow us to equate *the role of aesthetics in architecture*, specifically in terms of what architects do and how they carry out their work.

This role relates to Kant's concept of 'cognitive powers', encompassing the cognitive faculties of the human animal. The *universality* and *subjectivity of the judgment of taste*, as well as *the harmonious free play of these cognitive faculties*, are key aspects.

Experience, *memory*, and *imagination* collectively provide the foundational structure within which architects *explore* and *rehearse solutions*.

The functions of *imagining* and *understanding* within this process align with what Kant referred to as 'the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties' (Kant, 1790).

It's important to note that the *possibility of understanding* contrasts conceptually with that of knowing, even though both hypotheses trace their origins back to Greek *episteme*. This bifurcation is evident, with successive phase changes.

In the context of this essay, we do not aim to delve into considerations or critical analyses of the *non-genetic* aspects of aesthetic judgments. Instead, we confine our focus to the faculties of the human animal, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, which collectively form what we synthetically refer to as 'human nature.'

Aesthetic judgments are made possible and operate within the conceptual framework of *liberal naturalism* and *direct realism*, as suggested by Wollheim, or the naturalistic perspective, as assumed by Kant.

Our senses directly present *objects for judgment*. Everything that exists is perceived by our senses, and our *sensibility* plays a crucial role in these judgments.

Aesthetics, encompassing *aesthetic judgments*, plays a fundamental role in the field of *architecture*. By *bridging* insights from both aesthetic theories within a philosophical context [1] and [2] the activities of architects, we can propose *how* and *why* the study of aesthetics is relevant to our understanding and knowledge of architecture.

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AI-aesthetics and the artificial author

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ABSTRACT. Consider this scenario: you discover that an artwork you greatly admire, or a captivating novel that deeply moved you, is in fact the product of artificial intelligence, not a human's work. Would your aesthetic judgment shift? Would you perceive the work differently? If so, why? The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) in the realm of art has sparked numerous philosophical questions related to the authorship and artistic intent behind AI-generated works. This paper explores the debate between viewing AI as a tool employed by human artists and perceiving AI as a new form of artistic expression with minimal human involvement. While we often seek a human mind behind certain artworks, we may still appreciate and engage with works that lack this element but have aesthetic value nonetheless. The paper also considers the traditional concept of "implied author", suggesting that readers or artwork viewers might construct an authorial presence from the work itself, regardless of its actual origin. It will be finally suggested how AI-generated art might change our perceptions of human authorship itself.

1. Introduction

Imagine, for a moment, that you're visiting an art museum. You've spent the afternoon admiring all the works of art, marveling at the skill and depth of feeling expressed in each piece. Among them, a particular artwork captivates you. Perhaps it's a delicate sculpture that, in its meticulous detail, reveals a story that moves you deeply. Similarly, imagine you've just finished reading a novel that has left you spellbound. The prose is mesmerizing, the characters lifelike, the plot rich and emotionally resonant. You feel a deep connection with the author, sensing her emotional depth and profound understanding of human nature through her words. In both cases, you are in awe, filled with admiration for the artists who produced these

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masterpieces. To further illustrate, consider the realm of music. When listening to a symphony, one might be moved by its complexity and the emotional journey it offers.

And then, you discover a startling truth: these works were not created by human hands or minds but were instead the product of a generative neural network, an artificial intelligence (AI). How would you feel? The belief that a human composed it, perhaps reflecting his own emotional struggles and triumphs, adds a layer of meaning. But what if you were to discover that those works were composed by an AI: would your admiration wane, to be replaced with a sense of disillusionment or even betrayal? Would the sculpture lose its vibrancy, its bold shapes suddenly seeming less bold? Would the characters in the novel feel less real, their joys and sorrows less poignant?

If your answer to any of these questions is "yes", then you must ask yourself: Why? Why does knowing the creator was an AI, not a human, change our perception or evaluation of the artwork? Is it the absence of a conscious mind, the lack of personal history, emotion, or intention? Or perhaps it's the sense of an invisible barrier between you and the artwork, knowing that there's no human creator with whom to connect, empathize, or engage? These are empirical questions that are beginning to be investigated; but in this paper I will focus on the theoretical aspects of the issue.

The advent of artificial intelligence in the field of art has raised several philosophical questions related to authoriality and artistic intention of AI-generated works and the aim of this paper is to highlight some possible interpretations and issues about this specific point (for background and further discussions, see Manovich, Arielli, 2021; Arielli, Manovich, 2022). Some argue that AI-systems are simply *tools* used by human artists – and that *are* always humans setting in motion those tools –, and that the final product is still a result of human intentionality and creative input. Others claim that AI-generated art represents a new form of artistic expression, in which the AI itself becomes the artist and human involvement is minimal. Others argue that this cannot constitute real art, as the human contribution is limited to merely pushing buttons or writing commands, rendering the works devoid of meaning. But often is it not clear if those works are meaningless because they are aesthetically *bad* or are meaningless just because they are *artificial*. We might have artificial works that are more aesthetically appreciated yet are not deemed as valuable compared to their human equivalents. Michael Noll's 1966 paper "Human or Machine: A Subjective Comparison of Piet Mondrian's

"Composition with Lines" (1917) and a Computer-Generated Picture" describes a seminal study in the field of computer art and aesthetics. In this research, Noll created a computer-generated image that closely resembled the abstract geometric style of Piet Mondrian's paintings. He then conducted an experiment to see if people could distinguish between the genuine Mondrian and the computer-generated artwork. The results were intriguing: participants were split on their ability to correctly identify the human-made versus the machine-made artwork, and some even preferred the computer-generated image. It is noteworthy to consider this aspect of Noll's study: the individuals who formally appreciated the computer-generated images were not swayed by the knowledge that these were not Mondrian's works. It suggests that the aesthetic value attributed to an artwork might be seen as independent of its human origin. Alternatively, it might be that the experiment's participants lacked expertise in art and therefore did not view Mondrian, a notable figure in art history, as especially important or authoritative[56].

The point here is how AI's emergence reshapes the way the public and users perceive authorship. The latest iterations of these systems have bridged the uncanny valley, presenting outputs that bear a closer semblance to human-like intelligence than ever before. However, while AI systems produce sophisticated outputs, they do not truly understand the content they generate (yet). The perceived intelligence of these systems is a product of the observer's interpretation. Therefore, the critical question is not about the presence of real authorial intent in AI-generated works, but rather how these technological developments might transform our understanding of authorship from the perspectives of readers, listeners, and viewers.

2. An old debate

Before considering if AI-generated artworks challenge the idea of human authorship, it is important to acknowledge that the idea that there may be no "real author" is not new, nor is it unique to the realm of artificial generation of content. The question of authorship has been a focal point in philosophical and literary discourse, particularly in the context of structuralism

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[56] "The knowledge that one of the pictures was produced by a computer did not bias the Ss for or against either picture, as mentioned previously. However, the Ss in this experiment had very little or no artistic training and also were quite accustomed to the impact of technology upon many different fields. These Ss therefore probably did not have any prejudices against computers as a new artistic medium. If artists and Ss from a nontechnological environment had been similarly tested, the results might have been different." (Noll, 1966, p. 9).

and its successor, post-structuralism, according to which it is not possible to attribute a privileged and unique source of meaning to an author of a work of art. Similar to structuralism and post-structuralism, also according to the New Criticism it was important to avoid the "intentional fallacy", a term coined by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in 1954. This concept criticizes the practice of assessing a work based on the author's intention instead of its content and the reader's experience. According to New Critics, the author's intention is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art. Instead, New Criticism promoted an analytical methodology that prized the text's complexity, unity, and the interplay of its constituent elements.

Roland Barthes famously declared the "death of the author" in his 1967 essay. He argued that the author's intentions and biographical context should not dictate the interpretation of a work, since every text is the product of a complex web of influences, a "tissue of citations" and traditions, the recombination of a whole cultural past and social context. A text is the result of other texts and authors that speak through the pen of the alleged "autonomous" writer. In the realm of post-structuralism, Michel Foucault contributed to the debate with his essay "What is an Author?" (1969). Foucault introduced the concept of the "author-function", which serves as a mediator between the text and its interpretation, its social and discursive context, and its categorization as a work of art or literature. The author-function is not merely an individual but a complex construct that influences how a work should be interpreted and understood.

This tradition can also be linked to earlier avant-garde art experiments that explored artistic creation through reducing or even neutralizing the artist's control. Avant-garde movements like Dadaism and Surrealism used techniques such as chance and automatism to encourage spontaneous and collective creativity, thereby lessening the artist's role. For example, the Surrealists' endeavor to emulate a "machine-like" state was evident in practices like automatic writing.

The image of the unique and individual artist and author has, over the years, been largely discredited by these theoretical provocations. We cannot, however, ignore the perspective of everyday people who enjoy artworks and cultural products. From the point of view of a *phenomenology* of authorship (that is, how subjects commonly perceive and reflect on the authoriality of a work), theories about the "death of the author", though philosophically compelling, have not actually truly manifested in public attitudes. Humans perceive

intentionality in everyday life and, as a result, continue to think in terms of authorship when encountering human-made cultural products. Philosophical debates, which regard authorial intention as merely a chimera or a projection of cultural dynamics, do not diminish the innate tendency to envision a person behind the work, to inquire "who did that", and to consider the creator's motives and intentions.

Furthermore, while avant-garde experimentation and automatically generated art emphasized liberation from human decision-making and control by means of stochastic processes or mechanic procedures (that nevertheless, one should not forget, still adhered to the creator's initial intent), contemporary AI-generated content introduces a novel form of autonomy with its own control and decision-making capabilities: human authoriality seems replaced by another form of authorship that somewhat *mimics* the human one.

3. Do we need an author in aesthetic appreciation? Two thresholds

On one side, we can aesthetically engage with any phenomenon that has no "mind" at all, since they are not the product of human activity, like landscapes, flowers, or other natural structures[57]. On the other side, we assume that our aesthetic experience with human artworks, like a painting, a song or a novel, presupposes instead our awareness of a creative intentionality behind the work and inferences about what the maker wanted to convey, his or her inner states and motives.

In other words, we often assume that "sensing the mind" behind an artwork, be it a painting, a song, a novel is a crucial ingredient in our aesthetic appreciation of these works. It follows that we would not truly appreciate a work knowing that it is a product of a machine deprived of authorial intentionality, experience, or even consciousness. But a song or a screenplay could be simply emotionally engaging and entertaining in itself and we may not need the illusion of a mind behind the work. Consider the difference between a sophisticated and literarily complex novel might lead us to reflect on the author's motivations and intentions, and a serialized novel written for pure entertainment such as a detective story or a romance novel, usually written following stereotypical schemes and plots. This novel might satisfy us without prompting us to speculate about the author's intentions and feelings (which we can just

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[57] Even though for some these cases too might be considered objects of *divine* authorial creation.

keep in the background but are not necessary to appreciate the work).

In other words, *agency and intentionality attribution seem important in certain forms of cultural production, but not necessarily in others*. This is even more true in case of the aesthetic experience of design artifacts: a decorative pattern, a piece of furniture, a phone or a car do not require authorial depth; we do see that they are intentional products, but we do not need to figure out meanings or reasons about the maker´s thoughts. In a moment of reflection, I can admire the skill and creativity of a designer, but the object they created does not establish a dialogue between them and the user as an emotional song or a profound novel might do: no matter how the new model of smartphone might be aesthetically beautiful, we do not ask ourselves what the creator intended to tell us with his artifact (even though we might wonder about the functions a designer intended to put in certain features of an artifact, which mostly happens in cases of poor design). Even a catchy song that engages us can lead us to ignore the author's intentions behind this tune. Similarly, a movie can be evaluated positively for the simple fact that it is entertaining by itself, without having us think about what the writer or director wanted to say. The generation of AI-art thus becomes an interesting test case. It helps determine in which areas we feel the need for a recognizable subject behind an artifact and in which we can do without one. The pertinent question is where we should draw this line.

Summarizing the issue discussed here, along with some points mentioned at the beginning (namely: is AI merely a tool or a creative agent?), we can now identify at least two conceptual thresholds related to the question of authorship:

1) The first is the *threshold of authorial relevance* that we have just discussed and concerns the question about when authoriality or the idea of a "mind" behind the work becomes crucial for aesthetic appreciation.

It seems that where authorial intention seems irrelevant for our appreciation, we primarily focus on the formal, aesthetic features of the work. In a beautifully designed piece of furniture or a modern architectural structure we linger on the form, the lines, the materials used, and the overall visual harmony. We appreciate harmonious and low-fi background music for its pleasant and relaxing qualities.

A possible consequence of these considerations might be that the threshold of authorial relevance could be a demarcating criterion between "true" art, rich in meaning and relevant to the individual's subjectivity, and purely decorative, entertaining art. AI might thus find its

niche in art forms where the "surface" aspect is paramount and the presence of an author is not crucial for our enjoyment. This includes areas like background music, decorative patterns, industrial design, and formulaic narrative texts, among others.

In the 1950s experiment with algorithmically generated Mondrians, it was observed that the artificial images were favored over the originals for their formal qualities. This preference can be attributed to an exclusive focus on their abstract, non-figurative style, which lacks direct symbolic meaning for the naïve observer. However, from an historical and art theoretical perspective, this approach overlooks crucial elements. It ignores the link between the image and the artist's original intentions, his personal history, and the socio-historical context of the artwork's creation. Consequently, a purely formalist view of abstract art, one that disregards the author's presence, risks diminishing these works to simple decorative patterns. Take, for instance, the field of abstract expressionism in visual arts, a style typified by artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. When we stand in front of a Pollock drip painting, we are primarily drawn into a complex web of colors and patterns. But we also seek to understand the emotion, the passion, the turmoil that the artist might have felt while creating this piece. This pursuit of unraveling the artist's intent adds a layer of depth to our aesthetic experience that a formally better AI-generated Pollock would not be able to offer.

If the first threshold pertains to whether it is relevant for the audience to think in terms of the author's presence, the second threshold concerns the question of "where" the author is situated, or to which source we attribute authorship. This threshold, therefore, differentiates the source of authorship from what we might call its devices or media, that is, its tools:

2) the *threshold of instrumentality* concerns the general question of the border between agency and its tools. This second threshold focuses on whether AI is simply a tool used by human artists or if it can be considered an artist in its own right. For centuries, artists have utilized tools as an extension of their creative process – from simple paintbrushes and chisels to more modern tools like cameras and digital software. In these cases, the tool is an extension of the artist's creativity. An example of this is Harold Cohen's AI program, AARON. Cohen programmed AARON to produce original paintings already in the 70s. However, AARON was always seen as a tool, with Cohen being recognized as the artist because of his role in programming and defining the AI's artistic parameters.

In this issue, the views of practitioners in the field offer valuable insights. Mario

Klingemann, a vanguard in the utilization of AI in art, provides a compelling analogy: when one listens to a piano performance, the instrument itself is not considered the artist; it is merely the medium through which the performer's vision is realized. Similarly, Klingemann suggests that the complexity of the mechanism, referring to AI, does not shift the locus of artistic authorship. From this perspective, the artist employs advanced tools yet retains ultimate creative authority. This perspective aligns with a view of AI as an extension of the artist's toolkit, a sophisticated means to an end controlled by the human creator. It underscores a continuity in the concept of authorship, situating the human artist at the center, with AI as an instrument to achieve the artist's intent.[58]

But if a piano's keys are pressed by human hands, AI is like a self-playing piano with the capacity to compose new symphonies influenced by every piece it has ever "heard". AI systems are capable of creating artworks with minimal human intervention. They learn from vast datasets, generating creative outputs that can be highly unpredictable and original.

Consider the language model GPT developed by OpenAI. It has been trained on a vast dataset from the internet and can generate human-like texts that are nearly indistinguishable from texts written by human authors. Similarly, OpenAI's MuseNet can generate original compositions in various musical styles after having been trained on a dataset of music from various genres and periods. In these cases, does the AI merely serve as a tool, or does it become a creator in its own right? The human programmer's role in directing the AI's creative output is minimal, unlike in the case of Cohen's AARON. Here, the AI is making the "creative decisions" based on patterns it learned during its training.

4. Varieties of AI-authoriality

What has been discussed so far brings us back to the central question of this paper: in cases of objects created today with AI, where the artificial system is activated and guided by human

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[58] An issue not too distant from this one, which we do not explore here, is the locus of authorship in the relationship between author and performer, for example in music or theater. A performer is not just an "instrument" of an author and plays a crucial role in our attribution and projection of human feelings and authorial intention: we empathize with the feelings expressed by the singer or by the actor, even though they are just performing a song or piece written by someone else (think of the song "Nothing compares 2 U", written in 1984 by Prince, but famously performed and recorded by Sinead O'Connor in 1990). In certain cases, our perception merges performance with creation because we see that the performer is not mechanically repeating someone else's work, but in some ways has "made it their own".

decisions, should we attribute authorship in a different way than we usually do? I am not inclined to offer a definitive answer to this question in this context, but rather to map out the range of possible options and describe their characteristics. Based on what has been seen in the previous pages, at least five general responses to the issue could be discerned, without claiming to be exhaustive.

1) The *human-centric* view sees the human author as the source of all creation and AI as just a sophisticated tool. We normally tend to ascribe an intentionality "by design" (Dennett, 1996) toward any artifact we observe, even though this does not mean we consider the creator or author as someone who has intervened in every aspect of the artifact's construction. There may have been intermediate steps, such as the involvement of other individuals' work or the use of tools. In other words, someone might have designed or conceived an artifact without being involved in every stage of its creation. This is particularly relevant, for instance, in architecture, where the architect is recognized as the author for conceiving and designing a building, even though he did not physically construct the building. Similarly, in contemporary art, artists often conceptually develop a work that is later physically executed by craftsmen, sculptors, or painters. In these instances, authorship transcends physical creation and is rooted in the original idea or concept; the author is the "first designer". This understanding of authorship leads us to consider if in case of AI-assisted creations we could similarly speak of a human "first designer" who just *sets in motion* the machine, guides it and chooses according to their ideas. This perspective includes the notion of a) the "author as selector", where a person uses an AI system to generate a range of images, sketches, designs, or texts, and then *curates* and selects from these numerous outputs what they consider closer to their idea. Another notion is the b) "author as prompt-engineer", that involves the use of AI systems operated on linguistic "prompts," representing a newer form of indirect authorship.

Even the Dadaist artist who experiments with randomness is the "author" of what they produce because they decide and initiate a process, even if this then follows directions no longer guided by the artist but by contingency and physical processes. Similarly, automatic art still retains human authorship, since automaticity is set in motion by an initial decision of the human artist. From this point of view, for having authorship is just necessary to consider who or what set some process in motion, regardless of how this process is subsequently configured. Considering the case of today's text production by LLM (Large Language Models, like GPT),

this notion of authorship could be inadequate. In simple cases of mechanical production of text and communications, we attribute the source of an utterance to a human author, albeit an unidentifiable one: an automated announcement of a telephone service is something that has been designed to give certain responses by a programmer who developed that service. A digital watch that shows us the time produces a text, but the watch is not the utterer (that is, the "author" of that text). If there is an "author" at all, this could only be the designer and builder of the watch. In these cases, the texts are sufficiently predetermined to assert that they were conceived and intended by human creators. However, in systems like GPT, attributing authorship based solely on the initial prompts is no longer straightforward, as the resulting text appears to emerge from processes that suggest the presence of a distinct reasoning entity.

2) The exact opposite view considers *AI as a full author*. In this (probably future) scenario, the presence of an artificial intentionality or mind will be eventually attributed and recognized in AI-works. As AI technologies become more complex and advanced, we might start seeing their outputs as the products of entities with their own agency.

However, doubts arise regarding the necessity for AI systems to possess autonomy in the sense of pure initiative. Practically, there's little reason to imagine systems functioning beyond human directives. Yet, the issue of AI autonomy in authorship already exists when human agents use AI systems, allowing them a degree of "freedom" in generating forms and content. This raises the question of where the boundary lies, beyond which original generation not directly inscribed in the programming can be considered a manifestation of authorship that transcends both the programmer's and the artist's intentions.

The skeptical position argues that it's impossible to attribute authorship to a system; no matter how creative or original, or how disconnected from the initial intentions of programmers and users, because these are not entities to which we attribute initiative, autonomy, or intentionality in the first place: a system could be "intelligent", but not "intentional". Unpredictability or the lack of connection with initial human intents cannot be a criterion for authorship (otherwise, the use of stochastic methods in Dadaism and Neo-Dadaism would possess non-human intentionality). Instead, it's the fact that we recognize (or better, grant) the presence of intentionality that matters first. In other words, it's not from the characteristics of the work (its originality, creativity, etc.) that we derive the presence of authorship. Rather, it's the other way around: it's from the attribution of intentionality and authorship that we perceive

that authorship in the work.

Therefore, attributing initiative to the machine makes the problem of AI authoriality a "side issue" in the broader debate about if or when a machine becomes a "person". This issue of General AI transcends aesthetic or authoriality research, as it becomes a secondary effect of a much larger issue of human and social acceptance of autonomous agents with their own will and motivations, integrated into the collective human activity web. Ultimately, the question might hinge on social, psychological, and political mechanisms of intentionality attribution. The way societies and individuals ascribe intentionality to AI systems could shape our understanding of their role as authors, reflecting broader concerns about the integration of AI into human-centric domains.

3) An alternative interpretation considers the authorship of AI-generated works as the result of a blending of sources, texts, and works on which the systems have been trained. "*Remixed Authoriality*" in the realm of AI art means that works are seen as amalgamations of various influences, rather than the product of a single creative mind. This stance aligns with the theories which proclaim the "death of the author" and with the idea that all cultural artifacts are inherently "post-productive," meaning they are reconfigurations of pre-existing materials, challenging the traditional, romanticized view of authorship as an individual's unique creative expression. In this framework, the role of the author is akin to that of a curator or assembler, who brings together diverse cultural elements. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of so-called Remix culture (Lessing, 2008), where creation often involves recontextualizing, quoting, and repurposing existing works. AI systems, in their creative endeavours, draw from extensive databases from various domains of human culture. In the context of "Remixed Authoriality", AI-systems are a channel through which a wide array of human expressions, ideas, and cultural artifacts are processed and reinterpreted. The resulting creations are not just the product of programming by a human creator using those systems but also a reflection of collective human intentionality. From this perspective, the output of these systems can be interpreted as a manifestation of *collective authoriality*, one that is filtered and transformed by the artificial system.

4) *Implied authoriality*. One should keep in mind that seeing a specific intentionality in the text does not mean making an assumption about the actual process that produced that text. In this regard, narrative theory distinguished between *real* and *implied* authors (Booth, 1961).

While the former is the actual writer of the text, the latter is the voice grounded in the text and expressed by its content and style. The implied author thus becomes a reader-created construct that is different from who (or what) the actual creator is: when we read a text, we imagine the writer, his thoughts, and his personality emerging from his choice of words, expressions, and sentences. Therefore, though we may know that a text has been artificially generated, we could still engage with the implied author expressed in the text, immersing ourselves in what he or she has to say. Similarly, in other artistic expressions as well, the crucial factor may be the ability of the artifact to "narrate" intentionality and motives, effectively allowing the construction of an authorship that emerges from the work, over and above the original source that produced it (Pierosara, 2022). Therefore, we might instead limit ourselves to attributing an "implied" author, assuming a stance in which we relate to the work *as if* there were an intentionality, well aware that there is none.

In the absence of an author, the viewer/listener might even put himself in his perspective, becoming the author himself and simulating his presence; the implied authoriality becomes an actively *imagined authoriality*. This is analogous to the game of imagination we enact when we observe random, inanimate forms (lines on a rock face, cracks on a wall, cloud formations) and project meanings onto them. Like in the myth of Pygmalion, the artist who scorned real women but fell in love with a sculptural idealization of them, we may find a deep satisfaction in engaging with the products of a machine whose soullessness allows us to infuse it with our imagination or desires: we end up inscribing meanings into inanimate matter, becoming ourselves the authors through acts of imagination.

5) A final possibility is that AI-generated works compel us to abandon any inferences about authorial intention. In this scenario, we cease to attribute any mind behind the AI artwork, at best limiting ourselves to a purely formal appreciation, akin to our response to decorative patterns or design products that captivate us primarily for their superficial appearance. If the focus may move away from the idea of authorial intentionality, the primary concern might become if a work resonates with us on a personal level regardless of any hypothesis concerning the creator's identity, whether human or machine. This shift would represent a significant change in how we engage with creative works, shifting the center of our attention on the direct exposure to formal and aesthetic qualities of the work, avoiding questions about its origins. Alternatively, since we do not recognize any authoriality in AI-generated works, we might

altogether avoid them, considering them "soulless" and therefore unworthy of our attention compared to true human works. Consequently, it would be significantly impactful for us to know with certainty whether the music we are listening to or the novel we are reading was produced by a human or a machine, as we might suspend our judgment on authorship and thus any aesthetic engagement only in the case of machine-produced works.

5. Conclusion: post-artificial authoriality

The core of our inquiry is not to define the essence of true authorship nor to construct a theory of an "artificial author". Our focus should be on the potential variants of shifts in the public's perception of authorship in the wake of AI's integration into creative domains. The crucial issue, then, is not to determine whether there is "truly an author" behind the artificial work by scrutinizing their complexity and creativity. Rather, it is important to observe the dynamics of possible changes in our relationship with these new forms of technological and cultural production and to consider how our definitions of authorship and authorial intent might evolve in response. The heart of these shifts lies not in the code or algorithms of these systems, but in how people engage with them, how our understanding of their functions develops, and the roles they assume in our daily lives and consumption habits. Therefore, our perception of what possesses authorship is deeply intertwined with the social and cultural acceptance of these technological advancements.

The impact of AI on our perception of authorship is not just a speculative exercise; it is a tangible shift that is already unfolding. And this leads to a more speculative hypothesis: could these forms of artificial production also induce a change in our common way of perceiving and reasoning about any kind of human authorship?

In a more immediate and practical sense, there arises the pressing issue of the potential future indistinguishability between human-made and artificially created works. This challenge is similar to the current debates over the implications of producing photo-realistic artificial imagery, such as deepfakes. Imagine a future where it becomes increasingly challenging to determine whether a painting, a musical composition, or a written text is the product of human intelligence or artificial process. In such a scenario, the significant shift might not be in how we perceive the authorship of machines, but rather in our overall understanding of human authorship. It is conceivable that our expectations and inferences about authorial intentions

may weaken and diminish due to the persistent doubt over whether there is any author at all behind what we are observing. As we increasingly encounter works where the distinction between human and artificial creation blurs, our traditional notions of authorship could be challenged. The constant uncertainty about the origin of these works might lead us to approach them with a different mindset, one less concerned with discerning the creator's identity and more focused on the work itself, independent of its authorship, as we previously suggested. This shift could fundamentally alter how we interact with and appreciate artistic and creative works.

This "post-artificial" stance, as articulated by Bajohr (2023), foreshadows a profound shift in our approach to understanding and interacting with texts. The pivotal question concerns how we read a text or listen to a song when we can no longer be certain whether it was written by an AI or a human. On one side, as we discussed, this situation could open the door to the humanization of machines, suggesting that we might start to see AI as more than just tools or mechanical aids. On the other side, it also prompts a reevaluation of the human creative process, recognizing the "mechanical" aspects inherent in our own creativity and intentionality.

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Habits of Unexpectedness.
Expressiveness in Musical Improvisation (and Beyond)

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ABSTRACT. The expressive nature of musical improvisation is dissected, navigating between two predominant theses: The Transparency Thesis (1) which proposes that expressiveness in improvisation transparently reflects the musician's subjective affectivity, and the Objective-Generic Expressiveness Thesis (2) asserting that it hinges only on the music practice's objective components. This article challenges both theses, arguing against (1) by emphasizing that musical expressivity transcends a mere natural outburst, and counteracting (2) by highlighting that it is not merely an enactment of objective expressive *topoi*. Introducing a novel perspective through the conceptual pair of (social) Habitus and (individual) habit, a third stance is defended: the specific expressiveness in improvised music is significantly impacted by its improvisational quality, whereby the expressiveness emerges from the manipulation and transformation of an expressive Habitus within the musical performance's contingent situation.

1. Introduction

In this article, I aim to investigate whether musical improvisation possesses a unique expressiveness distinct from the expressiveness observed in the interpretation of composed music. Specifically, does the improvisational nature of the music lead to particular expressive features? As we venture into this discourse, suggesting the significance of expressive habits in the historical construct of emotions, this exploration can also be viewed as a contribution to the wider reevaluation of the topic of musical expressiveness. However, this broader task will not

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be delved into in this context; it will merely be introduced as a potential outcome of the chosen argumentative path to understand the expressiveness of improvisation, which is the central focus of this article.

Before we delve into the intricacies of the expressivity of musical improvisation, it's paramount to first grasp what musical improvisation is and to have a succinct overview of its varied kinds. I understand artistic improvisation, especially of the musical kind, as a practice where the act of inventing and realizing converge, to a certain extent. This means that music is crafted while it is being played.[60]

In this sense, musical improvisation is practiced in a vast variety of musical traditions, genres and practices: in jazz, in different ways according to its declinations (swing, be-bop, modal jazz, Free jazz) — in particular, but not only, in solos; in Indian classical music (the 'raga') and in musical practices like flamenco guitar, blues; and also rock (for example in bands like Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Cream, and Grateful Dead). But improvisation is also practiced within the so-called 'art music': not only were Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt great improvisers, but classical music in general is not without improvisation (for example, the cadenza of concerts was often improvised); moreover, in liturgical music, improvisation — particularly organ improvisation — has had and still has great relevance for its functionality concerning the times of worship. In the field of contemporary avant-garde art music, not only have some composers (for example, Cage, Scelsi, Penderecki) variously explored elements of improvisation in their compositions, but there are also famous improvisation groups (such as Musica Elettronica Viva, The Scratch Orchestra, The Art Ensemble of Chicago, Eddie Prévost's AMM, and Gruppo di improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza) whose music is sometimes located at the crossroads between music of classical tradition and Free jazz. Today, improvisation is also practiced in the field of electronic music and computer music, and in general in experimental or underground music.

Improvisation bears diverse aesthetic value and impact contingent upon the specific practices engaged. In Jazz Improvisation, it constitutes an intrinsic component of the musical performance. Jazz practitioners frequently generate spontaneous solos and improvisational passages amidst performances, facilitating a display of their individuality, creativity, and

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[60] On the ontology and aesthetics of artistic improvisation see Bertinetto 2016, Bertinetto 2022 and Bertinetto, Ruta 2022.

technical mastery. This method simultaneously encourages an interactive and dynamic exchange among ensemble member. Within the realm of Indian Classical Music, musicians navigate through intricate melodic patterns (*ragas*) and rhythmic cycles (*talas*) during protracted performances. Improvisation herein serves as a conduit for musicians to exhibit their virtuosity and profound understanding of their cultural tradition. In rock music, improvisation might initially seem understated due to the genre's tendency towards meticulously composed tracks. However, it has carved a distinct space for itself, especially in live settings. Many rock bands incorporate extended solos, jam sessions, and spontaneous interludes into their performances, giving musicians the freedom to delve deeper into musical exploration and experimentation that can transform the songs on the spot - Bob Dylan and the Grateful Dead are exemplary in this regard. This element of improvisation infuses rock concerts with an exhilarating and unpredictable energy. Pertaining to contemporary electronic and computer music, improvisation is prevalent especially within live performance contexts. Musicians and DJs employ various technologies to manipulate soundscapes, generate loops, and experiment with different textures in real-time, providing dynamic and interactive experiences for both performers and audiences.

These varied examples underscore the broad range of musical improvisation across different styles and traditions. Since each of them adds its specific touch to the realm of spontaneous musical expression, improvisation has different spaces, modes, and functions in the various musical practices. Yet, it can still be argued that the very fact that music is — even if only partially — improvised bestows a distinctive expressive quality upon the music performed.

2. A First Theoretical Attempt: The 'Improvised Feel'

Initially, one might think that the specific expressive quality of improvisation is perceived as a unique emotional/affective effect, what Andy Hamilton termed the 'improvised feel': a sensation of imperfection that distinguishes improvised art from non-improvised forms. This sensation would be contingent upon properties such as freshness, dexterity, coolness, variety, vitality, openness, urgency, tension, fragility, and even disorganization, lack of coherence, confusion, inconsistency, monotony, or limited novelty. However, this theory, which Hamilton specifically articulates in reference to jazz improvisation, hinges on the belief that the aesthetics

of improvisation is an aesthetics of imperfection. If one does not accept this premise, the theory collapses. As I have argued elsewhere (Bertinetto, 2022), there are compelling reasons to reject this premise, notably the observation that many genres of musical improvisation, such as Baroque or classical improvisation, do not inherently present an appearance of imperfection. Furthermore, as L.B. Brown (2011) posited, Hamilton's 'improvised feel' is exactly what the term implies: a sensation, or more precisely, just a sensation. In essence, this sensation might be a misleading perceptual impression that does not correspond with reality. Senses can be deceived: hence, one can perceive a performance as improvised when it is not. This suggests that there may be no perceptual difference between an improvisation and a non-improvised performance, and artists might intentionally mislead the audience's perception: they can feign or mimic an improvised expression, presenting a fully prepared performance as improvisation, or inversely, improvise in such a manner that the performance appears as a rehearsed composition.[61]

The sensation of improvisation might actually hinge on the traits of a particular artistic style, irrespective of how the performances and the pieces are in fact created. Consequently, listeners might perceive the performance as *expressive of improvisation* and mistakenly assess it as an *expressive improvisation*; however, the performance might only be a *putative* improvisation instead of an actual one (I borrow this conceptual distinction from legal terminology): it merely *represents* (a semblance of) improvisation rather than directly *offering* the genuine article. Thus, their assessment might be misguided by erroneous information (a scenario which, evidently, is not exclusive to improvisation). In short, the impression of *improvisational expressiveness* (the 'improvised feel') may stem from a bias that mistakenly views improvisation as inherently aesthetically imperfect, whatever that may entail. Consequently, this doesn't assist in understanding the uniqueness of *improvisation's expressiveness*. Let's explore other avenues.

3. The Two Main Positions in the Contemporary Debate

In this section, I will introduce the two main conceptions regarding the character of the expressivity of musical improvisation under discussion in the contemporary debate (1) the

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[61] On this "aesthetic paradox of improvisation," see Bertinetto, 2021a.

Naïve Transparency Thesis and (2) the *Objective-Generic Expressiveness Thesis*.

(1) According to the Naïve Transparency Thesis, the answer to the question about the expressive specificity of musical improvisation is undoubtedly affirmative, without this necessarily implying the 'improvised feel' discussed in the previous section. Improvisation possesses a specific expressiveness characterized by a close and direct link with the emotions of the improvising musician. This intimate connection can be judged positively or negatively, leading to the celebration or rejection of improvisational practices. However, the general point is that improvisation has specific expressive characteristics because the improviser is not musically interpreting someone else's emotions but expressing their own emotions through music. The musician's personality becomes transparent in the music. Particularly, musical improvisation would have specific expressive qualities because it is *transparent* with respect to the emotions of the performers.

(2) According to the Objective-Generic Expressiveness Thesis, the expressiveness of improvised music depends exclusively on the objective or public components of the particular musical practice or genre (e.g., in jazz: rhythm, swing, specific 'wrong' notes, typical harmonic solutions, pentatonic scales, etc.).

Both positions are too unilateral and reductionist. Let's see why.

3.1 The Naïve Transparency Thesis

According to the Naïve Transparency Thesis, improvised music directly reveals the emotional life of the improviser. Improvised music is, so to speak, a mirror of the soul, the natural self of the performer. The specific expressiveness of a musical improvisation performance depends on how the music transparently reveals the subjective emotions of the musicians during the musical performance (Gioia, 1988). It is the musician while playing who is responsible for the expressive characteristics of the music. Musical expressiveness is explained as a kind of natural outpouring. The music reveals the musicians' emotions, especially when the music played relies less on predefined cultural structures and constructs (such as in jazz standards) and there is ample room for uninhibited creativity, unconstrained by the interpretation of a pre-existing piece, as observed in free jazz and free improvisation in avant-garde music.

This transparency of music regarding the performer's emotions can lead to either appreciation or rejection of improvisation. Derek Bailey, for instance, sees this as a merit of

improvisation: As he argues, improvisation "guarantees the total involvement of the performer. Better than any other medium, it provides the performer with the opportunity to identify completely with the music." (Bailey, 2010, p. 42). Others hold different opinions. Musician Gavin Bryars, for instance, writes:

> one of the main reasons why I am against improvisation now is that in any improvising position the person creating the music is identified with the music. The two things are seen to be synonymous. The creator is there making the music and is identified with the music and the music with the person. It is like standing a painter next to his pictures so that every time you see the painting you see the painter and you cannot see the it without him. And that's why music in improvisation does not stand alone. It is corporeal. My position, elaborated through the study of Zen and Cage, is to distance yourself from your creation. Get away from what you are doing. Now that becomes impossible in improvisation" (Gavin Bryars, quoted in Bailey, 1992, p. 115).

According to this perspective, "improvisation is unsatisfying because the enunciation, the producing, the physical action of the performer is so strongly foregrounded. Someone else, however, may be content with and even aim for this situation" (Tarasti, 2002, p. 184).

In point of fact, this consideration is shared both by foes and friends of improvisation. French composer Pierre Boulez regards improvisation as "a purely affective phenomenon [..., as] a personal psychodrama [...]" (quoted in Zen, 2014, p. 182), which, like Bryars, led him not to appreciate improvisation much. Conversely, for the very same reasons Ted Gioia admires jazz improvisation:

> Jazz music lives and dies in the moment of performance, and in that moment the musician is his music. His improvisation is the purest expression possible of the artist's emotions and feelings, and it is a purity which is only heightened by the absence of the spoken word. (Gioia, 1988, p. 93).

However, the premise underlying the Naïve Transparency Thesis implies an erroneous understanding of the expressiveness inherent in musical improvisation. Indeed, it is certainly plausible to advocate for the eminently self-expressive nature of improvisation (see Hamilton, 1990, pp. 331-334), or the proposition that the development of the emotional expressiveness in musical improvisation parallels that of ordinary emotional expression. In improvisation, performers tend not to sonically depict previously artistically constructed manifestations of

emotional expressions, which are often prepared by others and packaged in compositions. Instead, they artistically present their emotional selves, showcasing the musical articulation of emotional expression, to varying degrees of success. Put differently, emotions are presented as they unfold in real-time musical expressions of emotions. Their significant differences notwithstanding, both in everyday life and in the realm of musical improvisation, emotions are not simply displayed in pre-formed expressions; instead, they are shaped through the act of expression as it unfolds.

However, this does not imply that improvisation is inherently expressively authentic because it reveals the performers' natural self. It is crucial to refrain from misconstruing the argument suggesting that in improvisation emotions are articulated as they become musical expressions as an endorsement of improvisation as a mere conduit for the direct external outburst of performers' feelings. Such a view, epitomized by the so-called "Theorie des unmittelbaren musikalischen Selbstausdrucks or Exhibitionstheorie" ("Theory of the immediate musical self-expression or exhibition theory," Mohr, 2021), demonstrates a naïve expressivist perspective that overlooks the intricate artistic qualities of musical improvisation. Moreover, this standpoint presupposes a simplistic view of the relationship between subjectivity and music, wherein musical expressiveness is relegated to the mere consequence of pre-existing, precrafted subjects. Such an expressivist thesis, in its present characterization, must be abandoned, because while the biography of the performers may be interesting in various respects, from the standpoint of the artistic value of the music, it is irrelevant.[62]

To this end, Georg Mohr (2021) rightfully critiques this position. However, he attributes it to the author of the present article (Bertinetto, 2019). But this is a blatant misunderstanding: I never espoused the notion that the artistic value of musical expressiveness lies solely in the overt manifestation of the musicians' emotional lives. Rather, my contention resides in a more nuanced examination of musical improvisation as a captivating realm of artistic exploration and expression. Indeed, the rejection of the Naïve Transparency Thesis does not warrant dismissing the notion that the expressiveness of improvisation possesses its own specificity and holds particular relevance in elucidating the contribution of musical performance to the

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[62] Furthermore, given that a single piece of music can be interpreted by different listeners as conveying different emotions, attributing a specific, commonly recognized emotion, such as anger, to the musician producing the music is unreliable. In the context of jazz, and specifically regarding John Coltrane, cf. Gridley, 2010.

expressive characteristics of music.

The crux of the matter is that the expressiveness of improvised music is deeply tied to the performer's affective state during the music production, their emotional response to the music they produce, and other contextual and situational factors that shape the musical output. However, this should by no means preclude the possibility that improvisation serves as more than a mere immediate outlet for natural-psychological self-expression. Instead, it can manifest the construction of self-images and intersubjective relations across diverse cultural contexts, illustrating the potential for staging the development of the self – encompassing both innovative and routine actions, interactions with others, and engagement with the natural and cultural environment. In this manner, improvisation offers illustrative and informative presentations of how individuals form themselves through their actions, gestures, and expressions, and how they navigate interactions with fellow beings and their surrounding context.

As I shall expound later, this is contingent upon the salience of the relationship between the expressive Habitus (with a cultural origin) and the aesthetic expressive habits of the performer.

3.2 Musical Expressiveness as Objective Grammar

In any case, the theory of emotional outburst or display – which I refer to as the Naïve Theory of Transparency – posits that music immediately and directly expresses the inner self of the performer. In contrast, Mohr (2021) counters this notion by proposing that the expressiveness of improvised music does not hinge on the performance alone but rather on the 'objective grammar' of the specific musical practice or genre (such as mainstream jazz, free improvisation, baroque improvisation, etc.).

The concept of 'objective grammar' refers to the idea that within specific artistic practices or genres, there are shared and culturally ingrained expressive patterns and conventions that influence the way emotional expressions are culturally formed and grasped. In the context of musical improvisation, the notion of 'objective grammar' implies that there are certain established and recognized patterns, techniques, and stylistic elements that are characteristic of a particular style or genre of musical improvisation.

For instance, in jazz improvisation, its 'objective grammar' may include elements such as specific scales, chord progressions, rhythmic patterns, and melodic motifs that are

commonly used by jazz musicians. These elements become part of the shared language and expressive palette of the genre, providing a foundation for improvisation within the jazz tradition. Similarly, in other forms of improvisation, such as contemporary classical or rock music, the 'objective grammar' would consist of specific rules, techniques, and idiomatic expressions that define the style and inform how improvisation is approached within those genres.

The notion of 'objective grammar' recognizes that improvisation is not an absolutely free and unbounded form of expression and that, instead, it operates within certain constraints and conventions that have been established and developed over time within specific musical traditions. These constraints are not rigid rules; they rather provide a framework within which musicians are able to communicate effectively with each other and with the audience. In summary, the concept of 'objective grammar' in improvisation recognizes the existence of shared expressive patterns and conventions inherent to specific musical practices, genres, and styles, thereby establishing a context for meaningful improvisation.

It is hard to deny the fundamental contribution of the grammar of a musical practice — and indeed, of artistic practices in general — to the expressiveness of a performance (or an artwork), and I have never refuted this fact (cf. Bertinetto, 2016; Bertinetto, 2019; Bertinetto, 2021b). The idea is that, as advocated by the theory of objective-generic expressiveness, musical expressiveness is shaped by 'objective' expressive characteristics inherent in genres, styles, and fields of musical practice. This encompasses culturally shared expressive *topoi* pertaining to the specific musical practice at hand: e.g., in jazz, elements such as: blue notes, chord substitutions and expansions, offbeat, swing, idiosyncratic timbre, 'linguistic' phrasing, 'conversational' interaction, the integration of audiotactile dimensions through 'neoauratic coding' (cf. Caporaletti, 2005) etc.

However, can the musical expressiveness of improvisation be understood as a mere *application* of objective expressive *topoi*? Or, even worse, as a mere theatrical performance serving solely social conventions? (Auslander, 2021, pp. 148-163). The response I intend to develop is that an affirmative answer to these questions oversimplifies the expressiveness of improvisation. It overlooks the crucial aspect that the attribution of emotional content to an expresser, which the listener emotionally responds to, is what renders the music as expressive (cf. Levinson, 2006), rather than merely conforming to an expressive grammar (or code).

Similarly, in everyday life, we can (or at least, can be able to) discern between a mere pretense of emotionality (dependent on the application of an expressive pattern in gestures or speech) and genuine emotional expressiveness through which the subject shape their unique personality through words and actions, while embracing established expressive forms. When referring to ordinary expressiveness, it is imperative to recognize the crucial contribution of agency in shaping personal expressiveness. Likewise, adopting this perspective for the musical realm does not entail viewing music as a mere emotional release; rather, it acknowledges the pivotal role of performance in shaping musical expressiveness.

In conclusion, opposing Mohr's view does not entail accepting the naïve theory of transparency. Instead, it entails advocating a more sophisticated version of expressivism. This version, partly drawing on the 'person theory' of musical expression,[63] encompasses the following aspects:

(a) It willingly acknowledges that music, as an artistic practice, is not limited to expressing emotions, feelings, and affections. Instead, it encompasses a wide array of elements, such as ideals and concepts, including freedom, tolerance, contrast, resistance, and others.

(b) It embraces the idea that expressive grammars, culturally shaped and transmitted through musical genres and practices, significantly influence the expressiveness of performances, including improvised ones.

(c) It argues that music shapes emotional expressiveness and goes beyond merely forging the external form of pre-existing emotional states. Hence, various musical styles and practices shape emotions and moods in distinct ways, thus giving rise to diverse modes of artistic articulation of emotional life (cf. Bertinetto, 2019).

(d) It also acknowledges the role of performance in shaping expressiveness, and more specifically, it posits that the improvisational quality of a musical performance plays a crucial role in its specific expressiveness. In other words, the fact that music is improvised (i.e., that a musical construct is invented significantly and intentionally at the moment of its execution) influences its particular expressive traits (cf. Bertinetto, 2021b).

In this context, I wish to emphasize the compatibility between the thesis that the expressiveness of a performance is structured by the 'objective expressive grammar' of a

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[63] On the theory of 'musical persona' cf. Bertinetto, 2021b, Hatten, 2010, Levinson, 2006, Monahan, 2013; Rinderle, 2010, Ridley, 1995, Robinson, 2005.

cultural practice and the thesis that the performance and its improvisational character are not only relevant for the specific expressiveness of the music but also feedback into the expressive grammar of the reference musical practice. By doing so, I will clarify why my position not only avoids the naivety of which Mohr accuses me but also accounts for fundamental aspects of musical expressiveness that Mohr overlooks.

I will refer to this position as the Theory of Permeability or the Theory of Improvisational Habits.

4. The Theory of Permeability or the Theory of Improvisational Habits

In essence, the theory is as follows: Improvised music is not merely an immediate manifestation of the musician's interiority, but it does have a connection with the musician(s)' affectivity and expressiveness. This connection exists not only in the trivial sense that it is caused by the musician(s) playing it, but, more interestingly, it articulates subjectivity in relation to both the typical characteristics (stylistic, conventional, technical, aesthetic, etc.) of the reference musical practice and the situation of the performance. In this sense, however, while it is false that musical expressiveness is directly determined by the subject's interiority, it is also false that it is determined exclusively and unidirectionally by the typical characteristics of the practice or genre in question (the 'objective expressive grammar'). The expressiveness of an improvised performance cannot solely hinge on the characteristics of its genre, as the performative context, encompassing specific environmental, cultural, physical, and technical attributes, impacts the trajectory and expressiveness of the performance, engaging the performers throughout the process.

4.1 Bertram's Type/Toke Distinction

To develop this proposal, I suggest applying an idea recently proposed by Georg Bertram in an article devoted to musical expressiveness in general, significantly titled "Inwiefern ist Musik als subjektiver Ausdruck zu begreifen?" ("To what extent is music to be understood as a subjective expression?"; Bertram, 2022). Bertram's thesis is that musical expressiveness results from the combination of an objective/external dimension and a subjective/internal dimension. In particular, Bertram understands the specific expressive dimension of a musical performance

as the subjective *token* of an objectively distinguishable expressive *type*. Consequently, the individual expressive subjectivity of a musical performance applies the characteristics of an objectively distinguishable expressiveness in specific ways.

Bertram's approach is clear and plausible. However, it does not capture the *reciprocal* impact between exteriority and interiority. The type/token dichotomy presents a relationship that seems too rigid and unidirectionally deterministic, with the token merely instantiating a pre-existing type in particular ways but not contributing to its development. It is certainly plausible to suggest that there needs to be a reconciliation between 'externality' — that is, the 'objective grammar' of expressive resources inherent to musical practices – and 'interiority' — specifically, the affective subjectivity of interpreters who infuse their musical performances with creative expressiveness. This is especially relevant when considering improvisation, where performers manifest their unique expressive style in real-time musical creativity. Yet, it remains essential to recognize the reciprocal influence between these two dimensions.

Therefore, in this context, I wish to emphasize the compatibility between the proposition that the expressiveness of a performance is structured by an expressive grammar of a cultural practice and the idea that the musical performance, particularly when improvised, not only holds relevance for the specific expressiveness of the music but also, and importantly, retroactively influences the expressive grammar of the music practice in question. To address this concern, I suggest adopting Bertram's proposal, but with a reinterpretation: replacing the type/token dichotomy with the conceptual pairing of (social) *Habitus* and (individual) *habit*. This solution allows us to explain both

(a) that (subjective) musical expressiveness is rooted in, scaffolded by, and responsive to the context of a certain aesthetic mode of expression (an expressive *topos*) historically configured, socially shared, and instantiated in objectively distinguishable musical characteristics, and

(b) that, nonetheless, the specific expressiveness of the music in question contributes to shaping the objective expressive *topos*.

By understanding musical expressiveness in these terms and recognizing that individual habits of expressiveness interact in co-determination with the social expressive Habitus, we possess the concepts necessary to address the problem at hand.

4.2 Habitus and Habits

Let us focus first on the concepts of *Habitus* and *habits*. The concept of *Habitus* was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu as a way to understand the social and cultural conditioning of individuals' behaviors, tastes, and dispositions. Habitus refers to the set of embodied dispositions, habits, skills, tastes, and ways of acting that individuals acquire through their social activities and everyday practices and are taken for granted or 'go without saying.' It is the result of the internalization, and integration into a person's bodily memory, of the cultural norms, values, and practices of a particular social group or society. "The habitus — embodied history internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history — is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 56). Hence, the Habitus operates at a pre-reflective and unconscious level, shaping how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them. While the Habitus is relatively stable, it is not static. It can change through exposure to new experiences and social environments, although these changes usually occur slowly and gradually.

On the other hand, *habits* can be understood not only, or not so much, as attitudes or predispositions to act, i.e., as routines generated and constituted by the (almost) automatic and unconscious repetition of behavioral patterns; rather, following John Dewey (1922), they can be understood as practical forms of (organization of) life that can be more or less rigid and repetitive or elastic/plastic and mutable. Habits are ways of organizing the interaction between the organism and the (natural and social) environment and are formed through responses to environmental affordances (Noë, 2009): they are fueled by the interactions they make possible.[64] They are normative with respect to the actions that are based on them: they connect, organize, and direct actions in ways that are compatible and functional to human projects and practices (Levine, 2012). Therefore, habits (or at least some habits) can be understood as embodied norms of actions (Peirce, 1931), as well as perceptions, affects, and expressions.

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[64] The term 'affordance' was coined by psychologist James J. Gibson (1979) in the field of ecological psychology. He used it to describe what the environment allows or affords an organism to do. According to Chemero (2003: 181), affordances concern the relations between the capacities of organisms and the characteristics of the environment.

4.3 Emotions as Individual and Social Habits

This thesis finds support in the research of Monique Scheer (2012), according to whom emotions are a kind of practice, and thus they are historical and social, while at the same time being embodied and reconfigured by the individuals who experience them in their praxis. This implies that emotions are, on the one hand, culturally articulated and part of the social expressive Habitus that regulates and constrains individual expressiveness. However, on the other hand, while individual expressive habits are plastic and can be modified through practice, they can also impact the expressive Habitus of a cultural practice. This thesis reconciles the cultural dimension of emotions with their bodily dimension and accounts for how artistic expressiveness is not simply a reflection of subjective emotions but participates in shaping the typical emotions of a specific historical culture.

4.4 The Historicity and Situatedness of (Musical) Expressive Habits

Not only the expression of emotions but the emotions themselves should be understood in terms of *expressive habits*, encompassing both individual and social dimensions. Emotions are shaped and nurtured by the situated cultural and artistic practices, such as music, in which they are expressed. In turn, they constrain these expressive practices. However, emotions are not static. Since modalities and kinds of expression are among the constitutive elements of emotions, and since kinds and modalities of expressions change, at the historical and individual level, then emotions are transformed through the practices in which they are involved. In turn, emotions, as they are expressed in cultural and artistic expressive practices, impact these expressive practices.

This applies also to *musical expressiveness*. Considering musical expressiveness based on the relationship between Habitus and habits allows us to reconcile the external/objective and internal/subjective dimensions of musical expressiveness, while understanding that not only expressive grammars of musical genres constrains individual musical expressiveness, but specific musical performances retroactively influence the expressive grammar of the musical practice in question. If emotions have a historically and socially determined character as practices molded by an expressive Habitus (Scheer, 2012), then musical expressiveness arises from the way an expressive Habitus is (trans)formed through its application in the contingent

situations of musical performances.

Emotions develop historically, they have a history (or multiple histories); and when it comes to musical expressiveness, one must acknowledge that musical emotions too have a history (Spitzer, 2020): musical emotions are forged within the Habitus of historical practices.

Musicians embody expressive habits as aesthetic styles through exposure to practice (and training), thereby shaping the expressive Habitus of listeners. Therefore, a double influence is at play: a social/historical musical Habitus impacts the expressive habits of performers, while performers' practices realize expressive habits in ways that feedback onto the Habitus, (re)shaping it. This happens because habits are not merely automatic behavioral routines but also plastic organizations of the relationship between individuals and natural/cultural environments (cf. Dreon, 2022). In the case of musical performances, this means that the expressive habits embodied by performers are reshaped through the interaction (or correspondence: Ingold, 2022) between musicians and musical instruments, musical cultures, performance situations, etc.

In short, musical expressive habits are in tune with the emotional expressiveness of a specific historical-cultural context. For instance, an emotion that is historically and culturally situated, such as romantic love, shapes the expressive characteristics of the music from the Romantic Age. This is manifested in musical expressions characterized by longing and melancholy, contrasting with the emotions evoked by the typical expressiveness of 21st-century *Echtzeitmusik*. Analogously, the aspiration to freedom and the revolutionary rage embodied in the African American rights movement in the second half of the 20th century significantly influence the expressiveness of free jazz. This is distinct from the expressions of rage articulated, for instance, by British punk music of the seventies. Thus, musical expressive habits rooted and articulated in objective grammars of musical practices and genres are forged by the cultural expressive Habitus, which also shapes musical practices. In turn, the expressive Habitus is (trans)formed by specific subjective expressive and performative habits embodied in response to situational (including cultural) affordances. Thus, the musical social Habitus guides individual expressive style. However, since musical expressiveness is realized through specific performances, the individual style of each performer (their personal expressive habits) in the long run has the potential to influence the overall style embodied by the social Habitus.

4.5 Shaping Emotions Through Musical Expression

It is therefore easy to realize that musical expressiveness is not merely a direct outpouring of the self. Instead, it arises from the interaction between individuals and both the natural and social environment. This means it hinges on the individual's appreciative response to the cultural — and especially musical — environment at the time of performance. Yet, it is crucial to recognize that not only is expressiveness historical, but emotion itself is historically constructed. This stems from the idea that expression, in the broader gestural sense tied to emotion, is a historical-cultural habitus. As such, it plays a role in structuring the emotion itself, which is embodied. In essence, musical emotion is both historical and embodied.

As shaped by the interaction between individual habits and the cultural Habitus, expressiveness is embodied both through immersion in a cultural practice and the diligent efforts of the performers. Performers craft their style through consistent practice, which encompasses the integration of musical instruments, assimilation of technologies like writing, interaction with the performance situation, and alignment with aesthetic cultural traditions. Notably, this influence is bidirectional: The expressive Habitus shapes the performer's habit, while the expressive habit reciprocally molds the Habitus. Consequently, musical expressiveness is influenced by the emotions which musicians experience in the context of the performance situation. Yet, these emotions are intrinsically shaped by cultural and social determinants, with their musical manifestation being a pivotal aspect of this socio-cultural molding. The musical expressions in a performance, therefore, play a role in the ongoing evolution of both personal and social emotionality.

4.6 Performing and Interpreting Improvisational Expressive Habits

The expressive *topoi* that regulate specific musical practices (i.e., the cultural expressive Habitus organizing, e.g., be-bop improvisations) are rearticulated by the exercise of subjective expressive habits of performers and listeners in the context of specific musical performances (e.g. a specific New York Jam Session of the fifties). These individual habits are reshaped by how emotionally charged responses to sonic affordances (rooted in a cultural practice) are articulated in musical performances.

From the perspective of performative practice, the cultural Habitus of a specific musical

tradition or genre influences improvisational expressiveness. For example, the improvisational style of a traditional Indian classical musician is molded by the distinct melodic structures and rhythmic patterns characteristic of that tradition. However, through consistent practice and experimentation, improvisers cultivate specific individual performance habits over time. These habits include musical patterns, techniques, and stylistic elements that become deeply embedded in their playing. For instance, a jazz pianist might develop a tendency to use certain chord progressions or melodic motifs during improvisation. Every musician forms their unique set of expressive habits based on techniques they have internalized, their artistic inspirations, their individual personalities, and more.

These habits have both a social and personal dimension, guiding how improvisers convey their musicality during performances. While expressive gestures are informed by both social and individual factors, their ultimate musical significance in specific performances arises from the improvisational interaction with the situation at hand. This interaction includes listeners who interpret expressive gestures based on their own cultural and aesthetic habits. These habits, shaped by their exposure to various musical genres and practices, profoundly influence their listening experience.

Consequently, based on the expressive habits of cultural practices and cultural Habitus — even in terms of perception and listening — expressive gestures can be interpreted in diverse ways. For instance, consider the moans, screams, cries, shrieks, and groans of Coltrane's saxophone. These sounds can be perceived as a manifestation of religious cosmic spirituality, an expression of the African American people's call for freedom, as outburst of rage, or a display of gendered physicality, epitomizing black machismo. Different listeners interpret the same sounds differently because, drawing from their own cultural Habitus, they perceptually enact the act of screaming in varied ways while listening (cf. Wallmark, 2016).

Building on this perspective, it is true that one cannot ascertain the emotion felt by a musician based solely on the music they play, as implied by the Naïve Transparency Thesis. Yet, my proposition diverges from the view that the expressivity of musical improvisation directly reflects the performer's emotions. On one hand, as Gridley (2010, p. 165) puts it, "it is presumptuous to infer from a musician's performance that they are in a specific emotional state." On the other hand, grasping the psychological state of performers is aesthetically irrelevant: musical expressions of emotion are discerned by how listeners resonate with the

music, not with the emotional state of the performers. (However, in live performances, direct interaction and mutual emotional feedback loops can emerge between improvisers and the audience).

Nonetheless, my proposition counters the Objective Grammar Thesis as well, although it emphasizes that music is permeable or receptive to the cultural Habitus of a musical genre as well as to the aesthetic and expressive habits (or style) of performers. A performer's affective response to unfolding musical events shapes the interplay between the cultural Habitus and individual aesthetic habits, (potentially) leading to its gradual trans-formation. Just as ordinary emotions can be subjectively interpreted, musical emotional expressions can be perceived in myriad ways based on a listener's personal experiences, cultural Habitus, and individual expressive habits. For instance, Coltrane's "creative struggle" (Gridley, 2010, p. 178) and subsequent dissatisfaction with the realization of his aesthetic intentions can be interpreted as 'anger,' as suggested by journalist Don Gold's review (cited by Gridley, 2010, p. 164) of the concert featuring John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk at the Newport Jazz Festival 1958.[65] Yet, to many other listeners, it might evoke feelings of friendliness, happiness, or enthusiasm (Gridley, 2010, p. 181). Crucially, listeners' frequent belief, even if often misguided or unreliable, that they can discern a musician's emotions in their music might be an indication that the expressivity of musical improvisation is influenced by the musician's affective state during the performance. This doesn't necessarily mean that the recognized emotion transparently mirrors the musician's feelings, nor does it assert complete independence from the performer's emotional response to their own music.

5. An Objection, and Two Replies

5.1 The Objection

In summary, even in the realm of music, expressiveness arises from the dynamic interplay between the social/historical expressive Habitus and individual expressive habits, which together shape the emotional expressiveness of musical performances in specific contexts. While the social/cultural expressive Habitus constrains individual expressive habits, these

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[65] *down beat*, 7, August 1958, 16. Cf. the album *Miles and Monk at Newport*, Columbia PC 8978.

habits, enacted in specific performative situations, also influence the expressive Habitus. Thus, in an improvisational performance, musical expressiveness arises through the interplay between the cultural expressive Habitus governing the practice in question, the expressive habits of individual improvisers, and the manner in which they emotionally respond to the unfolding performative situation. While music is permeable to the emotions of the performers articulated in the performance, it isn't merely a direct outlet for the performer's feelings. Instead, it represents an artistic expression of culturally constructed emotions, honed by the musicians' performative experience, as they navigate a specific situation. This articulation is also contingent upon the performers' appreciation and perception of the development of the improvisation itself.

One could object, however, that this model, based on the thesis that emotion, and not just its expression, has a dual natural-bodily and cultural-historical component, is applicable, and in fact applied, to musical expressiveness in general, not only to the expressiveness of improvisation. Thus, the objective we had set ourselves: to explain the expressiveness of improvisation, would be missed.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide some elements to show how this theory is also particularly effective in explaining the specificity of the expressiveness of musical improvisation.

5.2 The Short Reply

A first, short and general answer is as follows. While the expressiveness of a performance of composed music, despite rooting its interpretative freedom (which contributes to distinguishing different interpretations of a composition) in individual and social expressive habits, depends on the constraints of the score, the expressiveness of improvised music is as such shaped more directly not by the subjective intentions of the performer, but by the meeting between the emotional/expressive Habitus of the practice and the individual expressive style — understood as a mark of the historically changing artistical identity of the performer — in response to environmental affordances.[66] In this context, this view not only accounts for the expressive

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[66] When it comes to music, 'environmental affordances' could refer to various elements that might influence a performance. In the context of musical improvisation, this could include the acoustics of the performance space,

stability of improvised music (anchored in the grammar of a musical genre or practice) and its inherent dynamism (stemming from the historical, plastic trans-formation of emotional expressions) but also elucidates the paradigmatic manner in which musical improvisation displays the intricate workings of (musical) expressiveness. A cultural (musical) expressive Habitus, which informs the expressive habits of both performers and listeners, is simultaneously applied in and reshaped by the (appreciative response to) the performance situation.

5.3 A More Detailed Answer: The Expressive Specificity of Improvisation and Its Paradigmatic character

Still, a more detailed answer can be provided. When music is consciously and significantly invented during the course of its performance, the expressiveness of music becomes permeable (but not transparent) to the emotions experienced by the musicians during the performance. This does not imply a traditional mentalist perspective, where music is seen as an external manifestation of an internal intention preceding the musical realization.[67] Instead, it's viewed from an enactivist perspective (see Schiavio et al., 2017): the specific expressiveness of musical improvisation is not the manifestation of the performers' inner emotional life, but the configuration of musical emotion — already substantially shaped at the cultural level — through performative interaction.

This expressiveness is a product of intertwining elements: the emotional Habitus of a society, the artistic expressive Habitus of a musical practice (rooted in that society), the performer's musical style, the expressivity of the mood presented by a piece of music performed through improvisation (like in the case of jazz standard improvisation), and the performers' emotional responses to situated performative interactions. In other words, musical emotion is not an internal state dressing up as music and behavioral manifestations, but an

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the nature of the instrument being played, the reaction and interaction of the audience, or even the historical and cultural traditions that have shaped the performer's approach to their craft. The performer's interpretation and reaction to these environmental affordances can significantly shape the expressiveness of their music, and it's a key element of improvised performance. For instance, a musician might adapt their play to the acoustics of a room, or change their improvisational direction in response to audience reactions. In this way, environmental affordances serve as both constraints and opportunities, guiding the performer's choices and giving shape to the musical improvisation as it happens in real-time.

[67] Unfortunately, this is how McAuliffe, 2022 misunderstands my position.

already culturally elaborated emotion that realizes itself as music in the performative situation, whose specific concreteness is unpredictable.

More specifically, in the context of a performance regulated by the cultural expressive Habitus, improvisation exhibits expressive habits in (inter)action with the Habitus and the performative situation. Cultural subjectivity is showcased by expressive styles (habits), but also by the performers' sentiment regarding their own (and others') performance, their interaction with a musical instrument, and, more broadly, the 'here and now' performative situation (including the audience) and the historical/cultural context. The performers' feelings (conscious or unconscious) of appreciation towards the ongoing musical results depend on how the subjective aesthetic habits (and emotional expression as Habitus) are realized, and they impact the performance's expressiveness. Since in improvisation the expressive articulation of the situation guides the performance's course, and is in turn guided by it, this expressive impact is significantly potent in improvised music. The musician's self-affection towards the music they produce contributes performatively to the expressive (and aesthetic) form of the played music.

6. Enacting Expressiveness Through and By Improvising Music

Some may contend that this perspective risks overstating the influence of cultural and interactive elements in musical improvisation, thereby minimizing the individual performer's contribution. However, while the cultural Habitus sets a framework for the performer, it doesn't pre-determine their actions. The performer's individual agency and creative choices remain central to the improvisation, evident in the distinctiveness of each performance. The performer's emotional responses and musical decisions shape the performance as much as the cultural and situational context. The interaction between these elements is what brings the music to life in the moment of performance.

Yet, one may conversely end up thinking that this amount to saying that then this view implies that musical expression is the manifestation of the musicians' private mental states. It is not so: In improvisation musical expression forms an integral part of the extended, embodied, situated, and enacted mentality that takes shape through the performance. To clarify: it's not about translating a mental state of a subject boxed in a body into sound, as the classic version of expressivism mirrored in the Transparency Thesis might suggest, nor is it the sum of many

already established individualities. Rather, it is about the enactment of an expression in which musicians participate (since they assimilate the expressive characteristics of a practice) and which, on the other hand, is reconfigured through musical practice. In essence, improvisation is not about intentionally conveying a pre-existing emotion of the performer or aligning the music with culturally-coded expressive patterns: it is about shaping musical emotions, already historically/culturally forged, through the performer's expressive correspondence with the concrete situation of the performance they are helping to realize.

Just as musical improvisation is not birthed from nothingness but relies on conventions, habits and skills, the expressiveness in improvised music is not purely spontaneous, but articulates the musical style, or the expressive personality of the musician who inherits past experiences. Thus, musical expression is not the immediate outlet of the person suffering the emotion they express, since its form complies with the codes of an expressive style (Habitus). In fact, it is the result of elaboration, articulation, and composition according to a specific cultural practice and the musician's practice in terms of their musical style, technique, and relationship with the instrument. Moreover, while the expressive essence of an improvisation might be preconceived — such as in rendering a jazz standard, which holds its overarching expressive tone — it can still take multiple interpretations without compromising its improvisational essence.

Furthermore, similar to what happens in the ordinary expression of emotions, in music (and more generally in art), the expression of emotion manifests itself through the (inter)action of the artist with the materials of their practice, articulating in response to the situation that activates it. The pre-reflective embodied intentions of musicians reciprocally shape each other, giving life, with lesser or greater aesthetic effectiveness, to an expressive 'joint intentionality' that develops on the spot (Keller, 2008; Salice, Høffding & Gallagher, 2019), in relation to the general context of the performance — which also includes the musical text, instrumental techniques and practices, and artistic competencies of the musicians — and influences this context. Expressivity is activated in the sound, which thus assumes a meaning (an intentionality) in the embodied and situated interaction (see Leman, 2016), forming in the performance and contributing to (re)elaborate and (trans)form the expressive patterns.

Of course, and to reiterate, during improvisation, musicians' emotional and affective engagement significantly shapes the music's expressive qualities. Thus, the emotions

expressed by the music can be both an effect and a trace of the musicians' emotional states, while those emotions are impacted by the developing musical expressivity. Consequently, the music that is being created can simultaneously become the subject and cause of the musician's emotional state, and the emotional response, which might arise from, for instance, the musician's appreciation of their own performance. In other words, the concrete situation of the performance can evoke emotions expressed by and within the music itself: there is a constitutive feedback loop between the modulation of the musician's affectivity and the expressive character that they, as well as the audience, perceive in the developing music (Cochrane, 2008, pp. 336-7). One may formulate this idea by stating that the expressive responses to the 'musical persona' being shaped in the improvised performance contributes to shaping the 'musical persona' through performative feedback loops. Furthermore, while both the performers' expressive responses and the 'musical persona' manifest and impact the interplay between the expressive social Habitus and the expressive individual habits.

Indeed, improvisation is characterized by the simultaneity of the musical flow and the underlying affective flow that drives the generation of music by the musicians (Canonne, 2013, p. 339). Unlike interpreting a pre-existing piece, the expressivity in improvisation does not just reflect a traditional expressive quality rooted in a cultural Habitus and its variations in the embodied habits of the performers. Instead, it ensues from an expressive articulation molded by the specific performance situation. Even a predetermined expressive intent, whether consciously acknowledged or not, adapts during the performance. The musicians' affective and bodily gestures, who manifest the flow of musical energy in line with their cultural embodied habits, also have a formative power. Their bodily exteriorization of affectivity — articulated through habitual pattens of expression — in response to the music's expressivity (or the music played by the other members of the group) also influences the generated music's expressive qualities. This self-stimulating process, exemplified by Keith Jarrett as noted by Clémént Canonne (2013, p. 341), integrates into the 'distributed creativity' dynamics among musicians, instruments, audience, and setting (Clarke, Doffman, 2017).[68]

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[68] *Distributed creativity* is a concept that originates from the field of cognitive science and emphasizes the collaborative and systemic nature of creative processes. Rather than considering creativity as a trait or ability confined to an individual, distributed creativity focuses on how creative processes are dispersed across individuals, tools, environments, and situations. In the context of music, the notion of distributed creativity can be particularly

Expressivity is not solely a manifestation of personal intent. Instead, shaped by both inherited and learned habits, it emerges from interactions within the musical environment. For the performer, the music's expressivity triggers affective reactions evident in their bodily movements, which then stimulate specific musical expressions. The musician participates in the expressive character of the music they play, emotionally reacts to the affordances it offers, and these reactions feedback into the expressive character of the music (Seibert, 2016, pp. 248-259). The expressive impact of the musicians' affections in relation to what they are doing can be conscious or not (it can become conscious precisely thanks to the music, to the musical and non-musical reactions of the other performers, the audience, etc.). In turn, the performer's 'expressive system' interacts with the expressive systems of the other performers and with those of the listeners: this interaction takes place on the ground of the expressive Habitus and impacts it.

In this regard, musical subjectivity is shaped through the display of expressive style (habit), which is influenced by the performative/appreciative impact of the performers' affections towards their own and others' performances, the interaction with the instrument and generally with the here-and-now performative situation (which includes the audience) and the historical-cultural situation dominated by the expressive Habitus.

Expressive musical habits of both performers and listeners are scaffolded by the Habitus. They correspond to the emotional expressiveness of a certain historical-cultural situation. Acquired through the incorporation of the responses to environmental/cultural affordances, that is, through an exercise of social coordination through and thanks to music they are determined by the Habitus that shapes artistic practices. Once incorporated, expressive habits scaffold the musical '*nachvollziehen*' (Vogel, 2022), that is the cognitive and emotional process of understanding, empathizing with, and appreciating a musical performance through listening: a

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relevant. For example, during a musical improvisation session, creativity is not limited to a single musician. Instead, it emerges from the interaction between all musicians involved, their instruments, the environment in which they perform (including the audience), and the historical, cultural, and stylistic frameworks they are part of. Each of these elements contributes to the overall creative process, influencing and shaping the music that is being created. Furthermore, distributed creativity does not only involve the 'distribution' of creative processes across different elements but also involves a continuous feedback loop between these elements. For instance, a musician's creative output can be influenced by the reactions and inputs from the other musicians, the audience's feedback, the characteristics of the instrument they are playing, and the specific atmosphere of the performance setting. At the same time, the musician's performance can, in turn, influence all these elements, leading to an ongoing, dynamic process of mutual influence and adjustment.

process that implies an active engagement with the music and that importantly includes grasping its expressiveness.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I have emphasized that the expressiveness of improvised music hinges on the dynamic interplay between the cultural expressive Habitus and the individual expressive habits of performers and listeners alike. This interplay not only acts as an organizational guide for the expressive articulation of the performance but is also shaped by the performers' emotional reactions to the evolving 'musical persona,' — the expressive character of the music being generated in real-time. To put it succinctly, in the absence of a predetermined composition, the improviser manifests their deeply rooted and socially-influenced habits, underpinning their performative expressivity. As this expressivity unravels within the improvisational context, it modulates in alignment with the expressive attributes emerging within the performance situation. Even if these modulations, or adjustments, are subtle, nuanced or latent, they possess the potential to redefine and reconfigure both the performative habits and the overarching expressive Habitus. Concurrently, these expressive habits frame the listeners' expectations, appreciations, and interpretations of the musical gestures occurring within the improvisations and, in turn, these habits are reciprocally influenced by the musical experience itself.

And yet, although I have previously addressed how to counter certain objections to my proposition — a proposition that is admittedly more programmatic in nature than formulated as an irrefutable argument — one could still have another worry and raise a general objection. It could be further contended that explaining the expressiveness of improvisation, especially in relation to expressive habits, might appear counterintuitive. Some might believe that improvisation, by its very nature, transcends the realm of the habitual.

But this assertion is misguided. Habits, in a broader sense and not merely as technical competencies, allow performers to ease control over various facets of their performance. This relaxation facilitates a creative response to the ongoing situation, enabling the emergence of unexpected elements that might even surprise both performers and listeners. Habits are operating even in contexts like 'free improvisation,' where there is a deliberate pursuit of novelty or unpredictability. In fact, the quest for the new and the emphasis on creativity itself stem from a historically-contextualized Habitus, within which the element of surprise is

aesthetically valued.

A plausible theory posits that habits don't just form aesthetically by virtue of to the emotional rewards that follow the organism's response to environmental affordances — they evolve and refine themselves through continuous interaction and engagement. But to prevent stagnation, they demand an affinity for the unusual, for novelty — a meta-habit of keen attentiveness to the situation's unique nuances and demands. This can be conceptualized as a distinct *aesthetic (meta)-habit*, which rejuvenates other habits. It is improvisation that accentuates this very trait (cf. Bertinetto, 2023). Furthermore, this responsive attention to the specificity of the situation, which is pivotal for successful improvisation, can be perceived as a key contributor to the aesthetic value of any musical rendition. Emotion, especially when viewed through the lens of embodied habits (Hufendiek, 2021), is always expressed in an improvisational manner. It is a core element of the organism's interactive dynamics with an environment discerned through felt *affordances* (Gibson, 1979). To put it briefly, the emotional essence of musical expression arises from the spontaneous improvisation inherent in the act of the musical performance. This dynamism also engages listeners expressively, as they navigate through shifts in the expressive schema (Habitus) guiding their listening of the performance. Listeners partake in the performance by 'processing' its style, through their internalization and adaptation of the expressive Habitus, actively contributing to its evolution and transformation.

Consequently, a compelling case can be made that musical improvisation serves as a paradigm for the expressivity inherent in musical performances at large.[69]

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Guilt and Shame: Ethics and Aesthetic

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ABSTRACT. While both ethics and aesthetics are "value philosophies," only ethics concentrates on moral values. Aesthetics takes its name from the ancient Greek αἰσθητικός (*aisthētikós*), which signifies "outer appearance." I argue that guilt pertains to the realm of ethics whereas shame, though also ethical, pertains more to the realm of aesthetics. While guilt results from accusations of unlawful behavior, shame tends to be produced by pointing out how the transgressing individual "looks" within a certain context. Of course, the limits between shame and guilt are fluid, and in parallel, the limits between ethics and aesthetics are fluid, too. The way one looks to others can have ethical consequences, and shame resulting from this "look" can remain ethical to some extent. Society or "the others" can be an ethical authority. It is even typical for shame to lead to conclusions about the person's character.

Guilt and Shame in Ethics

The guilt-shame opposition was popularized by the anthropologist Ruth Benedict in her *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a book published immediately after World War II, and whose main purpose was to define American culture as a "guilt culture" and Japanese culture as a "shame culture." Like ethics and aesthetics, guilt and shame can be blended and appear as a compound. However, though there are many overlaps (as especially emotion research has shown), both are distinct experiences that differ in terms of cognition and motivation. Shame concerns the shamed person's relationship with others or with society as a whole, which means that one feels shame when one is inadequate *in front of others*. Maibom suggests that the subject who feels shame "feels that she falls in the regard of others; she feels watched and exposed. (…) Central to shame is the idea of being observed or watched by others" (2010, p. 569). Since

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this "falling" does not need to have anything to do with ethical guilt, it makes sense to attribute shame to aesthetics. Shame experiences are due to "being watched" whereas "being guilty" responds to a more formal deontic system that is less directly (and only more abstractly) linked to society or to "the others." From this I derive my distinction between aesthetic shame and ethical guilt.

The attacks that aim to make the shamed subject feel embarrassed do not necessarily have an ethical character. They can concern the person's looks or appearance. One can be ridiculed for wearing the "wrong" clothes or for having an unfavorable body shape, which bears no link to ethics. Even more, since shame is a sanction imposed for not living up to the expectations of others, it can be considered *mostly* aesthetic simply because the others can presumably only see the appearance of my actions and not their moral content (my motivations and reasons). Even the fact of being "shameless" does not necessarily point to a moral mistake: it could merely be a matter of style that the others do not accept. When the "merely aesthetic" character of the shame sanction is denied, shame is ethicized. Though the aesthetically shamed person is guilty of nothing, she will be submitted to an ethical experience that resembles guilt. Often, she will be submitted to a "virtual guilt" based on an "as if." She *could* have done something wrong because she looks wrong. Having been accused can ruin the "image" and the reputation, which lawyer Alan Dershowitz's book *Guilt by Accusation* (2019), analyzes by searching for such patterns in #MeToo "trials." Dershowitz shows how it is possible that though a person has been declared innocent, they can still be "portrayed" as *possibly* guilty. The word "portrayed" is telling because it shows that the accusations have become "aesthetic."

Generally, shame is seen as an ethical sanction, which is, of course, not erroneous. According to Agnes Heller "the shame-affect [is] a moral feeling par excellence" (Heller, p. 217) and is "inborn in every healthy human being" (p. 219). Philosophers from Aristotle to Max Scheler (1957) as well as psychologists (see Erikson, 1963, Broucek, 1991, Nathanson, 1994) held similar views. Shame depends on a link between the self and others. Williams explains that for the Greeks, shame helped one "rebuild the self": "Only shame can do that, because it embodies conceptions of what one is and of how one is related to others" (Williams, p. 94). The feeling of shame is not produced by a fact or a situation but by the interpretation that others give to facts and situations. Shame is not a matter of merely individual judgment, but it is always, even if only indirectly, enabled by society. Even the peculiar case of self-

shaming is dependent on "imagined" others. The self depends on society, and shame establishes a link between both.

Williams argues that shame is an emotion and practical experience much thicker than is usually assumed by moral philosophers as well as moralists. Shame can have more ethical value than guilt. However, paradoxically, one reason for this is that shame is aesthetic. Guilt can more easily be shrugged off than shame; it can be played down through revised interpretations and judgments. By contrast, as shame is mostly due to the judgments of others who heard or saw or even – as will be shown below – *imagined* us doing something bad, shame cannot be easily controlled, which can make shame situations more traumatizing. Shame is in the eye of the beholder, which means that the shamed person can remain guilty not because she *is* guilty but because she *looks* guilty.[71]

Shame is more difficult to bear also because it can be much more diffuse and ungraspable than those claims that lead to clear accusations. The social dynamics of shame are more organic and less linear than those of guilt. In online shaming, shame is even more diffuse as one often does not know who the people are who deliver comments. Shame can be *unheimlich* and nightmarish. In contrast, the question of guilt simply asks whether one *is* guilty or not. Though guilt is also imposed by society, it remains a matter of individual conscience: theoretically, the accused person can judge their own guilt on a personal basis, independently of society's judgments. This is not possible with shame. When we try to shrug off shame, we can be called "shameless," which might be even more difficult to bear.

In addition, guilt can be atoned for through punishment whereas shame can persist even when the guilt has been "paid off." Shame is therefore indeed morally deep but, paradoxically, not because of moral concerns but because of aesthetic concerns: because of what is seen and how it is seen. It might even be due to what has been imagined; according to Baumgarten, aesthetics is the science of "what is sensed and imagined."

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[71] I can try shrug off shame by saying that I do not identify with the community that has imposed the shame upon me. That I do not care what they say. Williams (1994, p. 98) believes that the others' opinion can matter to me only when it reflects my own. Self-shame definitely depends on such an internalization of the community's opinion. Rawls (1973) suggests that self-shame is only possible when the individual has accepted and interiorized the shaming audience's values. These philosophers are only partially right. We can imagine, today with the internet, to be ostracized by the entire world community. Would it be useful to declare that I don't identify with their opinion? Even if I don't, I can still be ashamed. The others' opinions matter, even when they are not my opinions.

Shame can become ethical in the sense of virtue ethics. Though shame is mostly subjective and concerns mainly a person's "surface" or appearance, observations of shame can lead to radical ethical judgments of the person's character. Strangely, more than guilt, shame seems to concern what one "is" and not only what one has done. In Brené Brown's study, 215 American participating women "contrasted shame with guilt, which they defined or described as a feeling that results from behaving in a flawed or bad way rather than a flawed or bad self." Brown concludes that the guilt versus shame distinction is supported by an "I did/said/believed something bad" versus "I am bad" paradigm (Brown, p. 50). Though shame is due to the subjectivity of others and much less to objective moral standards, shame will be related to a person's character. This is peculiar because society at large is perhaps not qualified to judge a person's character. Would guilt, as it responds to more objective standards, not be a more reliable instance when drawing conclusions about a person's character?

The Ethicization of Aesthetics

When a person is put to shame for some sort of failing, this failing is often not the transgression of a rule but, in a more informal fashion, the transgression of what has been expected by others. More typically than guilt, shame concerns the breach of social etiquette, often leading not to shame but to embarrassment. Embarrassment is a sort of "light" shame, and its analysis can illustrate what I mean by aesthetics and ethics in shame contexts. The embarrassed person has not committed a strong ethical mistake, otherwise she would probably be accused in a more formal fashion. Embarrassment is a sort of shame that remains predominantly aesthetic. Zahavi states that shame signifies a global decrease of self-esteem or self-respect and a painful awareness of personal flaws and deficiencies and insists that this is not the case for embarrassment (2015, p. 210). This supports my claim that embarrassment is a "lighter" version of shame. However, sometimes the embarrassed person is supposed to act *as if* s/he is guilty: she should be ashamed. Then we have an ethicization of embarrassment, which marks a shift from embarrassment to shame. The same can apply to humiliation and recalcitrant or unfitting collective experiences that Krista Thomason analyzes in *Naked* (2018). Embarrassment is aesthetic and less ethical. It does not automatically relate to a feeling of guilt (nor does shame), but guilt can be loaded upon the embarrassed person through an ethicization of embarrassment. Then the person can experience "the global decrease of self-esteem or self-

respect" that Zahavi describes.

Contrary to guilt, shame does not only occur as a result of transgressions: it can even be seen as a natural condition. This topic is clearly related to aesthetics: it becomes obvious in the phenomenon of modesty. The veiling of women in Islam is typically cited as being "that which covers sexual shame" (Abu-Lughod, 1986, p. 159), which suggests that being ashamed is construed as an inborn instinct.[72] The primarily aesthetic act of covering oneself is ethicized by linking it to ethical conditions. These conditions are anchored in nature. Women are often supposed to have more of this inborn instinct. Though modesty is an aesthetic action, it is supposed to be an ethical instinct. Sarah Kofman lengthily explains that Rousseau considers, in his *Emile or on Education*, that a "veil of shame" (Kofman, p. 103) has been created by nature and that shame is a natural phenomenon. One must live up not only to *social* expectations, but also to natural ones – or perhaps rather to those that society deems natural. To enforce this, vestimentary codes or codes of behavior and appearance that are purely aesthetic, are enforced. Since aesthetics finds itself based on nature, it becomes a matter of ethics. However, we can argue that in the end, shame remains more aesthetic than ever: a woman is expected to *look* ashamed. Who cares what she is really doing? The modest appearance is sufficient.

Shame is a behavior code and thus very much linked to aesthetics. But when it is virtuous to be ashamed, then aesthetics has been ethicized; and even more so when it is virtuous to be ashamed *just for the sake of being ashamed*. For guilt, this same requirement would be found irrational.

Shame can *appear* real even when no real guilt exists. Reason identifies guilt in the form of necessary, abstract concepts whereas shame is perceived in the form of concrete appearances that can be contingent. One can be "reasonably" guilty, but as long as this guilt is hidden, one can still be recognized as honorable by the community because the community judges "only" the surface. Vice versa, one can be dishonored even though one is innocent.

The inverse case is also possible: there is the aestheticization of ethics. Abstract guilt is often not found sufficient, and a guilty individual must then also be shamed. One desires the

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[72] In Arab cultures, the identification of femininity with shame and masculinity with honor is common and revolves around the generic Arab term *'ird*, which is connected with "female chastity and continence" (Abu-Zeid, 1965, p. 65). The link with shame is provided by the fact that *'ird* is always linked to sexuality and the codes of its repression (cf. Patai, 1973, pp. 120–125). Patai presents the entire Arab world as a shame culture.

aesthetic event of shaming. Underperformers or bad students can be seen as inadequate or ridiculous. From a purely ethical point of view, it would be enough to give them bad grades, but when the ethical problem becomes aestheticized, one depicts them as lazy and undisciplined. Punishment, which should only be functional, acquires concrete aesthetic dimensions. When the ethical mistake is retold by using concrete descriptions, it becomes aesthetic. The strong mediatization of public and private events in modern societies leads to more such aesthetizations. The media constantly needs stories containing concrete characters. A guilty person cannot simply be "abstractly" guilty but must also be declared inadequate or ridiculous. It is true that this procedure can sometimes instill the right behavior just because it is aesthetic, as Thomason (2018, p. 181) argues. But in other cases, the aestheticization serves no purpose other than that of shaming for the sake of shaming.

"Aesthetic" shame can have an entirely autonomous existence: one can be put to shame for something for which one has had very limited or no responsibility, or even for something one has not done at all. People can be put to shame for the coincidence of being born into poverty or into illegitimacy. The latter are indeed classical reasons why individuals have been submitted to shame. We can feel ashamed because of the acts of others, of close relatives, most typically. Though there is no logical link between, for example, a father's virtue and his son's shameful deed, a blemish can darken the father's existence. Heller speaks of liability instead of responsibility (Heller, p. 218), but in many cases there is not even liability. Why is this aesthetic? I call it aesthetic because it concerns the person's appearance in society, an appearance that is independent of ethical acts. Shame is more like virtual guilt: it is potential and can be *seen* as a potentiality, but not more. It is "in force" (which is the original meaning of virtual). When I am ashamed of the immoral actions of my country or of my employer, it is clear that I neither support these actions nor am I responsible nor liable for them; but others can *imagine* that I *could* identify with these actions. Society draws a certain picture of me within social contexts. I am neither responsible nor liable for the actions that others performed before I was born; but these actions can stick to my reputation in the form of a fault that is aesthetic. I must "aesthetically" – and not necessarily ethically – identify with my country. My country's bad actions are supposed to make me feel embarrassed. This is related to honor, which is an ethical notion that very much stretches into the realm of aesthetics. In the case of the country, it becomes very clear how easily aesthetic shame can be transformed into ethical

guilt: "All Germans are *guilty* of the holocaust," is an opinion that is often seriously held. However, contemporary Germans can only be ashamed or embarrassed because of the historical image that have inherited; they cannot feel guilty. Nor does the shame that they feel denote their character. Ethicization of shame means here that their guilt can more easily be imagined.

Brown states that the experience of shame is often painful because we believe we are "unworthy of acceptance and belonging" (Brown, p. 47). Being unworthy has an ethical foundation. However, one needs to distinguish between feeling unworthy and feeling that one *looks* unworthy. Only the aesthetic experience of being aware of how one looks leads to shame.

Shame and Art

Aesthetics deals with images while ethics deals with facts. Furthermore, aesthetics deals with contingencies whereas ethics mostly deals with necessary systems. Reckoning with contingent constellations instead of with necessary ethical structures brings the shame business closer to an aesthetic activity. Artists too, must deal with contingencies. A work of art cannot be produced along the necessary rules of science or ethics, but the process of artistic creation is always playful to some extent. It deals with unpredictable constellations. Nor can the value of a work of art be established along necessary lines.

Both the act of shaming somebody and the overcoming or preventing of shame resemble therefore "artistic" processes. One deals neither with hard facts nor with rules but with allusions and possibilities. Further, being submitted to shame generally works through derision, sarcasm, ridicule, mockery, and laughter, expressions that are also used when reacting negatively to art. In contrast, "mockery and laughter are not allowed in the courtroom" (Lamb, 1983, p. 243).[73] Sussman calls derision, of which shaming mainly consists, "quasi-aesthetic" responses to human action (Sussman, 2008, p. 300).

Conclusion

In principle, when shaming somebody, one uses aesthetic features for ethical purposes; but

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[73] One might argue that guilt can be followed by derision, sarcasm, ridicule, mockery, and laughter, too. However, it is then not meant to establish or reinforce guilt but to aestheticize guilt and transform it into shame: 'You are not only guilty but also ridiculous.'

paradoxically, as has been shown, as an aesthetic phenomenon, shame can have a stronger and more enduring impact than ethical guilt, which can lead to the false conclusion that shame is not aesthetic but predominantly ethical. The power and persistence of shame in ethical matters is surprising because, though the good and the beautiful share, in the Platonic canon, the same essence or "forms," aesthetics is concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty. Though moral ideals can have a resemblance to aesthetic ideals, the purpose of aesthetics is not to talk about ethics, but rather about how phenomena appear within various contexts. Normally, one would expect ethics to have a stronger impact on moral conduct than aesthetics. Nonetheless, when it comes to shame, aesthetics is often more "ethically important" than ethics. The feeling of guilt is something one carries within; it can be individual and independent of others. In contrast, shame is submitted to the above intricacies of aesthetic philosophies.

Intellectual history shows that with regard to guilt and shame, ethics and aesthetics tended to be confused instead of being clearly distinguished. Though they will always remain linked, a more consistent identification of ethical and aesthetical procedures in shame/guilt questions is useful, especially in mediatized contemporary societies. I hope to have shown that in shame/guilt problems, aesthetics can be detached from ethics. One mistake is to ethicize shame. Further, it happens that an infraction that should induce only guilt is aestheticized in order to induce shame. This can happen for educational reasons or for mischievous reasons. Both procedures become problematic when we find it difficult to consider a person's potentially "shameful" behavior irrespective of ethical questions; or a person's unethical behavior irrespective of aesthetic questions. Sometimes, when mistakes are merely aesthetic, ethical judgments should be suspended, much as the ancient skeptics suspended judgments. Sometimes we need, with regard to shame, a phenomenological reduction. Many rules that need to be followed in cultures are not necessarily ethical. Often, they are linked to traditions and customs and merely guarantee the smooth functioning of society. Punishment for infractions is necessary, but it can be done without turning the rules into ethical ones. For example, somebody who violates traffic regulations interrupts the reasonable flow of traffic and must be sanctioned. But it is not necessary to employ ethical arguments. Traffic can metaphorically stand for culture, customs, and traditions. Many traffic regulations might have been based on ethical values to begin with, but constantly reminding oneself of these ethical origins and implications represents an ethicization of aesthetics. Eventually, viewing society

through ethics can lead to a culture in which even imagined acts will be judged ethically. The disentanglement of ethics and aesthetics prevents such mistakes.

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Simmel and the Aesthetics of Luxury

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ABSTRACT. Luxury is a rarely discussed topic within aesthetics. Even less attention is paid to George Simmel's perspective on the aesthetics of luxury, which can be found in *Philosophie des Geldes* and in *Das Geheimnis. Eine sozialpsychologische Skizze*. My paper has two aims. The first one is to analyse the texts in order to clarify his position. The second one is to interpret his contribution from a social aesthetic perspective. If *Philosophie des Geldes* is interpreted from this point of view, then the description of an ambivalent aesthetic phenomenon is provided: luxury, is, on the one hand, a private experience, but, on the other hand, it requires inter-subjective interaction. In luxury, I argue, there is a double experience: of distance, as for art in the basic Kantian assumption, and of narrowness, through possession, as in Benjamin's *Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus*. The reason for this is that luxury, like fashion and sociability, is a specific social form.

1. Introduction

George Simmel, the author of *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900), is today widely appreciated as a founding figure of sociology and, in particular, of the theory of sociological aesthetics at the turn of the XX and the XXI centuries, even though he lingered for a long time in disciplinary margins (Fitzi, 2021, p. 33). His essays are now widely considered relevant for the development of relational sociology, network analysis and for studies about money, space and individuality. What remains, however, a rarely discussed topic in relation to his thought is the social phenomenon of luxury. Even though it can be seen as relevant for both a sociological and aesthetics analysis, due to its relationship with the sensible perception and with the social organization of status group, such phenomenon or experience has never been object of a proper

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investigation in such perspective. In this paper I therefore propose to consider luxury as an object of socio-aesthetic analysis and I claim that Simmel offers interesting suggestions to consider it a social form. That is, the aim of this article is to analyse the concept of luxury taking inspiration from Simmel, whose texts, nonetheless, are not taken here as an object of philological analysis.

Barbara Carnevali and Andrea Pinotti famously described social aesthetics as the study of the aesthetic dimension of society (Fitzi, 2021, p. 170). They claim it to occupy both the field of studies that focuses on the realm of sensation and perception (*aisthesis*) and that pertaining to the theory of art as well as of those techniques used to shape and transform the sensible world (Carnevali, 2020). George Simmel is regarded as the founder of such field of research since the appearance of his famous essay *Sociological aesthetics* (1896).

According to him, society is regarded as a unity where people not only communicate though the senses, but also create and analyze new social formations from an aesthetic perspective and according to aesthetic principles, as the one of symmetry.

As I will further explain, social forms, as sociability and fashion (and luxury!), which are central in the last part of *Philosophie des Geldes*, constitute social unities. Accordingly, luxury is a social phenomenon that transforms a specific relationship between some people and some objects into a unity. The senses, among which the sight has a prominent place, are the means of this new formation: without their playing no social formation can have light. In particular, in relation to luxury, it is the sight that makes the subject and the observer identify an object as luxury. That is, an object is identified as luxury only if it is set at distance and it is able to attract the eye of the person. Moreover, such a distance is a social distance. The sight is, in fact, the faculty that immediately ('at first sight') catches the difference in personal appearance. Accordingly, social distinction is firstly acknowledged by the sight[75]. In conclusion, the social form of luxury indicates the relationship between a person and goods perceived, estimated as a positive deviation from a standard and possessed only by a minority of people.

In consumption societies, the discriminant factor to judge some goods as luxury is

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75 This aspect is particularly stressed by some sociologists. For example, Packard in his analysis of the new affluence class, wrote: "we tend to place people on the basis of what is visible: such as type of home, automobile, clothing, home furnishings. These are all visible" (Packard, 1960, p. 57). This is why every aristocrats in *Ancien Régime* had a policy for the appearances. See, for example Norbert Elias (*On the Process of Civilisation*) or Peter Burke's (*The Fabrication of Louis XIV*) studies on the French court.

represented by money, the mean per excellence of modernity in the German scholar's perspective, in reference to which moral and political claims are made. Hence the ever-debated link between luxury and economic inequality.

Because of her deviating nature, the social form of luxury is a constant object of social evaluation. Since the sight is the source of most of aesthetic principles, as the one of symmetry, a social form that derives necessarily from it will be judged in a positive or negative way in accordance to the overall aesthetic principle more influential in a given society. As Christopher Berry notably showed, in a socialist or platonic state luxury as transgression is condemned because it is a symptom of disorder, while a liberal and modern society, as Smith and Hume's writings clearly showed, has to accept it because idiosyncrasies in the world are effects of a spontaneous order. The former are the ones governed by a quest for symmetry, while in the latter this principle is refused (Berry, 1994) (Armitage, 2016).

Accordingly, the first aim of this article is to clarify the usage of the term luxury in Simmel's *Philosophie des Geldes*. This is the occasion to reveal the basic dualistic structure the author found in human nature as the role of distance in the creation and stratification of society. The second aim of this article is, instead, to investigate luxury in accordance with the social aesthetic perspective in order to arrive at a definition of the concept. In this second case only Simmel's methodology is to be used. My thesis is that luxury is the social phenomena of differentiation through the possession of goods reserved to the few and it is a specific social aesthetic form, as much as, but different from fashion and sociability. Luxury, as the hypostatization of vertical differences in society, is an aesthetic social form whose power of attraction is strictly bound with an aesthetic consideration of distance and whose experience lies in the possession of good through the market.

2. Of luxury in Philosophies des Geldes: Simmel's Philosophical Anthropology

Philosophie des Geldes is Simmel's work where the word luxury recurs the most frequently. Nonetheless, luxury is for sure not a topic of systematic investigation and this is the reason why Simmel's work is never quoted in such field of studies (Assouly, 2017) (Berry, 1994). Luxury is, for the first time, quoted in the second part of the third chapter, *Money in the Sequence of purposes* (*Das Geld in den Zweckreihen*). Simmel spoke of "Luxusgenüssen" as

the ones which 'has proven to be unenjoyable'.[76] They are associated to goods that cannot provide the expected enjoyment. For this reason, they are not appreciated by the thrifty people who think that whatever is paid should also be consumed to satisfy the person. That is, if a normal object should give to its possessor comfort, being oriented to satisfy a need, the luxury object is the one which does not provide a complete gratification of the senses. This is why the thrifty person does not appreciate it.

The reason for the attraction of this object does not lie in its usefulness. In the case of a luxury object, the direct relationship (= of use) that a person should have with the object is not relevant. Another element, the economic one, has gained a primacy in the consideration in a subjective estimation. Simmel suggests that the monetary value is here the sufficient condition to identify something that provides an enjoyment that is, paradoxically, no true enjoyment. He wrote: 'the object which has lost whatever might have been the meaning and purpose of his consumption, is consumed under condition of discomfort and harmfulness merely because the money spent has bestowed an absolute value upon it' (Simmel, 2005, p. 247).

Luxury then reveals a very paradoxical trait: it refers to objects by which people are attracted even though it is not possible to have a relation of true enjoyment with them, because of some of their characteristics. The most important concerns the monetary value. The price is a source of attraction, independent of the utility value of the good. In summary, the German philosopher judges luxury goods to be expensive (and therefore distinctive) and functionless (and therefore superfluous). They are the opposite of necessary goods, as Simmel's use of the word "Luxusgütern" shows.

To distinguish between the two types of goods, he proposes a distinction based on the intensity of desire. Necessary goods are highly desirable, but lose their appeal as soon as the basic need is satisfied. This condition easily occurs with primary needs, such as clothing and food. This means that Simmel, like many thinkers like Helvétius before him (Helvétius, 2021, p. 64), saw in the actual capacity of the stomach an insurmountable limit to the satisfaction of any increase in desire. Once the stomach is full, desire ceases.

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76 Frisby translated: 'Many thrifty people think it proper that everything that is paid for is also consumed, and even then not only if another necessary expenditure were to be saved, but also in relation to luxury goods which, in the meantime, have proved to be unenjoyable (Simmel, 2005, p. 247). The original text writes: 'Und zwar keineswegs nur dann, wenn damit eine anderenfalls erforderliche Ausgabe espart würde, sondern Luxus-genüssen gegenüber, von denen man sich inzwischen überzeugt hat, dass sie keine Genüsse sind' (Simmel, 1930, p. 271).

The demand for luxury goods, on the other hand, is unlimited and will never exceed the supply. Spiritual desires, such as those of esteem and self-realisation, can be created endlessly without any limit, unlike hunger.

In more anthropological terms, man is indeed described as a creature who is easily able to satisfy his own basic needs, which are already determined in quantity, but whose appetite for luxury goods ("Luxusgüter"), which here stand for superfluousness ("Überflüssigkeit"), is unlimited. For example, to protect the body from the weather, it is enough to produce a cloth, but man is always on the lookout for a more refined coat, then an umbrella, etc.

The increase of desire is due to the fact that man is represented not only as an instrumental animal who wants to satisfy his hunger, but also as a purposive animal who wants to enjoy the taste of the dishes in order to increase his sense of himself as a human being. That is to say, he not only needs means to satisfy his hunger, but he constantly increases and/or refines his desires, making them unlimited. The reason for this is that he is not only dependent on his instincts as a simple animal. Moreover, unlike God, he does not have the immediate power to satisfy all mental desires immediately (Simmel, 2005, p. 209). This is the reason why, in order to satisfy them, he generally needs means, also acquired through consumption, that are deemed necessary to satisfy human purposes, that lies well beyond instincts.

In summary, luxury goods refer to a macro-category indicating all products for which there is a fervency of desire that cannot be braked and that defines itself in strict opposition to what is judged necessary. Nonetheless, the luxury so described share some features of need, not physical, but psychological, due to human nature. This idea of "Luxusbedürfnis" is clearly revealed when Simmel made the argument that money, this modern medium of social life, is what carries in itself the structure of the need for luxury, because it rejects any limitation upon desire for it, but at the same time it has no necessity to set a distance from direct needs, because everyone use it on a daily basis, as a necessity. The modern society, built upon money, has thus in itself the germs for the spread of luxury.[77]

Luxury goods, in fact, have to do with what is outside the ordinary and it is such a distance that exercises a powerful attraction upon people due to mechanisms of social

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[77] Luxury has a tendency to become more and more widespread, progressively raising the limits of its acceptability and consequently failing in its identification as luxury. This thesis has been expounded philosophically by Peter Sloterdijk (Sloterdijk, 2015) and economically by Fred Hirsh (Hirsh, 1976).

psychology. The desire for esteem or self-actualization pass through a recognition of the superiority of something distant and a desire to reach it. Because of the distance, because luxury goods resist the desire to possess them, they are esteemed valuable[78]. The fervency in desire is a result of the limitlessness of human aspiration that can only be directed to what a person not yet possess. Nonetheless, an increasing distance is not always directly proportional to an increase in desire. Some distances may exercise a negative effect on it.

This is extremely clear in the last place where luxury is mentioned as "Luxusartikel". At the end of Chapter Five, *The Money Equivalent of Personal Value* (*Das Geldäquivalent personaler Werte*), luxury goods are described as the ones in which a considerable amount of mental labour is invested, and they are extremely rare in an economy where primary goods (for him foodstuffs) are easily reached. Luxury goods, if too expensive, push the goods completely out of the view of ordinary people, preventing people to make claim for them. Nonetheless, such goods may become more widespread in society if they stop being out of reach. What guarantees the desirability of luxury is exactly their visibility, the fact that they can fuel social passions as envy and, in opposite direction, a feeling of self-actualisation, self-esteem, vanity. Moreover, only the luxury that appears can fuel emulation, this peculiar form of imitative desire directed only to the superior in status, and that is a psychological mechanism to cope with a quest for self-esteem (Brennan and Pettit, 2005).

In summary, considering only the use of the word by Simmel two remarkable features of luxury have been highlighted. Firstly, luxury is an attribute of a good insofar as the good is judged distant by an ordinary person. Secondly, through luxury goods a psychological desire seeks to be fulfilled. Moreover, it must be noted that such goods in a modern society, where the social form of money dominates (Simmel, 2005, p.225), are desired mainly in virtue of their price. Money and luxury goods, in fact, have a common feature: they are ordinary and exclusive at the same time.

Beyond the textual consideration of "Luxusartikel", "Luxusgüter" and "Luxusgenüssen", it should be noted that luxury cannot be described as a property of an object, as well as fashion.

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78 'Value does not originate from the unbroken unity of the moment of enjoyment, but from the separation between the subject and the content of enjoyment as an object that stands opposed to the subject as something desired and only to be attained by the conquest of distance[...]. Objects are not difficult to acquire because they are valuable, but we call those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them. Since the desire encounters resistance and frustration, the objects gain a significance that would never have been attributed to them by an unchecked will' (Simmel, 2005, p. 64).

It is, on the contrary, a phenomenon involving a subject valuing a specified object and it relates to distance on at least three levels: from basic material needs, in "price architecture" and in fervency of desire. Only once the basic needs are satisfied a person can turn to luxury which is marked by a high expenditure, being it a prerogative of the higher strata of society, which can invest in products that required a considerable amount of mental labour, otherwise known as refinement. For example, before desiring a more refined dress the need for covering himself has to be satisfied. This has been and somewhere still is a privilege of the higher social strata. For the recognition of some objects as luxury, therefore, such goods, must be seen as a category to identify a peculiar social phenomenon. Visibility at distance is a necessary condition for luxury to subsist. In order to fully analyse the concept of luxury other parts of Simmel's work require an analysis.

3. The luxury social form – the apotheosis of distance

The thesis I proposed in the introduction is that luxury is the social phenomena of differentiation through the possession of goods reserved to the few and it is a specific social aesthetic form, as fashion and sociability. It is clear that there is no direct reference to the general concepts of luxuries that are somehow explicitly used by Simmel. The question, beyond the simple review of the usage of the word in Simmel's work, is: how is it possible to define luxury using Simmel's intuitions?

So far, two main points have been emphasized: a philosophical anthropology centered on the conception of man as a desiring agent who uses means such as money to satisfy ends, and the role of remote vision (sight plus distance) in stimulating such desires. Moreover, luxury goods were described as refined goods, since they involve mental labour, and the pleasure they provide is not related to comfort, it is not a real pleasure, but has to do with the path to possess them. It follows that, firstly, luxury is related to the experience of attainment as well as to the objects attained, and, secondly, that luxury is the value that a person attaches to a good on the basis of some characteristics that make it valuable. Accordingly, my hypothesis is that luxury is a social form that involves a particular relationship of distance between a person and an object.

3.1. Distance: the first a-priori of society

Distance is the central point for an understanding of luxury and it is strictly connected to sight. This point is of the greatest importance in a social aesthetics perspective. The eye is the organ which makes society possible in Simmel's *Sociology* (Simmel, 2009) and the possibility to conceive the study of sociology as an independent discipline relies on the fact that an inter-subjective distance is the first a-priori of society. If the other person were not distant, which means not fully knowledgeable, social formation would not take place. The distance, physical and in the possibility to fully know the other person, is at the basis of the possibility to have, on the one hand, social formations and, on the other hand, the abstract forms of reduction of fragments in knowledgeable unities that are the true objects of Simmel's sociology[79]. There is a triple movement at work here: the representation of the other person is indeed possible thanks to an individual distance, which in turn is necessary for the person to arrive at an objective assessment of the other and thus, on the basis of that assessment, to lay the foundations of the relationship. Distance is, after all, what makes society possible and it is, ultimately, a defect in a complete knowledge of the other person because she is constantly reduced to abstract forms, while her interiority is never and cannot be caught. Distance, in itself, is nothing more than a powerful, refined and necessary aesthetic medium[80].

My hypothesis is that luxury is based on the same logic that gives rise to society. In order to have luxury, it is necessary to create a distance between the subject and the object. This distance allows to present the object as a luxury, in a generally positive light, emphasising the formal aspects of the object and exerting an attraction on the subject. Moreover, since every social form takes into account all other people, it should be noted that luxury as a social form involves a precise social relationship between the owners of the object and those who can only

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79 Simmel claims that people and artifacts are given in the real world as fragments to the perception of every person. Since society is a form that is not only an abstract, but also every person has an awarness of it, what should be analysed is the way in which society become a single object of consideration. In relation to a single person fragmentation can, for example, indicate the place in the social order (i.e. the poor). Simmel famously wrote: 'Because one can never know another absolutely — which would mean the knowledge of every individual thought and every attitude — because one forms for oneself in fact a personal unity of the other from the fragments in which the other is solely available to us, then the latter depends on that part of the other that our standpoint vis-à-vis the other allows us to see' (Simmel, 2009). Equally, fragments have also to do with the world of objects, as Simmel's analysis of the ornaments, of the ruines, etc. testifies.

80 Dirk Solies shows how distance works as the central paradigm in Simmel's phylosophy and social theory and how distance is first of all an esthetic element: 'Der ästhetische Bereich ist die eigentliche Domäne des Distanzbegriffes' (Solies, 1998, p. 66).

continue to be limited in their possible enjoyment by the distance.

3.2. Distance in time

The basic levels of distance are clearly represented by time and space. The former, a relative distance, emerges between the subjective valuation of the object and the subjective momentary feeling of enjoyment of the object. It is the distance in the possible pleasure, which is the standard object of the aesthetic experience, that defines luxury. In one of the most famous sentences of his work Simmel states: 'We desire objects only if they are not immediately given to us for our use and enjoyment; that is, to the extent that they resist our desire. The content of our desire becomes an object as soon as it is opposed to us not only in the sense of being impervious to us, but also in terms of its distance, as something not-yet-enjoyed, the subjective aspect of this condition being desire' (Simmel, 2005, p. 63).

The temporal distance is the condition of an absence of enjoyment that fuel subjective desire toward an object that is judged as a source of gratification.[81] The distance of the 'not - yet gratifiable' can only be experienced, when imagination, the aesthetic faculty, is considered. In the end, the object has value because of this distance that should be overcome by the desire. Once this has been accomplished, the situation is deceiving, because the luxury good proves to be unenjoyable, as seen in the first quotation of this article. According to Simmel, such objects are functionless, they do not provide true comfort. Nonetheless, the reason why a person, once become a possessor, finds them deceiving has to do with a lack of intrinsic value of the content of desire. Luxury has value, but such value is only stated as a contrast. This movement is still nowadays seen in some common sentences: 'If you have it, it is not anymore a luxury' or by the famous Rifkin analysis about luxury goods, which are claimed not to provide true happiness (Rifkin, 2009). Luxury is the name given to objects reputed valuable because of the distance interposed between them and the agent. The more the distance established, the more the desire is fervent. Moreover, such a distance should be objectively evaluated. That is, luxury should be intersubjectively recognised.

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81 Simmel uses Kant's dicotomy between gefallen and genissesn. In order to describe the difference between the beautiful and the agreeable the father of Aufklarung famously stated: 'das Angehem kultiviert nicht, gehört zum bloßen Genusse'! Because luxury supposes an interest in the object it should be linked to Kant's agreeable. Nonetheless, contrary to this type of judgment that is only subjective, the one of luxury, as the one of the beautiful, requires others to agree upon, as I will show in this article.

In fact, if the luxury form would be completely dependent on subjective formulation of value the luxury would not constitute a social aesthetic form. It is necessary to have an objective medium that reify the distance. Money is the one allowing such objectification.

Simmel suggests that in a modern economy objective distance is hypothesized in the price, the most important medium or social form. Because money is conceived as an objective mean, that works only if adopted by all, also the judgment of something as luxury is considered somehow objective, as a quality of the object. As in the case of Kant's beautiful, in relation to luxury all are supposed to agree of what actually constitute it: 'Just as we represent certain statements as true while recognizing that their truth is independent of our representation, so we sense that objects, people and events are not only appreciated as valuable by us, but would still be valuable if no one appreciated them. [...] This extends all the way down to the economic value that we assign to any object of exchange, even though nobody is willing to pay the price, and even though the object is not in demand at all and remains unsaleable' (Simmel, 2005, p.65). The price objectifies the value, acts in a substitution with the subjective evaluation, becoming the greatest source of attraction. This can be seen in Simmel's example of the shops in large cities which, with ostentatious self-indulgence, emphasises that they have the highest prices and thus appeal to the finest circles of society who do not ask for them. It is because of the distance of contemplation, as well as their prohibitive cost, that the objects in the glass cases in the shop windows arouse the desire to possess them. Their attraction is even greater when price is hidden, as the case in new marketing strategies for luxury brands testifies (Kapferer, 2012). The money in that case reveals at best its power of objectification. What is highly valued in monetary terms does not even deserve its price to be evident: imagination can play at will.

The result of this process of objectification is that distance is no longer linked only to the desire to be satisfied for the individual. Luxury becomes a social form of hierarchisation in which distance is crystallised: only some people can afford to satisfy such a desire through possession. The basic gap in desire was transformed into a distance in price architecture that clearly shows how distance from ordinary needs can only be a prerogative of the few in relation to the many. As a social form of distance, luxury clearly marks a social distance between classes, ranks or, more generally, groups of people.

3.3. Distance in space

Strictly connected to the 'temporal' level of desire, distance reveals indeed also material estimation, in the worldly space: scarcity of an object, the difficulties of acquisition due to the scarce availability of its distribution, etc. These conditions predate the money circulation and it can be argued that they constitute an intersubjective recognition of the luxuriousness of a good. For example, a precious stone was a prerogative of a chief in the clan even in an economy based on gift. The temporal level of desire is here connected and/or substituted with the spatial distance of the not-yet – which means not-easy to be possessed. The rarity of the truffle as well as the luxuriousness of the product coming in Roman banquets from the Middle East is a clear example.

The distance in space is first of all a geographical and physical limit to the satisfaction of a desire. In a way, it is a more concrete distance than the one in time, created by subjective desire and an immaterial human creation, the money. It is even more evident in modernity where it also sometimes serves to increase the temporal distance, always arousing new desires. In fact, another element come into play in modernity: the value of money as universal medium. The spatial distance has now to do with the geographical space of the cities, the place at the center of the global tendency to urbanization. There exclusive spaces gain prominence. The spatial distance is the one of the exclusivity. It is again a human creation that creates or simply increases the spatial distance for the recognition of an object as luxury. Accordingly, the brand which aims to be recognized as a luxury in a generalized way, by the greatest number and not just by a person or by communities of lifestyles, should be at the center of the places that confer exclusivity.[82]

Accordingly, products being luxurious can only be associated to particular recognizable spaces in city center (especially in Europe), huge shopping malls (especially South Asia) or iconic places (usually everywhere). Be there means to be, for an object or, more commonly, for a brand, recognized as luxury. The recent celebration of the Chinese New Year of Bottega Veneta on the Chinese Great Wall as well as Valentino's colouring of the Séoul Wave Center

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[82] This is true for real spaces in physical cities as well as in virtual spaces in the metaverse as the most recent trend for some generally reputed luxury brand shows. For a quick and generall overview see: https://agedigroup.com/en/2023/01/10/the-luxury-real-estate-market-in-the-metaverse/. A complete analysis on this topic has not yet been conducted.

are outstanding recent examples in the world of merchandises.[83] The magnificence of installation is what attracts the eye because of its distance and, at the same time, confer a sense of exclusivity to the brands.[84]

The rarity in the space distance is then not necessarily a natural one, but also artificial, created only by the hierarchization that money generates: 'The fact that more and more things are available for money and, bound up with this, the fact that money becomes the central and absolute value, results in objects being valued only to the extent to which they cost money and the quality of value with which we perceive them appearing only as a function of their money price' (Simmel, 2005, p. 280).

Since money is what allows a brand to be in the center of cities as well as to provide extreme experiences for private clients during fashion shows on Mediterranean islands, these experiences are intrinsically valuated as luxury. They confer to a larger amount of people, the so-called aspirational consumers, a halo of splendour that fuels imitative desire. Again, it is the money form that not only objectify the distance in the satisfaction of desire standarising a value, but also it co-creates a distance in city space that make more evident the social hierarchies associated to the luxury social form.

In summary, luxury is related to what appear as luxury in relation to the price and to some spaces, that are already invested of significance in the eye of a relevant part of the public. From here the association with exclusive places having an aura of heritage or with an iconic status. The fact of being exposed to the public is a necessary condition for a general recognition of them as luxury. The possibility of small amount of people to be in such a given places reaffirms the sense of exclusivity and spatial distance. Luxury is then a social form of hierarchization through possession. It is aesthetic because it has to do with the senses, with a feeling of pleasure aroused by possession and also by techniques that continue to highlight such distance even when a society is democratized and luxuries (as goods not deemed strictly necessary) are at disposal of the majority of people, at least in Western countries.

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83 See, for example: https://journalduluxe.fr/fr/business/supersize-luxe-ooh-marketing.
84 Exclusivity may also be due to the link between aesthetic appreciation of the aesthetic of art installation,but this plan that should be linked to cultural capital, is not deemed necessary for a definition of luxury based on a modern person recognizing only the objective nature of money. This is why I do not consider this point in this article.

4. The aesthetic experience

The social form of luxury turns out to be recognised by the possessor of luxury as well as by observer. Nonetheless between the two there is a great difference. While the latter can simply recognise the distance without the possibility to fill such gap, the former bridges it thanks to possession. My suggestion is that the social form of luxury stresses also a specific form of aesthetic experience that only the highest strata in society can have. This means that not only the social form of luxury individuates the masters in every society, but also make it clear that some possibilities of aesthetic experience, contrary to the one of the contemplations of Kantian's beauty, are reserved only to the few.

In particular, I suggest that the experience of luxury is an ambivalent aesthetic phenomenon. It is, on the one hand, a private experience, but, on the other hand, an inter-subjective interaction is required. The masters have luxury insofar they possess something, but the source of the pleasure derives from intersubjective relations. Without possessing an item intersubjectively recognised as luxury it is not possible to have such an experience. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the masters indulge in a precise aesthetic experience[85]: the objects, as Simmel remarks, do not provide true comfort because they are not judged in an operationally oriented way; the subjects are conscious of their experience, since they are the conscious desiring agents who willingly indulge in possession; they, at least at first, have some pleasure of a very peculiar kind, because completely social.

On the other hand, contrary to a normal aesthetic experience the one of luxury is not concerned with the contemplation of the object, but there is an interest in its possession. Nonetheless, such possession, contrary to the one of objects that gratify the senses (the place of the agreeable, following Kant's *Critique of Judgment*), gives no enjoyment. It is the distance, as for the beautiful, that provides a feeling of pleasure (the standard object of aesthetic experience). Such pleasure is completely a social one. That is the fact of having something that can be possessed only by the few and whose value is judged as universally recognized offers a socio-psychological pleasure. The charm of luxury is the one of social exclusion: a person increases the sense of one own value because of the exclusion of others in the ownership of such goods. In Simmel's essay, *Das Geheimnis. Eine sozialpsychologische Skizze*, the German

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85 The two main criteria of an aesthetic experience are operationally orientation and self-referentiality as defined by Wiesing (Wiesing, 2019). I also consider the pleasure dimension, as done by Kant (Kant, 2000).

philosopher noted how an increase feeling of ownership ("Eigentumsgefühl") is experienced due to the exclusion of other people from a possession. From here the rule: the pleasure of possession ("Besitz") has not to do with the feeling of actually owning something, but in knowing that others should renounce to it. Through possession a vital feeling, inspired by a reciprocal regard with others, arises in people. The consequence is relevant also in the establishment of the value of the good and in the continue objectification of it: since a good is precluded to the many it should be precious.

Here the circular logic of luxury become evident: price standardizes the desire for what is distant, arising also a certitude in the intrinsic value of the object because of the feeling of possession that is nothing more than an affirmation of one own value in comparison with the others whose desire have not (at least yet) been satisfied. My conclusion is then that in modern society luxury is linked to an experience of possession whose value lies in the exclusion of others from it: possessing and having coincide, arising a sense of vanity, fueled by a claim for generalization of the judgment of luxury made by the actual owner of the good in question. At the basis of it there is not only the temporal distance, but recognizability has also to do with the spatial one to be overcome. Spatial distance is then not the necessary condition as the temporal one, but the sufficient one to fuel such desire of self-realization through exclusion, as previously mentioned. Again, sight and distance are the central medium.

To summarize, in luxury, so my thesis, there is double experience: of distance, as for art in the basic Kantian assumption, and of narrowness, through possession, as in Benjamin's *Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus* (Wiesing, 2019).

5. Conclusion

I have suggested that luxury should be seen as a social form. In particular, luxury should be seen as a form of distance, whereas fashion, which is usually associated with luxury in the usual marketing brand, is a form of imitation. As in any social phenomenon, content and form constitute a unity: the form of distance is related to the object, its content, in order to make the social phenomenon of luxury visible and analyzable. That is why I have spoken of luxury in terms of both an experience and an object. Luxury is then a social form of stratification that has a correlate in personal experience.

On a subjective level, it is nothing more than an aesthetic experience of possession

through the medium of distance, in desire. Nevertheless, the plan of mere experience is only subjective, and it should be converted into a more social perspective based on aesthetics. To put it more clearly, the simple form of distance, without material content, is definitely not an object of social aesthetics. The peculiarity of this approach is that not only form and content are brought together in the social world, but the person is never considered as a microcosm, but always in relation to others. The consequence of this is that the social form of luxury can be used to give cause to social passions such as envy and vanity, because of the medium of sight, but it can also explain a social phenomenon such as the attraction that one person sometimes feels for another person who, for example, wears a brilliant earring. The subjective experience of luxury then leads to a consideration of the actual social form of luxury, which could never have been understood without a preliminary aesthetic analysis. On this basis, a more refined analysis of the role of the aesthetic experience of luxury in modern society, or of the relationship between social passions and such experience, should be undertaken.

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The Aesthetics of Gesture

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ABSTRACT. Each historical era assigns a different function and meaning to the gesture, just as its meaning varies from culture to culture. When we consider the gesture of art, it is also clear that we mean different things by gesture in different artistic fields. Therefore, we can only talk about the aesthetics of gesture in relation to various specific examples, so is necessary to limit the scope of the investigation. In this approach two basic examples will be used, the concepts of Giorgio Agamben and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Firstly, we will discuss the main ideas of the two philosophers on gesture, and then we will turn to the question of contemporary aesthetics. To illustrate our thesis, we will present a cinematic example: an experimental film (*Four Bagatelles*) by Gábor Bódy. Finally, we will ask what the aesthetics of gesture means in the 21st century and what are its ethical implications.

1. Introduction

What is a gesture? Or to be more precise, what do we mean by gestures? Do we mean an expressive movement, especially a hand gesture (as the word 'gesticulation' suggests)? A certain technique of the body or a body language? A facial expression? An extra layer of meaning behind spoken words? A kind of archaic language that allows understanding without knowing any existing languages? Are gestures a tool of argumentation and persuasion, which is perhaps the most important elements in the orator's or actor's speech? Or is it an offering, a gift, a display of nobility, which is the most important passion among the Cartesian "passions of the soul"?

We have to admit that the notion of gesture is ambiguous. The fundamental ambivalence of gesture lies in the fact that it can be seen as both the most natural and instinctive form of

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expression and as a controlled and formalized sign language (Flusser, 2014). It is at the same time precisely legible for those who know the codes and indecipherable for outsiders. We can speak of gesture as imitated or quoted, as Brecht did in his epic theatre (Pavis, 1985) or defined as an infinite process as it manifests in Antonin Artaud's concept of theatre, known as *Theatre of Cruelty,* which states that "we must first break theatre's subjugation to the text and rediscover the idea of a kind of unique language somewhere in between gesture and though" (Artaud, 2010, p. 63).

Each historical era assigned a different function and meaning to gesture, so there were periods, such as the 17th century, when everything became a gesture. Furthermore, its meaning varies from culture to culture (e.g., the use of gestures is completely different in Eastern and Western theatre).

Also, when we talk about the gesture in art, it is clear that we mean different things by the gesture in literature, painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, film, dance, etc. Therefore, we can only talk about the aesthetics of gesture in relation to various specific examples, like gesturalism in painting, mimetic gestures used in pantomime, poetic gestures etc., in other words it is necessary to limit the scope of the investigation.

In this lecture two basic examples will be used, the concepts of Giorgio Agamben and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the first part I will discuss the ideas of the two philosophers on gesture, and then turn to the question of contemporary aesthetics. What does the aesthetics of gesture mean in the 21st century and what are its ethical implications?

2. Agamben's notes on gesture

In his famous essay entitled *Notes on Gesture*, Agamben speaks of the loss of gesture during the fin de siècle. He affirms: "by the end of the XIXth century the gestures of the Western bourgeoise were irretrievably lost" (Agamben, 2007a, p. 149).

But what exactly we mean by the loss of gesture? Agamben gives the example of gait and movement disorders. More precisely, he speaks about a generalized catastrophe of the gestural sphere, which is manifested in the fact that as psychiatrists of the time observed, the patients were incapable of either beginning or fully enacting the simplest gestures, as this was evidenced by the disorders in the sphere of walking. This was underscored by doctors such as Gilles de la Tourette, who noticed that the walker can get stuck between individual steps, and

the process of walking could become disjointed and uncertain. Irregularities of movement were also emphasized in Jean-Martin Charcot's famous Tuesday Presentations, which were public demonstrations of hysteria. Agamben considers the loss of gesture a symptomatic of a civilizational malaise, and he compares this decomposition of movement with the way a camera records motion: as a sequence of separate images.

Nevertheless, we can doubt that walking would be "the most common human gesture", as Agamben states. Why not the movement of the hand for example? And what if the observed movement disorders exist only for the clinical eye?

Agamben also argues, and for us this is one of his most important theses, that "an era that has lost its gestures is, for that very reason, obsessed with them" (Agamben, 2007a, p. 151). Again, the main example is cinema, since "in the cinema, a society that has lost its gestures, seeks to reappropriate what has lost while simultaneously recording that loss" (Agamben, 2007a, p. 154). In this respect, we can quote silent films, like the classics of Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton.

One of the most captivating examples is an experimental film of Samuel Beckett's, entitled *Nacht und Träume*, which Agamben describes as "the dream of a gesture." Beckett himself called this brief piece, written and directed for television in 1982, a *Nachtstück*, as its theme is a dream. In the 10-minute black and white short film we see a man sitting at a table in the classic pose of exhaustion or melancholy (Deleuze, 1992). Schubert's music *Nacht und Träume*, which gives the film its title, plays in the background, initiating the dream sequence, during which the human figure undergoes a doubling: we see both the dreamer and his dream-self. The experience of dreaming fragments the body: the spectral, dreamed hands gently touch the dreamer, while the gestures (drinking, wiping the forehead) refer to the New Testament. Another classic gesture is when the dreamed and dreaming hands touch each other, in the pose of a prayer, evoking one of Dürer's drawings. The dream is followed by awakening; but the same dream starts again immediately, however, this time the dream sequence is seen magnified and slowed down, as if we were entering into the dream. During the second awakening, the dreamed and dreaming selves both disappear. The dream is over. But the question remains: is the end of the dream identical to death?

Of course, we could also take examples from other works of art to emphasise the obsessive search for gestures. It is no accident that the new art forms that are born in this period

(photography, film, modern dance and ballet) deliberately use a strong language of gestures. What can better represent the continuity of movement, or the expressivity of gesture than dance? At the same time, philosophy also imitates dance. Agamben argues that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is "the ballet of a humanity bereft of its gestures" (Agamben, 2007a, p. 152). Or even in the field of art history, the final and unfinished masterpiece of Aby Warburg, the *Atlas Mnemosyne*, is not a fixed collection of images, but a virtually "moving representation of the gestures of Western humankind from classical Greece up to Fascism" (Idem).

It's only after these radically different examples that Agamben attempts to give a new definition of gesture. Following the Ancient Roman philosopher Marcus Terentius Varro, who distinguishes between practice (praxis*)* and creation (poiesis), Agamben proposes a third concept: endurance. For Agamben this term is synonymous with gesture, which is a "purposiveness without purpose" (using a Kantian formula), or a „being-in-a-medium." As Agamben writes:

> Gesture breaks the false alternative between ends and means that paralyses morality and presents means which, as such, are removed from the sphere of mediation without thereby becoming ends. (Agamben, 2007a, p. 155)

In other words, gesture is the exhibition of mediation: it is pure mediation that is devoid of an end goal. Therefore, gesture plays an ambivalent role in art as it is always going beyond itself without representing anything except its own process. Perhaps not surprisingly, Agamben argues that gesture is not a language, but rather a silent expressivity. From this point of view gesture is akin to a gag.

At this point we shall return to the realm of silent films. Let us remember that the original meaning of the word 'gag' is "to choke, strangle" or "to stop a person's mouth by thrusting something into it." Therefore, it can be said that the gag denotes an inability to speak. In silent movies the gag substitutes a linguistic expression by a gesture. The gag becomes a self-presentation or a testimony (witnessing) for oneself. In conclusion, Agamben draws parallels between film and philosophy and declares: "The essential 'mutisme' of cinema (…) is like the mutisme of philosophy, the exposition of the human being's being-in-language: pure gestuality" (Agamben, 2007a, p. 156).

3. Gestures of art

Agamben also treats the problem of gesture in his other works; therefore, this is one of the main themes that can be observed throughout his oeuvre. In particular, the problem of gesture emerges in several essays of his book *Profanazioni.*

To give a few examples, in the essay entitled *The Author as Gesture*, the gesture signifies the author's absence from the text and, at the same time, the author's indelible presence (what Michel Foucault called "author function"). According to Agamben, this gesture enables reading and makes the relationship between the text and its reader possible. Similarly, to the author, the reader also enters into play with/in the text, and, at the same time, remains absent from it.

It is worth noting that Agamben cites an unusual example here, a late project of Foucault's, known under the title *Lives of Infamous Men*. It consists of archival materials of 19th century crimes (prison records, unpublished official documents, protocols, testimonies etc.), and the collected documents aim to present the otherwise forgotten (hi)story of criminals. In the case of these texts we cannot really speak of an authentic author, yet we can see these documents as portraits that bear witness to secret lives. Quoting Agamben:

> Still, as in those photographs from which the distant but excessively close face of a stranger stares out at us, something in this infamy demands its proper name, testifying to itself beyond any expression and beyond any memory. (Agamben, 2007a, p. 94).

Photography as testimony appears also in the essay *Judgement Day*, where Agamben analyses the first photograph in which a human figure appears (the daguerreotype *Boulevard du Temple*). The photo shows him (by chance, due to the long exposure time) in a completely banal and profane situation: having his shoes polished. Yet, it is this everyday gesture that will be immortalised for eternity. As Agamben says, "thanks to the photographic lens, the gesture is now charged with the weight of an entire life" (Agamben, 2007b, p. 35).

Furthermore, the philosopher adds that not only this one but innumerable photographs can be seen as a kind of last judgment, since "a good photographer knows how to grasp the eschatological nature of the gesture" (Agamben, 2007b, p. 36).

Lastly, to close this short overview of the importance of gesture in Agamben's work I'd

like to highlight the importance of the gesture of dance in his oeuvre. It is no exaggeration to say that from *Notes on Gesture* on, in which dance was already referenced by the founding figures of modern dance and ballet, Isadora Duncan and Serge Diaghilev, the connection between dance and gesture is a constant preoccupation of Agamben's. More precisely, he is most interested in the potential for action in dance. In his philosophical approach, dance is conceptualized as the most suitable mode of expression for the pure potentiality of the human body. Dance emancipates the human body from conventional movements and gives new modes of using bodies.[87] For this reason, dance is not only one art form among many others, but as Agamben argues in his book *Karman*, it is the paradigm of the unworking body and free life.[88]

To sum up, we see that for Agamben a gesture is first and foremost a silent expression, a self-revelation and a testimony, and therefore always has ethical implications, considering that Agamben's ethics is an ethics of testimony.[89] We could even say that for Agamben gestures belong to the field of ethics rather than aesthetics.

4. Between ethics and aesthetics

This ethical aspect links Agamben to Wittgenstein's ideas on aesthetics. In his writings, Agamben makes several references to Wittgenstein, and *Notes on Gesture* ends by quoting him:

> The Wittgensteinian definition of mysticism as the showing of what cannot be spoken is a literal definition of the gag. And every great philosophical text is the gag that displays language itself, being-in-language itself, as a giant memory lapse, as an incurable speech defect. (Agamben, 2007a, p. 156)

While it may seem provocative to compare one of the most quoted passages in the history of philosophy to a silent film gag, Agamben's aim is to emphasise the imperfection and inadequacy of linguistic expression.

Before moving on to the second part of the presentation, which is a discussion of

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[87] "It is an activity or a potential that consists in deactivating human works and rendering them inoperative, and in this way, it opens them to a new, possible use" (Agamben, 2018, p. 84).
[88] "Dance is the perfect exhibition of the pure potential of the human body" (Agamben, 2018, p. 82).
[89] On Agamben's ethics of testimony or bearing witness see *Homo Sacer III (Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive)*.

Wittgenstein's ideas, there is one more important point to be made. In the context of the aesthetics of gesture we have talked about the aesthetics of Agamben, but the question has to be asked whether a real aesthetic theory can be attributed to this author.

As I tried to show in several of my writing as well as in my book *Enigmas: Giorgio Agamben's Aesthetics* (Darida, 2021) the question of aesthetics and aesthetic experience never disappears from Agamben's theoretical horizon from his first book *The Man Without Content*, which speaks of the destruction and refoundation of aesthetics to his latest works like *Studiolo, Hölderlin's Madness,* or *Pinocchio*, which are commentaries of paintings, poems and tales. However, as we have already seen, in his view aesthetics rather belongs to the silent realm of presentation, testimony and expression beyond words, and therefore has no theory. According to Agamben our attitude towards art is not so much aesthetic as ethical provided that by ethics we do not understand a set of dogma or morality, but rather a certain form of a happy and good life. Consequently, aesthetics as an experience of art is inherently part of a broader form of life.

5. Wittgenstein on ethics

Speaking of Wittgenstein's aesthetics, we are also talking about his ethics if we take seriously the only aesthetic thesis of his first major work, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1922), which states that "ethics and aesthetics are one and the same" (6. 421). This does not mean that they have the same subject matter, but that both are beyond the limits of language ("It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental", 6.421). In other words, both ethics and aesthetics belong to the realm of the inexpressible.

Nevertheless, during his years at Cambridge as a guest professor Wittgenstein gave lectures on ethics (c. 1929-30) and aesthetics (1938). He did not treat these as separate disciplines rather investigated their basic concepts, the good and the beautiful, which can be applied to multiple subjects and therefore could lead to misunderstandings.

In the following I will try to outline some of the main theses of these two lectures. The rather brief *Lecture on Ethics* begins with a statement affirming the link between ethics and aesthetics: "Now I am going to use the term ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called aesthetics" (Wittgenstein, 2014, p. 84).

Next, instead of "an enquiry into what is good"[90], Wittgenstein defines ethics as an inquiry into the meaning of life. He shows that we attribute several meanings to the same expressions: for example, relative (trivial) and absolute (ethical) meaning. This is how we can talk about a "good" chair (in the everyday sense, in which it serves a certain purpose) and a "good" life (in an ethical sense). However, while on the one hand every judgement of relative value is a mere statement of facts, on the other hand, there is no statement of facts which can imply a judgement of absolute value. Consequently, our expressions to which we attribute an ethical sense or value are based on a misuse of language.

According to Wittgenstein, the real ethical experience consists of the astonishment of "how extraordinary [it is] that the world should exist" (Wittgenstein, 2014, p. 90), whereas the linguistic expression of this is meaningless or nonsensical, since it violates the limits of language. Quoting his argument:

> To say 'I wonder at such and such being the case' has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. (Wittgenstein, 2014, p. 91).

He also emphasizes that this kind of "misuse of language" characterises all ethical and religious expressions. Nevertheless, at the end of his lecture he gives them a particular defence or apology. This passage is worth quoting at length:

> That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and, I believe, the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it. (Wittgenstein, 2014, p. 96-97).

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[90] As Moore defines ethics in his *Principia Ethica* (1903), and Wittgenstein's lecture mainly argues with this.

This quotation clearly shows the importance that Wittgenstein attaches to ethics in human life, which cannot be expressed in words.

6. Wittgenstein on aesthetics

Few years later, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, the philosopher does not touch on the traditional basic problems of aesthetics either, like the question of aesthetic judgement, or the question of taste. Instead he emphasises the situation in which we learn to use aesthetic expressions like "good" or "beautiful". He underlines that "one thing that is immensely important in teaching is exaggerated gestures and facial expressions" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 2).

Therefore, aesthetic judgement is partly a matter of following rules, and the value of art is not independent of the given environment and culture. Quoting Wittgenstein:

> The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgement play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultural taste, you have to describe a culture. (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 8).

This also shows that aesthetic judgement is always part of a language game, and "an entirely different game is played in different ages" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 8).

However, our real aesthetic judgments (likes or dislikes) or our artistic competences are usually not expressed in words. Wittgenstein reminds here that the correct interpretation of a Klopstock poem is expressed in finding its rhythm, as in reading aloud. As he describes it,

> the important fact was that I read it again and again. When I read these poems I made gestures and facial expressions, which were what could be called gestures of approval. But thing was that I read the poems entirely differently, more intensely, and said to others: 'Look! This is how they should be read.' Aesthetic adjectives played hardly any role. (Wittgenstein, 1967, pp. 4-5).

It can be said that our real aesthetic reactions, such as the feelings of distress, confusion or even satisfaction that we feel upon seeing, reading or listening to a work of art, are hardly expressed in language, but rather in gestures (e.g., the feeling of 'Oh, yes!' or 'Quite so!' during the performance of a piece of music). The impact of art on us is indescribable, inexpressible in words, and can only be measured by our reactions, which can also be misinterpreted. That is

why art remains an enigma even for Wittgenstein.

7. Gestures of life

The concept of gesture can also be found in Wittgenstein's other writings, such as in the texts left behind in his legacy, later published as *Culture and Value*. In these notes, the question of gesture is primarily related to architecture and music. On architecture, Wittgenstein writes: "Remember the impression made by good architecture, that it expresses a thought. One would like to respond to it with a gesture" (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 28). He also adds that "architecture is a gesture" (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 28).

In relation to music, he confesses: "The musical phrase is a gesture to me. It creeps into my life. I make it my own" (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 89). He illustrates this with an example:

> And again to a piece of music that I know (completely) by heart; and it could even be played on a musical box. Its gestures will still remain gesture for me, although I know all the time what comes next. Indeed I may even be surprised afresh again and again. (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 89).

It is worth underlining that he also uses a dance analogy in context of musical interpretation when he claims that "understanding and explaining a musical phrase – the simplest explanation is sometimes a gesture, another might be a dance style or word describing dance" (Idem). This analogy may remind us of the thoughts of Agamben, for whom dance was the gesture par excellence: the paradigm of all human action and of a happy life.

It is necessary to emphasize that although in Wittgenstein's view ethics or aesthetics are not disciplines, they still have a defining effect on our everyday practices, or represent a particular lifestyle. Many analyses underline the ethical content of Wittgenstein's entire oeuvre, where ethics is manifested in action (e.g., his volunteering to fight in the war, or to act as a public educator). Yet, art also played an important role in his life. Music in particular, since during his childhood several composers (Johannes Brahms, Clara Schumann, Gustave Mahler, Richard Strauss) visited his family home, and his brother Paul Wittgenstein was a famous pianist. Wittgenstein himself played the clarinet; so, it is no surprise that he mostly used musical examples in his writings. He was strongly interested in the parallels of musical, mathematical and architectural thinking, since each of them is characterised by constructions. On the practical level Wittgenstein also demonstrated his talent as an architect: he built a

country house for himself in Norway and a modernist house for his sister in Vienna. He also showed an interest in photography and experimented with sculpting. As a writer, his style was far from being mannered, instead it was characterised by simplicity, precision and a particular sense of rhythm (he often emphasises that his sentences should be read at the correct tempo, i.e., slowly). His literary taste was rather conservative (he was an avid reader of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky), but he used his inheritance to support contemporary poets (he offered scholarships to Rilke and Trakl). According to one of his most enigmatic notes, "really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem" (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 28).

These biographical data show how a philosopher can make ethics and aesthetics his own way of life.

8. Reflections

Towards the end of the presentation, it must be asked again why Wittgenstein's and Agamben's ideas on gesture are relevant from the perspective of contemporary aesthetics? What could an aesthetics of gesture mean based on Wittgenstein's and Agamben's ideas?

Nowadays, in the first third of the 21st century, we talk a lot about gestures in relation to a wide variety of artistic disciplines, but perhaps most of all in relation to postdramatic theatre and dance.[91] Traditional aesthetic categories like 'beauty' or the 'sublime' have long ceased to describe these new performances, nor do aesthetic judgements apply to them, and we cannot expect everyone to like them "without interest".

From the Kantian criteria of universality, necessity, disinterestedness and purposelessness, gesture as we have seen with Agamben can be identified with a "purposiveness without purpose". Every real work of art is a self-revelation, and as aesthetes we can only convey this. However, we cannot expect that our aesthetic judgement, or rather our free choice will correspond to the taste of others. We cannot expect that the audience will like or dislike a work of art in the same way either, or we cannot be sure that we all have a similar aesthetic experience. Still, I believe that presentation and transmission are important tasks, a kind of testimonies or witnesses to the works of art. Here we return to the two

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[91] As Hans-Thies Lehmann declares in his *Postdramatic Theatre*: "In dance we find most radically expressed what is true for postdramatic theatre in general: it articulates not meaning but energy, it represents not illustrations but actions. Everything here is gesture." (Lehmann, 2006, p. 163).

philosophers, who claim that aesthetics and ethics are one and the same (Wittgenstein), or a genuine artistic gesture is an ethical gesture (Agamben).

I am convinced that aesthetics as a way of life characterises everyone, it is just that we aesthetes are perhaps more reflexively aware of it. In one of his last books, *Studiolo*, Agamben writes about the time spent ('dwelling') with works of art as the authentic form of a happy life. Therefore, one must imagine the aesthete happy, who performs the process of presenting and transmitting works of art as an infinite gesture.

9. A "bagatelle" ending

I thought a lot about what example I could use to illustrate and conclude my presentation, and finally I have chosen not some contemporary work, but an experimental film or a series of etudes, the *Four Bagatelles* (BBS, 1972-75) by Gábor Bódy.

These film-studies were made within the framework of a "Film Language Series" organised in 1973, in which the participants came from various fields of Hungarian avant-garde, including fine arts, music and film. Among the film's creators we can find Ilona Keserű, Lászlo Vidovszky, or Krisztina Chatel.

The main theme of the four more or less independent film etudes is the "meaning-modification" resulting from the framing of a picture, hence the subtitle "Removings". All of these etudes raise both the issue of film language and the more general question of what we mean by language. At the same time, the problem of language is linked to gesture, since Bódy identifies the gesture as the origin of language. Furthermore, the theme of dance is present in most of the etudes. To quote the director:

> The motifs of the first 3 etudes are a kind of dance as a basis – like human manifestation. Dance is a border case when, with his or her body/movement, articulation brings oneself into a state which is at the border of existence and expression, and which reflects both sides. According to Vico, gesture is the beginning of language. (Bódy, 1987, p. 91).

In *Four Bagatelle* we can see a folkloristic dance, an artistic rehearsal and a very specific and

weird dance (the dance of a drunk[92]), all in front of an electronic image reflection created by cameras and monitors, in which we can also see a kind of nonhuman dance, and which was the model of Bódy's study "Infinite Image and Reflexion". It is important to point out that the four etudes do not form a complete work of art. As Bódy sees it,

> The etude-series of the *Four Bagatelles* are irregularly disrupted by or connected with empty frames and numbers indicating that the film-maker does not regard the possibilities as closed, completed.

This quotation shows exactly the gestural nature of the film.

In this presentation, we moved from one film (Beckett's silent film) to another (Bódy's film study). In the Beckett film, we underlined the indecisive ending: we do not know whether the protagonist has fallen into a new, deeper or a final sleep, while Bódy also emphasises the unfinished nature of his work. This is not by coincidence, as one of the most important theses of the aesthetics of gesture is the essential indeterminacy of works of art.

In several works, Agamben argues that a work or art is never finished, but is only interrupted at a certain point by its creator. This incompleteness, however, is not a mistake, but a gesture that addresses the interpreter and invites him to reflect further. At the same time, and this is another important feature of the aesthetics of gesture, no interpretation can ever be finished or completed. As we know from Wittgenstein, it is always possible to look at a work of art from a different perspective, and it is precisely this infinity that makes aesthetics a form of life, which is as open and full of possibilities as a gesture.

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[92] "The third study consists of only two shots: we can see the dance of a drunken man in the first one and a sociologist's lecture on drug addiction in the second one and with the extension of the frame we realise that the lecture is being listened to by the drunk (...) the basically serious performance gives a completely different effect when the object of the references – the alcoholic – as well appears on the picture." (Idem) It is obvious from the short synopsis that Bódy's film is also a gag.

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Pitches and Paintings: A Conferralist Theory of Art

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ABSTRACT. This paper attempts to motivate a new theory of art, termed the *conferralist theory of art*, derived from the conferralist theory of social categories as advanced by Ásta (2018). According to the theory of art proposed here, artefacts are conferred the new property 'art(work)' by institutional authorities based on those authorities perceiving the artefact to have certain base properties (whether or not the artefact actually instantiates these properties). Communal conferrals, I argue, cannot successfully confer the property 'art(work)' as a *new* property of the artefact. Following the successful institutional conferral, the artefact — now artwork — gains new enablements and constraints that it did not possess prior to the conferral. While this theory meets the core desiderata often proposed of a theory of art, it diverges in an important way: it does not propose to offer a solution to borderline cases or cases of disagreement by way of definitive artistic or non-artistic status. Rather, it shows why disagreement and borderline cases matter. As such, the account tracks the uncertainty and messiness of determining artistic status, without sacrificing explanatory power in classificatory terms.

1. Introduction

Many platitudes admit themselves of the definitional project in aesthetics, the most informative of which (and agreed upon) are that we want a theory of art to be *classificatory* — to tell us what counts as art and what does not — and *evaluative* — to tell us why we care about, or value, art. Some other desiderata present themselves, perhaps in virtue of the *classificatory* desideratum, relating to being mistaken, disagreement, and borderline cases, namely that we want these resolved such that artefacts fit nicely on either side of the art/not-art division. I think this is a mistake. We should not attempt to produce a theory of art that, for *ad hoc* reasons,

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resolves the messiness of our classificatory practices in art such that it neither accurately nor faithfully tracks common, observable contention. Instead, we should aim for a theory of art that maintains the uncertainty and messiness, without sacrificing explanatory power in classificatory and evaluative terms, by investigating what is significant or interesting about these uncertainties. A theory of art, then, has the following desiderata:

> **D1**: It should tell us what is art and what is not.
>
> **D2**: Without sacrificing an explanation of why we care about, or value, art.
>
> **D3**: It should explain how we can so often be mistaken about what is art (Fokt, 2017).
>
> **D4**: It should show why disagreement and borderline cases arise and tell us why they are significant if disagreement is not resolved.

Here, I introduce an original theory of art termed the *conferralist theory of art,* based on its namesake theory of *social categories* introduced by Àsta (2018). I argue that the conferral of the property *art(work)* has the following profile:

> **Conferred property:** art(work).
>
> **Who:** institutional authority (themselves having that institutional authority via institutional conferral).
>
> **What**: judgement as deployed through relevant mechanisms of institutional role.
>
> **When**: in the context of the authority's institutional role.
>
> **Base properties**: repetition, amplification, or repudiation of the narrative of art (Carroll, 1998).

This gives us a solution to D1. What is notable, indeed laudable, about Àsta's *conferralism* is that what matters is not so much the conferred property, but the *significance* — cast in terms of *enablements* and *constraints* in treatment and entitlements — that the object or agent gains following the conferral. Exposing what these are for artworks gives us a solution to D2. Moreover, Àsta draws a distinction between *institutional* and *communal* social properties, and I argue that artworks can only be institutionally conferred (which requires the whole profile

above to be met) and, therefore, that *communal* conferrals are always unsuccessful. This gives us a solution to D3. Finally, insofar as more weight is placed upon the significance — enablements and constraints — that follow a conferral or failed conferral, we are provided a solution to D4: what matters when people disagree about a conferral is not whether or not the artefact obtains that property, indeed, I do not think there is a determinate pull either way. Instead, what matters is that the artefact is treated differently by different people who do or do not confer. As conferralism provides D1-D4, thereby satisfying the classificatory and evaluative desiderata whilst tracking the messiness of artistic classification, it stands, I think, as a serious contender for a theory of art.

2. Social Properties: Conferred, but not Spooky

I want to make a (brief, in the interests of space) sidestep before we start: aestheticians get cautious when there is talk of social construction, kinds, or properties, in their domain. Instead, aestheticians would feel much more settled and content if artworks did not depend upon them or their attitudes about the artefacts for their existence. This is despite, of course, the fact that artworks are introduced *for* and *to* persons *by* persons (Höge, 1990; Reddy, 2018). Nonetheless, it would be fruitful to produce a brief sedative. That something is *ontologically* subjective — its existence is mind-dependent — does not (necessarily) render it *epistemically* subjective — facts, research, and value are not real, objective, or worthy in that domain — nor does it place that thing in a "spooky realm outside the natural universe" (Mason, 2016, p. 842; see Searle, 2006, for the distinction between ontological/epistemic subjectivity/objectivity). Instead, as Khalidi protests, something's being mind-dependent is a "red herring" in discussions of objectivity (2015, p. 11), and we can "maintain that our discourse about [social kinds] is truth apt" (Mason, 2016, p. 844), if not for the observation that social kinds are entities brought into existence for our valuing, use, wellbeing, coordination, and so on, by our own intentional action (Mason, 2016, p. 846). They are the hallmarks of human activity and, in at least this author's eyes, if anything is to have value in this world beyond bare sustenance of our biological wellbeing, it is surely those things created by social creatures for social creatures to pursue social and valuable ends. If that isn't convincing, then consider how itches depend on you for their existence — they are ontologically subjective (Searle, 2006, p. 55) — but that doesn't

stop you taking them seriously and scratching. We should do the same with — take seriously, perhaps not scratch — artworks.

Peacekeeping in place, let's look at *conferralism*. Àsta's account tells us not just what social properties are and how they are ascribed to (conferred upon) things and agents, but performs that classificatory pursuit with reference to what makes the properties significant. When a property is gained via conferral, the agent or thing gains not only the property, but certain enablements and constraints in what it can do and how it is treated. To a large extent, having a social property simply *is* having certain enablements and constraints (Àsta, 2018). The basic structure of conferral is: the conferred property, who does the conferring, what makes the conferral/how it takes place, when (and where) it takes place, and the base property/-ies tracked in order to confer (Ásta, 2018, p. 8). For baseball pitches being strikes, for example, the profile is:

> "**Conferred property:** […] being a strike.
>
> **Who**: […] the baseball umpire.
>
> **What**: […] the umpire's judgement.
>
> **When**: [….] in the context of a baseball game.
>
> **Base property**: […] the physical trajectory of the ball." (Àsta, 2018, p. 8).

The property of *being a strike* is conferred upon the pitch by the umpire on the basis that the umpire *perceives* the base property of the appropriate trajectory in the context of the baseball game. Importantly, the pitch is a strike *so long as the umpire says so*: it does not matter whether, nor need it be the case that, the ball actually tracked — and thereby instantiated the base property of — the relevant trajectory as declared in the rules of baseball. And, in performing such a conferral, "the new baseball fact that the pitch is a strike" is created (Àsta, 2018, p. 9), and in turn the role that strike plays in the baseball game.

As Àsta suggests, conferralism has advantages over other accounts of social properties. Consider constitutionalism, most notably Searle's "X counts as Y in C" (2006, p. 58). On this view, a pitch counts as a strike if it has the relevant trajectory, regardless of the umpire's call. Here, then, the "umpire's job is purely epistemic: he is supposed to discern what the baseball fact already is" (Àsta, 2018, p. 10). If this was the case, then we'd need to inflate our inventory

of properties to account for detected and undetected strikes, where only the former play a role in — have significance for — the game. But, if the property is missed or undetected, this means that there are strikes existing in the game that simultaneously do not play a role in the game. This is undesirable, as fans would therefore have to accept a faulty method for figuring out baseball facts (Ásta, 2018, p. 10). Moreover, it provides *prima facie* support for the claim that the conferral does ontological work: why think that *x* counts as *y* in *c* if it isn't actually counting — as in the case of undetected strikes — as *y* in *c*? If we don't detect the strike, then it ultimately *doesn't* count as a strike in *c*, and so it doesn't count as a strike in the context of the game to, in the first place, result in the conundrum of being a strike that is undetected.[94]

A distinction is then drawn by Àsta between those social properties *institutionally* and *communally* conferred. The former are conferred based on one's position within an organisation or institutional structure — things like chief executive, referee, editor, and so on — and are conferred by someone else within that institution that has appropriate authority within the context of that institution. Consider, for example, the declaration of a new President of the United States (Àsta, 2018, p. 22). The conferred property is *being the President,* via the speech act of the vice president, on January 6th following the November election, tracking the base property of having received 270 or more electoral college votes (Àsta, 2018, p. 22). By contrast, *communal* properties are conferred upon us by other members of our community in such a way that we are "thrown into categories by no one in authority, and often against our will. Yet, we are constrained and enabled by our placement in these categories" no less (Àsta, 2018, p. 18). The crux of the distinction is that institutional conferrals depend on *authority*, but only *standing* really matters in communal cases. For a communal property to be conferred, an agent must have standing or make deference to someone who does. For example, when conferring someone as *popular*, she who does the conferral must have herself some form of standing to perform such a conferral, and this standing "can have its source in a variety of sentiments that others have toward the individual in question" (Àsta, 2018, p. 20). Standing thus produces a safeguard against more *laissez-faire* conferrals, and instances such as a major number of conferrers, lacking standing, attempting to confer a social property against a smaller

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[94] Àsta gives further examples of her account's advantages, as well as over more accounts than just constitutionalist ones, but these are beyond this paper's scope.

number, with standing, not conferring the given property. The entity will not be confered as having the property as the members of the community with standing do not confer the property, despite the majority (lacking standing) attempting to confer.[95]

Finally, then, conferred properties come with enablements and constraints; possibilities and impossibilities that, prior to the conferral, were unavailable or not present: a conferred property "comes not only with rights and privileges, but with duties and responsibilities" (Àsta, 2018, p. 17). A good example of this is, again, popularity. In the high-school cafeteria, popularity opens up a certain level of power, *enablements*: you can sit where you like, you can take lunch money off other kids, you can "say or do things that others can't" (Àsta, 2018, p. 20). Being uncool or unpopular, of course, comes with the inverse *constraints*; you can't sit where you like and you can't take away other kids 'lunch money. In institutional cases, a chief executive has new powers to fire people, to change salaries, and so on. What it is to have a social property, on Àsta's account, "*just is* to have the constraints and enablements in question" (Àsta, 2018, p. 29). These enablements and constraints grant social properties their *social significance* (Àsta, 2018, p. 44). Tracked or perceived base properties become socially significant just insofar as they contribute to the conferral of another property that then opens up constraints and enablements. So, Àsta's account offers us not only an account of how social properties and categories are attributed to persons, but why these social categories or properties matter, that is, their opening up of constraints and enablements.

3. D1, D2: Conferralism about Art

What can baseball strikes tell us about paintings? My proposal is that artworks are conferred their status institutionally by those with (institutional) authority, tracking (*perceiving*) the base properties of *repeating, amplifying* or *repudiating* the narrative of art (Carroll, 1998). *Communal* conferrals of art either track the base property of having been institutionally conferred, or are using art metaphorically, maybe in a "like art" or "resembles art" sense. But in all cases communal conferrals are unsuccessful in legitimately ascribing — and thus opening the artefact up to the enablements and constraints as a result of possessing — the property *art*

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[95] I note that Àsta does not have much to say about what constitutes *standing*, beyond the relative intuitiveness of her popularity example. This is noted by Griffith (2020), too, who suggests Àsta may benefit from the employment of Haslangerian social structures and schemas. As communal conferrals and their contention do not play a significant role in my account, I leave the question of what constitutes *standing* open.

as a *new* property of that thing (communal conferrals tracking institutional conferrals do not grant the work a *new* property). Here's the profile of the institutional conferral of art again:

> **Conferred property:** art(work).
>
> **Who:** institutional authority (themselves having that institutional authority via institutional conferral).
>
> **What**: judgement as deployed through relevant mechanisms of institutional.
>
> **When**: in the context of the authority's institutional role.
>
> **Base properties**: repetition, amplification, or repudiation of the narrative of art.

One major contention with the original *institutional theory* is that it leaves unclear who exactly counts as authority-enough to say what is art. I think this is only the case if one wants to ensure that persons acting outside the context of concrete institutions dealing with art — i.e., in the community — can do some conferring, which on my account is not a possibility. This is contained within my proposal that not only are conferrers those institutional authorities that have had their authority institutionally conferred, but so too that the conferral must take place within the context of their institutional role. Consider, for example, a critic writing a column, a curator hanging a portrait, or a dealer selling a sculpture. This is the kind of thing Davies (1991) and Fokt (2013) have in mind in their discussions of the *artworld* and artworld-institutionality, but I do not subscribe to the claim, by Fokt, that anyone can describe themselves as an institutional member should they deem *themselves* to have the relevant cultural knowledge (2013, p. 644). Rather, what is common amongst institutional members in my account is that their institutional authority is itself an institutional property (some higher person with institutional authority conferred their role upon them) *and* their actions that confer status are all undertaken within the remit of that institutional role. In the sense of the practice and social phenomenon we are typically talking about when we say something is art, all that matters are what institutional people do within their institutional contexts. And, it's because these people have these institutional roles that they are in the best position to identify, at least in their *perception*, when an artwork repudiates, repeats, or amplifies the art narrative (Carroll, 1998). What binds artworks together is their relation to the narrative of what has preceded them, what might come next, and their conferral as doing so.

I will show why communal conferrals are unsuccessful in consideration of D3 in the following section. For now, one worry might be that restricting conferrals to institutional authorities in institutional contexts does a disservice to the knowledge and capabilities of institutional authorities acting outside their institutional context, or subsequent to their departure of their role. After all, it seems absurd to say that they lose knowledge and classificatory prowess when leaving the building for the day, or even when retiring. These worries are easily dissipated, however, when we think of enablements and constraints. Consider when a foul is alleged to have occurred in a soccer game and the VAR decision is pending. Commentary teams will often defer to a referee who is not an official in the current game to gather their opinion whilst the on-pitch and VAR referees are deciding. The commentary-referee may judge the incident a foul or not, but that they do plays no role in the soccer game. All that matters for the game, and the enablements and constraints following the conferral of the foul or fair play, is the decision of the on-pitch and VAR referees. The commentary-referee's (attempted) conferral does not give the scenario a new property that has enablements and constraints within the soccer game. Now, perhaps an ex-art-institutional authority decides to write a column in an arts magazine about a new work, and this is how they are attempting to confer. Notice, though, that this is simply an institutional authority acting within an institutional context — they are no longer an 'ex' institutional member. Lastly, if the institutional member attempts to confer outside the context of their institutional role — say, in conversation about some artefact with other parents on the sideline of their daughter's football game — then the artefact does not gain the relevant enablements and constraints. Rather, it is only when the authority moves into their institutional context and acts within it that their conferral grants the artefact the enablements and constraints.

What kinds of constraints and enablements does the (institutional) conferral of art open up the artefact to? Quite a few. Artworks are opened up to particular and peculiar — indeed rigorous — modes of assessment (the artwork no longer needs to achieve some utilitarian success, or functional gain), some frameworks and categories of assessment matter more when the artwork is conferred so (form and stylistic conformity, for example), the artefact or event might be afforded certain moral protections (consider how the court would react to your suggestion that your masturbating in public was art, versus Acconci's *Seedbed* [1972]), as well as physical protections that, when breached via iconoclasm or vandalism, evidence the

significance of art (consider recent outrage at Channel 4's *Jimmy Carr Destroys Art*). Artworks are also entitled to fetch prices inflated far beyond mere material cost, and, artworks continue a long lineage of their predecessors in doing what they do and being treated the way they are. Artworks are considered to have social significance insofar as they open up new pathways to experience things, they require specific treatments, are entitled to certain modes of engagement, and continue a socially significant practice. And, these are entitlements that *prior to conferral the artefacts did not have*. What carves out a distinction between Pollock's *Number 1A* (1948) and your knocking over tubes of paint onto a canvas is, quite simply, that the former is treated in certain ways, and entitled to certain things, because it has been conferred within an institutional context by an institutional authority. That is, Pollock's work is socially significant, it matters in the context of the institutional practice — yours is not, and does not.

It is this social significance, these enablements and constraints, that tell us why and how we care about art: the particular and peculiar modes and frameworks for assessment, the use of certain terms to describe the work, the favouring of enriching experience over functional utility, perhaps even its economic power. And, importantly, we care about art because, upon conferral, an artwork continues a socially significant narrative: a narrative that contains things with specific enablements and constraints. One issue with defining art is meeting the evaluative desideratum (D2) without sacrificing the existence of *bad* art. This is because if we define art (D1) in terms of what is valuable about it (D2), then either art is art and has that value, or it does not have that value and thereby cannot be art. Hence, all art is valuable *qua art*, and there is no bad art (see, e.g., Hanson, 2017). On the conferralist picture, artworks are valuable because of their enablements and constraints, alongside their continuation of that narrative. No *one* particular value is the source of artistic value — value *qua art* — and all artworks are valuable (perhaps *simpliciter,* or *qua art narrative*). Consequently, works can be appalling, morally contentious, or formally repulsive, and be bad *qua art:* bad in terms of some properties or determinants we typically assess something with regard to when we've conferred it as art. Nonetheless, they are significant because they are treated in certain ways, entitled to these treatments, and continue a socially significant narrative. *Guernica* is *good art* because of its form and its ethical and political criticism. A sketch by Picasso that should never have surfaced, or indeed Picasso's more contentious works, are bad *qua art*, but they are valued because of their status within the narrative should they be conferred as art. Hence, conferralism tells us

what counts as art and what does not — via conferral — and tells us why we care about art — via enablements, constraints, and the continuation of a socially significant narrative — thus satisfying D1 and D2.

4. D3, D4: Classificatory Conundrums and Conferralist Clarifications

4.1 "Anything can be art these days!"

The scale of disagreement and uncertainty in aesthetics' classificatory project is matched only by the corresponding confusion in our everyday encounters with the newest art. We are often befuddled by what the artworld next says is art: Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1503-6) and Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853) are lumped into the same category as dead sharks, things that are and are not pipes, and crustaceans-as-telephones. Two problems arise here. First, we disagree with the institutional classification: surely *that* can't be art. Second, we make claims of absurdity, "anything can be art these days", attempting to render the concept meaningless by way of attributing artistic status to, say, eyeglasses mistakenly left in the gallery space. Now, Fokt (2017) provides us with a simple and convincing response to the former issue. When we disagree with institutional conferrals based on radically diverging works, we're just applying different narrative timepoints, inappropriately, in our assessments. So, of course *Lobster Telephone* (1938) does not repeat, amplify or repudiate the works of Renaissance portraiture, but it *does* repeat, amplify, and repudiate themes running from Dada and expression, coupled with developments in psychoanalysis, to make a paradigmatic offshoot of surrealist painting. When people look at, and disagree with the conferral of, many works of contemporary art they mistakenly compare them with a romantic, fine, high art conception of representationalist painting. And we need not spend too much time grappling with the uncertainties arising from absurdity claims. When making claims about anything being art, it is most likely that the interlocutors know the stating person is being disingenuous — they don't really *mean* that anything can be art, just that they're pressing for something that unites *Lobster Telephone* (1938) and *American Gothic* (1930). And here, we can simply loop back to Fokt's cultural-comparative timepoints and criteria resolution.

However, the anything-can-be-art dictum does pose a threat for another reason. Suppose we want to contest — as I am sure at this stage many readers do — that sometimes we do

genuinely attempt to communally confer art. Instances, for example, such as our children's finger-paintings, or even Zangwill's (2007) cases of our holiday snaps being art. When it comes to cases like this, the anything-can-be-art dictum might be said to serve as a, very weak, justification — a kind of last resort for the communal conferrer. Some of these cases can be nullified by, as Matravers (2013) identifies, acknowledging that our use of *art* in these cases is metaphorical, we are using art in a *like art* or *resembles art* way. We don't really mean that our daughter's finger-painting should be hung next to, and compared or analysed in similar ways with, *The Starry Night* (1889). Indeed, if we were to pit the finger-painting against such evaluation, the results — unlike the finger-painting — might not be so pretty. Matravers (2013) also notes that these metaphorical instances are useful for deploying hyperbolic praise of the artefact. I think this, too, is correct, but can be cashed out in terms of enablements and constraints. We (metaphorically) describe things as art that matter to us *in our context* to grant those things enablements and constraints that have *significance in our context*: pinning the finger-painting to the fridge, making attempts to prevent its destruction via the dog's gnashers, framing the holiday snaps and donating to them a sentimental-symbolic kind of value. But the point is that these enablements, constraints, and significance are contextualised to what matters for *us* in *our* context, and not for an institutional context. Perhaps one last protest might be that we are *genuinely* conferring when, say, we have painted something which we intend to submit to a gallery or to our agent for consideration in an upcoming exhibition. Though, why are we submitting it? Audience, perhaps. Exposure, of course. But really, we're trying to access the enablements and constraints of the institutional label, displacing the ones mattering in our smaller, personal context. And the very act of submission to the gallery or agent presupposes that it's only (really) *art* when those submissions have been successful.

4.2 "But they're (basically) identical!"

A conundrum that often worries aestheticians in the classificatory project is indiscernibility, or even identity. In our everyday practice, this comes in the form of the exclamation in the subheading, or perhaps "I could have done that!". Suppose you construct some Brillo boxes and send them off to a gallery. Why should Warhol's be art, but yours not? I think this provides significant motivation for looking outside intrinsic, and towards relational, properties of artefacts to assign artistic status. The conferralist answer is that no one really cares about your

Brillo boxes — they haven't received the enablements and constraints that accompany a conferral. Now one might appeal to the process before, rather than after, conferral: if they're the same thing, why confer one but not the other? The repudiation, repetition, or amplification is the same, so the base properties are the same. What matters, though, is the *perception* of the base properties for conferral. Your latter boxes don't match up to the relevant base properties, they've been done before. We see, then, that the conferral itself does ontological heavy-lifting; it just *is*, alongside the resultant enablements and constraints, what makes something an artwork. In fact, conferralism actually allows that you *could indeed* have done that. But, of course, you didn't, and your Brillo boxes don't get the enablements and constraints.

Fortuitously, this provides a resolution to a dilemma in art classification that would arise were we to adopt a constitutionalist approach rather than conferralist, akin to that of pitches that are detected as strikes and those that are not. If we used *solely* the base properties to confer art — and not their *perception* and *contextualised* conferral — then we'd have lots of artworks that are legitimately, on the constitutionalist account, artworks but do not have significance or play a role in the artworld. In this way, there would be artworks surrounding us that no one, in a realistic sense, actually cares about, subverting the requirement that a theory of art tell us why we care about art. The point is that it is the enablements and constraints that matter. Here, we can see a resolution coming through for conferralism against Wollheim's (1987) dilemma. This dilemma is that either institutional authorities have reason to confer something art, or they do not. If the former, we should use those reasons (rather than the conferral itself) as our theory of art. If the latter, well, it's no theory at all. But, of course, it is the conferral beyond the base properties (the reasons) that does the ontological work, giving rise to the enablements and constraints. Without the conferral, we enter into quite redundant an uninteresting classificatory practice through which things that don't have the relevant social significance — enablements and constraints — are counting as art in the context without, just like undetected strikes, really counting as art in the context. It is the conferral, not just reasons for it, that make something art and thereby make it matter.

4.3 "I don't know who to believe!"

If we accept all of the above clarifications of our uncertainties and disagreements, we look to be in a pretty rosey position in the classificatory project. Save, of course, one glaring issue.

Institutional members by no means agree about what is and what is not art, no less than what is good and bad art. So, if one institutional member confers, but another does not, who are we to believe? Conflicting communal conferrals can be resolved by *standing*, as we saw, but we can't make such recourse in institutional cases. We need not look far for such an instance occurring in art history. Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) was, of course, conferred as art by himself and fellow Dadaists, but rejected — or *suppressed* (Cabanne and Duchamp 1987) — by the Society of Independent Artists. For the latter, it was "immoral, vulgar […] plagiarism" (Anonymous, 1917, p. 5). For Duchamp and fellow Dadaists, it spurred critical reflection on art practice, criticism, and standards in America. Artworks could now be merely "CHOSE[N]" (Anonymous, 1917, p. 5). We can explain the non-conferral of the Society as their not perceiving the relevant base properties: "if no connections can be found between a new work and the practice, we would have no reason to call it art" (Carroll, 1988, p. 149). But for Duchamp, the lack of connection, the outright contradiction, and thus repudiation, were precisely where the relevant connection, and thereby base properties, could be perceived.

Whereas this explains the *conflicting* conferrals, it doesn't tell us with whom to side, and therefore whether *Fountain* is or is not art. But that isn't what is needed here; it's not what is interesting. What is interesting — and what *matters* — about social kinds are the causal consequences that follow conferral and non-conferral. The way, that is, that things are treated afterwards in terms of enablements and constraints. What matters, then, is that different people treat different things in different ways based on different social category conferrals. And this is evidenced in what did indeed follow the attempted conferral and non-conferral of *Fountain*; the Society suppressed and criticised it, whereas Duchamp and the Dadaists lauded its criticality of the art historical narrative, including what we take art to be. And conferralism's solution to D1-D3 paints a significantly accurate picture of what's happening in cases such as *Fountain*'s. Critics may write of the most appalling art, the formalistic failures, art that has little artistic *value*; but it *is* art, because it has been conferred, and they write of these works as art subsequent to such a conferral (D1). They matter, though, for a socially significant narrative that grants things enablements and constraints (D2). And, although we might question these institutional agents and what exactly they're up to granting such status to, literally, *The Lights Going On and Off* (2000), our questioning does not matter (D3). Only their perception of base

properties in their institutional context with their institutional authority, and the enablements and constraints that follow, do (D1-D4).

5. Conclusion

To suppose that a theory of art should neatly provide a resolution to borderline cases and to cases of institutional disagreement is a mistaken move. We should not look for determinacy where there is observably not any to be found. To do so is to assume the premise of an "ideal world" wherein "categories are clearly demarcated bins, into which any object addressed by the system will neatly and uniquely fit" (Bowker and Star, 1999, p. 10). But this isn't how things are: "[n]o real-world working classificatory system" can or may work in such a way (Bowker and Star, 1999, p. 11). What matters in cases of disagreement, uncertainty, and indeterminacy is precisely that there is disagreement, uncertainty, and indeterminacy. To provide a resolution to these cases is, essentially, to suck some of the fun out of the classificatory pursuit and not "accurately reflect the messiness of many of our interactions" in category attribution (Àsta, 2018, p. 24). In this paper, I have shown that conferralism about art can do much explanatory work in showing us what counts as art and what does not (D1), why art matters (D2), why we are so often mistaken in communal conferrals (D3), and why disagreement and uncertainty matter (D4). We should, I think, take social ontology seriously in aesthetics, something for which I hope this paper serves as a foothold.

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Different Levels of Narrative Pictorial Content

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ABSTRACT. There seems to be a puzzle: all three of the following sentences appear to be true: (1) Single pictures can be narrative; (2) Time sequences are an integral part of narratives; (3) Single pictures cannot represent time sequences. To solve the puzzle, one of the sentences has to be wrong and in need of adaptation. In this paper I argue that sentence (3) is wrong, and I argue that single pictures can represent sequences of time and therefore can be narrative.

But if pictures can be narrative, *how* can they be narrative? How is it possible that single pictures, without words, can transport a narrative content? There are three options: (a) the narrative content is depicted; (b) the narrative content is represented; or (c) the narrative content is conveyed by (using) pictures in some other way. For sentence (1) to be true, either option (a) or option (b) must be possible. With the help of examples, I show that it is possible to formulate semantic rules that take us from a depicted content to a represented narrative content and thereby offer an account that provides a solution to the puzzle and the subsequent *how*-question.

1. Introduction

Most people may intuitively agree that even single pictures can transport narrative contents. Advertisements, cartoons, istoria paintings, or war photographs are just some of the very different categories to which—depending on the specific example—some level of narrativity is attributed.

But when one looks more closely, there seems to be a paradox: the following three propositions all seem equally true, but they are mutually inconsistent:

1. Single pictures can be narrative.

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2. Time sequences are an integral part of narratives.

3. Single pictures cannot represent time sequences.

Which of the three propositions is wrong and needs to be adapted?

The first option is to tackle the first proposition: either there are no narrative single pictures, or it is not the picture that represents stories, but rather image viewers who associate and co-narrate on the basis of a given picture. If either of these possibilities are correct, then the first sentence is wrong and in need of adaptation. The conclusion would be that single pictures cannot tell stories. This is not uncommon. Lessing (2016) [1766] famously claimed that the difference between a painter (or sculptor) and a poet is that the latter has a medium at hand that is useful for telling stories, and they can describe actions and developments, while the former cannot. The painter (or sculptor) needs to choose the most fruitful moment of a scene. They can make a moment of a scene visible but are not qualified to represent a story that develops over time.[97]

The second option is to confront proposition (2): Is time really an integral part of stories? Can't there be a narrative without the representation of time sequences? If this attack is successful, the conclusion would be that definitions of narrative should exclude the temporal aspect. Time sequences would not be an integral part of stories.

The third option is to challenge the third proposition. Even though static pictures are arguably atemporal, it might be possible that they *somehow* represent some element of time. The common approach would be to give up proposition (1).[98] In this paper, I take a different route. I argue that propositions (1) and (2) are true, and that proposition (3) is wrong and stands in need of adaptation. This goes against what could be called "the traditional view" (see (Gombrich, 1964) and (Marchetti, 2022).

I think it is possible for single pictures to be narrative. I think that narratives necessarily include the aspect of time sequences. And I think that there can be content *of the picture* that represents time sequences. This paper can therefore be seen as an argument in favour of the ability of single pictures to be narrative and to represent this narrativity in a semantic way.

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[97] Compare (Marchetti, 2022, p. 353) and the introduction to (Speidel, 2020). See for example (Titzmann, 1990) for a similar stance to Lessing.

[98] For an overview of some prominent positions that move in this direction and a discussion thereof, see (Marchetti, 2022, pp. 353–54).

2. *What* makes pictures narrative?

What exactly a narrative is remains contested and there are many different definitions around. But there seems to be a consensus that time sequences are an integral part of narratives. Now, there have been different labels proposed for this. Klaus Speidel, for example, called it a "temporal relationship"(Speidel, 2013). And there are more demanding accounts on narrativity (about which there is almost a consensus). So, here is just one representative of narrativity: "A narrative is a text that presents two (or more) events as temporally ordered and meaningfully connected." (Köppe, 2014, p. 103)

I think it is not possible to have a definition with necessary and sufficient criteria. But I have proposed elsewhere that for a picture to be narrative, it necessarily needs to represent an event and a time sequence (Fasnacht, 2023). I also think that there are paradigmatic cases of narrative pictures, and that for these paradigmatic cases, the following narrative characteristics can be detected[99]:

- At least two events (or one event and one situation)
- Time sequence
- Unifying subject between the events
- Bridging connections between the events (causality, etc.)
- Display of intentions (of a character)

3. *How* Can Pictures Be Narrative?

Now, if single pictures can be narrative, which is what I want to show, how can single pictures transport so many things?

There seem to be three options:

(a) The narrative content is depicted.
(b) The narrative content is represented.
(c) The narrative content is conveyed by (using) pictures in some other way.

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[99] Compare (Fasnacht, 2023) for the relevant discussion and argument.

Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* depict sunflowers. An image depicting a blindfolded woman holding a set of scales in certain contexts represents justice. And we can use pictures to convey a meaning. For example, when I see a bird, the picture of the same kind of bird in a field guide can help me decide what kind of bird it is that I see. Or the picture can be used as evidence when I say that I see an eagle.

Now, for narratives, one can imagine countless stories on the basis of some picture. One could imagine how Van Gogh's sunflowers were picked and put on the table, who arranged them, etc. But the picture does not give any evidence for such a story.

So, for *pictures* to be narrative, either (a) or (b) must be true. The narrative content either needs to be depicted or represented by the picture through some depicted things. For only then is it a semantic content of a picture, and not just circumstantial meaning or pure imagination on the part of an image viewer.

So, how can one show that pictures can represent time sequences and narrative contents? I think there are at least two ways to do this: either to look for meaning that is context-independent; or to see whether certain semantic rules could be formulated that establish the content of time sequences. Both these options allow us to attribute the content to the picture. A certain content is then not just imagined on the basis of a picture, but rather the picture transports such a content via pictorial means.

John Kulvicki has done something similar. In his book *Modeling the meaning of pictures* (Kulvicki, 2020), he argues that one could formulate semantic rules that get us from a depicted content to all different kinds of contents, metaphoric or iconic ones, for example. So, to stay with the example from before, Kulvicki proposes that if a picture depicts a blindfolded woman holding a set of scales and a sword, then the picture represents justice.

Now, narrative content does not concern Kulvicki. But his suggestion about semantic rules that govern certain pictures might be useful to explain how pictures can represent narrative contents and how they can represent time sequences. So, the basic model of a semantic rule that can be generalized from this is: If a picture depicts X, then the picture represents Y in a certain context.

Is a similar thing possible for *narrative* contents? And for the contents of *time sequences*? I think so. And in the following I will propose how such semantic rules might look.

4. Semantic Rules

I do not suggest that the rules I propose are universal and apply to every picture tradition everywhere in the world. Not at all. But I suggest that for many picture traditions, such rules could be formulated.

There seem to be three steps to undertake when looking at examples:

1. Does the rule apply? Is this particular picture from a picture tradition where such rules or this specific rule applies?

2. Is the antecedent met? Does the picture depict what is the input of a specific rule?

Now, if the answer to the previous two questions is yes, one can go on to ask:

3. Is the generated output content correct? This last step is the evaluative process if one wants to consider whether the rule is formulated correctly or whether it is in need of adaptation.

5. Semantic Rule R1: "Emotional Reaction"

A first option of what such a semantic rule could look like is Rule R1, which I call "emotional reaction":

• R1: If a picture depicts a subject as feeling an emotion E, then it represents the subject as reacting with E to some occurrence.

When looking at examples, we ask: Does this rule apply? Is it from a picture tradition where such rules govern? And is the antecedent met?

Figure 1. Quentin Blake, 2017, "Musicians in March", detail from *All the Year Round*, by John Yeoman.

In Figure 1, emotions are depicted. The adults are depicted as feeling an emotion. How can we be sure about this? The facial expression and the body posture indicate so.

Now, there is some empirical research on how to detect emotions or which facial expressions correspond to which kinds of emotions, most famously by Paul Ekman (1970). So, I just take it that if one can see that a person is feeling a certain emotion in real life, one can in theory also see a subject depicted as feeling an emotion (if the right moment is chosen).

The easiest cases where this rule applies are pictures where the occurrence, to which the depicted emotion is a reaction, is visible – both visible for the image viewer and visible for the depicted subjects. In this example, the occurrence is the children's band performance.

Another example is a painting by Goya (Figure 2). We see a focal subject, highlighted through the white shirt and the composition, depicted as feeling an emotion. We can also infer what occurrence triggered the emotional reaction, namely the execution of the people on the left and the possible execution of the subject himself.

Figure 2. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, 1814, "Los fusilamientos del tres de mayo".

This example shows that the rule can govern more than once in the same picture. The man in the white shirt is not the only one who is depicted as feeling an emotion. The facial expressions and body postures of some other subjects also support the judgment that several people are depicted as feeling emotions. Now, in this example, the different subjects are represented as having emotional reactions because of the same occurrences or events.

But this does not have to be so. In the much lighter example by Ali Mitgutsch (Figure 3), the rule applies too, and the antecedent is met several times as different subjects are depicted as having an emotion. But the represented emotional reaction is about different occurrences here. Happy, because they are being put on a shoulder; angry or startled, because some water

is being poured over them; frightened, because they are being pushed over; contempt, because they are being covered with sand.

Figure 3. Ali Mitgutsch, double spread of "Mein grosses Wimmelbuch", 2019.

But there are complications for the rule.

First, what about examples where the occurrence is not specified? When the image viewer does more work in interpreting a certain picture? In Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (Figure 4) one cannot be sure whether the depicted subject, who is depicted as feeling an emotion, is feeling this way because of something it sees that is not visible for the image viewer because it is outside of the frame, or whether it is the fear of walking over bridges or the general state of the world that triggered such emotions.

So, is this a picture that represents a subject having an emotional reaction towards some occurrence, which is just not clearly specified? If so, then it would not pose too big a problem for the rule. But if it is a painting that represents someone as feeling a certain emotion just so, not as a reaction towards some occurrence, no matter how big or small, then the rule may need

adaptation.
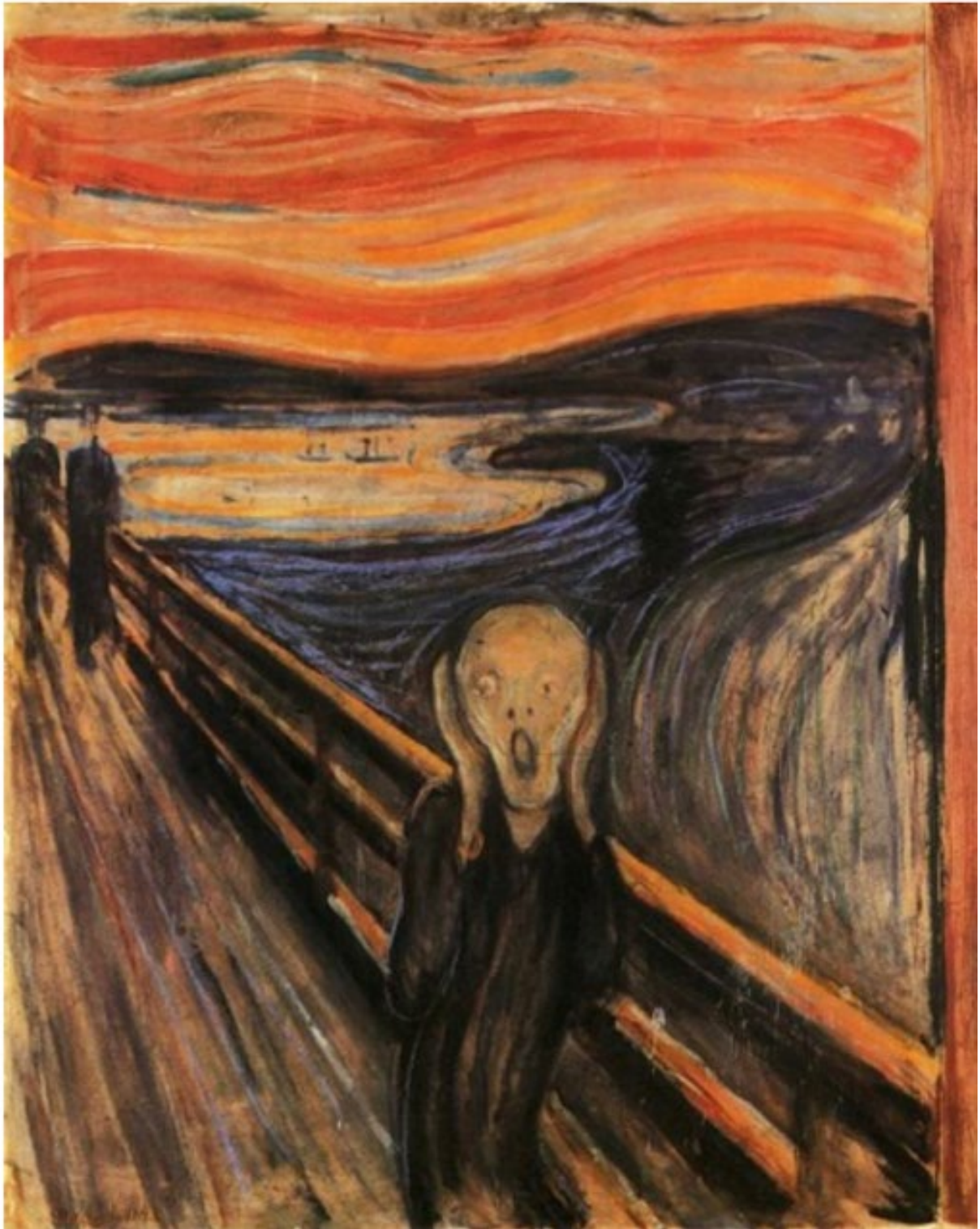
Figure 4. Edvard Munch, 1893, "The Scream".

A second complication for the rule arises from cases like the drawing below by Charles Le Brun (Figure 5), where the intention was to find out what it looks like to have certain emotions – what muscles are activated in the face, for example. The subject is here not represented as having an emotional reaction to something, probably, or if so, it is towards something rather unspecified.

Figure 5. Charles Le Brun, 1727, "Fear".

I will set these worries or complications aside for the moment but will return to them after presenting the other rules. This is because these worries can be systematized into more general complications that apply to more than just this rule.

These complications aside, R1, stated as is, seems to govern in quite different kinds of examples and seems to be correct.

So, a next question is: does the output content of the rule – in this case a subject having an emotional reaction because of some occurrence – does this content establish a narrative content? Does it get us to the narrative content of time sequences?

It certainly establishes the content of time sequences. So, the rule establishes an order of what happened before and what happens after, for example, being pushed over in Figure 3 being the reason for the emotional reaction; it orders the two states into a sequence.

Now, does the generated output content of R1 establish a narrative content in the more demanding way? This depends on the specific example. But an occurrence and an emotional reaction towards this occurrence can be seen as at least one event, if not two events. And there is some causal connection between the two states. So, the consensus view on narrativity can be secured through the output of the rule, and the near-consensus view, that a narrative consists of two meaningfully connected events that are temporally ordered, can be secured in many examples too.

5.1. Semantic Rule R2: "Goal-directed Actions"

Here is another possible semantic rule, R2:

- R2: If a subject S is depicted in a posture characteristic of (i.e. distinctive to) the goal-directed action A, S is represented as performing A.

When looking at examples, again the questions are: Does the rule apply to this example? Is the antecedent met?

Figure 6. Rembrandt, 1625, "The Stoning of Saint Stephen".

In the above Rembrandt painting (Figure 6), the rule applies and the antecedent is met. The different men are depicted in a posture that is characteristic of throwing. This example shows that a posture that is characteristic of a certain goal-directed action can look different in each depiction.

Again, the clearest examples are cases where the goal is visible for the depicted subjects and for the image viewer. And if certain tools or objects are necessary to reach a goal, then the depiction of these things makes it even clearer.

Figure 7. Quentin Blake, 1984, detail of "The Story of the Dancing Frog".

In Figure 7, the frog is depicted in a posture characteristic of jumping (at least for frogs). If it were a kangaroo, then the posture would need to be different. So, the rule is general enough to allow for all these different ways of how a certain posture that is characteristic of a certain action looks for a certain subject. Again, here, the goal, the water, is depicted and visible both for the subject and for the image viewer.

Figure 8. Quentin Blake, 2009, "Slightly Foxed", Cover of Slightly Foxed Issue 24, 2009.

In another example by Quentin Blake, Figure 8, we see two different rules at play. R1, the emotional reaction, governs because of the subject in the blue top, and R2, the goal-directed action rule, governs because of the fox.
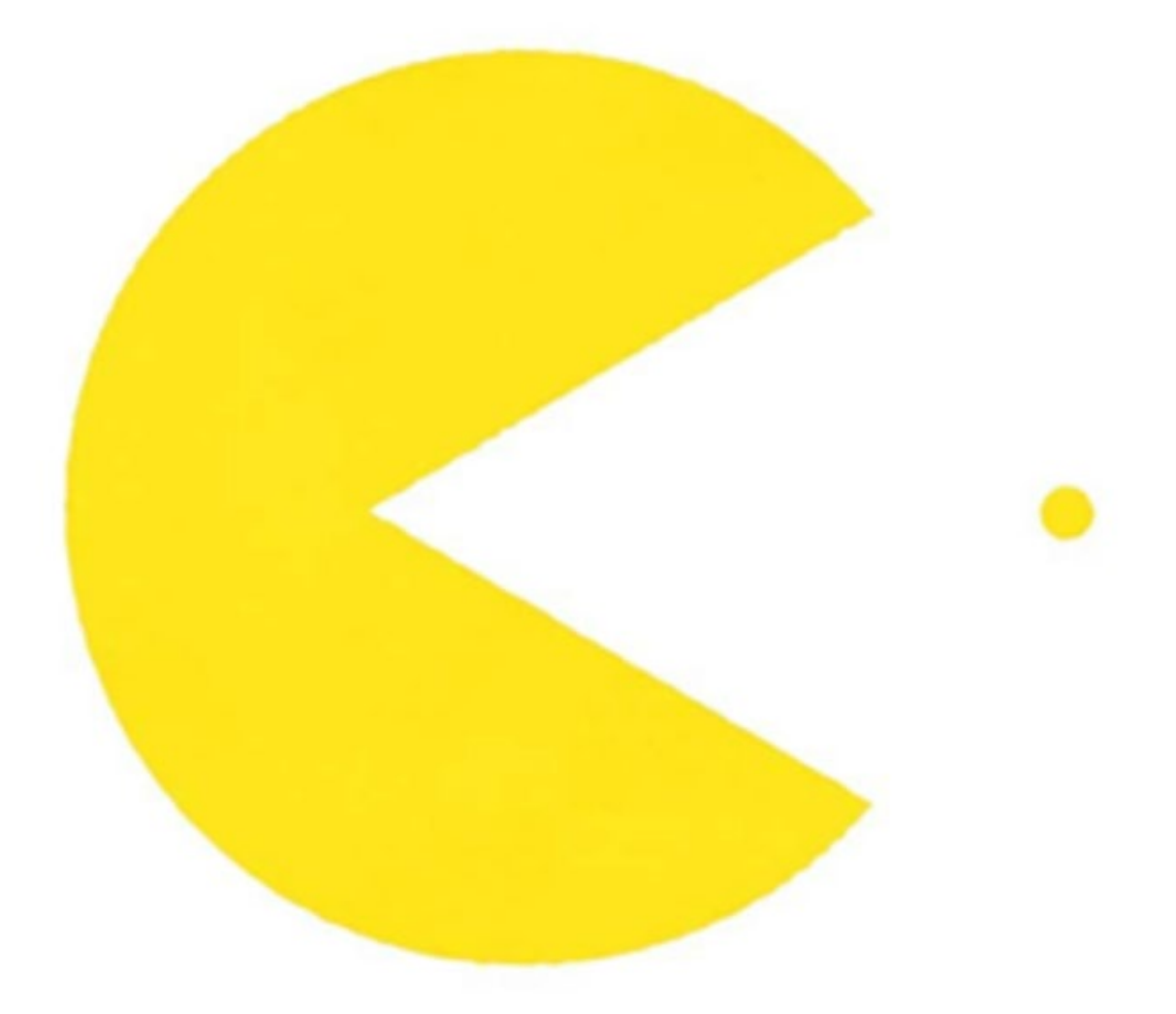
Figure 9. (Source unknown)

A worry could be that this rule only addresses human or animal subjects. But this need not be so. This Pacman figure in Figure 9 can be seen as depicted in a posture characteristic of the goal-directed action of hunting the little dot. The position of the object in relation to the little dot can be seen as a posture characteristic of the former hunting the latter.

Now, does the generated output content establish the content of a time sequence? Yes. It establishes the sequence from aiming to reach a goal until some moment (short of) either missing or reaching a goal.

Does the generated content by R2 also establish a narrative content understood in the more demanding way? This depends on how meaningfully connected the events that are connected have to be. And it depends on how actions and events relate. If a goal-directed action

is represented, an event is represented at the same time. Indeed, according to some authors, actions (and also goal-directed actions) are a sub-category of events (Casati and Varzi, 2020). Therefore, the generated content of this rule does secure the narrative content of an event. It may even secure the narrative content of two events in some examples.

It seems possible to say that at least two events or states are generated: the moment depicted, and the moment of reaching or failing to reach the goal. There is a unifying subject between these events; there is some bridging connection between these events, for example a causal one; and intentions are represented too. So, it seems that even paradigmatic cases of narrative content are established through the output of this rule.

5.2. Semantic Rule R3: "Same Subject"

A third rule is the following:

- R3: If a subject S is depicted more than once, then the picture represents S at different moments in time.

Now, again, the two questions: Does the rule apply? Is the antecedent met? Paradigmatic cases of where this rule applies are pictures that represent holy figures in Western medieval art.

How to decide whether one is correct in taking subject A to be the same as subject B? It helps to look for cues like clothing, hair, and other bodily features that distinguish one from another. In Figure 10, the halos and the gowns of the kings indicate that the three kings are depicted four times. So, the output of the rule is that the kings are represented at different moments in time. This seems to be correct.
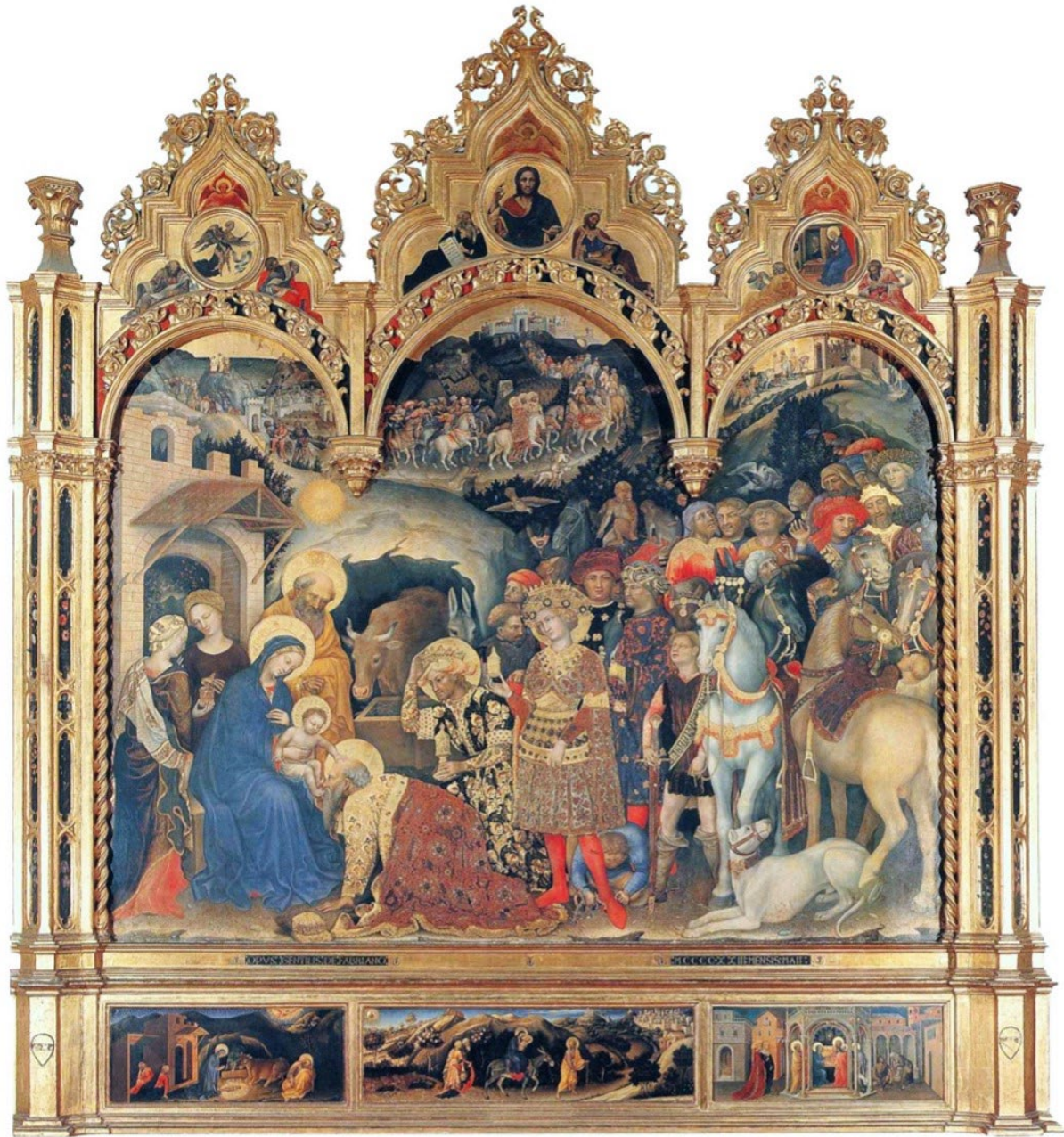
Figure 10. Gentile da Fabriano, 1423, "L'Adorazione dei Magi" (Strozzi altarpiece).

If no background knowledge about a pre-existing story is available, it can sometimes be tricky to judge whether the input condition is met. For example, in this picture by Bartholomäus (Figure 11), there are two possible and valid readings. First, that it depicts the same subject seven times; second, that it depicts seven different subjects. In one reading, according to this rule, it is the same subject at different points in time. One can then also find an additional

metaphoric meaning of the different stages of a life. In the other reading, it is a representation of different subjects at the same time, for example a family with grandfather, father, and sons of different ages. Thus, sometimes it is difficult to decide whether the input condition is met. But if one thinks that it is met, then, at least in this example, it can be said that the rule governs and that the output that is generated is correct.

Figure 11. Bartholomeus Anglicus, 1486, "Stages of Life".

There are cases that complicate this rule. I want to mention three: First, "impossible" stories; second, nested images through reflections like mirrors and "pictures inside pictures"; and third, triple portraits. Let me take each in turn.

1. Impossible stories. Stories where the same subject can be at two different

locations at the same time. (Think of Hermione in *Harry Potter*, when she has the watch.) I will get back to this complication at the end.

2. Nested images. Either in a mirror, some other reflection, or through a picture in a picture:

Here, in Figure 12, one could argue that there are two different pictorial spaces represented. One is only a reflection. So, one might either want to adapt the rule to exclude such cases or one could say that the rule only applies in cases where the subjects are present in the same pictorial space.

Figure 12. Fernand Toussaint, 1952, "Devant Le Miroir".

3. Triple portraits. The third case of potential counterexamples are portraits where a subject is depicted more than once but where it seems at least questionable that the subject is represented at different moments in time (for example, Figure 13). At first, it looks as if these portraits act similarly to mirror-scenes, as they show a subject from different perspectives. But they have a crucial difference, namely that all subjects are part of the main pictorial space.

Figure 13. Philippe de Champaigne, 1640, "Triple Portrait of Cardinal de Richelieu".

There are different ways to address these potential counterexamples. One could explicitly exclude cases like triple portraits in the formulation of the rule, or one could argue that these are cases where the intention of the image was not to depict the same subject at different times,

but rather at the same time (or in a rather timeless way).

Leaving the complications aside for the moment: Does the output content of the rule establish sequences of time? Yes, it certainly does.[100]

Does the output of this rule establish a more demanding narrative content? Not necessarily, as it is not specified that these two moments in time are events. But in cases where there are two events represented, the rule provides at least the narrative characteristic of a unifying subject and time sequences.

I think we are now getting the hang of it, that is, of what such semantic rules could look like. But it seems important to note that different rules could be formulated to get to the same or similar output, and that there can be more general and more specific rules. For example: To get to the represented output of "movement", or of a subject/object moving from A to B, at least two different rules could be formulated. Here is a suggestion:

5.3. Semantic Rule R4: "In the Air"

One of these rules could be:

- R4: If an object is depicted as being in the air (with no attachment to something stable), then the picture represents this object as moving from A to B.

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[100] A note of caution might be due, as one might want to question whether it is really a single picture, if the same subject is represented twice. But for the ones who would define a single picture with the help of "syntactic" features, like one vehicle, or one canvas, or one piece of paper, or one frame, the rule provides further evidence that single pictures can represent sequences of time (and that they can be narrative).

Figure 14. Quentin Blake, 1965, detail of "The Clown".

In Figure 14, for example, the papers are going to fall down at some point.

Exceptions to this rule are fictional stories where gravity does not apply.

But in general, the rule establishes a time sequence and can, in certain cases, represent an event.

5.4. Semantic Rule R5: "Traces"

Another rule to get to the same output could be R5:

- R5: If a picture depicts traces next to an object that match (i.e., that are consistent with) part of the object's shape, then the picture represents the movement of this object from A to B.

Such traces can be rather conventional or artificial. For example, in Figure 15 we see a line behind the arrow. But one does not normally see such lines behind objects that are moving (perhaps with the exception of airplanes). So, these, like three lines (sometimes called moving lines), are conventional ways for traces.
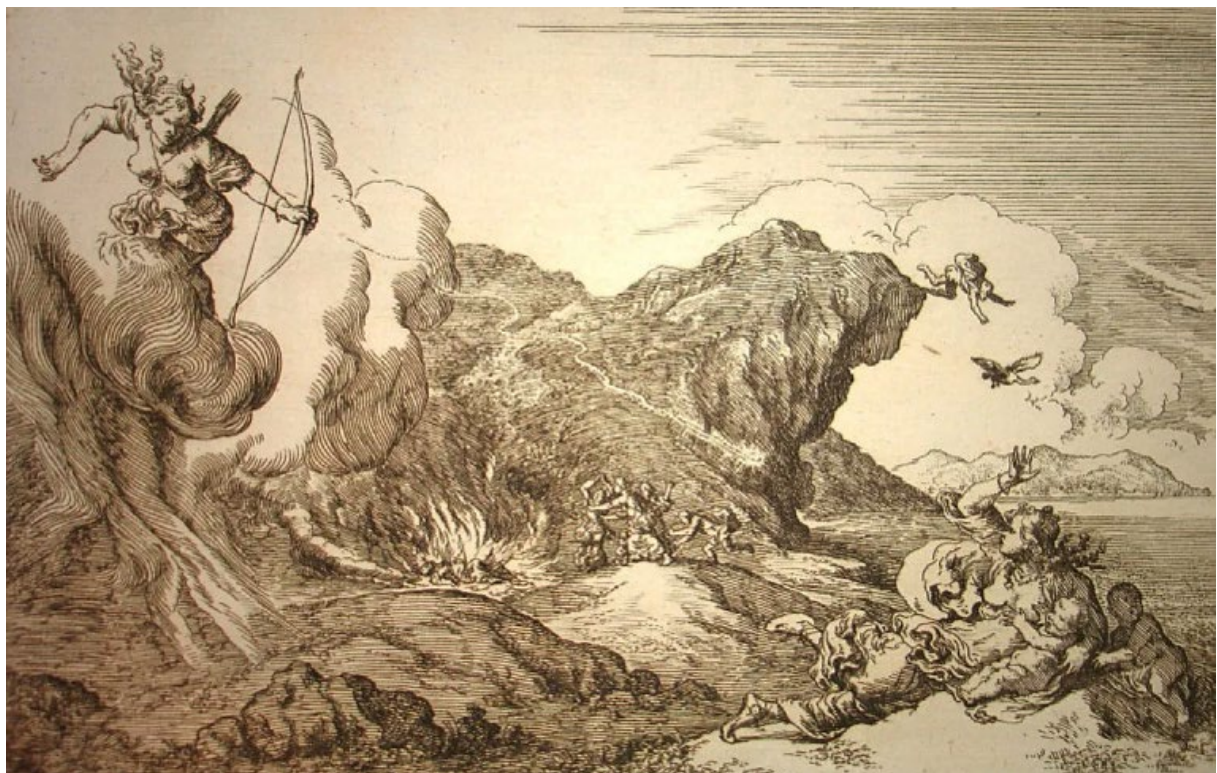
Figure 15. Johann Wilhelm Baur, ca. 1639, "Chione", engraving for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

But there are also more natural ways that are similar to how we see things in real life. In Figure 16, we see footsteps in the snow that indicate a movement from one point to another.

Figure 16. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565, "Hunters in the Snow (Winter)".

So, does the output establish time sequences? Yes. Does it establish the more demanding narrative characteristics? Not necessarily.

5.5.

To recap and for convenience, here are the five proposed rules again in one place:

R1: If a picture depicts a subject as feeling an emotion E, then it represents the subject as reacting with E to some occurrence.

R2: If a subject S is depicted in a posture characteristic of (i.e. distinctive to) the goal-directed action A, S is represented as performing A.

R3: If a subject S is depicted more than once, then the picture represents S at different moments in time.

R4: If an object is depicted as being in the air (with no attachment to something stable), then the picture represents this object as moving from A to B.

R5: If a picture depicts traces next to an object that match (i.e. that are consistent with) part of the object's shape, then the picture represents the movement of this object from A to B.

Now, this list is not complete; there are surely countless others that could be formulated. But already the fact that it is possible to formulate these rules – that get us from a depicted thing to a represented sequence of time – supports my claim that single pictures can be narrative and that single pictures can represent sequences of time.

6. Exception Groups

Throughout this paper, I mentioned some exceptions or complications to certain rules. It seems possible to generalize and systematize these cases of complication into two groups: first, cases of fictionality and impossibility; second, cases where it is important to appeal to the image maker's intention.

A first group of cases are problematic because the represented content involves story elements that are fictional or impossible. When such stories are represented by pictures, it seems at first to pose a threat to all rules. Here are some examples:

•For R1: Cases where facial and bodily expressions mean something entirely different. There could be a story world where someone smiling means that that they are angry or sad, or where the smile is entirely decoupled from emotional states, or where subjects do not have emotions, etc.

• R2: Cases where certain actions are performed differently or where bodies work differently when performing something.

• R3: Cases where people can be at different places at the same time.

• R4: Cases where there is no gravity in the story world.

• R5: Cases where there is no causality or time works differently.

In general: cases where some element in the story world does not behave as it should according to the rules. In such cases the reality assumption that everything in the story world behaves the same way as in the real world is not correct, as things behave differently.[101]

A second group of exceptions can be formulated as cases where the intention of the image maker contradicts what the rules prescribe the picture to convey. Through appeal to the image maker's intention, the best sense we can make of what a specific picture represents is not what the rule prescribes, even though the picture is from a system where the rule applies and the antecedent is met.

This can be seen as a threat to all rules too:

• R1: Cases where the intention was to study how facial muscles behave when one feels a certain emotion.

• R2: Cases where the intention was to show how bodily features look when performing a certain action, or when one is in such and such a position characteristic of a certain action.

• R3: Triple portraits, where the intention was to portray someone from different perspectives or angles.

• R4: Where the intention was to show something in the process of falling.

• R5: Where the intention was to study how a footprint (in the snow) looks, what shapes it has, etc.

So, to formulate it more generally: cases where the picture maker wanted to either study, show,

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[101] When we encounter narrative representations, we are guided by the "reality assumption" (Friend, 2017). If there are no elements that suggest otherwise, we think that gravity holds or that people can only be at one place at a time.

or illustrate how certain things (have to) look if they represent X.

In both exception groups, the best sense we can make of a given picture is not what R1–R5 prescribe the picture to represent. The difference between these groups is that in the first case, the image maker wants to transport some kind of narratively relevant content, whereas in the second case, they do not. In both cases, the intention of the image maker is relevant: in one case, it is because the aim is not to tell a story; in the other, the aim is to tell a story, just a really strange one.

7. Summary

All the semantic rules I have developed here secure the narrative characteristic of time sequence. This is essential. It shows that single pictures are able to represent time sequences, and that proposition 3 from the beginning needs alteration. It also shows that single pictures can be narrative. The narrative content can be represented through pictures, when certain semantic rules, like R1–R5 are governing. All the rules establish the crucial narrative content on which all narratologists agree: the representation of a time sequence. Some establish even more narrative characteristics.

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What's the "New" in "New Extractivism"? Tracing Postdigital Aesthetics in Vladan Joler's Assemblage

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ABSTRACT. This study critically examines Vladan Joler's work *New Extractivism: An Assemblage of Concepts and Allegories* (2021) with a specific emphasis on its aesthetic dimensions. The investigation seeks to address the following questions: How does the term "new" in *New Extractivism* manifest previously unexplored ideas? To what extent can the characteristics of postdigital aesthetics be discerned in this artistic work? Traditionally, the term "extractivism" has been associated primarily with the exploitation of the earth's resources and its biosphere. However, Joler's work emphasizes that today it has assumed an additional layer of significance and refers to the exploitation of individuals as reservoirs of data because of the traceability of their online activities. While the concept of extractivism acquires a novel connotation within the postdigital context of our era, I contend that there is nothing particularly unprecedented about it in terms of aesthetics. Instead, its roots can be traced to Jack Burnham's *Systems Esthetics* of the 1960s. At that time, a profound enthusiasm for technology and a firm conviction in the value of its swift advancement were prevalent in the art world, which sought to establish an interdisciplinary foundation that encompassed art, science, and technology. This paper further explores Joler's allegories of the digital space, a compilation comprising thirty-three concepts and ideas aimed at elucidating the significance and interrelationships of the graphics employed in his assemblage. It concludes with an analysis of a selection of these ideas from two distinct perspectives: first, from the theoretical framework of Jack Burnham's *Systems Esthetics*, and second, from the contemporary theory of James Bridle's *New Aesthetic*.

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1. Introduction

I encountered the work *New Extractivism* by Vladan Joler during a visit to the Biennale Warszawa in June 2022 for my PhD research on socially engaged art and its relationship with digital networks within the postcommunist context. The piece struck me as a compelling illustration of the art world's transition from its initial enthusiasm for the internet as a groundbreaking artistic medium to its current skepticism and focus on the challenges it presents.

Notably, the accessibility of the World Wide Web in the 1990s has assumed particular significance in former Communist countries. The collapse of the Soviet Union engendered a disconcerting situation, as Boris Buden elucidates in his book, *Zone of Transition*. Individuals found themselves suspended amid the ruins of an old society, with the foundations of a new societal order yet to be firmly established. This liminal space represents a moment of profound political significance, subjectively experienced as a loss of societal cohesion. It manifested as an unsettling state of existence. The emerging generation of young artists faced a void devoid of substance (Buden, 2009, p. 84). Additionally, the former Communist countries encountered economic challenges when they were integrated into the democratic and neoliberal system. Within this context, the digital world appeared as an easy, accessible, and promising arena, offering opportunities to explore the concept of freedom, foster cross-global connectivity, cultivate new forms of collaboration, and immerse oneself in a vibrant, posthuman era.

Two decades ago, Vladan Joler played an active role in the Serbian hacker scene and served as the inaugural artistic director of the Exit festival. The vision of the internet during that period starkly differed from its present state. Joler elucidates that, at the time, it was conceptually idealized as an open and decentralized system that facilitated communication without intermediary centers of power. However, as the new millennium dawned, significant capital inflows transformed and commodified the internet. Currently, internet users find themselves ensnared within a system dominated by large centralized platforms, such as Facebook or Instagram, that act as intermediaries. The hopes and expectations pinned on social media platforms as organizational tools capable of inciting revolutions against authoritarian regimes have remained largely unfulfilled. Joler, disenchanted, comments "Perhaps the Internet could not have developed differently in the context of neoliberal capitalism." This realization prompted Joler to adopt a different approach, aiming to expose the hidden economic

power structures within the internet (Fakin Jansa, 2023, pp. 35–37).

In collaboration with media technology theorist Kate Crawford, Joler coauthored the book *Anatomy of an AI System*. This publication challenges the prevailing notion that the internet is an immaterial entity, emphasizing instead the exploitative mechanisms involving human labor, personal data, and the earth's resources. The work under examination, *New Extractivism*, draws not only from the aforementioned publication but also from collaborative endeavors, notably Crawford's *Atlas of AI* (Crawford, 2021), Nooscope with Matteo Pasquinelli, "My Little Big Data" with Eva and Franco Mattes, and investigations conducted within Joler's research platform, SHARE Lab. Additionally, Joler incorporated input and recommendations from Olivia Solis, Vuk Cosic, Daphne Dragona, Vladimir Todorovic, and Randall A. Major (Joler, 2021).

This study endeavors to investigate two key questions around Joler's assemblage: First, in what manner does the term "new" in *New Extractivism* introduce previously unexplored ideas? Second, to what extent can the characteristics of postdigital aesthetics be analyzed within this body of work?
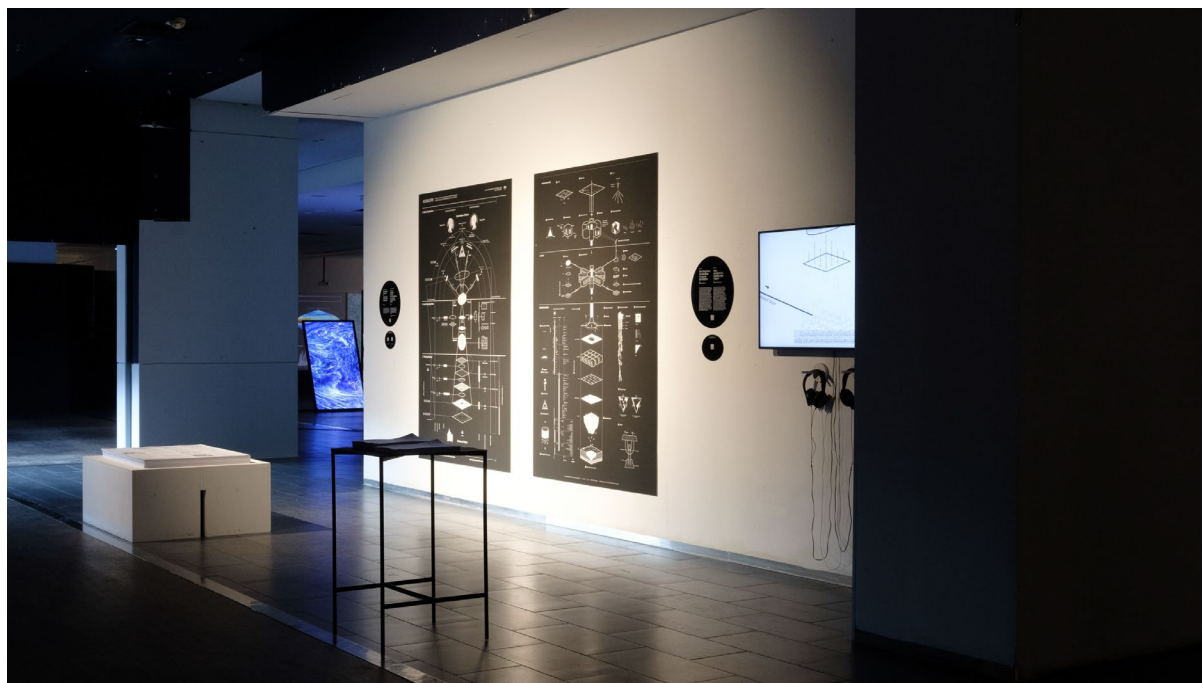
Figure 1. Vladan Joler, *New Extractivism: An Assemblage of Concepts and Allegories*, 2021. Manual, map, video, 17'33", available online at: https://extractivism.online. fot. Bartosz Górka / Biennale Warszawa

2. Analysis

2.1. "New"

Within the postcommunist context, the use of terms such as "new," "revolutionary," or "change" carries a sense of bitterness due to the historical trauma associated with the Soviet era. Consequently, I am intrigued by how Vladan Joler navigates the concept of "new" in his artistic endeavors.

Historically, the notion of "new media" art gained prominence toward the end of the twentieth century. The term new was employed to characterize any emerging form of art at any given time. Its usage invariably suggests the obsolescence and outdatedness of preceding artistic expressions, making way for novel art forms. In contemporary times, digital technologies have pervaded all realms of artistic production, thereby ushering in the era of postdigital and post-internet art. This indicates that every mode of artistic expression, at its core, is already influenced by digital technologies and networks (Paul, 2016, pp. 1–2). In this context, I refer to the concept and term "New Aesthetic," coined by James Bridle, which delineates the altered visual processes engendered by the advent of digital devices (Bridle, 2011a).

Arriving at a comprehensive definition for the New Aesthetic proves somewhat challenging. It is characterized as "a vibe, an attitude, a feeling, a sensibility" (Berry et al., 2012, p. 12). Bridle introduced the term on May 6th, 2011, through a Tumblr blog:

> For a while now, I've been collecting images and things that seem to approach a New Aesthetic of the future, which sounds more portentous than I mean. What I mean is that we've got frustrated with the NASA extropianism space-future, the failure of jetpacks, and we need to see the technologies we actually have with a new wonder. Consider this a mood-board for unknown products. (Bridle, 2011b)

In a broader sense, the term New Aesthetic addresses the intersection between the digital and the physical. Bridle's approach can be perceived as curatorial, aimed at amassing imagery that is evidently influenced by the digital realm (Sterling, 2012). His collection encompassed visuals such as satellite views, Google maps, surveillance imagery, pixelation, and digital logos

on textiles. Moreover, the choice of the Tumblr platform itself reflects a contemplation of network culture. Bridle coined the term the New Aesthetic to designate the characteristics of the elements shared on Tumblr, further expounding upon his reflections on his publishing website Booktwo.org. However, a significant turning point occurred during a panel discussion at the SXSW Conference in March 2012, which catalyzed a discourse on new media and art communities. This discussion revolved around the implications of perceiving reality through digital devices and its impact on our epistemological understanding within a convergent technological culture, as well as its influence on art's interpretive capacity (Bridle, 2011a). Bruce Sterling played a noteworthy role in popularizing the concept of the New Aesthetic, describing it as a "native product of modern network culture," which signaled an attempt to impose a new mode of perceiving reality upon the public. Sterling's elaboration provided metaphysical insights into the status of machines, drawing parallels with historical art movements like futurism, cubism, and surrealism while evoking André Breton's and Walter Benjamin's ideas on "digital accumulation" (Sterling, 2012).

According to Rahel Aima's definition, the New Aesthetic primarily pertains to surveillance technology:

> The *New Aesthetic* is about being looked at by humans and by machines - by drones, surveillance cameras, people tagging you on Facebook - about being the object of the gaze. It's about looking through the eyes of a machine and seeing the machine turn its beady LEDs on you. It's about the dissolution of privacy and reproductive rights, and the monitoring, mapping and surveillance of the (re)gendered (re)racialised body, and building our own super-pervasive panopticon. (Aima, 2012)

However, in terms of aesthetics, Joler's assemblage can be connected to the conceptual art movement of the 1960s when the notion of art was discussed in terms of a systematic approach to artistic creation. Jack Burnham's ideas are considered quite influential for artists such as Hans Haacke, among the first conceptual artists to explore the interrelation between biology, ecology, and cybernetics.

Systems Esthetics (Burnham, 1968) aimed to formulate a concept that explored the relationship between art, technology, and social systems. His theory delved into concepts of systems theory, mathematics, and logic, in an attempt to redefine the role of art within society. Burnham highlighted the systems viewpoint as crucial and defined it as the following:

A systems viewpoint is focused on the creation of stable, on-going relationships between organic and non-organic systems, be these neighborhoods, industrial complexes, farms, transportation systems, information centers, recreation centers, or any of the other matrixes of human activity. (Burnham, 1968)

Burnham argues that system analysts are not merely "cold-blooded logicians" but individuals with a distinctly humane and subjective perspective, influenced by the specific circumstances of a given time and place. In this regard, he aligns himself with the perspective of intuitionism, which views mathematics as a product of human creation and mental activity (Burnham, 1968). This perspective describes mathematics as a way of understanding subjective reality and rejects the notion that mathematical laws exist independently of human conceptualization (Bridges and Palmgren, 2018).

Burnham's comments also touch upon the relational aspects of art, which are not strictly determined by physical boundaries, but rather by the interactions between people and the artwork itself. However, he distinguishes the systems approach from other artistic forms like happenings or theater productions. These artistic forms are confined within certain parameters, such as the stage or the script, whereas the systems approach exists independently of such constraints. The approach can move both within and beyond the framework of art, allowing for any aspect to be visualized and analyzed as a system. In the evaluative systems approach, the artist takes on the role of a "perspectivist" who has specific objectives in mind, including the structure, input and output, and internal and external movements of the systems. Emphasis is placed on precise information rather than on the material nature of the artwork (Burnham, 1968, p. 32).

In *Systems Esthetics*, Burnham elaborates that the considered problems cannot be solved through a singular technical solution but require a multileveled and interdisciplinary approach. The individual components of the systems do not hold inherent value; their value derives from their contextual relationships. Burnham acknowledges that this post-formalist aesthetic is not a universal philosophy, but rather a reflection of the present context.

The emergence of a "post-formalist esthetic" may seem to some to embody a kind of absolute philosophy, something which, through the nature of its concerns cannot be transcended. Yet it is more likely that a "system esthetic" will become the dominant approach

to a maze of social-technical conditions rooted only in the present. New circumstances will with the time generate other major paradigms for the arts. (Burnham, 1968)

Burnham provides insight into the evolution of the cultural producer, who, propelled by the Industrial Revolution, transitioned from being merely *homo faber*, the maker of tools and images, to assuming the role of *homo arbiter formae*, whose main purpose is to make aesthetic decisions. He anticipated that these aesthetic choices would have a profound impact on the "quality of all future life on the Earth" (Burnham, 1968).

This notion finds resonance in James Bridle's work, particularly his exploration of the New Aesthetics which is addressed in *New Aesthetic, New Anxieties*. The chapter "New Anxieties" explores the question: "What is it about the New Aesthetic that makes you so damn uneasy?" (Berry et al., 2012, p. 18). The question is a response to the perspectives of commentators from diverse fields like philosophy, new media, curating, design, and digital humanities—all of which contribute to the discourse on the New Aesthetics. Despite the diversity of viewpoints, this discourse appears to be ubiquitous, captivating the attention of individuals across disciplines.

However, the type of disconcerting sentiment that spurred this discourse can also be seen as advantageous, as it confirmed that the term New Aesthetics indeed unsettled network culture. Drawing from Donna Haraway's concept of the "new nature," such discomfort might refer to the act of occupying common space and examining the term in relation to the collective. Haraway asserts: "We turn to this topic to order our discourse (...) to reinhabit, precisely, common places - locations that are widely shared, inescapably local, worldly, enspirited, that is, topical. In this sense, nature is the place in which to rebuild public culture" (Haraway, 2004, p. 65).

Within this shared space, it is the disconcerting and disruptive elements that command attention in discussions about network culture. These disruptions not only impact the discourse on an intellectual level but also penetrate deeper levels. According to Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey, who wrote *On the Usefulness of Anxiety*, these "cracks, faults, and disturbances" influence our mental state (Fuller and Goffey, 2010, p. 157).

In his commentary, Sterling emphasizes that the New Aesthetic movement should not be misconstrued as a static concept, despite having progressed beyond its "original discovery phase" to being prepared for public exposure. Because the concept originated as a work in

progress, it embodies a particular mood, atmosphere, and provisional findings. It primarily addresses the human aspect, the nature of human perception, and less technical aspects:

> I hasten to assure you that I'm not making lame vitalist claims that our human reactions are mystical, divine, immaterial, timeless or absolute in truth. I am merely stating, as a stark and demonstrable fact, that our – machines have no such reactions. To rely on them to do that for us is fraudulent. (Sterling, 2012)

In response to Sterling's essay, Marius Watz argues that most of the qualities attributed to the New Aesthetics are not genuinely novel. The only aspect that can be considered new is the integration of these technologies into human behavior, even extending to our bedrooms. Our behavior is disrupted by technology, as evident when we walk down the street at night and find ourselves fixated on our phones (Watz, 2012).

Robert Jackson accuses Bridle of trivializing the discourse and criticizes the distinction between "high" and "low" media art. According to Jackson, using Tumblr as an official platform risks succumbing to instant gratification and adopting a format reminiscent of memes, whereas art demands depth (Jackson, 2012).

Similarly, the New Aesthetics has been accused by Ian Bogost of exhibiting an object-oriented ontology and neglecting the relationships within an expansive more-than-human ontology. Bogost, in his book *Alien Phenomenology*, elucidates the theory's rather exclusive nature, which is primarily concerned with correlations between digital and network technologies (Bogost, 2012). Lastly, the discussion surrounding the New Aesthetics acknowledges its initial male-dominated nature, with female voices taking some time to emerge (Aima, 2012).

2.2. Extractivism

Extractivism is primarily associated with the exploitation of Earth's resources and its biosphere. Vladan Joler's work highlights that today extractivism has acquired an additional layer of meaning: it denotes the exploitation of humans as data pools due to the traceability of their internet activities.

Naomi Klein, in her book *This Changes Everything*, provides the following definition of

historical extractivism:

> Extractivism is a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking.
> It is the opposite of stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and
> future life continue. (Klein, 2014, p. 226)

The author asserts that intricate living systems are often reduced to mere "objects" and "resources," stripped of any intrinsic value beyond their utility. These systems are categorized solely based on their economic worth, while disregarding any other significance they may possess. Consequently, obstacles like trees that obstruct economic pursuits are destroyed and disregarded, giving way to bulldozers. This mindset not only applies to natural resources but also extends to human beings. The value of individuals is determined solely by their capacity to contribute as laborers in the industry. Those who do not fit this mold are marginalized and, in extreme cases, confined to reservations or prisons. The extractivist mindset completely ignores the complex interconnections between various components of the system, leading to devastating ecological and social consequences (Klein, 2014, p. 226).

According to Klein, the practice of extractivism is closely linked to the notion of "sacrifice zones." These zones refer to regions that are exploited for their resources and subsequently left in ruins and neglect, without any consideration for their future. Depending on their prior use, the soil in these zones becomes contaminated, depleted, or otherwise damaged, all in the pursuit of perceived economic prosperity and progress. Klein draws parallels to imperialist ideologies, in which peripheries are exploited in order to serve the needs of the center, driven by a belief in the imperial state's own superiority. According to Klein, imperial states "need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of sacrifice" (Klein, 2014, p. 226).

Extractivism is a prevalent practice of colonialism, through which lens the world is viewed as an object to be conquered rather than a place to coexist. This mindset has led to irresponsible behaviors. The concept persists where it is believed that when one political entity can no longer provide the resources it requires, the resources of another can be exploited instead. This mindset has its roots in the historical era that first witnessed the widespread use of fossil fuels, which powered the ships and factories driving global conquests. Klein

emphasizes that we must not overlook this historical aspect, as it represents a continuation of our civilization's narratives of perpetual growth and progress (Klein, 2014, p. 227).

Klein attributes this mode of thinking to Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, scientist, and statesman. Bacon advocated for a departure from what he considered the outdated pagan view of the earth as a nurturing mother deserving of reverence and gratitude. Instead, he promoted a worldview in which nature was to be ruthlessly probed and exploited to uncover what he called "truth." (Bacon, 1870, p. 296) Behind a veneer of eloquence, Bacon's intentions were primarily focused on material advantages for the dominant societies, with resources being sent back to their respective ruling powers. This perspective engendered a sense of "human invincibility," as Klein aptly described, characterized by the belief in humanity's ability to fully understand and control the earth (Klein, 2014, pp. 227–28).

Kate Crawford, in her book *Atlas of AI*, posits that the contemporary definition of "extractivism" is intricately intertwined with its historical meaning: "Global computation and commerce rely on batteries. The term artificial intelligence may invoke ideas of algorithms, data, and cloud architectures, but none of that can function without the minerals and resources that build computing core components" (Crawford, 2021, p. 30).

Numerous aspects of everyday life, encompassing personal, medical, leisure, pleasure, and political interests have transitioned to the cloud. However, little consideration has been given to the tangible material capacities and resources underlying this development. Crawford contends that the term extractivism can be interpreted both metaphorically and literally, encapsulating the new extractive nature of data mining alongside traditional extractivism. Artificial intelligence not only relies on servers, hardware, and networks, but also has profound implications for the capital, labor, and resources of the planet. The immense requirements of AI infrastructure extend beyond the visible cloud infrastructure, constituting a vast and concealed substructure (Crawford, 2021, p. 30).

Crawford further expounds on the idea that computer media impact geological and climatic conditions. By perceiving media and technologies as integral to geological processes, one becomes aware of the nonrenewable resources essential for their use. Each component of digital infrastructure—such as raw materials for batteries—takes billions of years to form within the earth's core. However, these technologies often have short lifespans. Consequently, their disposable nature results in unnecessary and increased consumption. Once these devices

reach the end of their use, they undergo an extensive process of degradation, which involves disassembly, processing, mixing, smelting, and transportation—ultimately terminating in e-waste dumping grounds of the Global South. This wasteful process illustrates the exploitation involved in the life cycle of AI instruments on multiple levels. It not only encumbers natural resources and human labor but it also leads to the monopolization of corporate and geopolitical power. It is crucial to acknowledge the substantial energy resources required for this process (Crawford, 2021, pp. 31–32).

On a content level *New Extractivism* is rooted in the principles of data colonialism, initially introduced under this terminology by Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias.

> In describing the transformations underway today as data colonialism, we use the term colonialism not because we're looking for a metaphor but because it captures major structural phases within human history and specifically within capitalism. (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 4)

Couldry and Mejias argue that the key attributes of historical colonialism are applicable to data extraction. These attributes include the appropriation of resources, the presence of social and economic inequality, an uneven distribution of profits, and the accompanying ideology that rationalizes these disparities. This ideology often perpetuates the notion of the "civilizing" mission, in which the appropriation of resources from supposedly inferior populations is regarded as a measure of progress (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 4).

While traditional colonialism revolves around the exploitation of raw materials and the conquest of new geographical territories, data colonialism engages a distinct level of exploitation that encroaches upon the very fabric of human life. In this context, human life is continuously subjected to a form of colonization, which is perpetually driven by the pursuit of profit. It is essential to acknowledge that the acquisition of personal data occurs without the consent of the individuals concerned, which more easily enables the conversion of data into monetary gains, as Couldry and Mejias contend:

> This progressive opening up of human life to externally driven data extraction is what we mean by the capitalization of human life without limit. (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 5)

Technological networks, particularly social media platforms, provide the infrastructure for

subtle data extraction. This kind of extraction distinguishes data colonialism from historical colonialism, which relied on more overt forms of violence. And yet data colonialism also employs diverse forms of violence through intricate and interconnected systems of extraction. These systems are often bewildering, abundant, and intertwined to such an extent that they exercise a profound level of control over individuals, akin to the dominance historically exerted by colonial powers (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 6). Capitalism functions as a systematic apparatus driven solely by the goal of maximizing value production through data extraction, irrespective of the sources and applications of that data (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p. 7).

2.3. Allegories of the Digital Space: A Selection

> In the information age, everything becomes a potential frontier for expansion and extraction - from the depths of the DNA code to the vast frontiers of human emotions, behavior and social relationships, and nature as a whole. (Fakin Jansa, 2023, p. 9)

The work *New Extractivism* consists of so-called allegories of the digital space—a total of thirty-three concepts and ideas that serve the purpose of elucidating the meaning and interconnections portrayed in the graphics. In the following, a selection of five concepts will be discussed and further analyzed through two distinct perspectives: first, through the lens of Jack Burnham's *Systems Esthetics* theory, and second, through the contemporary theory of James Bridle's *New Aesthetic*.

The first image (*Gravity*) emanates from the concept explored by French artist Louise Drulhe (Druhle, 2015), who contemplates the influence of gravity within the topography of the internet. It alludes to Einstein's theory of relativity, exploring how objects in the space-time continuum curve relative to their mass, in this case, in the virtual realm. Dominant entities such as Google and Facebook possess immense gravitational pull, attracting users and their content through their monopolistic power (Joler, 2021).

The second diagram (*Forces*) depicts the social factors implicated in the gravitational mechanism of the internet. Joler introduces various facets, including the apprehension of social isolation and the fear of missing out, economic and professional insecurities, and the influence of addictions, depression, and anxiety. These represent only a subset of the factors that bind

individuals to virtual platforms. An escape from this entanglement appears impossible. Consequently, the notion of escape becomes more akin to a fantastical construct rather than a tangible reality (Brunton and Nissenbaum, 2016).

The third concept (*Black Hole*) depicts the protagonist's endeavor to swim against the tide, counteracting the gravitational forces exerted by these virtual epicenters. Joler explains that the current is progressively intensifying. Although the presence of a black hole remains at this stage unnoticed, the protagonist crosses a point of no return. At this stage, the social and economic costs associated with leaving become overwhelmingly burdensome. Regardless of one's swimming ability, the pull of the black hole remains inescapable. The protagonist descends into the next allegory, which is the metaphorical cave.

The subsequent visualization (*Allegory of the Cave*) unveils the abyssal depths of the black hole, transforming the allegory into a rendition of Plato's cave. Plato's allegory of the cave illustrates how individuals spend their lives enclosed within cave walls. In Joler's adaptation, the resultant shadowy objects are forged by algorithmic machines that regulate, filter, censor, and moderate the projected content upon the cave walls. The genuine reality existing beyond the cave encompasses an incessant stream of information comprising images, sounds, emotions, and creations that were once tangibly experienced, but have been distorted into abstract representations within the shadow world.

The fifth representation (*Platopticon*) depicts the composite nature of the shadow performance, constituted not by a solitary entity, but by the concentration of numerous spectacles. The gravitational force of technological monopolies retains billions of users, workers, and products. Each user is confined to a distinct cave tailored explicitly to their preferences, brimming with images and meanings derived from affective and cognitive responses. Users exist in a circular fashion, engaging with themselves within this realm, subjected to an unceasing torrent of spectacles. Joler describes this domain as a form of imprisonment, however one characterized by pleasure. Yet, the imprisoned individual remains incapable of self-liberation. Within this collection of millions of caves or prison cells, the form of a Panopticon structure emerges. The central tower of this edifice assumes dual functions: it projects content onto the walls of the caves, and it surveils and captures the digital shadows of the prisoners.

From an aesthetic standpoint, the work *New Extractivism* follows a systems theory

approach, such as that described in Burnham's *Systems Esthetics.* The diversity in the work's visual presentation suggests that the primary emphasis was placed on the content. The initial development of the graphics involved collective collaboration, as mentioned by Kate Crawford in her publication. The artist's primary focus was to highlight the profound penetration of digital technologies into contemporary human life. In doing so, he transcends physical boundaries and expresses the subject matter through philosophical and physical metaphors, blurring the distinctions between reality and imagination. This method can be extrapolated to the fluid boundaries between the virtual and real worlds. Burnham's remarks also serve as a guiding principle, considering art as a means by which to find interdisciplinary solutions for societal challenges. Whereas Burnham's elaborations were undeniably influenced by the exuberance of the 1960s, *New Extractivism* does not align with this perspective. Initially, the artwork may appear as a map that offers potential escape routes from the virtual, enigmatic black hole. However, this notion is futile, as the composition itself illustrates the profound entanglement that engulfs the users, leaving no viable means of escape. Nevertheless, Burnham seems to have astutely addressed an important point in a visionary manner. His observation highlights how artists, who no longer adhere to the notion of *homo faber* (tool creators), have evolved to become *homo arbiter formae*—individuals who represent ideas purely through aesthetic choices. However, this aesthetic has far-reaching consequences on the "quality of all future life on Earth" (Burnham, 1968).

This is where the concept of *New Aesthetics* comes into play. From an aesthetic perspective, Joler's assemblage diverges from established tradition. Joler does not employ elements from the digital world directly and unfiltered in his work. Instead, his approach is more abstract and monochromatic (black and white), incorporating principles from physics, mathematics, and logic. The only aspect of his work that aligns with the digital tradition is the accessibility of his work online, which is standard in the postdigital age. However, in terms of content, parallels can certainly be drawn, particularly regarding the notion of new anxieties, which refer to a sense of unease without a clear understanding of its cause or remedy. *New Extractivism* addresses this unease on multiple levels. Just as technology acts as a "disruptive" force in human behavior and impacts individuals' mental well-being, Sterling's performances reference the bedroom, while *New Extractivism* draws upon Plato's cave allegory. The content of this allegory encompasses several aspects of the *New Aesthetics* concept, specifically how

human perception of the world has been altered through the use of digital technologies. The view through the machine, which observes and connects individuals, also restricts their ability to escape their caves, which were algorithmically tailored to their preferences. While the critique of a purely object-based ontology can be partially applied here, Joler incorporates into his work illusory and existential elements that somewhat diminish such criticism. Furthermore, the artwork's creation was not limited to a singular male perspective, as it emerged through collective work and drew inspiration from Kate Crawford's publications.

In summary, one can say that Joler's multimedia assemblage succeeds in depicting the connection between artificial intelligence and everyday life with surprising clarity. This was precisely my experience when I visited the Biennale: the very complex graphic representation initially seems overwhelming. However, his online material, which is presented with detailed texts and an explanatory video, made it easily comprehensible upon closer examination.

Delving deeper, I was surprised by the simplicity and clarity with which Joler visually represents highly complex relationships. The curators of the Biennale Warszawa chose to showcase the work in multiple forms (map, manual, video), allowing the visitors to explore the graphics at their own preferences. Furthermore, it was placed to another collaborative work by Joler, which provided an additional perspective on the topic called *The Nooscope Manifested - AI as Instrument of Knowledge Extractivism* (Joler and Pasquinelli, 2020). Cocurator Anna Galas-Kosil reports that, according to the guided-tour participants' reactions, the work series seemed to generate great interest, as the pamphlets of *The Nooscope Manifested* were taken away in large numbers (Galas-Kosil, 2023). Even before the curators became aware of the artist, a Polish collective Grupa Robocza (Working Group) had already recognized the importance of Vladan Joler's work and translated the *The Nooscope Manifested*. The collective was invited by the curators to give tours specifically about Joler's contributions, which illustrates how the artist's work has unquestionably established a prominent presence within the discourse of reception history. His work has also been recognized and presented by internationally influential art platforms such as MoMA and transmediale.

3. Conclusion

Finally, I would like to address the questions raised at the beginning: What is the "new" in *New Extractivism*? The novelty of *New Extractivism* lies in its content, specifically its association

with the postdigital manifestation of extractivism, which disregards the personal boundaries of internet users as it appropriates their data. However, considering the geopolitical context, this discourse is not entirely unprecedented, as it aligns with neo-Marxist and post-Marxist theories and the critique of commodification. Though the analytical and systematic approach as an artistic method is not new, it can be connected to the early Soviet avant-garde. This connection was temporarily interrupted during the Stalinist era when the intellectual discourse on cybernetics was perceived as a threat to the Soviet system. Nonetheless, it resurfaced in the 1960s following Stalin's death, and international collectives like New Tendencies emerged, effectively bridging the Cold War divide by fostering mutual interest in the intersection of art, society, and technology. Art centers in Eastern Europe, such as Zagreb, served as pivotal hubs for networking artistic communities within both Soviet and capitalist geographies.

My second research question—to what extent can the characteristics of postdigital aesthetics be discerned in *New Extractivism*—can be answered by pointing to its methods of dissemination. The work is readily accessible through online channels, possesses a collective nature, and is presented as an ongoing endeavor because it is consistently accompanied by further research and collaborations in various contexts such as books, exhibitions, and conferences. However, it should be noted that *New Extractivism* primarily suggests a metaperspective with a critical distance to postdigital aesthetics. In this capacity, it formulates a parallel theory that bears resemblance to the concepts put forth by James Bridle's *New Aesthetic*, particularly concerning the notion of new anxieties, which regards technology as a disruptive force in human behavior.

Ultimately, the work leaves the viewer with a question that is far from novel and has been contemplated by artists since the early twentieth century: Can we envision a future divergent from a capitalist trajectory?

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Fiction, Belief and Understanding

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ABSTRACT. Philosophers and other scholars have long held that reading fiction, particularly literary fiction, is cognitively valuable. They have argued, for example, that fiction deepens understanding, enhances empathy, cultivates psychological insight, exercises moral imagination, refines emotions, increases modal or conceptual knowledge, opens our minds and expands our horizons. The capacity of fiction to convey factual information is, by contrast, typically ignored in these discussions. In this paper I argue that the way we learn facts from fiction is essential to explaining several other cognitive values often attributed to fiction. Works of fiction are about the world in which we live, and they are cognitively valuable when they illuminate features of that world. I further suggest that truth and accuracy may contribute, not just to the cognitive value of a work of fiction, but also to its value as fictional literature. This is because the processes by which we learn facts from fiction are integral to literary appreciation.

1. Introduction

There is a traditional view that reading literary fiction is cognitively valuable, and any number of accounts of the relevant kind(s) of value. Perhaps fictional literature gives us moral knowledge or improves our moral capacities (e.g., Diamond, 1983; Nussbaum, 1992). Perhaps it gives us modal or conceptual knowledge (e.g., John, 1998; Stokes, 2006). Many have argued that literature gives us psychological insight, or insight into human nature (e.g., Stock, 2006; Conolly and Haydar, 2007). Some say that it gives us a sense of other people's perceptions and feelings: *what it's like* to undergo certain kinds of experiences (e.g., Novitz, 1987). Jenefer

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Robinson (2005) has argued that we learn through our emotional responses to fiction, while others suggest that our imaginative capacities are expanded or stretched (e.g., Kind, 2023). And there is some discussion of the idea that works of fictional literature or art might enhance certain kinds of traits, like creativity, perspective-taking, and open-mindedness (e.g., Huemer, 2022; Wimmer et al., 2022).[104]

The above is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather one that illustrates the wide range of the topic. Despite this breadth, though, relatively little philosophical attention has been paid to one kind of cognitive value that can be attributed to works of fiction: the capacity to convey factual information.[105] This is not because people doubt that we acquire ordinary beliefs from fiction (say, about history or geography); in fact, that's widely accepted.

Instead, one reason for the neglect is the widespread assumption that when we try to identify the cognitive values of fiction (or fictional literature), what we are seeking is a value that is specific to fiction, or specific to fictional literature.[106] Needless to say, the provision of empirical information is not specific, since we learn ordinary facts through perception, from other people, from non-fiction representations and so on. Indeed, conveying facts is a familiar goal of many works of non-fiction. Another problematic assumption, which is typically less explicit, is that the capacity to convey factual information is somehow trivial and uninteresting. That we learn facts from fiction (it is assumed) could not possibly tell us why we value the great works of literature.

I think that both assumptions are mistaken.[107] However, rather than argue directly for that position, I will elaborate and defend a positive account of learning facts from fiction that does not rely on them. I will argue that the way we learn facts from fiction is not only far from trivial or uninteresting; it is also essential to other cognitive values often attributed to fiction. Therefore, people defending the cognitive value of fictional literature in other terms still have a reason to pay attention to how we learn facts.

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[104] This idea is the focus of my current interdisciplinary research project, 'Art Opening Minds: Imagination and Perspective in Film' (with Heather Ferguson, Angela Nyhout and Murray Smith), funded by the Templeton Religion Trust (TRT-2021-10476).

[105] Exceptions include Friend (2014) and Ichino and Currie (2017). There has been more discussion in psychology, mainly focused on the concern that readers may believe false information (for an overview see Friend, 2014).

[106] I will use these terms more or less interchangeably for present purposes.

[107] As I note below, there are certain literary and artistic techniques that facilitate learning. The claim is that these are not unique to fiction since they can be found in non-fiction as well.

Here's what I'll do. First, I'll briefly provide some background on my conception of fiction, the Genre Theory. Second, I'll give slightly more background on a claim I've made elsewhere, about how we determine what's 'true in a fiction'. Then I will describe how we acquire beliefs about ordinary facts (or about anything) from fiction. I will talk a bit about the relationship between that and understanding. Finally, and most tentatively, I will say something about why I think that learning facts is relevant to the value of works of fiction *as* fiction, or *as* literature.

2. Background Theories

According to the theory of fiction that I defend elsewhere (Friend, 2008; 2012), there are no individually necessary or jointly sufficient conditions for the fictionality of works. I'm focused on works; I'm not focused on specific utterances or sentences or passages or parts of works. This is because I think that works are the primary bearer of fictionality, though I'm not going to argue for that here. With respect to works, I claim in particular that *inviting imagining* (vs belief) does not demarcate any difference between fiction and non-fiction.

The positive account that I give—which is less relevant than the negative claim for this talk—is that fiction and non-fiction are *genres*, which means that they meet the following two conditions:

1. Works are classified by sets of non-essential criteria. These include what I call *standard features,* following Kendall Walton in 'Categories of Art' (1970); and also what I call *categorial features*, like the author's intention that a work be classified a certain way and contemporary practices of classification (still following Walton).

2. Classification as fiction or non-fiction matters to appreciation, that is, to the understanding and evaluation of works that are so classified.

The important upshot of this very brief tour of the Genre Theory is that there is nothing about the nature of fiction on my view that excludes (ordinary ways of) learning facts. So, I will

assume that we should reject any view of fiction that draws an epistemic distinction between fiction and non-fiction.

Now I turn to the second bit of background, explaining what I call the *Reality Assumption* (RA). The basic idea, that fictional worlds are in many ways like the real world, is not new with me; it has many precedents (e.g., Lewis, 1983; Ryan, 1980).[108] But my version is the RA: the assumption that everything that obtains in the real world is also *storified* (true-in-the-fiction), unless excluded by features of the work (Friend, 2017). The RA is a default assumption that we make when we read, or watch, or consume a fiction. It's a claim about what is true-in-the-fiction, whether we realise it or not. However, it has practical implications, indicating that when you're reading and you're trying to figure out what is fictionally the case (what is going on in this scene? why is the character doing that? will she succeed? why is she so upset? etc.), you should assume that the storyworld is (like the) real world unless you have a particular reason to do otherwise. This is a default assumption in the sense that you presuppose it when you read (or watch or consume)[109] fictions. Take the psychology of characters. In most works, we assume that human beings have ordinary human psychology, without even thinking explicitly about this. So, when you wonder 'why did they do that?', you automatically reach for the standard kinds of explanations of why real people do certain things.

It's important that the RA is defeasible, and indeed that it is easily defeated. As soon as you start reading a work of fiction, you will exclude from your assumption of reality all kinds of things, in particular the non-existence of certain people. So, as soon as you start reading *Emma*, you become aware of Emma Woodhouse, who is handsome, clever and rich. She doesn't exist, so you know that you should not think of the population in the story as determined by the actual population in the real world. A contrast is with Hilary Mantel's Thomas Cromwell novels, where the population is entirely made up of people from the real world. But in most fictions that's not the case, so we exclude such facts. In this way, explicit content can give you a reason to recognize that the storyworld departs from the real world in certain respects.

Genre conventions can also provide reasons for excluding real-world facts. If you know you're about to read a vampire novel, you won't be at all surprised that there are vampires.

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[108] Others develop the basic idea, that fictional worlds are similar to the real world, in different ways. Though I articulate the argument in terms of the RA, I suspect that any related account will sustain the main points I want to make.

[109] I focus on reading fictional literature in this talk, but the claims apply to other kinds of fiction as well.

Still, you assume that when they drink blood, they drink the kind of blood we (real human beings) have. You don't give up the RA across the board. And depending on your views of interpretation, you might think that authorial intention can give you reason to take the world of the work to depart from the real world.

So, there are lots of ways to defeat the RA, but the idea is this: When we don't have a particular reason to think that the world of the story departs from the real world in a certain respect, we simply default to the assumption that it's like the real world in that respect. Practically, this means that any real-world facts are *available* when making inferences to understand a work. That is, if you're trying to figure out what's going on in a work, which means (subconsciously, automatically) making a variety of inferences as you go along, you can draw on any facts that you know.

The idea is that we *import* (using Tamar Szabó Gendler's (2000) term) our 'prior knowledge' to understand what we are reading or watching. 'Prior knowledge' is the term in psychology for standing beliefs and assumptions, which need not constitute knowledge in a philosophical sense (not least because the beliefs and assumptions can be false). That is, in order to understand a text, you will have to bring in what you know, or think you know. This point is standardly demonstrated by using a passage about a sport that people might be unfamiliar with, thereby indicating how a lack of prior knowledge affects comprehension. Following in the tradition, consider this passage from a memoir about cricket:

> In the first innings England had scored 231, assisted by a last-wicket stand of 56 from Allott and Willis. Australia crumbled to 130 (M. F. Kent 52, Wills 4-63, Botham 3-28). But by the time Botham came in on Saturday afternoon, England had squandered their advantage in their usual spineless fashion. After 69 overs of their second innings, they had amassed only 104 for 5 on a pitch that was growing steadily easier. (Berkmann, 1996, p.60)

If you don't know cricket, you probably have no idea what is going on in this passage. (What is a 'last-wicket stand'? What does it mean that 'Australia crumbled to 130'?) It's very concise; but it is also completely transparent to anyone who understands the game. The point is: If you find it difficult to understand this passage, it's because you lack prior knowledge. I'll take for granted that it has nothing to do with your competence in reading English, for example. You may be able to understand every word, every sentence, parse the grammar and so on. What

you're missing is background information about cricket, which you need to understand what's going on.

At this point I want to re-emphasise that when we exclude facts from the scope of the RA, this exclusion is *localised* and *by domain*. When you're reading *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* you very quickly exclude facts about the ordinary laws of physics, while the principle of non-contradiction goes right out the window. But you still rely on facts about human psychology. What's interesting about *Hitchhiker's Guide* is that you apply your knowledge of human psychology to aliens, and a lot of the time that works. Ford Prefect's actions cannot be understood without assuming that his psychology is much like our psychology. For example, he wants six beers just before the world (Earth) will end. I think we can understand this desire, and in the ordinary way, even though Ford Prefect is from Betelgeuse. In short, it's a very powerful bias toward reality, and we just don't give it up unless we're forced to do so.

3. Testimony in Fiction

What I've said so far is that text comprehension relies on importing 'prior knowledge': making inferences about what obtains in a story that rely on our mental representations of the real world. (I say 'representations' rather than beliefs because I don't think these are all propositional. Our mental representations of the world can be beliefs, but they can also be imagistic or objectual, so long as they are taken to characterize the real world.) The result of the inferential process isn't yet the same as *learning*, except in the sense of learning the content of the work. How do we learn about the world by reading fictional texts? Borrowing Gendler's (2000) terminology once again, we can put the question this way: how do we *export* information that we acquire from the text into our representations of the world?

A standard (though incomplete) answer for non-fiction texts is that we learn through testimony. I'm not going to talk about the differences between *learning* in the sense of acquiring true beliefs and *learning* in the sense of acquiring knowledge, because the details of the many accounts of knowledge won't matter here. I'll assume that we have *some* justification for believing testimony if the relevant assertion is meant to convey information and there are no undefeated defeaters (see Leonard, 2023). You can substitute whatever conditions you want, so long as it turns out that we can acquire true (and sometimes justified) beliefs and/or knowledge from testimony, including the testimony that occurs within works of non-fiction.

Let's look at a passage from Euclides da Cunha's 1902 journalistic and literary history of Brazil's War of Canudos, *The Backlands* (*Os sertões*). Da Cunha went into an area of Bahia state, which was largely ungoverned in the late nineteenth century, to report on an uprising by a religious group. The book is reportage, painting a picture of the geography, climate, agriculture, history and people as well as the war between the rebels and the government soldiers sent in to restore order. Though da Cunha displays many biases within his descriptions, much of what is known about the event comes from his testimony. In the following passage, he describes the bandits who were running wild before the war:

> As an example, the entire valley of the Rio das Éguas and, to the north, the Rio Prêto form the homeland of the bravest and most useless men in our country. From these parts they habitually embark on expeditions to challenge the bravery of the political henchmen. Such forays usually end with arson and sacking of towns and cities throughout the valley of the big river. (da Cunha, 2010, p.184)

I take it that you can learn from this work through da Cunha's testimony.

The same can occur in fiction (cf. Vidmar and Baccarini, 2010). The following passage is from Mario Vargas Llosa's (1981) fictional retelling of the War of Canudos based on da Cunha's history, *The War of the End of the World* (*La guerra del fin del mundo*):

> There had always been men who came onto the haciendas to steal cattle, had shootouts with the *capangas*—the hired thugs—of the landowners, and sacked remote villages, outlaws whom flying brigades of police periodically came to the backlands to hunt down. (Vargas Llosa, 2012, p.20)

In this passage, Vargas Llosa offers testimony about the same bandits described by da Cunha, who is his source in portraying them as running around the backlands and fighting with each other. If we can learn about them via testimony from da Cunha, there is no reason that we can't also learn about them via testimony from Vargas Llosa. Nothing in the Genre Theory excludes the possibility of testimony in fiction, including via direct assertion.

However, that isn't the usual way of learning from fiction. Straightforward assertions are much less common in fiction than in non-fiction (though not all learning from non-fiction is via assertion or testimony either). Learning facts from fiction is often more indirect. A good

example is this passage from Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*, about the experience of Koreans during the Japanese occupation and then in Japan. The novel spans the late nineteenth through much of the twentieth centuries. The scene is set in Osaka in 1933:

> Yoseb was an easy talker by nature, and though his Japanese was better than proficient, his accent never failed to give him away. From appearances alone, he could approach any Japanese and receive a polite smile, but he'd lose the welcome as soon as he said anything. He was a Korean, after all, and no matter how appealing his personality, unfortunately he belonged to a cunning and wily tribe. (Lee, 2020, p.38)

I take it that from this passage, readers can acquire true beliefs, even though the content is not asserted, because Yoseb does not exist. For example, you can acquire the following true beliefs: that (i) at least some ethnic Koreans cannot be distinguished by sight from ethnic Japanese, and (ii) that in 1933 the Japanese held certain negative stereotypes about Koreans.

Those are two of the various conclusions you might infer from this passage and export into your beliefs. To draw those conclusions requires all kinds of interesting competences, like the ability to recognize that the last sentence is not the narrator's judgement of Koreans but an attribution to the Japanese, even though this is not marked; the attribution is made via free indirect discourse. And you also have to have sufficient general reading abilities, background knowledge about history, the signs of prejudice and so on.

How do you learn (i) and (ii) from *Pachinko* if not by testimony? If testimony that *p* requires stating that *p*, then Lee's passage isn't testimony, at least according to many accounts (see Leonard, 2023). What she stated instead was that Yoseb did this, that and the other; Lee never manifestly *states* (i) and (ii). However, there are broader conceptions of testimony. Kathleen Stock, defending the pervasiveness of testimony in fiction, says it's 'roughly, the conveying of information to a hearer with the aim of being believed, partly on the speaker's say-so' (Stock 2017, p.19). I think you could potentially apply that to Lee, on the assumption, which seems to be right, that she was trying to convey something about life in Japan for Koreans.

But I don't think all cases can be understood in that way, even on this broad conception. Here's an example from Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2020, p.75):

Dominique came across Nzinga at Victoria station in the rush hour

as she was being knocked down by the steamrollering effect of

London's ruthless commuters determined to catch their trains at all

costs

This description is (in case you haven't been in London) accurate, so that readers can learn something about rush hour in London from the passage. I think it's very unlikely that Evaristo was describing the scene in order to *tell* people about what it is like in London during rush hour; rather, she's taking that for granted as part of a shared background. Many of her readers are British and very familiar with train stations at rush hour, so the description is more of a reminder of something that they know.

Another good example comes from Anna Ichino and Gregory Currie (2017, p.73): In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy writes that 'Anna looked out of the window and saw Alexey ringing the front doorbell', from which sentence, they point out, you can learn that there were doorbells in nineteenth-century Russia. It's unlikely to be the main thing you focus on, but you can learn it. Still, I assume that Tolstoy was not trying to convey this information to his readers. He was taking it for granted and deploying it in the usual way, in order to set up the scene. So, these are cases which can't be explained through testimony even in the broadest sense. Stock (2019) calls these kinds of cases 'true-in passing' (TIP) sentences.

To address such statements, Ichino and Currie (2017) suggest that readers take the text to be *expressive* of an author's beliefs, even when the author doesn't intend to express those beliefs. Stock says that readers are able 'to non-accidentally ascertain that the authorial intention behind some descriptively accurate TIP sentence, in a particular case, refers to truth-telling in a way that cannot easily be eliminated' (Stock, 2019, p.490). So, you read the Tolstoy passage and infer that there were doorbells in nineteenth-century Russia, because you have some reason to think that that's probably supposed to be, or assumed to be, accurate.

Now, I won't deny that these mechanisms are among the ways that we pick up such truths. But I want to say that focusing on TIP sentences, or how we glean bits of information from testimony, is misleading with respect to the overall learning process. The accounts tend to presuppose or at least suggest that learning facts from fiction means something like extracting true propositions from various statements that you identify as TIP sentences, where

the information is somehow hidden away in passages about fictional characters. But this is not the best way to conceptualise the learning process.

4. The Learning Process

First, learning in any interesting sense isn't the same as memorization, which is what you would get if you just collected a list of facts. Rather, learning is integration with prior knowledge to enable application in new situations. Moreover, in reading an extended text, we do more than absorb isolated titbits of information. I suggest that we can think of the learning process as having two 'stages' (note that this is an abstraction; they happen more or less simultaneously). One is comprehension of what you read, which is a precondition of learning anything; and the other is exporting some of the relevant information into your mental representations of the real world—but not all of it, because some of it's not true.

Let me say something about reading comprehension in the first stage that goes beyond what I said earlier. For psychologists, reading comprehension involves the construction of a *mental model* (Johnson-Laird, 1983) or *situation model* (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983). This is a complex, dynamic mental representation of what the text is about: the individuals, the situations, the events as they unfold (see e.g., Graesser, Olde, and Klettke, 2002). Situation models are constructed as we read from inferences we make to understand what is happening and to fill in the gaps left by the explicit text. If you're familiar with Roman Ingarden's (1979) *Literary Work of Art*, or Reader Response Theory (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1979), you'll know that scholars in literary studies have been discussing how readers fill in those gaps for a very long time. More recently, psychologists have amassed a great deal of empirical evidence for the idea that we draw on our prior knowledge to elaborate mental representations that go beyond what is explicit (see e.g., McCarthy and McNamara, 2021). At the same time, mental models are used to explain understanding more generally: our understanding of the world around us, of other people, and so on (see e.g., Gentner and Stevens 2014).

The second stage of learning consists in selective exportation from the situation model for the story. This is incorporating some but not all elements of the model into your mental representations of the real world (including beliefs) in memory. The more you comprehend in the first stage, the better you can learn. Going back to *Pachinko:* Learning (i) and (ii) requires a variety of inferences deploying background knowledge and what you have represented about

the story so far, up to that point. The result is not just a bunch of propositions stored in memory. From this long text what you get, and what you're supposed to get, is a larger and more complex picture of life for Koreans in Japan over time. So, you might be acquiring propositional knowledge, but you're also acquiring something else, or something more, which may be more valuable depending on your views in epistemology. This is *objectual understanding:* in addition to learning truths, you grasp the relations between them, how to reason with them, how to apply them and so on (Kvanvig, 2003; Elgin, 2017). For example, I visited Korea after I had read *Pachinko*, so I was not surprised that I couldn't tell the difference between some people who were ethnic Korean and some who were ethnic Japanese. I was able to apply the information to real-world experience. So, as I said, it's more than acquiring a set of new propositions. When you understand more about a phenomenon, when you have a more elaborated model from comprehending the text, you can develop more interesting and useful representations of the real world.

Returning now to our favourite cricket passage above, it is clear that better comprehension of what you read also means that you can better export information. If you understand cricket, you can learn a lot about the match from this passage. In fact, you can learn a lot from the first two sentences, which are the most opaque to anyone who doesn't know cricket. If you don't know enough to interpret those sentences, probably all you can learn is something like: The England team was doing okay, but then lost an advantage. What you won't recognise is that Kent is a batsman, Willis and Botham are bowlers, that the scores indicate incredible bowling and so forth. That Willis and Botham bowled brilliantly is something you can learn about this match if you understand cricket, and something you're unlikely to learn if you don't. So, the comprehension process is essential to what you can learn.

As I've said, we do not believe or export every representation in our situation models into our beliefs. If we did, we'd believe that there were elves and hobbits and wizards. So, readers who are competent don't believe that Yoseb, Nzinga or Dominique exists simply because they read the relevant novels, nor do they believe that there are ghosts simply because they read Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. So, how does the selection process work? My answer is that *both* import and export rely on the Reality Assumption. For domains you take to be within the RA's scope, you are likely to export information into your belief structures. In other words, when you take a work to be realistic in a certain respect, you don't just *import* prior knowledge

to understand what you're reading, you also *export* information from the work. This is because you have taken the author to be accurate in that domain. For instance, if you read *Beloved,* it's impossible to comprehend Sethe's motivations if you know nothing about the history of slavery. To understand the central event in the novel, that Sethe kills her daughter, you have to understand why she would do that; and the only way is to understand something about the horrors of slavery. At the same time, you can learn a lot about the situation in that period, for example that many escaped slaves ended up in Cincinnati, Ohio. We take the facts about slavery, runaway slaves and geography to fall within the scope of the RA in *Beloved*, but not descriptions of the characters and their particular experiences.

Thus far I have made a psychological claim, that this is how people read: they subconsciously identify certain aspects of the work as accurate, they import information from their prior beliefs to fill in the relevant gaps, and they export what seems to be new information about those domains. This suggests a normative claim: if we are justified in taking a certain domain of facts to fall within the scope of the RA—to treat the work as accurate in that respect—then we have a default justification for forming beliefs concerning topics therein. Or this is so at least in the absence undefeated defeaters, such as reasons to think the author is unreliable. For example, Michael Crichton is unreliable about climate change in the novel *State of Fear*. If you know this and you're rational, you shouldn't export information about the (putative) conspiracies among climate scientists and so on. The upshot is that learning facts from fiction essentially involves, and is involved in, understanding. We import prior knowledge about certain domains to understand the work, and we simultaneously export new information about those domains. It's all part of the same process.

With that in mind, I turn now to a short argument for a big claim. Many forms of cognitive value attributed to fiction are kinds of understanding, such as insight into various aspects of human nature and human psychology (e.g., other people's emotions or motivations), insight into social relations, others' experiences ('what it's like'), and so on. The claim is that insofar as fictions can foster these kinds of understanding, it is via the same mechanisms as we learn ordinary facts: comprehending the text and selectively exporting information.

If you read *War and Peace,* you get some idea of what it's like to be in a certain kind of a battle at a certain time. Do you *know* what it's like? No, I think obviously not. But do you get *some* understanding, more than what you had before? It seems as if you do. My claim is

restricted to these kinds of cognitive value, which are frequently attributed to fictional literature. Whether we export a general conception of human nature or specific geographical information, the understanding relies on the same export constraints of truth and accuracy. We don't acquire *genuine* understanding of social relations or others' experiences if these are misrepresented. To say, 'I read a book that has a completely misleading picture of how love works, and now I understand love', makes no sense. So, to acquire any of these kinds of understanding, the work cannot radically misrepresent the phenomena.

To defend this claim I want to consider a challenge: Even if learning facts relies on understanding, the converse might not hold, because understanding in other ways might not require truth/accuracy. For example, Stock (2006) has defended the claim that acquiring psychological insight from fiction does not require any reason to think the portrayal true or accurate, as long as the motivations or explanations appear *possible* for human beings. Relatedly, there is a traditional idea often traced to Aristotle that fiction is educational precisely because it is not factual or truthful, because it is concerned with possibility rather than particulars. Fiction abstracts and simplifies. Instead of giving you all the details of historical events, a good fiction conveys the core causal components. This provides a better sense of what matters, but only by shedding some of the less important truths or facts. Inspired by Aristotle, psychologists like Raymond Mar and Keith Oatley (2008) think of fictions as simplified simulations of human interaction; we learn from them precisely because they are simplified in ways that ordinary human interactions are not. Catherine Elgin (2017), an advocate of the value of understanding over propositional knowledge, compares fictions to scientific models and thought experiments. In all these cases we find that abstraction and idealisation (forms of falsification) are what makes them effective tools for learning.

Elgin (2017) thus argues that understanding is *non-factive*, so that representations need not be true to constitute genuine understanding. There are two reasons for this position: First, understanding is gradual; it can be better or worse. By contrast, a particular belief is either true or false. So, we can say that Copernicus understood the motion of celestial bodies better than Ptolemy, even though he thought that the planets in the solar system orbited the sun in circles. This is a better understanding than the view that the celestial bodies are going round the earth; but it's false, because they travel in ellipses. Copernicus's model of how the solar system works is inaccurate, but it represents better understanding than Ptolemy's model.

Second, Elgin argues that in science we find many 'felicitous falsehoods', such as the ideal gas law. The ideal gas law not only enables understanding of the interactions of gases in terms of pressure and volume; it arguably does so better than an accurate description would. The model abstracts away from many facts about real-world gases, such as the fact that the molecules interact with each other. There are no gases in reality that are accurately described by the ideal gas law. Nonetheless, Elgin argues, the model cannot be improved upon by improving its accuracy; a more accurate description of the movements of molecules in a container would not help us understand the behaviour of gases better. It's the simplification that makes the model useful.

We can apply this idea to fiction (as Aristotle himself did, at least on a common interpretation). Many standard features of fiction seem to contribute to understanding. For example, there is empirical evidence that people understand narratives better than expository texts, possibly because they are exposed to narratives from a very young age. Fictions also have first-person or more generally 'here/now' perspectives, deploying concrete, imagistic language. Many provide multiple 'inside views' via free indirect discourse; these are the works that are usually credited with fostering deeper understanding. Fictions typically invite personal and emotional engagement, elicit our interest and attention, and so on. These features tend to increase active inferential processing and thus understanding.[110] In my view, all these features can be present in non-fiction. But there's no doubt that invention makes it easier to construct a narrative with those features.

Here are some cases that demonstrate this point. There are fictions that function like counterfactual history, such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* or Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad.* These novels are designed to illuminate real events by imagining that they unfolded differently. There are also fictions that seem to function as thought experiments, like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. They invite us to imagine a society like *this* and consider the consequences. In terms of simplification, a good example is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Solzhenitsyn wrote non-fiction accounts of the gulag system, but you can best learn what it was like by reading this very short novel. In it, Solzhenitsyn takes his own

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[110] I discuss evidence for these claims in Friend (2006).

experiences and the experiences of other prisoners and compresses them all into the experiences of a fictional character across a single day. This is using invention to provide information that would be harder to extract from a purely truthful description.

So, the challenge to my claim—the claim that understanding from fiction relies on the same mechanisms by which we learn facts—is as follows: Isn't it the case that when we acquire understanding from fiction, what's really valuable is that it's *false*?

My answer is that even if invention facilitates understanding, this does *not* undermine the significance of truth or accuracy for understanding from fiction. First, 'non-factive' does not mean 'divorced from reality'. Elgin herself says scientific models are supposed to help 'make sense of the facts' (2017, p.329), to be applicable within certain constraints and so on. In any case, I think the comparison with scientific models is misleading, because scientific modelling relies on scientists' understanding the parameters within which accuracy is or is not required. The ideal gas law works as a model because abstracting away from certain features doesn't change the fundamental real-world relation between pressure and volume of a gas. If it did, the model would no longer be useful. This is a feature of science case that's hard to apply to the fiction case. And everyone, including Elgin, would agree that if we export or believe what is inaccurate, our understanding is less than it would otherwise be, *ceteris paribus*. If you have two equally coherent, elaborated models, the one that is more accurate is going to be better.

I'll illustrate this with a classic example deployed by Elgin (2017, p.237): Jane Austen's simplified models of human relations, famously relying on nothing more than 'three or four families in a country village'. If we learn from Austen's novels, it's because the simplified representation is accurate and therefore applicable to real situations, though at a more abstract level than, say, learning some historical facts from a historical fiction. In reading Austen, you don't learn (in the relevant sense) about the specific activities of certain individuals, since they do not exist. Instead, you can export a picture of life in Regency England, or even more abstractly, a picture of relations between people applicable across times and places. This picture must be accurate *at the abstract level* if we are to acquire genuine understanding.

5. Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion, I turn to the most tentative part of my argument, concerning the relation

to aesthetic or artistic or literary value (I will use these terms interchangeably). I claim that a fiction's capacity to convey facts can contribute to its value *as art* or *as literature*. To defend this claim—or any claim about the contribution of cognitive value to aesthetic value—requires an account of *when* a cognitive value contributes to this value of a work. What are the criteria? I will not defend a new account here, but instead consider the issue in light of criteria that have been suggested by other aesthetic cognitivists.

According to one view, a work is more artistically valuable when the cognitive value is one to which fictional literature is uniquely or especially attuned, such as moral psychology (Conolly and Haydar, 2007). Oliver Conolly and Bahshar Haydar suggest that *Middlemarch* is more valuable as literature in virtue of it telling us something about moral psychology than *Moby Dick* is for telling us a lot about whales, because informing readers about whales is not a special capacity of literature. A second position relies on the idea that artistic value involves *achievement* (see e.g., Huddleston, 2012).[111] A simplified version of this idea is that if an artist intends to do something (that contributes, that is difficult to accomplish, etc.) then the work is more valuable in virtue of achieving what they set out to do. The third proposal is that cognitive value contributes to artistic value when the cognitive gain is *inseparable* from the appreciation of the work (see Thomson-Jones 2005). Eileen John (1998) argues in great detail and convincingly that this may be so for the conceptual knowledge acquired from some works of literature.

Briefly, I suggest that a work's capacity to convey ordinary facts can be essential in all these ways to our appreciation of a work. First, it can foster significant forms of understanding. That's the conclusion of my argument above, that learning facts is part of how we understand what we read and therefore contributes to understanding other people and the world around us. Second, the capacity to convey facts can manifest artistic achievement. Hilary Mantel spent five years engaging in research for *Wolf Hall*, ensuring (for example) that no character in the novel was located in a place that they could not be, given where the historical records indicated they were before or after. That is how much she cared about getting it right. You might think, 'what a waste a time'. But I think, 'what an achievement!'. So, in my view *Wolf Hall* is partly valuable because of this accomplishment.

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[111] The view is controversial. See Grant (2020).

Most important is the third criterion. I have argued that to understand a work is to import and export information within domains we take to be realistic. You couldn't understand a work of fiction without (subconsciously) determining the respects in which the storyworld is like the real world, because comprehension requires importing prior knowledge. But once you start importing information about a topic, you are likely to export information about the topic as well. In other words, learning facts is inseparable from understanding any work of fiction, and therefore inseparable from appreciation.

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General Remarks for a Historical and Systematic Reconstruction of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents the main aspects for a systematic and historical reconstruction of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime. First, I argue against general assumptions of the literature on the Kantian sublime. Second, I explain Mendelssohn's reception of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and his rejection of the philosophical use of the concept of negative magnitudes. Third, I present Kant's concept of "negative pleasure" in the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* as a response to the problems presented in our explanation of Mendelssohn's reception of Burke. Fourth, I examine how the difficulties encountered by Mendelssohn in Burke's theory of sublime condition Kant's Analytic of the Sublime. This influence is evident in the introduction of the negative pleasure into the *Critique of Judgment*. However, I argue that Kant cannot adequately address the problem that negative pleasure presents in his aesthetics. In conclusion, I claim that Kant, in the third *Critique,* encounters the same difficulty as Mendelssohn in his reception of Burke, namely the impossibility of philosophically grounding negative feelings.

1. Introduction

The problem of the sublime in Kant's philosophy can be reduced to a single question: How is it possible to take pleasure in an imperfect object? This very question is formulated by Kant in the Analytic of the Sublime of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: "How can we designate

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with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contra-purposive?"[113]

Interpretations of this question usually make two assumptions that, in my opinion, are insufficient for a proper interpretation of the Kantian sublime. On the one hand, the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* are understood as preamble to the Analytic of the Sublime. On the other hand, it is often said that the title of these *Observations* was inspired by Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.[114] Both assumptions are incompatible with two facts. Against the first assumption, it must be said that the term "displeasure," which plays a central role in the Analytic, appears only once in the *Observations*, so that a systematic relation between this precritical writing and the Analytic loses consistency. Against the second assumption, it must be emphasized that Kant only read the *Enquiry* after the publication of Garve's translation. Thus, a direct influence of Burke on Kant's precritical aesthetics becomes rather fraudulent.

In my view, the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* is much more important for understanding the sublime in Kant's early philosophy. There are two historical reasons for considering this essay. On the one hand, the concept of negative pleasure, which plays a central role in the Analytic, was defined for the first time in this essay. On the other hand, this concept is a response to the difficulties of Mendelssohn's aesthetics. This paper aims to outline the key historical and systematic aspects of the concept of negative pleasure. First, I explain the major difficulties presented for Mendelssohn by Burke's theory of the sublime. Second, I explain the concept of negative pleasure in the essay on negative magnitudes, and argue that this feeling can be read as a critique of Mendelssohn's aesthetics. Third, I analyze how Kant reinterprets negative pleasure in the Analytic of the Sublime, arguing that this feeling is not compatible with the foundations of his aesthetics.

2. Mendelssohn's Difficulties with Burke's *Enquiry*

For Burke, the most important feature of the sublime is that it arouses an ambivalent feeling, one composed of pleasure and displeasure. It is important to say that, for Burke, the sublime is

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[113] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 245. The translations of Kant's works are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood.
[114] For instance, see Guyer, Paul (2000), "Editor's Introduction," in *Critique of the power of judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), xiii–lii; here, xv.

not a feeling as such, but a property of the objects given in experience. The feeling aroused by sublime objects is called *delight*. As he says, the sublime object is "capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror".[115]

For German intellectuals such as Lessing, the problem of Burke's aesthetics is primarily methodological in nature. According to Lessing, since the empirical method of Burke lacks systematicity, it is necessary to develop the compendium of his empirical observations under the unity of a rational system. However, the task of introducing Burke's aesthetic observations into rationalism is a task reserved for Mendelssohn. After reading the *Enquiry*, Lessing proposes this historical task to his friend: "but even if the author's basic principles are not much use, his book is tremendously useful as a collection of all the observations and perceptions that the philosopher who would undertake the same study must accept as indisputable. He has assembled all the materials for a good system that no one knows better than you how to use."[116]

The two key moments of Mendelssohn's confrontation with the Burkean sublime are the review of the *Enquiry* and the *Rhapsody*. In both places, one can clearly see the great difficulty that the introduction of Burke into rationalism supposed for Mendelssohn. The main reason why the *Enquiry* seems incompatible with rationalism is the ambivalence of the feeling of delight. In the review, Mendelssohn says: "From this we see that the author does not attribute a positive pleasure to the sublime, but a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant sensation, which can be called delight. But that every delight, every liberation from an unpleasant sensation, could be a source of the sublime, seems to run straight against the system of our philosophers."[117]

A very similar picture was expressed by Mendelssohn a few years later in the *Rhapsody or Additions to the Letters on Sentiments* (1761). In these additions, Mendelssohn confesses his inability to properly understand Burke: "In no way do I flatter myself with having provided

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[115] Burke (2005), *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), p. 136.

[116] Lessing, letter to Mendelssohn from 18 February 1758, in *Werke und Briefe* (Frankfurt a/M: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998), 11.1: pp. 276–278. See Furniss, Tom (2009), „Our Neighbors Observe and We Explain: Moses Mendelssohn's Critical Encounter with Edmund Burke's Aesthetics", in *The Eighteenth Century*, 50, 4, pp. 327–54.

[117] Mendelssohn, *Burke, Sublime and Beautiful,* in *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe* (JubA) Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1971, 0, p. 235. English translations of Mendelssohn are based on Daniel O. Dahlstrom's translation: Mendelssohn (1997), *Philosophical Writings* Cambridge University Press.

the psychological basis for all the experiences noted by the Englishman. Our sentiments have such depths that poking my eye in their direction is all too fatuous. I wish rather, by my effort here, to have encouraged a philosophical mind to undertake this worthwhile investigation."[118]

The reason why the mixed feeling of delight is hardly compatible with Mendelssohn's rationalistic aesthetics can be clarified in view of the architectonics of this philosophical discipline. Baumgarten, at the beginning of his *Aesthetica* (1750), says that this discipline is reduced to the reflection on the perfect and the beautiful; the ugly and the imperfect are excluded from it. As Baumgarten says: "Aesthetices finis est perfectio cognitionis sensitivae, qua talis. Haec autem est pulcritudo, et cavenda eiusdem, qua talis, imperfectio. Haec autem est deformitas".[119] Thus, negative aesthetic objects and feelings remain outside the discipline.

It is important to emphasize that the exclusion of negative feelings from this discipline has, at the same time, an ontological reason of utmost importance. The question of why negative feelings does not deserve philosophical reflection mainly boils down to the fact that negations lack their own reality. For both Baumgarten and Meier, the concepts of reality and negation were opposed to each other. "If a negation is posited, then a reality is removed. Hence, negations and realities are mutually opposite to each other."[120] Therefore, it was impossible for a negation to have its own reality, that is, a *positive ontological value*. The contrary, that is, if a negation could have reality of its own, it would contradict the principle of sufficient reason (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). This idea is expressed in Meier's *Metaphysics*: "No reality (*Realität*), insofar as it is a reality, can be the ground of a negation or have a negative consequence, since otherwise a negation should be able to have a real ground [...]. If now a reality, insofar as it is a reality, had a negative consequence, it would be to this extent a negation, and therefore it would be a reality at the same time and in the same sense a negation, and this is impossible."[121]

Mendelssohn developed this fundamental opposition between realities and negations in his aesthetics. In both the *Letters* and the different versions of the *Rhapsody*, he understands the imperfection of the object as a "lack" of reality. Since each negation is a lack of reality, displeasure, as a negation, cannot have its own reality, and it is thus incapable of being opposed

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[118] Mendelssohn, *Rhapsodie*, JubA, 01, p. 401.
[119] Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, § 14.
[120] Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 136.
[121] Meier, *Metaphysik*, § 135.

to pleasure. This ontological devaluation of negativity was criticized by Kant in the essay on negative magnitudes. As I show in the next section, Kant's aim in the essay on the philosophical use of negative magnitudes is to define negations as something real and positive. Among the disciplines in which he develops the concept of real negation, empirical psychology stands out.

3. Kant's Concept of Negative Pleasure

Against the rationalist conviction that negations are a lack of reality, Kant wrote the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes in Philosophy*. It is important to remember that this concept was rejected in both mathematics and philosophy. In the first volume of *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, Wolff says: "it is said *positive*, also *affirmative* or *greater than 0* to the amount assigned to something with the + sign; however, when the sign – is assigned to a quantity, it is called *privative*, also *negative* and is *less than 0*, by some it is called *absurd*".[122]

Against the opinion that negative magnitudes are absurd, Kästner tried to popularize their concept in the first volume of his *Foundations of Mathematics*. For him, negative magnitudes are something real: "One can consider the negative magnitude as something that must be subtracted from the affirmative one, and thus denote it with the sign – if the affirmative one has + [...] The negative magnitude can exceed the affirmative one. This negative, which remains, is a real (*wirkliche*) magnitude and is opposed to the one that is considered positive".[123]

Following Kästner's definition, Kant states that negative magnitudes "are not negations [...], but something in itself truly positive."[124] And "positive," as understood by the rationalist school, means reality. According to Wolff, a "positive thing" (*ens positivum*) is something and it has reality.[125] This also applies to Baumgarten: "Tam realitates ipsae, quam entia, quibus insunt, ENTIA REALIA seu positiva dicitur".[126] Therefore, it is possible to affirm that, in the essay on negative magnitudes, negations are something positive and with a reality of their own.

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[122] Wolff, *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), 29, p. 299. See Lausch, Hans (1993), „Moses Mendelssohn. ‚Ein Algebraist würde das Gute in seinem Leben mit positiven Größen vergleichen'. Zur Unwirklichkeit des Negativen im 18. Jahrhundert", en *Mendelssohn-Studien*, 8, pp. 23-36.
[123] Kästner (1758), *Anfangsgründe der Arithmetik, Geometrie, ebenen und sphärischen Trigonometrie und Perspektiv*, Goettingen, p. 60.
[124] Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 169.
[125] Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive ontologia*, § 274.
[126] Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 135.

This positive concept of negativity is developed in the field of empirical psychology, that part of metaphysics that served as the basis for aesthetics. In this section, Kant asks: "Is displeasure simply the lack of pleasure? Or is displeasure a ground of the deprivation of pleasure? And in this case, displeasure, while being indeed something positive in itself and not merely the contradictory opposite of pleasure, is opposed to pleasure in the real sense of the term. The question thus amounts to this: can displeasure be called negative pleasure? Now, right from the beginning, inner feeling tells us that displeasure is more than a mere negation".[127]

As can be seen in this passage, Kant tries to understand the negation of displeasure as something real and positive that is capable of being opposed to the feeling of pleasure. Further on in the text, he concludes: "Displeasure is accordingly not simply a lack of pleasure. It is a positive ground which, wholly or partly, cancels the pleasure which arises from another ground. For this reason, I call it a *negative pleasure*."[128] Displeasure becomes as positive as pleasure.

To understand the reality of the feeling of displeasure, that is, of negative pleasure, it is essential to return to Mendelssohn's aesthetic theory. In my opinion, Kant's definition of negative pleasure is a critique of Mendelssohn's aesthetic standpoint. The *Berliner Sokrates*, in the *Letters on Sentiments*, rejects outright the reality of negative magnitudes. He argues: "What is a negative magnitude? An artificial word that mathematicians have adopted to indicate a real magnitude by which another must be reduced. In strict sense, a negative magnitude is something absurd. The reality can come to it as little as to the mathematical point."[129]

The rejection of this concept has an important consequence. When Mendelssohn asks in the first edition of the *Letters on Sentiments* (1755) how a mixed feeling is possible, he says that the feelings of pleasure and displeasure cannot be in real conflict, that is, opposed to each other:

> If a few bitter drops are mixed into the honeysweet bowl of pleasure, they enhance the taste of the pleasure and double its sweetness. Yet this happens only when the two types of sentiments, of which the mixture consists, are not directly opposed to one another. If, to the conception of some present

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[127] Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 180.
[128] Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 181.
[129] Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 96.

fortune, there is added the poignant memory of that misery in which we previously lived, then tears of joy gush forth, tears that are the epitome of all joys. Why? The concept of a past imperfection does not conflict with the concept of the present perfection. Both can exist next to one another, and that bygone imperfection makes us more sensitive to the gratifying feeling. [130]

When Mendelssohn says that both feelings cannot be opposed to each other, he means that the negativity of displeasure cannot have the same ontological value as pleasure: "were there some distressing circumstances that still pain us in the present, they would erase part of the joy and markedly diminish its intensity. For this reason, I said that they must not be directly opposed to one another."[131] Thus, it becomes evident that the argument that mixed feelings cannot consist of a real opposition is determined by the rejection of the reality of negative magnitudes.

Kant raised the connection between negative magnitudes and the problem of mixed feelings in the *Attempt*. There, Kant says: "The calculation of the total value of the complete pleasure in a mixed state (*vermischten Zustand*) would also be highly absurd if a displeasure were a mere negation and equal to zero."[132] To make clear in which sense displeasure has a reality, Kant gives an example: "Suppose that the news brought to a Spartan mother that her son has fought heroically for his native country in battle. An agreeable feeling of pleasure takes possession of her soul. She is thereupon told that her son has died a glorious death in battel".

In view of this aesthetic interpretation of negativity, one can appreciate the novelty of the concept of negative pleasure for aesthetics. Negative pleasure expresses the reality of displeasure and, as can be seen, was defined by Kant against rationalism. However, negative pleasure in the *Critique of Judgment* does not mean mere displeasure; rather, as will be explained in the next section, it describes an opposition between of pleasure and displeasure.

4. Kant's Analytic of the Sublime

As I indicated at the beginning of this paper, the question of the sublime in Kant can be reduced to a single question: "How can we designate with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contra-purposive?" In other words: How is negative pleasure possible? It is necessary to analyze both parts of this question. Because the sublime is a mixed feeling, it

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[130] Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 110.
[131] Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 110.
[132] Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 181.

is necessary to ask about the conditions of possibility of both displeasure and pleasure. Before explaining both feelings, I would like to point out that the way Kant grounds both feelings are insufficient. (i) On the one hand, as the literature on negative feelings claims, Kant does not offer any transcendental foundation for the feeling of displeasure. (ii) On the other hand, he does not offer an adequate explanation of pleasure either; rather than grounding its purposiveness in *nature*, he grounds it in *freedom*, which is inconsistent with the fact that the proper transcendental principle of pure aesthetic judgments is the purposiveness *of nature*.

(i) In the essay on the concept of negative magnitudes, Kant argues that one of the main characteristics of the reality of negations is that they presuppose a "positive ground." "A real repugnancy only occurs where there are two things, as positive grounds, and where one of them cancels the consequence of the other."[133] In the context of the Analytic it is important to emphasize that the "positive ground" of the feeling of displeasure is not a real ground. Because this ground must lie in subjectivity, it must be a *transcendental ground*. In other words, to explain the feeling of displeasure, Kant should have formulated a *negative, transcendental principle*, through which displeasure can be opposed to pleasure in a transcendental sense.

The possibility of displeasure lies mainly in the object that is judged. As opposed to the phenomenon of the beautiful, which seems to show that nature suits to the knowledge conditions of the subject, the sublime shows no purposiveness whatsoever, only chaos and devastation: "in that which we are accustomed to call sublime in nature there is so little that leads to particular objective principles and forms of nature corresponding to these that it is mostly rather in its chaos or in its wildest and most unruly disorder and devastation."[134] For this reason, Kant states that the sublime object is "contra-purposive" for the power of judgment.

This inadequacy between nature and the subject's capacity to judge results in displeasure. However, the feeling of displeasure is in itself paradoxical. Although it results from this inadequacy, the judgment does not cease to presuppose a purposiveness of nature. This is emphasized by Henry Allison: "Although the judgment remains both aesthetic and reflective, the faculty here is clearly not functioning heautonomously. Instead of legislating merely to itself, in the experience of the sublime, judgment encounters something that conflicts with its

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[133] Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 175.
[134] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 246.

own requirements, so that the assessment of reflective judgment as such, that is, as operating in accordance with its own principles, must be negative, issuing in a dislike for the object."[135]

From this, it follows that the foundation of displeasure lies in the object and not in the subject's inner transcendental structures. As discussed in the literature on negative feelings in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant has not given any transcendental foundation of the principle that could make displeasure possible. Accordingly, displeasure has been interpreted as a mere *psychological effect* of the subject without a transcendental foundation.[136]

(ii) For the judgment of the sublime to be aesthetic, it is necessary that displeasure is accompanied by pleasure. The great difficulty that the feeling of pleasure poses for the interpretation of the Analytic of the Sublime is that Kant does not base the feeling of pleasure on the purposiveness of nature, but on that of freedom. Accordingly, pleasure "indicates not only a purposiveness of objects in relation to the reflecting power of judgment, in accordance with the concept of nature, in the subject, but also, conversely, one of the subject, due to the concept of freedom, with regard to the objects, concerning their form or even their lack of form; and thereby it happens that the aesthetic judgment is related not only to the beautiful, merely as judgment of taste, but also, as one that has arisen from a feeling of spirit, to the sublime".[137]

The practical dimension of the feeling of the sublime is developed in the dynamic part of the Analytic of the Sublime. In this second part of the Analytic, Kant says that the pleasure of the sublime "has its foundation in human nature, and indeed in that which can be required of everyone and demanded of him along with healthy understanding, namely in the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to that which is moral". It is evident that the pleasure of the sublime has nothing to do with the principle of the judgment of taste, namely, the purposiveness of nature, for the source of this pleasure lies in freedom. For this reason, some scholars have argued that the pleasure of the sublime is not aesthetic, but moral.

As can be seen in view of both aspects explained (i, ii), Kant does not offer an adequate explanation for the feeling of negative pleasure. On the one hand, there is no transcendental foundation for displeasure. On the other hand, neither does Kant offer an aesthetic, but a moral

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[135] Allison, Henry (2001), *Kant's Theory of* Taste, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 306.
[136] Guyer, Paul (2006), „Kant und die Reinheit des Hässlichen", in *Im Schatten des Schönen: die Ästhetik des Häßlichen in historischen Ansätzen und aktuellen Debatten*, ed. by Heiner Klemme, Michael Pauen and Maire-Luise Raters, Bielefeld, pp. 93–116.
[137] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 192.

explanation of pleasure. These aspects led Kant to reduce the significance of the Analytic to an "appendix": "For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former – a very necessary introductory remark, which entirely separates the ideas of the sublime from that of a purposiveness of nature, and makes of the theory of the sublime a mere appendix to the aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature."[138]

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the main aspects for a historical and systematic reconstruction of the concept of negative pleasure. To conclude this paper, I would like to point out that the impossibility of grounding the feeling of displeasure is not only characteristic of Mendelssohn's aesthetics. As has been shown in the last section, neither has Kant been able to provide an adequate answer. Neither Mendelssohn nor Kant have been able to provide a transcendental explanation of the feeling of displeasure. While in Mendelssohn's case this impossibility has been due to his rejection of negative magnitudes, it still remains to be clarified why negative feelings are incompatible with the aesthetic framework of Kant's *Critique*.

In my view, the underlying reason why the negativity of pleasure cannot take on a transcendental status is mainly due to the fact that the principle of the power of judgment restores the rationalist equivalence between reality and perfection. This equivalence has played a central role in rationalism since Spinoza. For him, the perfection of reality lies in the harmony between objects and concepts. "Ordo et connexio idearum est ac ordo et connexio rerum."[139] This connection between concepts and objects constitutes the principle of judgment: "the causality of a concept with regard to its object is purposiveness."[140] The transcendental principle of judgment, the purposiveness of nature, despite being merely regulative and non-determining, seems to be an attempt to restore the rationalistic harmony between objects and concepts.

Because for the reflective judgment the objects of nature must conform to ends, it is therefore unrepresentable that a natural object can be contrary to them and yet be aesthetic, that

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[138] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 246.
[139] Spinoza, *Ethica*, II, Prop. VII.
[140] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 220.

is, capable of producing a pleasure. This is the great difficulty of the Analytic of the Sublime.

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Should We Accept Fictional Universals?

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ABSTRACT. Certain realists about properties and relations identify them with universals. Furthermore, some hold that for a wide range of meaningful predicates, the semantic contribution to the propositions expressed by the sentences in which those predicates figure is the universal expressed by the predicate. I here address ontological issues raised by predicates first introduced to us *via* works of fiction and whether the universal realist should accept that any such predicates express universals. After assessing arguments Braun (2015) and Sawyer (2015) for fictional universal anti-realism, I propose a novel, Kripke-inspired argument for the same. I ultimately argue that while such an argument presents the strongest case for fictional universal anti-realism, it is nonetheless unsound. I conclude that nothing stands in the way of accepting that some fictional predicates are instantiable, and hence, that some universals are fictional universals.

1. The Doctrine of Universal Realism and Some Questions Concerning Fictional Universals

Let's suppose, for the purposes of this paper, that you subscribe to Universal Realism (henceforth, UR), which entails the following facts about you.[142] You are a realist about properties and relations, and you take them to be necessarily existing abstracta of a certain sort, viz., *sui generis* universals. You think universals are fairly abundant, and for a fairly wide range of meaningful predicates, you hold that there is not only the extension – the set of entities to

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[142] And not just that you believe UR, but you do so rationally. You have arguments or reasons for UR that you take to be sound and are ready to defend, such as the One Over Many argument, perhaps coupled with considerations about what you consider the best semantics for predicates.

which the predicate applies – but there is also the universal expressed by the predicate. You further believe that when a meaningful predicate expresses a universal, that universal is the semantic content of the predicate that expresses it.[143] Now, when wondering about just how wide a category this is, you of course realize that 'is non self-instantiating' expresses no universal.[144] But you also commit yourself to something slightly stronger: while 'is a dog', 'is a quark', and 'has 3 siblings' all express universals, as does the uninstantiated 'is a blue swan', you deny that 'is a round square' expresses a universal.[145] 'Uninstantiable universal' refers to nothing whatsoever; in order for any predicate to express a universal, it must be a predicate that possibly has a non-null extension. In other words, you are ontologically committed to universals that go "beyond science" and correspond to most of our ordinary concepts, even though this means being ontologically committed to universals that are uninstantiated. A bright line is drawn for you, however, at concepts corresponding to universals that cannot be instantiated.

There nonetheless may remain for you the following interesting question: does 'is from the planet Krypton' express a universal? Generally, should you think that all such predicates introduced by works of fiction are relevantly similar to 'is a round square'? After all, if the only entities that could instantiate such universals are purely fictional, how *could* such predicates have non-null extensions? Or are they relevantly similar to 'is a blue swan'?

To begin to tackle these questions, let us first focus on a three-way distinction: real (abstract or concrete) entities, fictional entities, and actual entities. Candidate real, nonfictional, actual entities are pineapples, coffee cups, the number 7, and the set of sharks. Now, if Fictional Anti-Realists are correct, then all fictional entities are unreal (and *a fortiori* non-actual).

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[143] That is, it at least provides the content to the propositions expressed by sincere assertions of sentences containing those predicates.

[144] Absurdly, if such a universal existed, it would entail that something exists that both instantiates itself and fails to instantiate itself.

[145] While 'is a round square' would express an uninstantiable universal if it expressed one at all, such a predicate would be relevantly dissimilar from 'is non-self instantiable'. If the universal *round-square-hood* exists, that does not entail that something exists that is both round and non-round; the universal itself would instantiate neither *round-hood* nor *square-hood*, and any other entity that instantiated one would fail to instantiate the other. An aside: by my lights, the idea that instantiability is essential to a universal is too restrictive. 'Is perfectly round', e.g., seems to express a universal, even though nothing concrete or abstract could instantiate it. But, for purposes of the present paper, specifically, to avoid an argument for realism about some fictional universals that would be trivially sound, I will assume that instantiability is essential.

However, if some Fictional Realists are correct, then some actual entities are fictional entities, such as Sherlock Holmes, Superman, and Cinderella.[146] If other Fictional Realists are correct, then all fictional entities are non-actual entities, that is, mere possibilia or non-existents.[147] At any rate, all such fictional entities are understood by the theorists just mentioned to be particulars, not shareable universals. So, the questions of interest from the preceding paragraph can be boiled down to these: What's the proper ontology of fictional universals?[148] What should you – believer in fairly abundant, necessarily existing, abstract universals – say about *being a friend of Dr. Watson*, *having parents from planet Krypton,* and *turning into a pumpkin post-midnight*? Are these entities real or unreal? If such universals are real, what, if anything, does this dictate about the extensions of the predicates that express them? Are any comprised of actual entities? Could they only be comprised of non-actualia?

2. What Would Anti-Realism about Fictional Universals Look Like?

Recent philosophical literature teems with views regarding the ontology of fictional particulars – elaborate elaborations of varieties of Fictional Anti-Realisms and Realisms. Braun (2015) and Sawyer (2015), however, explicitly focus their discussions on the ontology of fictional non-particulars. Here is Sawyer summarizing her project:

> …[T]he … question of whether a fictional predicate refers to a fictional property is, as far as I know, rarely discussed. … [I]f fictional predicates *do not* refer to fictional properties, then semantic questions arise about how to make sense of the apparent phenomena of meaning, reference, and truth. … If, on the other hand, fictional predicates *do* refer to fictional properties, then metaphysical questions arise about the nature and scope of those properties. … I argue that the question of whether a fictional name refers to a fictional character is *inherently bound up with* the question of whether a fictional predicate refers to a fictional property. Consequently, the former, more discussed question (about fictional names and characters) cannot be answered independently of the latter, generally

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[146] I have in mind here van Inwagen (1977), Thomasson (1999), and Braun (2015).

[147] I have in mind here Lewis (1978), Parsons (1980), and Priest (2005). And I say that some fictional *realists* accept fictionalia as non-existents or mere possibilia. All such things would be non-actualia. My terminology in this paper thus presupposes the falsity of Actualism – the thesis that all real things are actual – but nothing of substance turns on this terminological decision.

[148] Note that on my usage here, 'fictional universal' functions like 'brown duck', not 'decoy duck.' A fictional universal is both fictional (in the sense of essentially being originally mentioned in a work of fiction) and a genuine universal. A fictional detective, e.g., Sherlock Holmes, is not a genuine detective, but a fictional universal, if extant, is a genuine universal. This is an important terminological difference from Braun (2015); see Section 2.

neglected question (about fictional predicates and properties). Crucially, a number of semantic theories of fictional names and metaphysical theories of fictional characters *presuppose*, either explicitly or implicitly, that there *are* fictional properties to which fictional predicates refer…. I argue that this presupposition is inconsistent with *antirealist* theories of fictional characters and that it cannot be taken for granted by *realist* theories of fictional characters either. … [T]he considerations adduced favour … a theory which is consistently antirealist about both fictional characters and fictional properties. (pp. 208-209)

Braun also argues for a kind of anti-realism *qua* fictional non-particulars. However, he differs from Sawyer in that he finds no reason in this to be an anti-realist about fictional particulars. On Braun's account, 'is from planet Krypton' at times expresses a "fictional attribute", but it never expresses a fictional universal nor has as its extension a set of particulars that instantiate the property *being from planet Krypton*; rather, when the predicate determinately contributes something other than a gap to propositions expressed by sentences in which it figures, it contributes a created, abstract particular. And the argument used to establish this is *of the very same sort*[149] he employs to establish that the semantic content of 'Superman' is also at times a created, abstract particular.[150] So, Braun is a realist about fictional particulars, and while he is a realist about so-called fictional attributes, he is an anti-realist about fictional non-particulars, and more generally, fictional universals. The fictional attributes he believes in are no more genuine universals than Superman is a genuine person.

My project in this paper is as follows: I wish to argue that for you – believer in fairly abundant, necessarily existing, abstract universals – full-blown antirealism about fictional universals is not supported by the most powerful argument in its favor. In fact, there is nothing additionally peculiar about fictional universals as compared to ordinary universals that stands in the way of extending your UR view to encompass Fictional Universal Realism (henceforth, FUR), the view that some universals are fictional universals. And I wish to further argue, contra Sawyer specifically, that we can indeed separate questions of the ontology of fictional particulars from questions concerning the ontology of fictional non-particulars; whether or not fictional names for particulars ever refer, and regardless of their semantic contribution to the propositions expressed by sentences they figure in, there are times when fictional predicates

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[149] Roughly, it's the sort of Quinean argument van Inwagen (1977, pp. 41-3) provides.
[150] Other times it contributes a gap, other times its contribution is indeterminate.

express genuine universals. There are some universals introduced to us by fiction such that it's possible they are instantiated; some fictional predicates possibly apply to a non-null set of entities.

In addition to the difference in the way that Braun and I might use terms such as 'fictional attribute' or 'fictional property' – (oftentimes) meaning *created abstract particular* in his mouth, but meaning *abstract sui generis universal* in mine – some merely terminological issues regarding Sawyer's framing of the issues should also be cleared up. As she points out, we should not, of course, understand 'fictional predicate' to mean *predicate that appears in a work of fiction*; many ordinary predicates applying to non-fictional particulars also appear in fictional works. By her lights, a fictional predicate is an expression that "refers to a fictional property, where a fictional property is to be understood as a property which is not instantiated by real (non-fictional) individuals" (p. 209). But note, Sawyer says she is concerned with "whether a fictional predicate *refers* to a fictional property" (p. 208, my emphasis). Given that I'll be understanding the reference of a predicate to be its extension throughout, a perfectly *un*charitable interpretation of her project would take her as endorsing an anti-realist conclusion *qua* fictional non-particulars that is trivially true. Even realists (of every stripe) about fictional particulars such as Superman think that 'is from planet Krypton' *refers* (in my sense) to nothing actual whatsoever; its extension is actually empty.[151] So, I think a charitable interpretation of Sawyer's anti-realism is instead the claim that the semantic content of a meaningful fictional predicate is either nothing whatsoever (not even a gap) or something non-identical to a fictional non-particular (hence, *a fortiori*, something non-identical to a fictional universal). In other words, we can charitably understand (both Braun and) Sawyer as ultimately defending views that entail that for every meaningful fictional predicate R, when meaningful sentences of the form 'x is R' express a proposition P, the semantic contents of P will fail to include the universal *R-hood*.

I contend that the most powerful argument (as well as the runner-up) for anti-realism regarding fictional universals at most shows that a great many, such as the one that would be

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[151] For instance, some Fictional Realists are Artifactualists who identify Superman with a created abstractum. But they still think 'is from planet Krypton' has a non-null actual extension because an abstractum is not the sort of thing that can hail from any planet. Other realists, Meinongians, e.g., identify Superman with a flesh and blood superhero who genuinely hails from the planet Krypton, but Superman, and anything else hailing from planet Krypton, are all non-actual in virtue of being non-existent.

expressed by 'is from planet Krypton', could not be instantiated, and thus do not exist. With possible instantiation as the criterion for a predicate expressing a genuine universal, then I surely agree – a great many fictional predicates don't live up. But full-blown anti-realism about fictional universals (or Fictional Universal Anti-Realism; henceforth, FUAR) is unwarranted. The idea that no fictional predicate can express a fictional universal is made only apparently plausible due to the sorts of examples typically chosen.

3. Braun's Argument for Fictional Universal Anti-Realism

The most powerful argument for FUAR does not come from Braun. In fact, he doesn't offer any arguments directly in support of FUAR. As I made clear at the outset, instantiab*ility* is the existence condition for the sorts of non-particulars I'm interested in here, but actual instantiation is the existence condition for non-particulars that Braun employs. His reasoning, if compelling, would thus directly show that certain uninstantiated non-particulars, those introduced by predicates of fiction, do not exist. And this conclusion would then entail that all uninstantiable non-particulars introduced by predicates of fiction thereby do not exist, i.e., his reasoning, if compelling, would indirectly show that FUAR is true.

What is Braun's main line of reasoning? Here is a paraphrase:[152] If fictional predicates have as their semantic content a fictional non-particular, then, if 'is a witch' has content, it's the non-particular *being a witch*. But the content of 'is a witch' is the non-particular *being a witch* only if 'is a witch' has been applied by at least one speaker to at least one entity that in fact instantiates *being a witch*. But that has never occurred; there are no witches. So, fictional predicates do not have fictional non-particulars as their semantic content.

As Braun himself is quick to point out (p. 80), the believer in fictional non-particulars (a species of properties he calls "empty properties") has an immediate reply: reject the principle at the heart of the argument and maintain that the "semantic content of 'witch' is simply […] an empty property that nothing exemplifies" (p. 80). In FUR-speak, one may the invoke the fictional universal *witch-hood* as the semantic content of the predicate 'is a witch'. The predicate has never in fact been applied by at least one speaker to an entity that in fact

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[152] This is a paraphrase of the argument he calls the No Content Acquisition Argument (p. 78). Braun also thinks the argument applies to predicates introduced to us not only by works of fiction but by false scientific theories.

instantiates *witch-hood*, but this says nothing about whether this is an impossible scenario. Braun makes clear that while he thinks such a view would be "problematic", refuting it is something he has no interest in (pp. 80-81). That is why I think Braun's argument is not the strongest one in favor of FUAR; he merely sidesteps the response available to the proponent of UR. That is, he begs the question in favor of FUAR by assuming that non-particulars, generally conceived, are the sorts of things that must in fact be instantiated in order to exist.[153]

4. Sawyer's Argument for Fictional Universal Anti-Realism

Sawyer's arguments for FUAR are direct, however, and they are primarily epistemic; if compelling, they would show that both Fictional Realists and Fictional Anti-Realists (about fictional particulars) alike lack the epistemic justification for accepting fictional non-particulars as the contents of fictional predicates. Fictional Anti-realists such as Russell (1905), Currie (1990), and Adams, Fuller and Stecker (1997) all either implicitly or explicitly help themselves to a FUR ontology when presenting their views, but none provide the epistemic entitlement that's needed to do so. There clearly can be no sensory evidence for the existence of the universal *having parents from planet Krypton*, nor can one's evidence be grounded in taking such fictional universals to one and all be complexes of non-fictional universals that we do have evidence for. *Having parents* is presumably a universal whose existence we believe in because offspring are directly observable, but no such evidence exists for *being from planet Krypton*.

Fictional Realists likewise implicitly or explicitly help themselves to a FUR ontology, but any reasons they have for believing in fictional particulars will fail to count as reasons for believing in fictional universals. Quite the opposite, Sawyer argues: our lack of evidence for fictional universals teaches us that Fictional Realism is itself unwarranted. Neo-Meinongian Fictional Realists such as Parsons (1980) and Zalta (1983) rely on fictional universals to individuate the non-existent entities they identify fictional particulars with, but they simply take fictional universals for granted. No independent evidence is offered for the existence of

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[153] This is not a knock against Braun's project *per se*. Many theorists would reject an ontology of abundant non-particulars that would include uninstantiated non-particulars, and his entire project is aimed at one such theorist who furthermore wishes to retain the basics of a certain theory of meaning ("The Naïve Theory") while providing a plausible semantics of fictional discourse. However, one wonders, then, how such a theorist would treat 'is a blue swan'.

entities that would be just as metaphysically queer as the only sorts of particulars that could instantiate them. And Artifactualist Fictional Realists such as Salmon (1998) and Thomasson (1999) also rely on fictional universals to explain essential aspects of their views. The truth of metafictional sentences of literary criticism (e.g., 'According to the Superman stories, Kent works as a reporter for the Daily Planet') requires fictional universals that exist and get ascribed to a character by a work of fiction, and the explanatory work needed to generate the falsity of certain transfictional sentences[154] (e.g., Superman is from Krypton) also requires the existence of fictional universals that fail, of necessity, to be instantiated (Superman-*cum*-created-abstractum does not, indeed *cannot*, hail from any planet).

In the end, argues Sawyer, both the Fictional Anti-Realist and the Fictional Realist build their theories on the idea that there are universals of the sort that could only be instantiated by fictional entities. But such non-particular entities, given their metaphysical queerness, are epistemically unwarranted; hence, any ontology of fictional particulars, realist or anti-realist, that either implicitly or explicitly relies on their existence will be ultimately unwarranted. No evidence points us toward FUR; hence, FUAR is the better option.[155]

I agree that such non-particulars would be metaphysically queer and hence objectionable, especially if they are conceived not only as uninstantiated, but as uninstantiable, entities. But I don't think Sawyer's argument is compelling, and I intend to explain why in Section 6. I also don't think her reasons are the most powerful ones in favor of FUAR either. They are the runner-up. Ultimately, she attempts to make her case by appealing to either uninstantiated or uninstantiable entities of a certain sort that we in fact lack evidence for. And she's right, as far as her examples show. *Being from Krypton*[156] is uninstantiable by anything non-fictional. But just because we lack evidence for many fictional universals doesn't establish that we should think that all fictional universals would be relevantly like *round square-hood*. The defender of UR can make her case for extending her view to FUR by appeal to instantiable entities that we

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[154] That is, sentences whose contents do not seem fictional, ones that seemingly are just plain true, not fictionally true or true according to any fictional work. Transfictional sentences are ones that do not appear, at any rate, to be elliptical for 'according to fiction F, …'.

[155] Sawyer ultimately favors a thorough-going anti-realism about both fictional particulars and non-particulars along the lines of Walton's (1990) pretense theory. Sawyer holds that we talk *as if* both such kinds of things exist when playing certain games of make-believe.

[156] For consistency, I've been sticking with Superman-fiction examples. Sawyer actually uses Pooh-Bear-fiction examples, such as those that would be expressed by 'is a tigger' and 'is a heffalump'.

have do evidence for. Some fictional universals, I will argue below, are relevantly like *blue swan-hood*. And if we have reason to accept *blue swan-hood*, which we ultimately do, then Sawyer's case for FUAR is undermined. Whatever positive reasons the UR defender has for such uninstantiated universals would automatically be the same sorts of reasons she can employ for accepting FUR.

5. A Kripke-Inspired Argument for Fictional Universal Anti-Realism

There is one sort of argument for FUAR yet to consider, and by my lights, it is the most powerful argument for rejecting fictional universals. It is an argument that no one in the relevant literature has previously given (to my knowledge, anyway). However, it is one derived from a line of reasoning sketched by Kripke (1980) and refined by Zvolenszky (2014), et al.[157] Here is what I have in mind:

i)   If fictional names ever genuinely refer to particulars, what they refer to cannot be concrete actual nor non-actual particulars.

ii)   If what fictional names refer to cannot be concrete actual nor non-actual particulars, then FUAR is true.

Therefore,

iii) If fictional names ever genuinely refer to particulars, then FUAR is true.

The above is valid by *hypothetical syllogism*. It is, of course, not strictly an argument for FUAR, but it is one where it is intended that the conditional conclusion is vacuously true. Whether Fictional Realism or Fictional Anti-Realism (about fictional particulars) is true or not, FUAR is the case.

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[157] Kaplan (1973, pp. 505-8), e.g., uses it to show that 'Pegasus' cannot possibly refer to anything concrete. See also Fine (1984, pp. 126-8), Plantinga (1974, pp. 154-5), and Yagisawa (2010, pp. 271-77) for arguments that either names for fictional particulars cannot refer to any entity that's merely possible or that fictional particulars cannot be identified with mere possibilia. One of the main lines of reasoning, usually called The Selection Problem – advanced, e.g., by Sainsbury (2010, pp. 60-3) – for the claim that names for fictional particulars cannot refer to Meinongian non-existents is relevantly similar.

The rationale for premise (i) traces back to some remarks Kripke (1980, p. 157) makes regarding unicorns. Consider any non-actual, concrete particular (a Meinongian non-existent, or a Lewisian mere possibilium, say) having the sorts of features unicorns are said by the legends to have. No such particular could in the end have just what it takes to be a unicorn. To be a unicorn, a particular has to instantiate all the properties essential to them, but there are no such properties; there are no actual, particular beasts which provide them, and our legends incorporating them are utterly under-specific about what exactly they would be.

Zvolenszky (2014), expanding on some additional Kripkean commentary (1980, pp. 157-8) that seems to extend this line of reasoning to include the potential referents of fictional names such as 'Sherlock Holmes', provides more direct support for (i). She defends the general claim that "the fiction-writing mode of introducing proper names into the language is unsuited for them to have as their reference concrete, spatiotemporal objects, whether they be actual or [non-actual]" (p. 462).

To make her case, she first discusses the mythical name 'Vulcan'. Le Verrier hypothesized that an intra-Mercurial planet, which he named 'Vulcan', explained perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. But his hypothesis was eventually shown to be false; Einstein's general theory of relativity confirmed that the perturbations were produced by the gravitational field of the Sun. 'Vulcan', if it refers to anything at all, does not refer to an actual, concrete planet. But more importantly, 'Vulcan' cannot refer to any non-actual, concrete planet either (a Meinongian non-existent planet, or a Lewisian merely possible planet, say). The only way Le Verrier could have succeeded in naming a concrete planet is if his original hypothesis had been true, but its falsity shows he failed to name anything concrete, actual or non-actual; to say otherwise is to embrace the absurdity that, by utter coincidence, and completely contrary to the scientific intentions he had at the time, he succeeded in naming some non-actual, concrete planet.

We can use this lesson to adopt the following principle about *any* proper name – ordinary, mythical, or fictional: If a name doesn't manage to refer to a concrete particular here in the actual world, it cannot refer to any concrete, non-actual particular either.[158] Non-actual

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[158] She charmingly names this the *Inverse-Sinatra principle for Proper Names* (p. 581). Being an Artifactualist about fictional particulars, Zvolenszky in the end maintains that 'Superman' does refer to an actual, created

concrete entities would, at best, be coincidentally similar to any concrete particular that may in fact be referred to, given whatever relevant intentions would be used to introduce the name in question. If 'Sherlock Holmes' refers, it cannot refer to a concrete pipe-smoking, deerstalker-cap-wearing, cocaine-using detective. Any non-actual detective instantiating those characteristics would at best be coincidentally similar to the particular Conan Doyle describes, and any actual detective would not be fictional, i.e., would not be in line with his authorial intentions. (Similar considerations apply to 'Superman', 'Krypton', 'Cinderella', 'Pooh Bear', 'Tigger', etc.)

Premise (ii), however, is the crux of the argument. The rationale for it is as follows. Suppose the Kripke/Zvolenszky line of reasoning just rehearsed is correct. And further suppose, for the purpose of *reductio*, that FUR is true. If it were, then the only sort of entities that could instantiate fictional universals would be either concrete, fictional actualia or concrete, fictional non-actualia, that is, the concrete particulars referred to by our fictional names. Just as only a concrete detective could smoke a pipe, wear a deerstalker cap, and use cocaine, only a concrete superhero could work at the Daily Planet, fall in love with Lois Lane, and hail from planet Krypton. But, as was just demonstrated, there can be no concrete particulars referred to by our fictional names. It thus follows on the Kripke/Zvolenszky line of reasoning just rehearsed that (the above conditional of which) FUAR (is a consequent) is (vacuously) true.

6. In Defense of Fictional Universal Realism

Various Fictional Realists[159] will be keen to deny premise (i). I do not wish to enter those philosophical waters here. Rather, I wish to focus on premise (ii); this is where the argument fails.

FUR, recall, is the thesis that *some* universals are fictional universals. Premise (ii) only seems reasonable when one narrowly focuses on fictional predicates that are in some way

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abstractum, so it does not follow on her view that 'Superman' refers nowhere else. Both Fictional Realists and Anti-Realists, on her view, ought to accept the Inverse-Sinatra Principle.

[159] I have in mind here Neo-Meinongians such as Parsons (1980), or defenders of a view relevantly similar to the one suggested by Lewis (1978).

phrased using fictional names, such as 'is from Krypton'.[160] It's true that a predicate like this could only be instantiated by fictional particulars such as Superman, Jor-El, and General Zod, and so if one conceives of all fictional universals as being of this sort, one could be misled into thinking (ii) is true, and even that the argument of Section 5 is sound. But there are other sorts of fictional predicates, and some of these express fictional universals that are possibly instantiated. The sorts of fictional universals I have in mind are those that are expressed by fictional predicates that are not phrased using names for fictional particulars or fictional groups; they're universals that would be instantiated by non-fictional entities.

To see this, first consider Scenario 1: Paulina authors a fiction in which, among a great many sentences about things both fantastical and mundane, the sentence 'Richard Nixon is 30' tall' is found. This would be a case where a fictional work seemingly ascribes to a non-fictional particular the non-fictional universal *being 30' tall*. Next, Scenario 2: Paulina authors a fiction in which, among a great many sentences about things both fantastical and mundane, the sentence 'Richard Nixon is from the planet Krypton' is found. This would be a case where a fictional work seemingly ascribes to a non-fictional particular the fictional universal *being from planet Krypton*. However, if we assume the above Kripke/Zvolenszky line of reasoning about fictional particulars is correct, since 'is from Krypton' uses the name for the fictional particular Krypton (something not possibly concrete, so not possibly a place anything may truly hail from) the universal in question would be uninstantiable. Hence, 'is from Krypton' fails to express any universal at all. Now, Scenario 3: Paulina authors a fiction in which, among a great many sentences about things both fantastical and mundane, the sentence 'Only Superman is flurgish' is found. According to the details of Paulina's work of fiction, we learn that something is flurgish if it is a 30' tall person. Until this point in history, 'is flurgish' had not been a part of English. Paulina introduces us to this predicate in the authoring of her fiction and ascribing it only to Superman. Assuming the above Kripke/Zvolenszky line of reasoning about fictional particulars is correct, Paulina's fiction is partly about something that is not merely (extra-fictionally) false, but (extra-fictionally) impossible; 'Superman' can't name a concrete particular, so can't name a 30' tall person, and so can't name the sort of thing that instantiates

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[160] A predicate uses a name for a fictional particular (such as 'Superman' or 'Krypton') or a name for a group of individuals ('is a unicorn', or 'is a heffalump') when that name was introduced *via* some author's fictional intentions, that is, an author's use of make-belief that 'Superman' or 'heffalump' is genuinely referential.

(extra-fictionally) *being flurgish*. The fictional predicate in question here plausibly expresses no universal at all. Finally, Scenario 4: Paulina authors a fiction in which, among a great many sentences about things both fantastical and mundane, the sentence 'Only Richard Nixon is flurgish' is found. Until this point in history, 'is flurgish' had not been a part of English. Paulina introduces us to this predicate in the authoring of her fiction and ascribing it only to Richard Nixon. According to the details of Paulina's work of fiction, we learn that something is flurgish if it is a 30' tall person.

I claim that it is open to the defender of UR to maintain that in Scenario 4, 'is flurgish' expresses a fictional universal, one that is (extra-fictionally) instantiable. No (non-imported) fictional character could be flurgish (outside the fiction), but Nixon could, and so could Aristotle and Michael Jordan, even though neither is anywhere discussed in Paulina's fiction. When a fictional predicate is not phrased using a name for any (non-imported) fictional particular or group, that is, when a predicate introduced to us *via* fiction linguistically attaches in that fiction only to non-fictional imports into the story, we can see that we have no grounds for accepting premise (ii) of the argument above. In this case, the non-fictional particular Nixon instantiates within the story the fictional universal *being flurgish*. But the story describes something that is possibly (extra-fictionally) true; Nixon could have been 30' tall. The content of Paulina's story includes this modal fact, just like some other works of fiction, such as the Sherlock Holmes stories, involve the non-modal fact that London is in England. Provided the fictional universal in question is not tied by the predicates used in the story to any names for fictional particulars, instantiation of it (outside the story) is possible.

I maintain that a universal like *being flurgish* is relevantly like *blue swan-hood*. It may not be instantiated, but it's instantiable. *Blue swan-hood* was not introduced to us *via* a fictional predicate, so it's not a fictional universal. But *being flurgish* was, we are supposing, introduced to us *via* Paulina's fiction (in Scenario 4) and the predicate she coined therein. Even if the universal is never instantiated, we understand perfectly well what it would take for it to be instantiated. With *blue swan-hood*, we use what we know of *blue-hood* and *swan-hood* to understand what's required for instantiation, and with *being flurgish*, we use the contents of Paulina's fiction. What's fictionally true here spills over into "real life"; her fiction tells us just what it would take for a certain kind of universal to be instantiated. The kind of specification Kripke/Zvolenszky demand for telling us when we have a unicorn or Sherlock Holmes is

irrelevant here. Paulina's story tells us everything we need to know concerning when something is flurgish.

To further drive the point home, suppose, contrary to fact, that Juvenal in 100 CE authors a satirical poem according to which cross-global communication occurs nearly instantaneously between two people by way of holding up a blackish rectangular device to one's ear. Use of such a device is not attributed to anyone in his poem, and the device itself is not given a name. His poem merely uses predicates novel to Latin to explain such a device. In that case, *communicating by way of…* would be a fictional universal, one first expressed by the Latin predicates coined by Juvenal, and one that is instantiated nowadays by mobile phones.

Of course, if any of us were to meet a pipe-smoking, deerstalker-wearing, cocaine-using detective, we would not be meeting Sherlock Holmes. If we met someone sincerely claiming to hail from planet Krypton, we may justifiably think him insane. But upon seeing someone using a mobile phone in 2021, we should, in the counterfactual scenario just imagined, judge it to be the case that the fictional predicate Juvenal introduced to the Roman world *via* his poem has a non-null extension. We should judge the fictional universal here to be instantiated.

While premise (i) of the argument presented in Section 5 may be true regardless of the ontological status of fictional particulars, I maintain that premise (ii) is false regardless of the ontological status of fictional particulars. Contra Sawyer, questions of fictional universals are indeed separable from one's ontology of fictional particulars. If the only thing that could instantiate a fictional universal were a fictional particular or a fictional group, then I would agree that her complaints about the metaphysical queerness of such entities would apply. But when predicates are not expressed in fictions in ways that use names for fictional particulars or groups, they may express fictional universals. The case that Sawyer, Braun, and the proponent of the argument from Section 5 each makes for FUAR is only apparently compelling due to the particular fictional predicates chosen.

7. A Response and Some Concluding Remarks

I have critically assessed three lines of reasoning for FUAR. The most powerful one (by my lights, anyway) is intended to show that fictional universals fail to be real regardless of one's views about fictional particulars. However, not being able to deliver an appropriate particular

is no knock against the view espoused here by the defender of FUR about *some* fictional predicates. Fictional predicates can, on some occasions, deliver a set of entities as an extension, thereby meeting the criterion for the existence of a corresponding universal.

I imagine a natural sort of reply to this defense of FUR would be the following. The reasoning I have provided here on behalf of an adherent of UR fails to employ a proper understanding of the nature of fictional entities. 'Being flurgish', if it expresses a universal at all, expresses a non-fictional universal, one that gets imported into Paulina's story in the same way that the non-fictional particular Richard Nixon gets imported. According to UR, all universals are necessarily existing, *sui generis* abstracta, so it trivially follows that *being flurgish*, if it exists, is a non-fictional import, not one that Paulina used her authorial activities to genuinely bring about. She was being quasi-creative when she coined 'is flurgish', but that was simply employing a bit of new terminology to express a universal that we already were able to express using other well-known predicates. And Paulina may not have intended to import *being flurgish* into her story in the way she intended to import Nixon, but she accidentally succeeded in doing so. On the other hand, if *being flurgish* fails to be identical with *being a 30' tall person* (or any other instantiable non-particular), then Paulina's fictional predicate does not, indeed cannot, have a non-null extension. Her fictional intentions would ensure that the predicate could not apply to anything.

This reply misses the mark. The defender of UR will assert that not all entities imported into a fiction are, of necessity, non-fictional. Many influential Fictional Realist theories (of fictional particulars), viz., Neo-Meinongianism and Possibilism, defend the claim that all fictional particulars are strictly discovered by our authorial activities and are hence strictly imported into our works of fiction. Authorial creativity is thus understood not as bringing into existence but rather "fictionalizing".[161] (This aspect of these versions of Fictional Realism is precisely what has turned some instead toward ontologies that involve authors genuinely bringing into existence fictional particulars *via* story composition.)

But accepting that Paulina's authorial activities fail to be appropriately creative is not on the table for the defender of UR. According to UR, universals are indeed abstract and exist necessarily, and so Paulina is being creative with respect to authorship of her fiction involving

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[161] See, e.g., Parsons' (1980, p. 188) discussion of authorial creativity.

being flurgish even though she is, perhaps unwittingly, importing the universal into her story. If an author intends to "cut a fictional character from whole cloth", it's highly likely she'll be able to succeed, regardless of the correct ontology of fictional particulars. Similarly, if one intends to "cut a fictional universal from whole cloth", it's highly likely she will succeed. In this context of assuming the truth of UR, an author cuts a universal from whole cloth and is appropriately creative when she incorporates into her story some universal *via* the coining of novel, instantiable predicates, that is, ones introduced to us by her fiction that express that universal.

I conclude that not all fictional predicates are on a par. Some genuinely express fictional universals, some may not. If a fictional predicate is expressed using a name for a fictional particular or group, then it may,[162] of necessity, have a null extension, and hence, according to UR, would express no universal whatsoever. Braun, Sawyer, and the defender of the Kripke/Zvolenszky-inspired argument in Section 5 make their case for FUAR by focusing solely on fictional predicates that plausibly cannot have an extension. One would thus be forgiven for thinking along with them that any corresponding universal would fail to exist. But according to the thesis I have defended here, while 'is Superman' is analogous to 'is a round square', there are some fictional predicates that can refer, hence there are some fictional predicates that express fictional universals. They are no more metaphysically queer than *blue swan-hood*. And if I'm correct, we have reason to further reject Sawyer's contention that universal realism necessarily tethers you to various claims about the nature of fictional particulars.

I say that accepting FUR dictates nothing about which ontology of fictional particulars is most plausible. For you – adherent of UR – nothing stands in your way of adopting the further idea that some fictional predicates are meaningful in virtue of expressing a fictional universal. That is, there is nothing additionally peculiar about such universals that prevents you from extending your view to FUR.

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[162] That is, if the Kripke/Zvolenszky line of reasoning in Section 5 is sound when restricting predicates in this way.

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Aesthetic Education and Embodiment: Notes Toward a Cavellian Approach

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ABSTRACT. The talk outlines an alternative to the humanistic conception of aesthetic education inspired by the work of Stanley Cavell. Taking the form of philosophical therapy for entrenched Cartesian biases, this form of aesthetic education is understood as one possible option for constructing an aesthetic education based on embodied ontologies of human existence.

1. Introduction: The Philosophical Problem of Aesthetic Education

What we seem headed for is an idea that what can comprehensibly be said is what is found to be worth saying. (Cavell, 1979, p. 94).

My focus in this talk is the philosophical problem of aesthetic education (or the problem of aesthetic education for short). The most straightforward way of formulating this problem is this. On what conception of education can we take the encounter with artworks to be central to (or even decisive for) how the goals of such an education may be achieved?[164]

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[164] I intend this formulation in a non-vacuous sense: one could propose that that only meaningful kind of education *is* per se one over the course of which students become interested in artworks, in which case we would be (vacuously) proposing a conception of aesthetic education in the sense intended. So, to be precise, one might need to add that the conception of education in question cannot itself have artistic engagement as its main goal. *Art in aesthetic education (perhaps paradoxically) must function as means to a different end.* (A way of dealing with this paradox would be to insist that art is the *right kind* of end in itself, i.e., the right means for *liberal* education, with "right kind" needing a definition other than in aesthetic terms to avoid circularity. As I briefly indicate below, in Schiller, for instance, engagement with art serves a political end.)

It is important to formulate the question in this abstract way because the term "aesthetic education" seems to be used in two distinct ways - practical and theoretical. On the one hand the term can be used simply to refer to the teaching of art-appreciation, and indeed this practical sense is its common use. By contrast, in a more philosophical sense aimed at in my definition, the term "aesthetic education" is meant to capture an idea of education for which the aesthetic experience is in some manner the key to achieving the goals of (liberal) education in general. A discussion of aesthetic education in the practical sense might provide powerful examples of critical discussion of artworks, while remaining vague, abstract, or indirect about the goals such engagement is meant to accomplish. On the other hand, the idea of aesthetic education in the theoretical or philosophical mode must focus on articulating what it is precisely that an encounter with artworks accomplishes for students, and how indeed the essence of such encounters fits the description of the goals of the proposed conception of education. By contrast with the practical idea of aesthetic education, a philosophical conception need not, at least in principle, concern itself with pedagogy or methodology at all.[165]

It is obvious that a proper articulation of a philosophical conception of aesthetic education is quite an ambitious enterprise requiring at least three things each of which are difficult in themselves: an articulation of a philosophy of education[166], a full-blown philosophy of art, and an argument about how the two are connected or in some manner made for each other. It is precisely such an ambitious undertaking that is accomplished by the first formulation of a conception of aesthetic education in the Western context (from now on I will drop the cumbersome "philosophical theory of"), namely Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

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[165] Most approaches mix the theoretical and the practical without quite dealing with this as a problem. The reason for this is that the distinction is much messier than it appears at first glance, as both the practical and theoretical approaches call on each other to some degree. Any seemingly purely practical recommendation for engaging with artworks will be operating with more general if perhaps not clearly articulated assumptions about what the ultimate usefulness of such an engagement will amount to in educational terms. On the other hand, no purely philosophical idea of aesthetic education can prove to be quite persuasive without at least gesturing towards some possible implementation. It is all fine to argue about the wonderful things art may do for us, but such arguments remain a bit abstract unless they fail to provide some indication as to how someone may be brought to such engagement who is not inclined to do so. While in this way it is true to say that the "what" and the "how" of aesthetic education are mutually dependent, the distinction between practical and theoretical in this context remains essential. I return to this problem below.

[166] It is notoriously difficult if not impossible to define the idea of liberal education in an uncontroversial way in the modern context, although I will propose an atypical way to do so in the conclusion to this article. For a historical survey, see, (Kimball, 2010).

While I will not be engaging in this article with the details of Schiller's conception, it is essential to provide the bare outlines to see how this idea of aesthetic education has been central to something called the humanistic idea (or ideal) of liberal education. The core of the humanistic idea of liberal education in turn is a concept of *inner transformation*, and its articulation is usually contextualized by a narrative about modern life. (This is already true about Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, as well as the other standard example of aesthetic education namely Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.) According to this concept of transformation (or transformative learning) it is the mission of liberal education to provide learners with experiences that enable them to feel complete or whole *qua* human beings. The importance of providing such experiences is justified by the way modernity has imposed a division of labor and by consequence a division and "antagonism of faculties and functions" on human beings, which Schiller acknowledges at the same time as "the great instrument of civilization".[167] This fragmentation of the human psyche, due to external causes beyond the control of any individual or institution, is in turn claimed to have resulted in a kind of dehumanization characterizing everyday life, associated in turn with the danger of individuals undergoing stunted and one-sided development, and thereby failing to achieve their full potential as human beings.[168] The mission of liberal education is then to provide us with the means for re-humanizing ourselves: liberal learning supplies occasions whereby human beings can re-experience their full humanity, discovering and recovering their true potential for self-knowledge, change and fulfillment. Because works of art reconcile two fundamental aspects of human nature, the sensual and the intellectual sides, they are the best means (!) towards "educating" us about *what it would be like* to live a life that attempts to reconcile artificially severed aspects of our original nature, and to try to live up to what it means to be a human being in a higher (or more original) sense. Works of art, properly experienced, inspire us to look for further ways in which to integrate our capacities by means of providing us in and through the aesthetic experiencing of such works with working models, so to speak

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[167] Schiller, 1982, p. 41.

[168] For Schiller this distorted or stunted condition may be described as a form of "barbarism" or as a form of "savagery": the first one represents an excess of intellect over the senses, while the latter a kind of loss of intellectual control over our desires. Schiller expresses this with a coloring of sentimentality: "Man can be at odds with himself in two ways: either as savage, when feeling predominates over principle; or as barbarian, when principle destroys feeling." (Schiller, 1982, p. 21).

of such experiences.

The most well-known problems with what I am calling the humanistic model pertain to humanism itself, i.e., its philosophical background and its implications. Humanism (or the philosophical outlook called liberal humanism) has undergone severe and an in many ways' legitimate criticism over the last couple of decades at least on three grounds, all principally ideological. The first of these is a bias for constructing human identity based on Western values and the Western cultural tradition, as well for adherence to an associated conception of a canon. The second complaint is related to the first, with an emphasis on humanist universalism and rationalism failing to account for different ways of constructing and reflecting identity (by reference to racial and gender-based diversity, as well as physical disability), and the relevance of such experiences for understanding and valuing the human in less biased terms. The third major criticism stems from environmental philosophy, i.e., for the failure of humanism to *provide models for relating to nature that are based on other ideals thank those of domination.*[169] *The net result of this intellectual climate together with the identification of aesthetic education as a philosophy of humanistic education has been to reject humanism, and together with it the possibility of aesthetic education altogether.* However, as I hope it is obvious from the formal definition of the idea of aesthetic education suggested above, this is by no means a matter of logical necessity. All the idea of aesthetic education requires is that there should be an ideal of liberal education operating in the background (the humanistic or a different one), and some argument as to why it is an engagement with artworks or an aesthetic encounter that is the best means towards achieving its proposed ends. That the philosophical essence of works of art is their capacity to present sense and intellect as reconciled is further one view of art, namely the Kantian one, and one should at least ask the question whether a different conception of the value of art (for understanding the human) could not naturally give rise to a different conception of aesthetic education.

The main goal of this article is to offer some ideas about how indeed such a different conception of art can be deployed for this purpose. The starting point for making this case for an alternative form of aesthetic education is provided by a further observation about the humanistic conception of art, namely that the ideological problems listed above in fact rest on

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[169] *Nota bene*, all of these are legitimate charges with a vengeance against Schiller's *Letters*, give or take a willingness to forgive some of them based on contextual considerations.

deeper, ontological foundations, namely a form of Cartesian dualism or idealism shared by all humanistic conceptions. This is quite easily demonstrable in the case of Schiller, for whom art's very existence is a kind of evidence for the ultimate ascendancy of mind over matter, so to speak. It is of course much more difficult to demonstrate such a thesis about humanism in general, and I will not attempt it here. In fact, it is sufficient for my purposes to adopt the charge of idealism as a hypothesis, as it permits the reformulation of the main goal of this talk as follows: how can philosophies of art resting on non-dualistic assumptions about human nature give rise to a conception of aesthetic education?[170]

Now, in fact there is a long and colorful tradition of anti-Cartesian (non-dualistic) philosophy in Western thought, and it is further striking that virtually all thinkers who can be identified as in some sense belonging to this tradition unanimously agree on the significance of art for confirming the truth of the embodied ontology of human existence.[171] At the same time, it is perhaps no exaggeration that for most of these thinkers the significance of art does not go beyond serving as evidence for the confirmation of their philosophical views, rather than becoming an instrument of argument.[172] What is further true is that virtually none of the thinkers we can identify as belonging to this tradition show any serious or explicit interest in education, or at least not in the kind of education that can take institutional form - and it would be particularly difficult to find thinkers of this persuasion for whom the educational context provides an essential link between their philosophical views about human existence and about art. The context of education, at best, while often held to be important, is mostly incidental in these accounts.[173]

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[170] At this point the concern with humanism may seem superfluous, but I hope it will gradually become clear as the argument proceeds why it isn't.

[171] The tradition begins with Diderot and Herder, continues with Feuerbach and Marxism, and then branches interestingly into pragmatist, hermeneutic, existentialist, post-modernist, structuralist, post-humanist, critical-theory, psychoanalytical and ecological strands with lately even cognitive science coming to emphasize both embodiment and the significance of artistic production as a confirmation and expression of the embodied condition of human existence (a good summary of the latter state of affairs is (Crippen and Schulkin, 2020)). The specific art-historical tradition is also tied to modernism and the haptic/tactile conception of art. While Cavell's work incorporates many of these strands, it is surprising how little they each take notice of each other as representing a cultural shift in human self-perception. I predict that this is where it is headed, and liberal education has mission to take a leading role in piloting this shift.

[172] This is even true about Merleau-Ponty's writings about modern painting in general and Cézanne in particular, even though his brand of existential phenomenology is perhaps the most thorough and powerful representative of what I am calling embodied ontology.

[173] One of the most powerful recent representatives of this tradition is Paul Crowther, who has also written importantly about liberal education. For the latter, see (Crowther, 2003).

All of these are large claims, and much more space would be needed to argue them properly than is available in this context. I am asking for the reader no more than to accept it as a hypothesis worth pondering. The point is that to build something like a theory of aesthetic education based on anti-Cartesian ontology we need a conception of art where artworks do not merely serve as evidence for or illustration philosophical views, but perform as participants in a philosophical dialogue that is available for the ordinary person seeking education in an ordinary context. Moreover, we need a conception of embodied ontology that is articulable in relatively simple terms in a way that is available for conversation. The closest we have to such a conception of art may be found in a relatively recent field of inquiry called film-philosophy whose spiritual instigator is Stanley Cavell. It is to his thoughts about aesthetic education that I now turn.

2. The Cavellian model

2.1 General remarks

The main claim of this section is that we can see such a model of aesthetic education emerging from Stanley Cavell's philosophy. This might seem paradoxical for Cavell is a notoriously difficult author, and therefore a reference to his work could appear to defeat the criteria of simplicity introduced above. However, I think that the insights to be gathered for educational purposes from a study of Cavell's works basically fall into three separable categories.

The first such insight is simply that *the right kind of conversations* about *the right kinds of works of art* conducted in the *right kind of educational setting* will result in an increased awareness on behalf of the participants of the falseness of Cartesian ontology, and of the difficulty of extracting ourselves from its hold on us. I try to say a bit more about the potentially profound transformational effects of such an insight in what follows.

The second set of insights concern organization and methodology. Cavell's works in fact give us both a tremendous amount of guidance as to what kinds of works of art (particularly film) can serve the purposes of such transformational conversations, as well as quite a substantial amount of methodological discussion about what kinds of questions (mostly concerned with the direct close reading of films and texts) can serve the purposes of these conversations. This "methodology" I would like to call medium-based philosophical criticism.

Thirdly (and this is perhaps the difficult part), Cavell's work is a profound study of the transcendental conditions (in the Kantian sense) for how and why the study of works of art (film in particular) can have the kind of effects just referred to. This is the aspect of Cavell's work that is most important for my purposes here to show the *possibility* of a type of aesthetic education based on embodied ontology. However, it is the nature of such transcendental arguments that they in fact serve a theoretical (or philosophical) purpose that is quite independent from the practice they seek to justify: once absorbed, such arguments assure us that a certain kind of practice works, but whether it does or not is independent of those arguments.[174] It is in this sense that I suggest Cavell's philosophy meets the criterion of simplicity or availability: the experience of the embodied ontology of artworks and human beings is indirect: it takes place in the context and as a result of the type of conversation I mentioned above.

2.2 Cavellian Transcendental Arguments for the Possibility of Aesthetic Education

If most of the arguments to be presented in this section are minimally inspired by, if not wholly due to Cavell, there is one aspect that I feel is new and Cavell should not be made to take responsibility for. This is the emphasis on the ontological significance of the classroom as a temporally and spatially limited meeting point of adult subjects (as well as experts and non-experts) for the purposes of having conversations of cognitive and potentially transformative value. The key idea here that part of what is made meaningful in the educational experience is the fact of convening physically together for this purpose - a successful meeting of the college classroom will in fact be transcendentally determined (and underwritten) by as well as expressive of the embodied ontology of being human. In the ideal situation (and I am essentially arguing that it is to create such an ideal situation that works of art are indispensable) whatever meaningful happens during such a meeting will amount to an (indirect) expression of the fact of being physically i.e., bodily together in this educational context, and the *meaning* and *significance* of this fact for the nature of human community and self-knowledge.[175] The

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[174] The best account of transcendental arguments in this generis sense may be found in Taylor, 1995.

[175] The best scholarly account of Cavell's philosophy along these lines is (Mullhall, 1994).

conversations had in such a context will amount to an indirect expression of our embodied ontology as human beings, and it is in terms of this "content" that they will achieve their transformative effect.[176]

To see what kinds of arguments we may extract for this position from Cavell, it is worth noting first of all that a classroom (it is worth emphasizing again that we are talking about a college classroom, whose context is essentially created by fully responsible adult subjects joining that context of their free will) whose aim is to create meaningful conversation is readily described as having an aesthetic character even without any invocation of philosophy, Cavellian or otherwise: works of art are after all characterized by a coincidence of fact and value: reading a work of art consists precisely in recognizing and giving expression to meaningfulness of detail, where such meaningfulness is a condition for recognizing a part-whole or aspect relation altogether: nothing is strictly speaking an element of the work unless it contributes to its significance in some manner.[177] On the other hand, the kind of conversation ideally to be had in a class-room context must demonstrate precisely such a character. Most of Cavell's arguments in the first part of *The Claim of Reason* are in fact directed at showing that ordinary language has an intrinsically or naturally normative dimension, and it is basically only a false Cartesian ontology, i.e., a skeptically inflected way of thinking about language that makes us believe otherwise. Once we examine more closely how we use criteria in the everyday context, we will be, as Cavell writes "heading towards a view where what can be ordinarily said is what is found to be worth saying"[178]. What these types of Cavellian insights enable us to do in turn is precisely to recognize the normal classroom environment as a natural candidate for a context that operates to the effect of re-normalizing, or re-naturalizing human verbal exchange based on nothing more than ordinary language and ordinary insight. It is this kind of

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[176] An immediate objection to this idea could be that it rejects the possibility of online learning altogether. Once again, there is no space to argue against this objection in detail apart from mentioning that online presence very much involves an awareness of bodily existence - arguably even in a more enhanced manner. I nevertheless believe that the objection holds, although for different reasons. Not only are physical meetings requisite in my view for properly cathartic education to take place, ideally the artwork also needs to be materially present.

[177] It seems important to acknowledge that this is skirting a very difficult issue in philosophical aesthetics, or perhaps several different issues (part-whole relation; the ontology of works of art and how they differ from everyday objects, etc.). However, I am merely pointing out the intuitively obvious parallel between a well-functioning conversational class-room context and an object of aesthetic appreciation. The precise nature of this analogy is immaterial.

[178] It is worth noting that Cavell argues for the aesthetic character of ordinary language in a different way on the pages of *Must We Mean What We Say*.

recognition of the naturally normative character or ordinary speech (freed from skeptical inflection) what creates the possibility of the kind of conversations Cavell calls philosophical, which are described in what is probably the most well-known passage from *The Claim of Reason*:

> In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me.
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> This seems to me a task that warrants the name of philosophy. It is also the description of something we might call education. In the face of the questions posed in Augustine, Luther, Rousseau, Thoreau …, we are children; we do not know how to go on with them, what ground we may occupy. In this light, philosophy becomes the education of grownups. It is as though it must seek perspective upon a natural fact which is all but inevitably misinterpreted - that at an early point in a life the normal body reaches its full strength and height. ... And for grownups this is not natural growth, but change. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth.[179]

That the transcendental condition for the possibility of these types of conversations is a defeat and inverting of Cartesian ontology is recognized very early on in Cavell's works.[180] However, it is the parallels between the *intentionality* of human speech, and the *intentionality* of works of art worked out in Cavell's later writings that provide the true transcendental grounds for the possibility of aesthetic education in the sense implied by the formal parallel or analogy between works of art and the class-room situation. For Cavell, engaging with a work of art is not a formal matter in the sense of having as its end-goal a kind of epiphany of speechless and purely sensual experience. Rather, it is the gradual discovery of how works of art intend their meaning; as he famously expresses it at one point: the central problem of aesthetics is how we can come to treat works of art as persons. Treating persons as persons on the other hand precisely consists in getting rid of our notions of Cartesian ontology, which essentially means "reading" the other

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[179] Cavell, 1979, p. 125.

[180] Cf., the title essay of Cavell, 2002, besides being implied in the mysterious reference to the body in the quote above.

rather than inferring (or being skeptical about) an interior event determining "outer" events whether speech or gesture. As Cavell remarks at the conclusion of *Knowing and Acknowledging*: "I know your pain the way you do."[181] *The Claim of Reason* is a sustained exploration of this issue, and it is for good reason that it has the structure it has with its seemingly endless procession of examples: Cavell's main insight here is that no amount of general philosophical explanation can bring us to recognize how the way we normally go about identifying intention is misguided. Given the depth to which this is part of our mental make-up and culture, we need an infinite amount of "training" based on specific contexts to attain some kind of transformation of our perception. However, within the bounds of this effort Cavell's later work increasingly comes to the realization that works of art (again: film in particular) play a special role. Perhaps the best example for this in Cavell's essay in *Must We Mean What We Say*, *A Matter of Meaning It*, and the extended discussion there of an interpretation of Fellini's *La Strada*: As Cavell explains, identifying the intention of *La Strada* as proposing a new version of the Philomel myth is fundamentally independent of the question of whether Fellini consciously had the myth in mind in the course of making the film. Yet, at the same time, it would be equally false to talk about the intentionality of the work of art as somehow independent of the intention of its author. Cavell's point is precisely that the latter is what gets us into false (Cartesian) ontology and a false, causal theory of the relationship of the inner and the outer.[182] What needs recognition or acknowledgement is that our natural or normal way of understanding intentionality must be freed up from false assumptions about causality: our access to such intentionality is precisely through interpretation rather than external "philosophical" assumptions about how it is meant to work. All this means of course, that even though our experiencing of the meaning of the work will be one based on how intention really operates in natural way, it will nevertheless remain indirect: *by engaging with works of art (so far: films) in the right kind of way in conversation we will be living our embodied ontology both vis a vis these works and vis a vis each other in a way that is not normally available to us in everyday existence thoroughly permeated by Cartesian assumptions.*

The words "everyday" and the "ordinary" are keywords as they are also essential to appreciating the value of such experiences in terms of reorienting deeply ingrained humanistic

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[181] Cavell, 2002, p. 266.
[182] Cf p. 226 passim.

assumptions about the relationship of the everyday and the condition of true insight, or, in other words, between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

On the humanist account, the class-room situation is fundamentally paradoxical, particularly in its role as figuring as the locus of aesthetic education. Following the venerable principle of "*non scholae sed vitae discimus*" the humanist, if I may generalize for the sake of brevity, identifies the classroom as simultaneously both a place secluded from everyday existence for the purposes of rigor and focus, and at the same time the place with the potential for transformative ecstasy. This is of course in itself pedagogically valuable. However, instead of resolving the paradox by some means, humanism insists on it: the ideal experience associated with this context is something a great humanist educator, Jacob Klein calls metastrophic (invoking Plato's turning of the soul):

> I have said before that within the confines of our horizon· there is the expected as well as the unexpected, the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the familiar and the unfamiliar. We do, however, experience a kind of question which, as it were, tends to smash the bounds that limit us. We do occasionally stop altogether and face the familiar as if for the first time-anything: a person, a street, the sky, a fly. The overwhelming impression on such occasions is the strangeness of the thing we contemplate. This state of mind requires detachment, and I am not at all certain to what extent we can contrive its presence. We suddenly do not feel at home in this world of ours. We take a deep look at things, at people, at words, with eyes blind to the familiar. We re-flect. Plato has a word for it: metastrophe or periagoge, a turnabout, a conversion. We detach ourselves from all that is familiar to us; we change the direction of our inquiry; we do not explore the unknown anymore, on the contrary, we convert the known into an unknown. We wonder. And we burst out with that inexorable question: Why is that so?[183]

Works of art enable this because in the words of yet another humanist, Clive Bell,

> ...a good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy,"[184]

Turning now to Cavell early work we may recognize several instances of his applying his

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[183] Klein, 1960, p. 162.
[184] Bell, 1913, p. 13.

admittedly idiosyncratic version of the method of ordinary language philosophy *to dissolve or resolve similar paradoxes*. Examples include metaphor (whether a metaphor can be paraphrased or not), whether atonal music is altogether without tonality, and whether ordinary language claims obey a kind of logic or not. In each of these instances of resolution the method turns out to have implications for how we can understand the principle of ordinary-language-philosophizing as aesthetic. Although the humanistic paradox of in-school/out-of-school I have just described does not straightforwardly involve a misuse of language in this way, I do think it bears an analogy to it, and the analogy moreover is a Cavellian one. Cavell's later philosophy precisely generalizes this method of resolving paradoxes relying on ordinary language laid out in his early work to develop his notion of moral perfectionism which does involve a kind of overcoming of the paradoxical dialectic of the ordinary and the extraordinary that I suggested characterizes the humanist construal of the pedagogical situation. If I may put it in such a way, for the humanist the ordinary and the extraordinary are involved in a kind of dialectic which never really gets resolved: we are either in one realm or the other, but the two never coexist. By contrast, inspired by Emerson, the later Cavell comes to construe the ordinary itself as a place of ecstasy, and moral development as a never-ending re-finding of this experience (he sometimes calls this in relation to the re-marriage comedies, a re-finding of innocence).

This is one of the fundamental aspects in which Cavell's perfectionist moral philosophy is deeply rooted in his philosophy of ordinary language. One can already catch a glimpse here of the rich Cavellian connections between a non-skeptically infected use of ordinary language (I also want to use the phrase, "re-naturalized" use of language) and the way works of art offer themselves to us to be read: the ontological mode in which works of art present themselves to us as meaningful involves a (fictional) collapsing of fact and value: interpreting works of art involves a naturally operative assumption about the connection between meaning and meaningfulness (in the process of criticism interpretative insights are per se indistinguishable from judgements of aesthetic value).

This is of course an all too concise presentation of how Cavell's conception of intentionality is dependent on an inverting (in fact: a righting of) Cartesian ontology, and the connections between his philosophy of language and art with perfectionist moral views. Regarding ordinary speech, this righting of its normal use in the context of the enabled meaningfulness of the classroom amounts to "putting our soul back into our bodies" to use the

oft quoted Wittgensteinian phrase (one of Cavell's favorites). On the other hand, the enabling of this experience is directly connected to the intentionality of works of art, and how they are "read" for their meaning.[185]

3. Aesthetic Education as Therapy for Cartesianism

I began this talk by insisting on the necessity of separating the practical and theoretical conceptions of aesthetic education. I further pointed out that a theoretical idea of aesthetic education requires the prior articulation of a full-blown philosophy of education. The argument as it has proceeded so far fulfilled this goal only partially: I argued that a certain approach to art and the idea of the classroom have an intrinsic affinity, and that artworks can make us aware of the hold on us of a dualistic Cartesian ontology. However, I have yet to explain how inducing an enhanced perception of the embodied aspect of human ontology amounts to a form of (liberal) education.[186] True, an awareness of embodied ontology should straightforwardly undermine ecological and gender biases, and an awareness of the close ties between humanism and Cartesian dualism should also generate healthy skepticism about the authority of tradition based literary canons.[187] However, this is merely negative: a positive conceptual articulation of the non-humanistic idea of education implicit in the Cavellian model is still lacking in my account.

To move closer to that goal we need to address a further problem with humanism that has so far been omitted. On closer look, the main problem with the humanistic model pertains not so much to ideological matters (that too) but formalism. It is a well-worn complaint already

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[185] To invoke a source other than Cavell, the type of reading at issue here is what Edward Snow calls "associative" in contrast to "contextual" reading in (Snow, 1997).

[186] In other words, I suggested a process as the correct one for articulating a conception of aesthetic education and then reversed it: I should have first pinned down an idea of education and then provided an argument to the effect that art is the best means towards the desired ends. This is a further indication that the strict separation of theory and practice whose possibility was implicitly assumed by my initial distinction is itself questionably based on Cartesian prejudices. Cavell's method of philosophical criticism (relying on how art creates meaning by making aspects of its medium meaningful in terms of defining genres) is particularistic: we read works of art precisely for the way they "think" about how their individuality is determined by aesthetic principles: we typically find them to be self-reflexive in this respect; they articulate their meaning in terms of self- knowledge. Cavell himself never quite states this view, but it is nevertheless implicit in virtually all his analyses of individual works. A nice statement in more abstract terms is found in the opening paragraph of his essay on Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*.

[187] I am not suggesting they should be rejected - that simply undermines their availability for questioning, and is nothing less than silly (or tragic, depending on how one looks at it).

about Schiller's account of aesthetic education that concrete artworks, let alone critical analyses of such, play virtually no significant role in his arguments. This anti-critical bias becomes a standard feature of humanistic accounts of aesthetic education (i.e., its philosophical form). This is partly due to a form of Kantianism most saliently present in Schiller, and then gradually assuming subliminal form. Artworks on the Kantian account provide occasions for experiencing true community by creating a context for sharing our private judgements, but this possibility arises at the cost of those judgements not being *about* anything, apart from some very general conception of beauty. Of course, Kant himself points out that artworks offer unique opportunities for cultivating our knowledge about human matters, and hence provide one of the most important means towards educating our "humanity".[188] However, such learning is not part of the *aesthetic* experience, and hence cannot come into play in *aesthetic* education. (The technical term for the underlying view of art is non-cognitivism.) Some would even insist that formalism is not a problem *per se*, it is just the way things are: the word "aesthetic" is virtually synonymous with form anyway. However, this way of picturing things should at least motivate the need for an account of aesthetic education where it *does* matter for the purposes of education what the artwork is about. On the other hand, ceding a certain cogency to the insistence that the aesthetic is about form should also fill us with a measure of salutary respect for the potential difficulty of articulating an account of *aesthetic* engagement as implying engagement with *meaning* or content. The question to ask is: what are the criteria for when we can call an engagement with meaning *aesthetic* engagement?[189]

Whatever those criteria may prove to be in general, the Cavellian model of aesthetic

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[188] See Katn, 1952, pp. 226-7.

[189] A similar question frames one of the most interesting XXth century accounts of aesthetics by Andrew Harrison, namely the question "What is pictorial thought?" (Harrison, 1987) An account of pictorial meaning as different from linguistic meaning would be one way to articulate how an experience of meaning can be aesthetic in some sense. A related problem is that of pictorial vs linguistic *expression* (*of* meaning). For this, see Parsons and Blocker, 1993, p. 18.:

To give an account of what expression is ... seems to require more than an explanation of what our concepts already are. ... We may have to explain, for example, how language works to express ideas and how the visual arts are similar to or different from language in this regard.

as well as footnoted reference in the same work to Goodman's *Languages of Art* and Langer's *Form and Feeling* as classics engaging this problem.

Hermeneutics, pragmatism, and semiotics could be obvious candidates for providing an aesthetics of content, but I don't think any of them quite work in this context. Hermeneutics is too abstract (hence fails to meet the criterion of simplicity), and the Gadamerian version has often been accused of humanistic bias. Pragmatism and semiotics both cede too much to Cartesianism.

education outlined in the previous section is clearly based on engaging with the content of works of art, rather than their form. However, the question remains: what makes this engagement *aesthetic*? The short answer I would like to give to this question is that aesthetic education in the Cavellian form is a kind of philosophical therapy. However, it is not quite what Cavell himself would have in mind in using this term (which would be Wittgensteinian in its accent).

To understand the difference, we need to evoke a further characteristic of humanism and its influence on contemporary ideas about education in general and aesthetic education in particular. For it is important to make clear that the ideological critique of humanism has been profoundly ineffectual in at least two further senses. First of all, it has resulted in very little change to the practice of liberal education as a form of higher education, which continues more or less unchanged as organized on the basis of humanistic principles.[190] In this context the overall bias against humanism has in effect resulted in a profound weakening of the substance of liberal education, and an equal weakening of the possibility of offering effective apologies for its necessity, particularly as it pertains to the humanities. Because it is no longer customary, adequate, or even salutary to appeal to humanistic ideals, the last lines of defense of liberal education as an education pursued for its own sake have collapsed in the face of neo-liberal and corporate assault. As ideological critics of humanism are typically themselves potential enthusiasts of liberal education (ideological critique itself being a form of intellectual enterprise), it is not an exaggeration to say that ideological critique has also been an epic failure - it has achieved exactly the opposite of what it intended, and worse, which is bad enough. However, it has also failed in a further and even more damaging sense.

As I would further like to argue, the actual ideological situation is as follows. Ideological critique, on the rise from at least the 60's in the West, has actually succeeded in creating a kind of amnesia about the meaning of the term "humanism" as a loose way of referring to the tradition-based set of liberal values the average cultivated person has regarded as a readily

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[190] This is not difficult to argue simply by reference to the fact that colleges and universities around the world accept the division of labor imposed by specialization, with liberal education relegated to the margins and entrusted with the mission of imposing some kind of unity on this chaos at best, and at worst some show of how colleges are still dedicated to transmitting a unified vision of things, and a "culture" of sorts, although the word "culture" has more or less been exorcised as part and parcel of the humanistic bias. What replaces it is a more or less empty and tautological insistence on "critical thinking".

(even folkloristically) available secular philosophical guide to life to be obtained by engaging with liberal education.[191] Humanism provided the vernacular of high culture right up to the mid-sixties. At the same time ideological critique has failed to undermine either the system itself or the fact that Western middle-class values (insofar as we can still speak of a middle class under the conditions of late capitalism) are humanistic values. As a result these values, or whatever is left of them (basically a quite reductive and crude version) have retreated to the unconscious and have become assumptions about *the way things are*, basically inaccessible to reasoned discourse.*[192]* On the one hand, the truly valuable aspects of humanism, such as a respect for wisdom and the complexity of human existence, as well as its forms of cultural expression have more or less disappeared, or have assumed a much more segregated form wherein they are no longer recognizable as belonging to a coherent (and nameable) world picture. On the other hand, the cruder assumptions of secular humanism have become subliminal assumptions about the very make-up of the world endowed with a kind of fatalistic aura of unchangeability. Because these values are hegemonical in the West (in a quite precisely Gramscian sense), students come to higher education with these gut reactions entrenched and initially resistant to either refining or proper critique. Again, ideological critique has been a dismal failure: instead of undermining the hegemony of ideological assumptions it has served to strengthen them, while also causing a general amnesia as to what they are.[193]

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[191] For a recent, powerful and sympathetic restatement of this view coming from an unlikely source, see (Scruton, 2009).

[192] On a classical Marxist view, things have always been like this, but I am hoping to offer something other than the classical Marxist view.

[193] It is common to meet with in complaints about students being relativists, or narcissistic - attitudes that the digital age has allegedly only served to exacerbate. According to the view advanced here about the fate of humanism this is exactly the opposite of the truth: the effect of the retreat of humanistic assumptions to a kind of subliminal level has in fact been to make young people rigidly moralistic and in fact intolerant of discussing issues about how values come about and how they may be criticized and changed. This is not a form of relativism, however, but more like a kind of hypnotic conditioning: it reflects a deep-seated bias for scientific reasoning and a suspiciousness towards discourse whose claims are not empirically verifiable. All this is coupled with a kind of moralistic demand as to how education must proceed without disturbing or questioning this frame of values. To hold that values are subjective is in fact to acknowledge that the abstract notion of value is in fact a kind of universal. At the same time, it is also to believe that it is inaccessible to rational discourse. And there is even a further paradoxical consequence deriving from the assumption that aesthetic education is basically identical with humanistic liberal education. If we hold this together with what has just been described as a retreat of humanistic values to the subliminal level, it follows that aesthetic education in its humanistic form in fact continues to be the ruling paradigm of liberal education, except that the latter is pursued without almost no aspiration to involve artworks in the process. To state the paradox in all its starkness: liberal education at most colleges and universities today is a form of aesthetic education without artworks.

This is not a negative view of the possibilities of education. On the contrary such a view of things offers unique possibilities for reinventing liberal learning in atypical ways. It is precisely the fact that deeply embedded Cartesian assumptions make content-based engagement with art difficult which create the potential for true revelation when we are successful in making it happen. In accordance with the nature of good therapy the aesthetic transformation in question should feel less critical than transformational: at its best it will amount not so much to a radical deconstruction of humanism than its *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense. The therapeutic experience, even when are talking about psychotherapy, is almost by definition a form of aesthetic experience: it involves a fusion of the emotional and the cognitive in a single act of perceptual awareness. Bringing subconsciously operating crippling assumptions to consciousness and opening them to the possibility of criticism and change is precisely what therapy is all about: in this way philosophical therapy is no different from psychotherapy. The transformation effected by aesthetic education understood as therapy for Cartesian biases should be instrumental in preserving those of the humanistic values that are worth preserving, transforming those that are worth transforming, and finally making us more respectful towards the human in us, in others, and towards little understood non-human forms of agency emerging from the natural (and the technological) world.

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Democratic and Aesthetic Participation as Imposition: On the Aesthetics of the Collective

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ABSTRACT. The global art exhibition *documenta fifteen* (2022) drew attention to a distinctive approach in curatorial and artistic practice: aesthetic collaboration as part of a collective. While *documenta fifteen* has been broadly discussed with regard to its political agenda, the aesthetic strategies involved in collective curatorial and artistic practice received less attention. This paper will explore the philosophical and aesthetic implications of collective work and targets to work towards an aesthetic account of the collective. In order to do so, I will transfer the political concept of a 'democracy of imposition', which the political scientist Felix Heidenreich introduced in his *Demokratie als Zumutung: Für eine andere Bürgerlichkeit* (2022), to the realm of aesthetics. The idea of 'democracy of imposition' emphasises the necessity to exercise active citizenship and to participate in democratic processes in order to guarantee a functioning democracy. I will argue that approaching the practice of collectives against the backdrop of the concept of 'participation as imposition' is necessary for giving a full account of their aesthetic potential.

1.Introduction

In 2022, the global exhibition *documenta fifteen* drew attention to a distinctive approach in curatorial and artistic practice: aesthetic collaboration as part of a collective.[195] While *documenta fifteen* has been broadly discussed with regard to its political agenda, the aesthetic

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strategies involved in collective curatorial and artistic practice have received less attention.[196] This paper explores the philosophical and aesthetic implications of collective work and targets in order to delineate an aesthetic account of the collective. A central question concerns how visitors to *documenta fifteen* responded to exhibits of the collectives. Rather than interacting and participating in the collective practice, the majority approached these exhibits as if they were autonomous artworks merely to be viewed. This objectifying tendency among art audiences has not yet been sufficiently explored. In order to give a full account of the aesthetic potential of collective practice, I argue that approaching the practice of collectives requires 'participation as imposition', a concept I have adapted from Felix Heidenreich's concept of 'democracy as imposition' (German: 'Demokratie als Zumutung').[197] My contention is that we miss the genuine nature of the aesthetics of collectives if we evaluate their practice only with regard to their socio-political impacts, as the case study of *documenta fifteen* revealed. In order to work towards an aesthetic account of collective practice, I first compare different approaches to the collective and propose a working definition of collectives. Second, I analyse the recipients' responses to collective practice and attempt to show that audiences need to open themselves to 'participation as imposition' in order to do justice to the distinctive aesthetic nature of collective practice.

2. The collective: a working definition

Recent exhibitions focusing on art collectives, e.g. *Group Dynamics: Collectives of the Modernist Period* (19 October 2021 – 12 June 2022) at Lenbachhaus, *documenta fifteen* (18 June 2022 – 25 September 2022) at various locations in Kassel, and *Collaborations* (2 July – 6 November 2022) at mumok in Vienna, brought out different nuances of the collective. While the Lenbachhaus curatorial team subsumed a wide range of groups such as Grupa 'a. r.' (Łódź), the Nsukka School and Casablanca School under the label of the collective, they refused to define the term collective and stated the following reason for their decision:

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[196] Notable exceptions form Nora Sternfeld's approach, which she outlined, for example, in an interview with Änne Seidel, 'Gemeinsam die Welt verändern – Kuratorin Nora Sternfeld über Kunst im Kollektiv', *Deutschlandfunk*, 11. September 2022, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/gemeinsam-die-welt-veraendern-kuratorin-nora-sternfeld-ueber-kunst-im-kollektiv-dlf-ae3cebd5-100.html (7.10.2023) and Monica Juneja and Jo Ziebritzki's, 'Learning with Documenta 15: Principles, Practices, Problems', *Grey Room* 2023; (92), pp. 94–105.
[197] Translations from the German are my own if not otherwise noted.

> In our study of the phenomenon of "group dynamics", we realised that there can be no binding definition of the art collective. A group thrives on association and disruption, its dynamics are unpredictable: joint work, conversations, conviviality, rivalry, friendship, openness, inclusion, demarcation, fatigue, argument, love, polemics and enthusiasm are its hallmarks.[198]

Taking these dynamics into account, I will, however, propose a working definition of the collective, since I consider this as foundational in order to work towards an aesthetic account of collectives. In my understanding, the collective consists of a group formed by a number of individuals, whose collective work is characterised by the desire to transform social conditions. In the case of *documenta fifteen*, the joint goals were to establish community-based practice as aesthetic alternative to the capitalist functioning of the art market, to raise awareness of communities and their political contexts in the Global South and to advocate for climate justice. These and related utopian aims are, often, distinct from the political situation and social contexts with which the collective is confronted.

Historically, the concept of the collective is closely linked to socialism, where it is associated with forms of communal work. Work brigades in the former GDR, for example, refer to labourers who conceive of their joint work practice as happening within a collective.[199] While this socialist understanding stands in contrast to the capitalist logic of the contemporary art market, it is not surprising that the collective art practice at the centre of *documenta fifteen* caused misgivings within the art world. As Monica Juneja and Jo Ziebritzk argue in 'Learning with Documenta 15: Principles, Practices, Problems' (2023), *documenta fifteen* turned the focus on individual authorship in the arts upside down:

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[198] While there is an English translation of the exhibition catalogue, the English catalogue substantially differs from the German original and does not contain all texts. This is why I translated this quote from Sarah Louisa Henn and Dierk Höhne, 'Subjects of Solidarity', in *Gruppendynamik. Kollektive der Moderne*. Ausstellungskatalog, edited by Lenbachhaus. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021, pp. 62-69, p. 62.

[199] See „Brigade", *DDR-Geschichte*, private history project supervised by Dana Schieck, http://www.ddr-geschichte.de/Wirtschaft/sozialist__Arbeit/Brigadebewegung/brigadebewegung.html (8.11.2022); Markus Würz, 'Brigaden der sozialistischen Arbeit, in: Lebendiges Museum Online', *Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, http://www.hdg.de/lemo/kapitel/geteiltes-deutschland-gruenderjahre/wirtschaft-und-gesellschaft-im-osten/brigaden-der-sozialistischen-arbeit.html (08.11.2022).

> The simple fact that we continue to speak of "Beuys's oaks" reveals the valorizing habitus of the art world. It foregrounds the artist's initiative […], whereas the participation of innumerable collaborators—community workers, politicians, administrators, staff members of Documenta—who did the actual work of planting the trees has not found its way into recollections.[200]

In addition to deviating from the art world's consensus about the relevance of individual artistic authorship, the focus on collectives at *documenta fifteen* shifted attention from the 'autonomous artwork' to the process of art creation within communities predominantly located in the Global South.[201] So far, the reception of collective and collaborative art practice within aesthetics and art theory has remained entrenched in Eurocentric epistemic categories, as e.g. Rachel Mader's essay in the catalogue 'The Art History of Collaboration' outlining the history of collaborative art practices since the 1960s confirms. Especially with regard to the cultivation of relationships, which she understands as a central characteristic of 'microcosms [...] of collaborative interactions', it appears necessary to expand on art historiographies by taking epistemologies from the Global South into account.[202]

If one considers the role of collectives within the historical context of Indonesia, the home base of *documenta fifteen's* curatorial collective ruangrupa, the collectives' central role in operating as a form of resistance against the undemocratic and repressive Suharto regime (1967-1998) becomes obvious. Claudia König argues in her essay 'Understanding Indonesian Collectivity', published in February 2022, that this historical context is relevant to an understanding of ruangrupa's modus operandi, which has been 'integrated into a network of like-minded collective efforts in the Global South since the beginning of their practice'.[203] In Indonesia, the collective facilitated art practice in the first place. As Christina Schott describes it:

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[200] Monica Juneja, Jo Ziebritzki, 'Learning with Documenta 15: Principles, Practices, Problems', *Grey Room* 2023; (92): pp. 94–10, here p. 92.

[201] Monica Juneja, Jo Ziebritzki: 'Learning with Documenta 15: Principles, Practices, Problems', *Grey Room* 2023; (92): pp. 94–10, here p. 100.

[202] Rachel Mader, 'Die Kunstgeschichte der Kollaboration', in *Kollaborationen*, Exhibition catalogue edited by Heike Eipeldauer and Franz Thalmair. Cologne: König, 2022, pp. 8-16, here: p. 15.

[203] Claudia König, 'Das Verständnis indonesischer Kollektivität', *Südostasien: Zeitschrift für Politik, Kultur, Dialog*, 21 February 2022, https://suedostasien.net/das-verstaendnis-indonesischer-kollektivitaet/ (7.10.2022).

> In Europe, where art is often state-funded, artists can act individually and create "art for art's sake". In many other countries, however, especially in the Southern hemisphere, contemporary art would not be possible without collective collaboration. In Indonesia, for example, many art students can only keep their heads above water by sharing rooms for living, sleeping and working. Often, these modest dwellings also serve as exhibition spaces, or vice versa. [204]

To understand the political significance of the collective, it is important to be aware of state oppression and persecution by undemocratic governments, which numerous artists in Southeast Asia faced during the anti-colonial liberation struggles. In 1988, the Malaysian government, for example, ordered the demolition of Anak Alam's studio complex.[205] An awareness of the political role of collectives in the Global South is lacking in Eurocentric, apolitical definitions of the collective. While the cultural scientist Klaus P. Hansen develops his take on collectives in his book *Kultur, Kollektiv, Nation* (2009) from a Eurocentric perspective, the neologism of 'multicollectivity' he introduced in order to refer to 'the existence of an unmanageable number of collectives' is still applicable to collective practice in the Global South.[206] He goes on to claim that 'this diversity functions only because the individual is simultaneously located in many collectives'. [207]

The idea of partaking in multiple collectives at the same time was central to the exercise of lumbung, ruangrupa's curatorial concept for *documenta fifteen*. The Indonesian term lumbung, translated as 'rice barn', is linked with an artistic approach of sharing communal resources between multiple collectives and communities. According to ruangrupa, the practice of lumbung stems from Indigenous Indonesian communities, who store their surplus harvest in communal rice barns to then share it with regard to commonly developed criteria in the best interests of the community.[208] Referencing an interview with Judith Schlehe, former director of the institute for ethnology at the University of Freiburg, Jan von Brevern argues, however,

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[204] Christina Schott, 'Kunst und Leben sind nicht voneinander zu trennen', *Südostasien: Zeitschrift für Politik, Kultur, Dialog*, 21 February 2022, https://suedostasien.net/kunst-und-leben-sind-nicht-voneinander-zu-trennen/ (7.10.2022).
[205] Sarah Louisa Henn and Dierk Höhne, 'Subjects of Solidarity', in *Gruppendynamik. Kollektive der Moderne*. Exhibition catalogue, edited by Lenbachhaus. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021, pp. 62-69, here p. 69.
[206] Hansen, Klaus P., *Kultur, Kollektiv, Nation*. Passau: Verlag Karl Stutz, 2009, p. 20.
[207] Hansen, Klaus P. *Kultur, Kollektiv, Nation*. Passau: Verlag Karl Stutz, 2009, p. 20.
[208] See https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/ (2.10.2023)

that rice barns in contemporary Indonesia predominantly belong to the elites. If ruangrupa refers to the historical rural rice barns called 'lumbung desa', they ignore that those were part of Indonesia's colonial heritage since they were introduced by Indonesian colonialists to prevent the starvation of the population.[209]

If we reduce the lumbung principle to its usage in Indonesia, we are, however, in danger of exoticising it, since corresponding experiences such as those of the 'commons, cooperative, cooperative' also exist in the Global North, according to Schott.[210] Elinor Ostrom spelled out the concept of the commons, for example, in her monograph *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (1990). According to ruangrupa, lumbung is happening within an ekosistem, which refers to but is 'not synonymous with' the ecological ecosystem.[211] The ekosistem signifies a network through which lumbung members share their resources with each other. These network structures are 'inter-lokal', as they disseminate the local resources and practices of the fourteen lumbung members, whom ruangrupa invited to participate in *documenta fifteen*, through an international network.[212] Ruangrupa shared their curatorial privileges with the invited lumbung members and granted them the freedom to invite further artists. While the lumbung members are long-term collaborators, with whom ruangrupa collaborates prior to and beyond documenta, the so-called lumbung artists (a misleading title as the majority were also art collectives rather than individual artists) were only invited to develop work specifically for *documenta fifteen*. Given that lumbung members as well as lumbung artists could approach further artists and collectives to participate in *documenta fifteen*, it is quite likely that even the official artistic directors of *documenta fifteen*, namely ruangrupa, no longer had an overview of everyone involved in the global art exhibition. Rather than operating as curatorial gatekeepers, ruangrupa de-institutionalised curatorial practice and outsourced their decision-making power to so-called majelis, communal meetings for joint discussions, exhibition-planning and decision-making. Due to the pandemic, the majelis happened predominantly online and were partly documented as video call recordings on the

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[209] Jan von Brevern, '"Lumbung" – die Rückkehr der Scheune', Merkur 75, October 2021, pp. 59-65, p. 60.
[210] Christina Schott, 'Kunst und Leben sind nicht voneinander zu trennen', *Südostasien: Zeitschrift für Politik, Kultur, Dialog*, 21 February 2022, https://suedostasien.net/kunst-und-leben-sind-nicht-voneinander-zu-trennen/ (7.10.2022).
[211] See https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/ (2.10.2023)
[212] See https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/ (2.10.2023)

documenta website. The attribution of the participating collectives and artists with regard to their time zones mirrored the working structures of the lumbung practice and indicated a move away from categorising artists with regard to their nationalities.

In their first official publication of their concept for *documenta fifteen* in the regionally published street newspaper *Asphalt Magazine*, ruangrupa refer to their digital preparatory meetings with the collectives participating in documenta as a 'lumbung assembly'. [213] This compound term highlights the radical nature of this approach, as it not only questions the structures of an art system tailored to the competition (e.g. on the art market, for exhibitions and grants) and individual stars, but instead seeks to establish an economy of art based on collectivity and care. The idea of coming together and joining forces within a collective is reminiscent of the concept of assembly as 'meant to grasp the power of coming together and acting politically in concert' most recently employed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their *Assembly* (2017).[214] Hardt and Negri emphasise the political resilience and power that derives from assembling. For their analysis, they make use of the principle of so-called 'calls and responses', which 'should speak back and forth in an open dialogue'. [215] This open field of tension requires both those who call and those who respond to constantly engage in new exchanges and to allow themselves to engage in these negotiation processes again and again. The discursiveness of the assembly is similarly adopted by the singers of the 'Jeju Arirang' from the Korean island of Haenyeo, whose *Seaweed Story* (2022) is transferred to Kassel through a looped video and models of simply built rectangular houses arranged on an island formed by sand. The community of Haenyeo consists of mainly older women who identify themselves as companions ensuring each other's survival in the midst of the sea. The houses depicted exhibited at *documenta fifteen* primarily fulfil the function of changing rooms and storage spaces for the equipment for diving. At the same time, they operate as discursive spaces and thus stand in the tradition of the bulteok, a fireplace made of stones that traditionally served as a place of assembly.

Ruangrupa's sharing of resources, such as the exhibition budget and the outsourcing of

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[213] The concept of lumbung featured centrally in the press release ruangrupa published in the street newspaper *Asphalt* on 4 October 2021. https://documenta-fifteen.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Asphalt_Ausgabe_1.pdf; (7.10.2022).
[214] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: *Assembly*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xxi.
[215] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: *Assembly*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xxi.

curatorial authorship to the multiplicity of collectives, indicated a break with the confinements of large institutions, such as documenta's administrational structures and their embeddedness within local and federal politics (documenta is mainly funded through public sources, namely the City of Kassel, the state of Hesse, and the German Federal Cultural Foundation), and thus opened up novel perspectives on curatorial practice.[216] Yet scenarios such as Taring Padi's poster featuring anti-Semitic imagery also hinted at the downsides of outsourcing curatorial authorship and responsibility, since collective curating makes it difficult to identify individual authors and hence to take on responsibility, e.g. for the anti-Semitic depiction of Jews. As a disclaimer, I will not deal here with the charges of anti-Semitism at *documenta fifteen*, as these have already been discussed intensively and need to be investigated in by experts in the field of anti-Semitism research.[217]

3. Collectives and their audiences

While the broad swathe of the press reception brought out the problems of collective curating, e.g. the difficulty of allocating responsibility for curatorial fallacies, such as the inclusion of Taring Padi's anti-Semitic poster, less attention was paid to the ways in which visitors engaged with the exhibits of collectives. In what follows, I will show that the practice of nongkrong, which played a key role for ruangrupa, was not taken up by the majority of visitors to *documenta fifteen*. My contention is that an engagement with the practice of collectives requires different appreciative virtues from the audience than the appreciation of individual artworks in order to fully function. I will, therefore, argue that 'participation as imposition' is necessary to allow audiences to engage with the practice of collectives.

One central curatorial strategy pursued by ruangrupa was the facilitation of nongkrong, the practice of 'hanging out together'. This practice opens up new opportunities for lingering over the exhibits and discussing them together with others, which includes visitors as well as participating collectives and artists. Once visitors had entered the Fridericianum through columna that had become columns (the Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi's word play is based

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[216] See also Hubertus Locher: *Kunsttheorie. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart.* München: C.H. Beck, 2023, p. 440.

[217] A very good summary of this complex topic can be found on the website of the Bildungsstätte Anne Frank; https://www.bs-anne-frank.de/events/kalender/zum-antisemitismusskandal-auf-der-documenta-fifteen; 3.11.2022.

on his 'Horizontal Newspaper', which he continues on the antique columns Fridericianum), they arrived directly at FRIDSKUL, a space displaying numerous working materials and resembled the creative common space of a start-up. FRIDSKUL could be viewed as ruangrupa's Kassel version of GUDSKUL, a public venue the collectives ruangrupa, Serrum, and Grafis Huru Hara established in Jakarta in 2018 as a platform to share resources and knowledge. If one compares FRIDSKUL with GUDSKUL, it quickly becomes obvious that it lacks something, namely public access. If FRIDSKUL is only accessible to those who can afford documenta's high entrance fees, it can no longer operate as a platform, where resources are shared equally. Accordingly, these spaces seem deserted; at least on the three different days I visited *documenta fifteen* myself. Rather than participating in FRIDSKUL, the few visitors I observed examined the working materials as exhibits of an installation, but did not interact with them. Only one visitor made himself comfortable in a hammock. There was no dialogue, no nongkrong. Although participatory formats, also known under the label of socially engaged art, have been canonised in art historiography since Claire Bishop's 'social turn' in 2006, *documenta fifteen* revealed more than an unwillingness to engage in dialogue on the part of the curators. Critics, such as Jörg Heiser, criticised the lack of contextualisation of the exhibits. [218] However, this criticism could also be continued at the level of the recipients. It is possible that the lack of aesthetic virtues, such as patient viewing and entering into dialogue with the artworks, also contributed to a reduced understanding of the collective aesthetic proposed at *documenta fifteen*.

At this point, I ought to mention that the concept of 'aesthetic virtues' might initially sound antiquated to a reader unfamiliar with an approach in philosophy called virtue aesthetics. Virtue aesthetics is a relatively new approach in philosophical aesthetics and was fundamentally shaped by Peter Goldie, Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes. [219] It applies the framework of virtue ethics, the Ancient idea that the exercise of one's virtue is crucial for one's flourishing, to the realm of aesthetics. The idea behind it is that only 'virtuous'

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[218] Jörg Heiser, '"Contested Histories": on Documenta 15', *Art-Agenda Reports*, 29 June 2022, https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/477463/contested-histories-on-documenta-15 (7.10.2022)

[219] Nancy E. Snow, 'Virtue Aesthetics, Art and Ethics', in *The Oxford handbook of ethics and art*, edited by James Harold. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023, pp. 250-266, p. 250, e-book: https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/46863/chapter/414148640 (21.10.2023).

forms of art appreciation, e.g. patient appreciation that focuses on various nuances of the work, allow us to appreciate art fully. As Peter Goldie argues, the idea of aesthetic virtues highlights a 'kind of demandingness', namely 'the demand to care about what one is engaged in'.[220] If we apply virtue aesthetics to an analysis of participatory and collective art practice, as I have done elsewhere, this will 'allow us to take the important role the audience has in the construction of the value of a participatory artwork into account'.[221]

If the audience, such as the visitors of *documenta fifteen*, did not exercise their aesthetic virtues by dedicating themselves to the collective work in the mode of nongkrong, they could not get an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the exhibits. Naturally, there were several barriers to nongkrong preventing it from happening as planned. Juneja and Ziebritzki mention some:

> Not only did the incompatibility of cultural codes make encounters difficult but so, too, did the very languages spoken by the artists and visitors. The call to "make friends not art" could cut both ways. Many visitors experienced the conviviality they observed in the social hubs as a closed group of "friends" to which they could not find a ready entry point—an experience often recounted by German visitors. Any form of community that uses friendship as a key category also operates, by definition ("friends only"), as a selective mode, enacting its own inclusions and exclusions. As the polemics of the antisemitism scandal acquired shrill tones, the lines between "friends" and "others" were inevitably drawn.[222]

In addition, the public charges against *documenta fifteen* led to the fact that many participating artists and collectives withdrew from engaging in the practice of nongkrong. If an understanding of the collective practices at *documenta fifteen* necessitated engaging in nongkrong, many critics and visitors would have failed to apply aesthetic (and democratic) virtues for art appreciation. Therefore, I suggest to take the demandingness linked with an account of the aesthetic virtuous and virtuous appreciation seriously as this puts emphasis on

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[220] Peter Goldie and Dominic McIver Lopes: 'Virtues of Art', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* LXXXII (2008), 179-211, p. 187.
[221] Hegenbart, Sarah, 'The Participatory Art Museum: Approached from a Philosophical Perspective', in *Philosophy and Museums: Ethics, Aesthetics and Ontology*. Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement, Vol. 79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 319-339, p. 334.
[222] Juneja and Jo Ziebritzki, 'Learning with Documenta 15: Principles, Practices, Problems', Grey Room 2023; (92), p. 102.

participation as imposition. This means that recipients ought to have engaged in the collective work in order to gain an in-depth understanding of it.

In order to foster our understanding of the political force of the work of an aesthetically operating collective properly, I transfer the political concept of 'democracy of imposition', which the political scientist Felix Heidenreich introduced in his *Demokratie als Zumutung. Für eine andere Bürgerlichkeit* (2022) (Democracy as Imposition: Towards another kind of citizenship), to the realm of aesthetics. The idea of 'democracy of imposition' emphasises the need to exercise active citizenship and to participate in democratic processes in order to guarantee a functioning democracy. It adopts a concept the political philosopher Christoph Möllers sketched out in his *Demokratie – Zumutungen und Versprechen* (2008) (Democracy: Impositions and Promises) and develops this further. Heidenreich outlines this as follows:

> If one understands democracy as a relationship of reciprocation between citizens on the one hand and political leaders on the other, this relationship must then be thought of as a dialogue, which is by no means unidirectional. The refusal to listen is not only a consequence of those political elites who do not cultivate a culture of listening; it can also be observed among citizens who believe that they owe nothing to the political community. Democracy, however, is a form of government that not only allows us to formulate our demands, but also imposes demands on us. With reference to Christoph Möllers' political philosophy, democracy not only formulates promises, but also imposes something on us. [223]

If we transfer this plea for an understanding of democracy as imposition to the analysis of the aesthetics of the collective, we can argue that the aesthetics of the collective requires participation (and in particular the participation of viewers and other aesthetic audiences) 'as imposition'. This concerns, for example, the imposition that visitors enter into dialogue with artistic projects that are designed to be long-term. An in-depth understanding of the works of

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[223] Felix Heidenreich, *Demokratie als Zumutung. Für eine andere Bürgerlichkeit*. Klett-Cotta, 2022, 21-22. The German original states: "Versteht man Demokratie als ein Resonanzverhältnis zwischen Bürgerinnen und Bürgern einerseits und politischen Verantwortungsträgern andererseits, so muss dieses Verhältnis als ein Dialog gedacht werden, in dem keineswegs nur die eine Seite auf die andere zu hören hat. Resonanzverweigerung findet nicht nur durch jene politischen Eliten statt, die keine Kultur des Zuhörens pflegen; sie kann auch bei Bürgerinnen und Bürgern beobachtet werden, die glauben, dem politischen Gemeinwesen nichts zu schulden, ihm voller Rechte aber ohne Pflichten gegenüberzustehen. Demokratie ist jedoch eine Regierungsform, die uns nicht nur erlaubt, unsere Ansprüche zu formulieren, sondern die uns auch *in Anspruch nimmt*. Sie formuliert – mit Christoph Möllers gesprochen – nicht nur Versprechen, sondern auch Zumutungen."

collectives goes beyond a singular encounter with their practice, but it imposes participation in the practice of the collectives comparable to the operation of the assembly. Given that many visitors to *documenta fifteen* refused to enter into a dialogue with the collectives, whose artistic projects were based on participatory engagement and interaction, they failed to exercise their aesthetic virtues necessary for the aesthetics of the collective to fully function. In other words, if the 'impository' mode of reception is not realised, the full potential of collective curating will not be fully realised. These considerations can also be applied to the modes of reception of related art forms such as participatory art and socially engaged art.

Applying Heidenreich's approach to democracy as imposition to the reception conditions of the works of collectives, as represented at *documenta fifteen*, involves a willingness to abandon aesthetic distance in order to take the demands that the works make on us seriously. This did not happen, though, if one examines the above-mentioned central example of the FRIDSKUL. Impatient observers, whose aesthetic vice of impatience, prevents them from a full engagement with artworks have a tradition that goes long beyond documenta. Julius Meier-Graefe exemplified this in a birthday letter to Wilhelm Lehmbruck published on 5 January 1932, where he recalled his first reaction to *Die Kniende* (1911) ('The Knealing') twenty years ago:

> It cut the air like a steep reef and forced the viewer to either sink down or walk away. I preferred the second [...] Of course, I soon returned [...] *The Kneeling* is something to strive for.[224]

Die Kniende was a key work at the first documenta in 1955, where it was prominently exhibited in the Rotunda. In 2022, the Rotunda was transformed into a meeting room set up by the *foundationClass*collective, which invites for mutual exchange. Founded at the Weißensee Kunsthochschule, the *foundationClass*collective self-defines as a 'dissident-minded art education platform and resistance toolkit to facilitate access to art academia for migrant communities.[225] A colourful fountain made of plastic bowls and Tupperware pieces formed

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[224] Quoted from Dietrich Schubert, 'Wilhelm Lehmbruck im Blick von Meier-Graefe', originally published in *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* 2015 (2017), pp. 147-166, hier p. 154, https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/6643/1/Schubert_Wilhelm_Lehmbruck_im_Blick_von_Meier_Graefe_2017.pdf (7.10.2022)

[225] Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu, '*FOUNDATIONCLASS*COLLECTIVE', in *Documenta fifteen Handbuch*, hrsg. von ruangrupa and Artistic Team. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2022, p. 47.

the centre of architecture ideally suited to participate in an assembly. However, the visitors were neither interacting nor participating when I visited. Instead, the posters and banners reminiscent of relics from a demonstration stretched across the assembly room. The banners could be read as symbols of book pages, which were meant to illustrate the institution-critical teaching practised in the *foundationClass*collective. It is just as symbolic that this very institutional critique is now at the heart of one of Europe's oldest public museums.

The grassroots movement OFF-Biennale Budapest, who are mainly active in Hungary, pose related questions about the institutional and societal power structures that enable inclusion and exclusion. The OFF-Biennale Budapest invited one of its collaborators, namely the European Roma Institute of Arts and Culture (ERIAC), to imagine the '(im)possibilities' of a transnational 'RomaMoMA' together with them.[226] (As a side remark: The ways in which network members were allowed to invite further artists not only points towards the lack of clarity with regard to participating actors, but reveals power structures even within the lumbung community, namely between those who were allowed to invite and those who were invited). As part of the RomaMoMA, the Polish-Romani artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, whose works were also displayed in the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, writes a visual art history of the Roma in her tapestries. Based on Jacques Callot's historical iconographic depiction of the Roma in his etchings *The Life of the Egyptians* (ca. 1633), Mirga-Tas gives women, who in historical depictions are subject not only to the male but also to the colonial gaze, a new form of agency. The self-confident gaze of a woman riding a blue horse with an oversized green hat, which almost looks like a halo due to its round shape, marks her out as an actor in her own history. Her garment is an ornamentally decorated carpet with golden fringes. In no way does this rider appear like an impoverished refugee, which is not only expressed materially, but also in the network of bonds with her children and the other figures depicted. Pink fabric panels with red dots together with blue striped, red and flower decorated fabric panels form the ground over which she rides. This playful use of colour lends the black and white engravings a modern colourfulness that could at the same time be transposed to a picture book for children. Possibly the generation whose view of history is less exclusively shaped and could be characterised by an openness to diasporic life. The designation Egyptians, which stands out both in Callot's title

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[226]Krzysztof Kościuczuk, 'OFFBiennale Budapest', *Documenta fifteen Handbuch*, edited by ruangrupa and Artistic Team. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2022, p. 159.

and in Mirga-Ta's designation of her series as *Out of Egypt*, refers to the Roma and their understanding of origin from 'Little Egypt', which is why they were called Egyptians in French-speaking regions and the Netherlands. [227] As Timea Junghaus explains:

> The later names Gypsy, Gitano and Gitane all derive from words for Egyptian. In reality, Little Egypt was an area under Venetian rule in the Peloponnese, where Sinti and Roma had settled for a while before continuing their journey into the interior of Europe - presumably under pressure from Ottoman invasions. [228]

In an age of mass migration, the work also has a very shocking presence, as though news' images have been turned into art. In general, *documenta fifteen* illustrates more clearly than almost any other world exhibition since *documenta 11*, curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2002, that art can also be directly linked to securing living conditions. The extent to which solidarity as an aesthetic principle overrides the classification of art according to nation states also becomes clear in the systematisation of the works by time zones (instead of national country borders). These were formative for the network formation within the framework of the documenta preparations, which were mainly organised via video conferences during the pandemic. If one plans to organise a meeting, it is practical if the cooperating collectives are always awake at about the same time. Nigeria, Libya and Chad, which are in the same time zone, are, thus, much closer to Germany than the USA or Australia. Speaking of Australia, here, too, the question of territories and the forced displacement of the Indigenous population arises. Richard Bell not only thematises the desolate living conditions of Indigenous people in Australia within the Fridericianum on the upper floor, but we also encounter his *Aboriginal Tent Embassy* (original 1972/here 2022) on Friedrichsplatz, where it seemed strangely out of place amidst the withered grass. The *Aboriginal Tent Embassy*, which turned fifty in 2022, originally functioned as sunshade for protesters for Indigenous rights. The tent has since established itself as an iconic statement in the centre of Australia's capital, Canberra. Although

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[227] Timea Junghaus, 'Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen Kunstgeschichte Das Bild der Sinti und Roma in der westlichen Kunst', *RomArchive*, https://www.romarchive.eu/de/visual-arts/roma-in-art-history/towards-a-new-art-history/ (7.10.2022).
[228] Timea Junghaus, 'Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen Kunstgeschichte Das Bild der Sinti und Roma in der westlichen Kunst', *RomArchive*, https://www.romarchive.eu/de/visual-arts/roma-in-art-history/towards-a-new-art-history/ (7.10.2022).

the embassy is far from being a regular visa facility, it fulfils a discursive role at least and has promoted debates about the land that was forcibly taken from Indigenous people. Bell's paintings at the Fridericianum also feature a strikingly clear message. In the background of a protest picture, on which mainly People of Colour express their demand 'What We Want Landrights' with posters, an oversized Aboriginal flag with its black and red colour fields, in the centre of which a yellow circle (exactly: the sun!) can be seen. At this point, documenta once again seems to be operating as an assembly.

Political messages also continue on the archival level. The Amsterdam-based collective *The Black Archives* not only deals with the history of Black Dutch people, but also with the paradoxes of reparation payments. While neither the descendants of enslaved people nor the Indigenous population in Australia, to which Bell draws attention, were financially compensated, *The Black Archives* shows that the Dutch Ministry of Colonies paid compensation to slaveholders after the banning of slavery in Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles in 1863. Another exhibit, a book published by the Mainz Academy of Sciences and Literature, documents the correspondence between Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Samuel Thomas von Soemmerring in the years 1784-1828. It deals with the presence of scientific racism in Kassel, which was encouraged by Frederick of Hesse-Kassel, who settled Black people in Wilhelmshöhe, among others, for anthropological and medical studies.

If we leave the Fridericianum and enter the documenta Halle through a tunnel-like architecture of corrugated iron lit only by a kind of oil lamp, one of our first associations might be that we are entering a mine. The walls of the foyer of the documenta Halle were also clad in corrugated iron by the Kenyan Wajukuu collective. Rather than alluding to the mine as central symbol for the extraction of resources on the African continent, the Wajukuu collective references the blending of architectural forms of the Maasai and the informal and ephemeral architecture in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, a township in the east of Kenya's capital Nairobi. The Wajukuu Art Project addresses young local people, who are searching for resources to sustain their own survival in the neighbouring rubbish dump. In doing so, they do not only endanger their own health, but their poverty also makes them vulnerable to drug dealing, prostitution or other criminal activities. Art functions here as an element of meaning-making or, as the Wajukuu collective puts it, to promote 'resilience' and the 'human' capacity to transform

suffering into beauty'.[229] In the arte povera tradition, the collective builds a self-titled 'readymade' (why is a European art term used here?) sculpture out of old knives and exhibits paintings of an African Madonna and Child. However, the aesthetics of a film documenting the work of Wajukuu reveals problematic connections to the field of development aid. While the film introduces the Wajukuu artists, it highlights at the same time that these artists could only realise many community projects thanks to the funding by documenta. This aligns with the principle of *documenta fifteen* as explained in the catalogue. The funding is now only supposed to finance the exhibits themselves, but the so-called 'seed money' is also supposed to cover the foundations of those exhibits in the work that precedes them.[230]

Through the emphatic expression of gratitude, the documentary film perpetuates a problematic (neo)colonial asymmetry of power. However, it also makes clear how reality-shaping and relevant this monetary support is perceived locally. This power asymmetry provides another explanation for why finding forms for equal participation in collective work was impeded.

The sound of clacking skateboards attracts visitors to the lower floor of the documenta Halle, where the Thai-based artist initiative Baan Noorg Collaborative Arts and Culture has installed a skateboard ramp behind which shadow plays are shown. The idea is to activate the oral knowledge available in communities and, above all, to enter into dialogue with neighbours. Unfortunately, this only works to a limited extent. While a sign in Kassel promised free admission to the hall for skateboarders, this hardly worked out in practice. So, it was mainly white middle-class teenagers, who were waiting in front of the ramp. The dialogue with the collective is reduced to a timid enquiry as to whether they are allowed to enter the artwork.

This illustrates the greatest challenge of a global art exhibition in process. The lumbung concept is designed for nongkrong over an extended period and not a short flying visit. It also presupposes that both participating artists and visitors are willing to enter into dialogue. However, this did not seem to be the case, so that most exhibits remained reduced to installations that are looked at reverently. Perhaps what is needed most at this point is audience

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[229] Documenta fifteen, „Wajukuu", https://documenta-fifteen.de/lumbung-member-kuenstlerinnen/wajukuu-art-project/ (7.10.2022)
[230] Ruangrupa, 'Lumbung', in *Documenta fifteen Handbuch*, edited by ruangrupa and Artistic Team. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2022, p. 21.

criticism. Because the constant criticism of those responsible (i.e. the curatorial collective ruangrupa) is somewhat reminiscent of the passive attitude that we know all too well from politician bashing, when 'politics' is criticised in general terms, thereby lumping the entire party spectrum together. On the other hand, citizens have a personal responsibility to shape politics.

4. Conclusion: Democratic and aesthetic participation as imposition

If we apply Felix Heidenreich's plea for an understanding of democracy as an imposition to the reception conditions of documenta fifteen, we can derive a plea for dealing with art as an imposition. This means accepting the demands that the works of art make on us. In other words, to enter into dialogue. To inquire. To reflect. To think critically. To throw habits of seeing overboard. And above all, to enter into a relationship. While the curatorial team formulated numerous offers to enter into a relationship, these were only been accepted to a limited extent by the visitors. One exception is the project *A Landscape: Local Knowledge Kassel East*, which happened in Kassel East beyond the exhibition spaces of *documenta fifteen*, where it introduced local residents and their community projects through a walking tour.

If individual art appreciation requires aesthetic virtues, e.g. attentiveness, the appreciation of collective art requires additional dialogical virtues, e.g. interacting with conflicting perspectivities, *documenta fifteen*, as I have argued, was characterised by flawed virtues of dialogicality. I have shown here that transferring the concept of democracy as imposition to the realm of aesthetics could be fruitful for giving a full picture of the aesthetics of the collective.

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Displaying Participatory Art

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ABSTRACT. Recently, participatory art has become more and more present on the international scene and also in theoretical debates. This tendency was clearly visible at the Documenta 15, which displayed a lot of participatory art projects. This paper underlines the differences between the modern paradigm of art and the model offered by participatory art, suggesting that the most acute problem raised by this form of art is related to the communication of art: displaying and receiving/consuming participatory art is not resolved in the frames of actual institutional practices. The two major questions are what to exhibit and what is the receiver expected to do. Based on the discussion of these questions, there are two possibilities. A possible solution is to renounce the exhibitions of this form of art. Participatory art should not be exhibited at all, it has an intrinsic value, obvious for the target group, and no meaning for others. Another possible solution is to find a way of presenting participatory art to the public. Here we also have more possibilities: presenting participatory art by non-artistic ways, presenting the outcomes of the participatory process or presenting participatory art as ongoing projects. The challenges of each option will be addressed[232].

1. Introduction: Participatory Art Everywhere[233]

For at least a quarter century, the "social turn of art" (Bishop, 2006) has become increasingly apparent in the practice of artists and artist collectives, in curatorial discourses, in state funding, and – indicating the official inclusion of participatory art in the "community of saints" – in the program of the 15th Kassel Documenta. Despite this, the name and definition

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[233] As it is stated by a veteran of communitary art, François Matarasso in his book A restless art: How participation won, and why it matters.

of this relatively new artistic form are not uniform.

In a manifesto published in 2010, Gustaf Almenberg claims that "personally I used the term Participatory Art at my first solo exhibition in Stockholm, Sweden in 1982" (Almenberg, 2010, p. 10), and "in the early 1980s, no one had heard of Participatory Art, and it is little known even today." (Almenberg, 2010, p. 11). By the "Age of Participation", Almenberg mainly refers to the phenomenon that Alvin Toffler calls the "prosumer" – when the consumer participates in some form in the production process. Almenberg sees this trend reaching its full potential in art as well, stating that "we are now entering the Participation Age – an age of mass creativity" (Almenberg, 2010, p. 13).

Finkelpearl noted in 2014 that "discussion of participatory art seems to be in its infancy" (Finkelpearl, 2014), and numerous terms are competing (activist art, collaborative art (G. H. Kester, 2011), community art (Matarasso, 2019) or community-based art, cooperative art, dialogic art (G. Kester, 1999), experimental communities, interactive art, interventionist art, littoral art (G. Kester 1999), participatory art, relational art (Bourriaud, 2009), research-based art, socially engaged art – to name just a few). Today, the situation has perhaps only changed to the extent that the term "participatory art" appears to have become institutionalized as a generic term.

A few years ago, community artist François Matarasso observed that: "[d]uring the past 20 years, something unexpected happened to participatory art. It became normal."(Matarasso, 2019 p. 19) and "[i]t is promoted by curators, reviewed by critics and studied by academics." (Matarasso, 2019, p. 21) The weight of participatory art at the Documenta 15 exhibition proves this normalization.

The phenomenon itself is so diverse that it is difficult to comprehend, and even more challenging to create some kind of conceptual framework for it. Those who engage with participatory art come with some preferences that influence how they think about the entire phenomenon. For instance, Nicolas Bourriaud favors Rirkrit Tiravanija, who creates "micro-utopias" (Bourriaud, 2009). In contrast, Claire Bishop draws attention to the works of Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn and Spanish artist Santiago Sierra, which "are marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging" (Bishop, 2004, p. 70). Grant Kester is open to collectives like Park Fiction in Hamburg, Ala Plastica in Argentina, or Dialog in Central India (G. H. Kester, 2011). Based on his own practice, Almenberg believes that "much of

Participatory Art probably is abstract sculpture" (Almenberg, 2010, p. 19). Matarasso mainly focuses on community programs in England, including many theatrical and musical performances and festivals.

I do not wish to delve deeper into the terminological debate or the definition of the phenomenon – only to the extent that it can be decided whether a terminological clarification solves the specific aspect that is the topic of this paper: the presentation of participatory art (displaying). Thus, I accept François Matarasso's simple definition, which states that "participatory art is the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists". (Matarasso, 2019, p. 48) This definition differs from Finkelpearl's in that the term used by the latter – "people referred to as citizens, regular folks, community members, or non-artists" (Finkelpearl, 2014) – is not careful enough, according to Matarasso. Firstly, it perpetuates a hierarchical view that implies a qualitative difference between the artist and other people. Secondly, it does not take into account that someone who makes art, even if it is just a temporary episode in their life, is an artist in that specific situation. Matarasso, who himself has been a community artist his entire life, distinguishes community art as a subcategory of participatory art:

> Community art is the creation of art as a human right, by professional and non-professional artists, cooperating as equals, for purposes and to standards they set together, and whose processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance. (Matarasso, 2019, p. 51)

Despite the terminological difficulties, it is clear that the participatory art is a radically new phenomenon (even if some aspects can be traced back to Duchamp, Fluxus or other antecedents), which stands out from the modern paradigm of art.

2. Participatory Art Goes out of the Frame of Modern Paradigm of Art

The modern paradigm of art (Horváth, 2016) has three main elements: 1. the author/artist, conceived as outstandingly gifted and compulsorily original, 2. the artwork, which is a remarkably original and valuable artifact, and 3. the museum, conceived as the temple of arts. The modern paradigm of art could be logically deduced from Immanuel Kant's theory of "beauty without concept", which offers no choice to the producer of beautiful art (artist) but

to be original, to create without rules. Being original is the new categoric imperative for artists, but it is also a very rare capacity, a gift from the Nature for a select few individuals, who are referred to by Kant as "geniuses". This geniality reflects also on their work, so the artwork started to be viewed as more than an object, almost a living being, belonging to a sacred territory. The encounter with the work of art could happen on the almost sacred place of the museum, which legitimates the work of art and displays it to the public, to the receivers. The public (receiver/viewer) has to contemplate (in awe) the work of art, with respect/adulation, from a distance, without physical, tactile connection.

Participatory art reverses this model in all respects. In participatory projects, the author is not the genius individual: the artist is often replaced by artistic collectives, and the "work of art" is not produced by the artist, but it implies the participation of non-professional communities. Identifying the natural gift of artists or artistic collectives that cannot be reproduced, conceptualized or executed by ordinary people is a challenging task. The work of art as an object which can be displayed is often missing, being replaced by projects without stable temporal or spatial limits. These projects can hardly be exhibited in museums or galleries, or even in large exhibitions as Documentas or Biennales.

In the following, I will try to abstract from the (valid) questions that arise in connection with participatory art – such as where it is situated between use and ornament (Matarasso, 1997), or between political art and the politics of aesthetics (Bilbao Yarto, 2017), or for example, the highly unsettling question of where the boundaries of participatory art lie, if it is true that "their practice becomes indiscernible from other contemporary socio-political practices, which threatens art's unique position as a medium for criticism" (Bilbao Yarto, 2017, p. 61). If we consider everything that advocates of participatory art claim as given and accepted, and do not raise questions like the ones mentioned above, there remains an essential question that, in my opinion, requires a solution: the question of presenting/displaying participatory art.

In my opinion, the main rupture produced by participatory art in the way of thinking about art is related to the communication of art, the relation with the receiver/viewer, which was traditionally mediated by museums/galleries/mega-exhibitions.

3. Troubles with Displaying Participatory Art

The modern paradigm of art generally interprets the work of art as an object (which includes not only painting, sculpture, and printmaking, but also installation or video art). According to Claire Bishop, after 1989 the process characteristic of the project – "an open-ended, post-studio, research-based, social process, extending over time and mutable in form" (Bishop, 2012, p. 194) – replaced the object. The term "project" itself is the umbrella term for many types of art: "collective practice, self-organised activist groups, transdisciplinary research, participatory and socially engaged art, and experimental curating" (Bishop, 2012, p. 194).

What is particularly characteristic of participatory art is that the process is at least as important as the resulting object: the aim is not to create works of art that meet classical criteria of beauty or quality, but rather to create an experience or encounter for non-professional participants during the process, and possibly to have an impact on the life circumstances of the participants involved in the project. However, if this is the case, exhibiting the potential products/outcomes actually misses the point. Indeed, how can one exhibit or even present and communicate the experience of the participants? Is it even meaningful to attempt to communicate the participants' experience to outsiders?

If we focus on community art, then the question becomes even more disturbing. Generally, the target audience of community art is a very specific community that often suffers from some disadvantage: the poor, the elderly, women, ethnic or sexual minorities, immigrants, those struggling with mental health problems, prison inmates, etc. It is not in question that the artistic project brings benefits to the selected community, and its usefulness or value can be judged by the participants themselves. The question is whether such artistic projects are aimed at outsiders as well, or only at those belonging to the community (the curious, the viewers, and the audience – generally those we traditionally refer to as "receivers")?

The previous discourses primarily focused on the legitimacy, interpretation, and value of participatory art. In 2022, however, at the 15th Kassel Documenta exhibition, we could almost exclusively encounter participatory art, thus the 15th Documenta became a huge laboratory of participatory art exhibition. Unfortunately, an incident that caused ideological conflicts (the accusation of anti-Semitism generated by the large mural of the Taring Padi art collective, entitled *People's Justice* and the heated debate surrounding it) completely

overshadowed the discourse on Documenta 15, and those interested missed the opportunity to ask substantive questions based on the analysis of specific cases that relate not only to a single work but to the entire phenomenon of participatory art – for example, whether Documenta 15 was able to solve the issue of presentation and exhibition.

In the following, I will outline some possible options for presenting participatory art.

3.1. To display is a must

Let us start with the premise that it is essential for art to reach others – to be exhibited, performed, read, projected, etc. The value of art, in this perspective, lies in the fact that it is important not only for the creator but also for others, the audience. It must be universal or at least have a significance that goes beyond individual value. In order to determine whether it has such value at all, art (the artwork) must be made available to others – ideally everyone and anyone. In other words, the process of reception and perception is just as essential to the nature of art as the process of creation, and it is through exhibition, through presentation, that reception becomes possible.

This expectation is not weaker even in the case of participatory art – in fact, we can consider it even more essential. Participatory art allows non-professional artists to enter the arena because it aims to demonstrate the transformative power of art to society, communities, and other people. Moreover, if we are talking about community art where non-professional artists are not random individuals but a group chosen by the artist(s), and often a deprived group, and if the artistic project is driven by some social ideals (such as equality, democracy, freedom, self-determination, etc.), then it would be even more important for the voice of the non-professional participants to be heard, for the "world" to know their position, to understand their feelings, concerns, and problems, to have a spectator-receiver who can develop empathy, compassion, understanding, and a sense of solidarity through art. According to community artist François Matarasso, the communication of art is always necessary.

> Unless it is presented, in performance, exhibition, online or print, art has no life. It becomes an act in the world when it is freed from the artist's control. After that, its future depends on how people respond to it. (Matarasso, 2019, p. 97)

If we accept this line of reasoning, we must decide what (or how) to exhibit and what we recommend and expect from the viewer.

The first option is to exhibit ARTIFACTS in some form. The difficulty arises from the fact that the aim of participatory art is not to create an artifact, but to initiate or sustain a process, which sometimes spans over a considerable period of time (for example, Tania Bruguera's organizations, the Cátedra Arte de Conducta launched in 2002, and INSTAR – the Hannah Arendt Institute of Artivism launched in 2016 operated for several years, with the latter being an important and permanent participant of Documenta 15). What can be exhibited from all of this, and in what form?

The importance of process brings participatory art close to an artistic form that has been around for about a century if we take into account the first initiatives of Dada: performance art (or happening, or created situation). In the case of performance, the process takes place live, and the most authentic experience is created when we are direct witnesses of the event (possibly participants if it is a happening or a created situation). But of course, many of us were not there in 1977 when Marina Abramović and Ulay stood naked and blocked the gallery entrance, forcing every visitor to squeeze past them to enter the exhibition – yet, many of us have seen pictures, read descriptions, or heard conversations about this performance. The documentation of this performance can be exhibited, and the visitor can gain an important artistic experience. In 2017, the documentation of two performances by Tehching Hsieh was presented at an exhibition in Venice: *One Year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece)* and *One Year Performance 1981-1982 (Outdoor Piece).* In the first case, the artist punched a time clock every hour for a year and took a photo of himself while doing it – 24 pictures every day, with some gaps. In the other case, for a year, the artist did not sleep under a roof – every day he marked his movements on a printed New York map, wrote down where he slept, ate, and fulfilled his bodily needs. 365 maps. The exhibition was impressive, captivating, unforgettable. Even if we weren't present to witness the performance, viewing the associated documentation can leave a profound and lasting impression. Therefore, over time, it has been demonstrated that performative art, a genre tied to a specific time and place and inherently transient, can be effectively showcased in galleries and museums.

As in the case of performances, we can exhibit records (photos, videos, texts) of the activities. Of course, there is a huge difference between witnessing a performance and

watching a video – but a presentation of a performance can be truly informing. The difference is that the performance in most occasions is performed before an audience, so recording it is not surprising. The recorded and displayed image could be seen as the objective gaze of the witness of the performance. In participatory art, numerous projects have no audience, only participants. A video recording, a photomontage should be perceived as a foreign body in the project. A performance is meant to be presented to others, a participatory project is meant to be realized with others, but without spectators.

If participatory art is exhibited as an ARTIFACT, we see two possibilities.

First: the exhibited artifact documents the project (photo installation, video, film, recorded conversation with the participants, etc.). This is an artwork that is about the process but not a part of the process itself. This product is created by professional artists and can be evaluated using the same criteria as for similar creations – such as photos, installations, videos, etc.

Second: The participatory art project is likely to produce some tangible outcome: drawings, paintings, installations, posters, furniture, etc. (e.g., the El Warcha workshop that we saw at the 15th Documenta). François Matarrasso emphasizes that participatory art cannot do without artworks: "participatory art involves the creation of art. Without that, what is happening is not art but a form of art education or social development." (Matarasso, 2019, p. 48) These works are likely created by non-professional artists. These can also be exhibited. They are part of the project, but they may not necessarily express the essence of the project. In this case, it is very likely that these artifacts will be measured by the same standards as classic works. At Documenta 15, we could see many murals, posters, and puppets of the Indonesian art group Taring Padi. If the visitor knew that these were protest materials, i.e., they were used in various protest actions, then obviously some kind of ethical evaluation could be made. And as the exhibited materials were still murals, paintings, prints, visitors also aesthetically evaluated the exhibited objects – not always in an appreciative way. At Documenta 15, the Project Art Works collective "cast light on the work of people living and working in neurodiverse ways" (Ruangrupa et al., 2022, p. 169). In fact, the art group brought a stockpile of works, placed on shelves, so that the visitor could only see the quantity of these, along with a few highlighted exhibited works (paintings, drawings). As a matter of fact, these paintings, drawings had aesthetic value – they were beautiful, interesting, naively simple, or

obsessively saturated. But does this matter? In terms of evaluating and understanding the several-months or year-long project, does the aesthetic value of the outcome matter?

If an artist or artistic collective works with neurodiverse groups, it may not be essential to focus on the quality of the paintings created, but rather on the personally enriching, life-improving experiences that the non-professional participants can gain. In this case, it is not clear what the role of the viewer is. On the one hand, since the artworks were created in a classical medium, they can be approached in the same way as other paintings, drawings, photographs, objects, etc. In this case, these works fall into the realm of works created by professional artists, and on the one hand, it is likely that few of them will meet the standards set by professional art, and on the other hand, if the visitor focuses only on the aesthetic quality, then they will miss the point. If we choose this exhibition format, it is likely necessary to offer a story alongside the artwork, which makes the work interesting. We cannot necessarily expect the artworks to be interesting in and of themselves, to speak to us on their own – the situation in which they were created is significant in this case. Only with knowledge of the story can the viewer develop solidarity, empathy, and a striving to understand the situation – which can be an essential goal of presenting such projects.

Another possibility for presentation is NON-ARTISTIC DOCUMENTATION, i.e., presenting participatory art by non-artistic ways, e.g., as reports, descriptions, statistics, memories, interviews, documentaries. In this case, instead of "displays" or "exhibitions", we will have presentations, discussions, lectures – in short, non-artistic communication.

It is obvious that the presentation of participatory art through lectures and discussions is useful and serves to introduce and understand the artistic form, and can even help to cultivate an empathetic relationship with the adopted social group - however, this type of communication loses its artistic nature. It resembles science popularization, where the audience expects information rather than aesthetic or artistic experience. In this form, it is precisely the "art" aspect of participatory art that is left out.

Finally, it is possible to attempt to present the ONGOING PROJECT. This was the concept of the organizers of Documenta 15.

Facing the dilemma of displaying participatory art, the curators of Documenta 15 have chosen to "translate" their local practices to Kassel (Ruangrupa et al., 2022, p. 9). So, instead (or besides) of video- or photo-documentation, one could meet at Kassel a space for education

(Fridskul), a space for kids (rurukids), a fully equipped kitchen (Britto Arts Trust), a garden maintained by Vietnamese immigrants (NHÀ SÀN Collective), two floating gardens maintained by locals (Ilona Németh, invited by OFF BIENNALE), a carpentry workshop (El Warcha), an open-to-all printing press, a skateboarding ramp (Baan Noorg Collaborative Arts and Culture), etc. These "translations" of local practices were meant to give viewers the opportunity to shift from contemplation to participation. In the words of the Documenta handbook: "We try to produce a new aesthetics – an ethical paradigm where the viewer is obsolete. They should not be there to observe but to be part of the process" (Ruangrupa et al., 2022, p. 29). Unfortunately, the translations did not solve the problem: in most locations there were no activities for the entire 100 days of Documenta, and the artists were not able to be presents all the time in Kassel in order to interact with visitors. In many cases it was not clear who should participate, and what it means to participate in the first place. The viewer did not have a definite opportunity to participate in the process.

When participatory art is presented as an ongoing project, it has to be very carefully considered what we expect from viewers, in order to ensure the possibility to experience the participation in the project. The purpose of presenting ongoing projects is to enable the exhibition visitor to place themselves in the position of the non-professional artist with whom the artist(s) originally worked/works. If this is not the goal, presenting ongoing projects is a weaker solution than presenting artifacts with explanatory texts. Observing and contemplating ongoing projects does not come with the experience of sensation or immersion. At Documenta, the ongoing projects were often represented only by their props, which visitors could either try out or not (in several places, there were warnings such as "do not touch" or "do not use"), and which had an unpleasant warehouse-like character. Many people praised the Vietnamese garden of NHÀ SÀN Collective in Kassel: the artists built a vegetable garden with Vietnamese plants with the help of Vietnamese immigrants in Germany, with whom they maintained contact, and they also offered the seeds of the garden for taking away. This is indeed an example of a participatory art project that was "translated" to Kassel: the community space built on the banks of the Red River in Vietnam was reconstructed in the city on the banks of the Fulda, in collaboration with the Vietnamese immigrant community. The artists worked with the community and organized conversations, "with celebratory imbibement of rise-based street food and homemade wine" (Ruangrupa et al., 2022, p. 155). A European

visitor, for example, who visited the garden on a rainy Thursday at noon, did not experience much of this. It did not seem that the visitor could participate in any artistic project. In this case, how could the visitor have been "part of the process"? How should participation have been imagined? Would the visitor have participated in the project by starting to weed the garden? Does eating a tomato (although the artists may not have been happy about it), having a glass of beer or wine at the bar count as participation? Does posting a selfie among the tomatoes with lots of heart and hugging emojis count as participation? I find the case of NHÀ SÀN Collective relevant because it produced two works that stood out for me among the projects of Documenta 15. In the Stadtmuseum, they presented their studio (or perhaps rather the symbolic objects and space of the studio) in a beautiful, elegant, airy interior installation, while in the Vietnamese garden, the associated Appendix Group exhibited three unremarkable blue vases and a hand-drawn comic to explain why they were unable to realize their original, very poetic and spectacular project in Kassel. The sight of the artifacts makes it easier for the viewer to connect with the artists' ideas, while the ongoing projects often reinforced the feeling that the visitor was an outsider.

Documenta 15 was a bold and radically innovative experiment. In my opinion, however, the presentation of ongoing projects did not succeed in conveying the essence of participatory projects to the visitors, and did not succeed in transforming the viewer into a participant. Of course, this does not mean that this option is always necessarily doomed to fail. Rather, I see it as necessary to carefully consider how, if we want to turn the visitor into a participant in the display of participatory art, we can create the conditions for such participation. We need to carefully consider what we expect from the ideal (and not only the ideal) visitor: what they should do, how they should behave in this unfamiliar situation, so that their encounter with the ongoing project is not alienating, but rather enables them to experience a sense of belonging to the project, to a collective.

3.2. No display at all

From the discussion of the previous options, it becomes apparent that introducing participatory art in a way that implies some form of aesthetic or artistic experience on the part of the audience, while still maintaining its participatory nature that distinguishes it from other forms of art, poses significant challenges. Whatever we choose, something will be

compromised. If we exhibit the ARTIFACT, the process and the communal experience are left out. If we display the DOCUMENTATION, the audience misses the aesthetic or artistic experience, and only informative communication takes place. If we present ONGOING projects, it is not easy to ensure that the viewer does not feel foreign or even excluded from the target audience. Considering these aspects, a possible radical option is to renounce the display of this form of art. Participatory art should not be exhibited at all, it has an intrinsic value, obvious for the target group, and no meaning for others. Actually, even the Documenta handbook articulates this viewpoint: "Our work should not be judged by an outsider but in terms of the benefits that it brings to the community which creates it" (Ruangrupa et al., 2022, p. 29). If the viewer is considered obsolete and the judgment of outsiders is undesirable, perhaps it would be better to refrain from the exhibition. In this way, the internal purity of the project would be preserved, there would be no need to make any compromises, and there would be no question of "extractive" politics, institutional pressure, or even the question of misunderstanding. There is no need to prove or defend the value of the project against possible attacks, as its value is evident to those who participate in it. In this case, however, we would have to give up presenting the art to the audience – which is a sine qua non in our present paradigm of art. At the same time, refusing to exhibit contradicts one of the aims of participatory art: increasing access to art (Matarasso, 2019, p. 63), thus creating a rift within the coherent structure of participatory art itself.

4. Questions to Be Answered

This article does/cannot not aim to solve the issue of exhibiting participatory art, but rather to outline the possibilities and present some arguments for and against the various options.

The first question to be answered is whether we should even insist on exhibiting participatory art.

If we start from the assumption that this is a project operated for a specific community, whose value is obvious to the participants, it is even possible to imagine giving up entirely on presenting the project (3.2). In this case, however, the impact of the project seems very limited, and this option is difficult to reconcile with the general principle that art exists for the viewer and the artwork ends in reception (Barthes, 1977; Eco, 1989).

In my opinion, for participatory art too, exhibition and communication with others should

remain essential, even if it presents unusually difficult choices for artists and curators.

If participatory art is presented without artistic devices, by non-artistic documentation, its artistic nature may be lost: it will be difficult to distinguish the work of artists from that of social workers, clergy, psychologists, volunteers, etc.

Presenting participatory projects through artifacts created by the involved professional and non-professional artists definitely highlights the artistic nature of the projects. This form of presentation is closest to the functioning of the modern paradigm of art, and therefore, it is the easiest to assimilate. At the same time, this approach runs the risk of overshadowing the very essence of the participatory artistic form, the cooperative process and the experience of sustained collaboration.

Finally, presenting participatory art as an ongoing project seems to be the boldest attempt, as it highlights the collaborative nature and the process of cooperation. However, this can only work if the casual visitor can truly be turned into a participant – presumably through hard efforts, well-thought-out roles, and by planning ongoing activities that anyone, regardless of cultural background, can engage in. If we accept Ruangrupa's vision, in which the viewers are obsolete, and „they should not be there to observe but to be part of the process" (Ruangrupa, et al. 2022, p. 29), then a functional mediator and exhibition framework must be devised and created for this purpose.

Participatory art definitely rewrites the modern paradigm of art. While in the case of traditional art we presume a relation between at least two players (the artist and the viewer/receiver), in the case of participatory art we have to take in consideration at least 3 types of players: 1. the artist(s), 2. the non-professional artists who collaborate in the project, 3. the viewers/receivers/visitors. It is almost a unanimous expectation formulated by these artists that participatory art should be appreciated by the community which is involved in the project. But in this case, the traditional model of contemplation by a third party is rather inaccessible. So, it seems that we have to find a new model of displaying art.

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Multisensory Experience of Paintings

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I will argue that certain figurative paintings, namely paintings that depict atmospheres, such as Pissarro's *Snowscape in Louveciennes*, 1872, can elicit multisensory experiences in their viewers. The relevant multisensory experiences do not just involve different sensible qualities. Rather, the sensible qualities are fused together in such a way that a new sensible quality emerges that cannot be experienced in a single sense-modality.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will argue that some figurative paintings like Pissarro's *Snowscape in Louveciennes*, 1872 (Fig.1) are able to elicit genuine multisensory experiences in their viewers. When we view paintings like these, we sometimes imagine what the cold snow under our feet would feel like, what it would sound like to walk through the snow, what it would be like to breath in the cold air, and so on. My thesis in this paper is stronger. I believe that some paintings can elicit in their viewers what I will call *multisensory fusion experiences*. A multisensory fusion experience is an experience that involves a distinct sensible quality that we cannot experience through one single sense-modality.[235] I will call such sensible qualities *fused qualities*.

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[235] Sensible qualities are distinct from sensory qualities. A sensible quality is a quality that one perceives, a sensory quality, in contrast, is a quality of an experience. See Byrne (2009) for a clear exposition of the distinction.

My argument for the claim that paintings can elicit multisensory fusion experiences in their viewers is based on an analysis of how painters recreate atmospheres in paintings. We often find that the space surrounding us affects us in a certain way. For example, when one visits a desolate landscape, one might be struck by its gloomy atmosphere, or when one visits a beach, one might be struck by its serene atmosphere.[236] Painters often try to recreate atmospheres in their paintings, that is, they try to create paintings that are able to elicit experiences of atmospheres in their viewers.[237] In section 2, I will first argue that experiences of atmospheres

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[236] Many efforts to analyze atmospheres and their relation to aesthetics from a philosophical perspective come from outside of mainstream anglophone philosophy of art. Analyses of experiences of atmospheres in the phenomenological tradition can be found, for example, in Schmitz (2012), Böhme (1993, 2013), and Hauskeller (2018). Excellent summaries of the genesis of the concept of an atmosphere in the philosophical literature can be found in Rademacher, M. (2018) and Riedel, F. (2019).

[237] Some philosophers who have written about atmospheres also mention the ability of paintings to create atmospheres. Hauskeller, for example, talks about Van Gogh's painting "Wheatfield with Crows" as an example of a painting that creates an atmosphere. See Hauskeller (2018). Sauchelli talks about Francis Bacon's *Head I* (1948) as an example of a painting that creates a horrifying atmosphere (Sauchelli 2014). See also Böhme (1993, 124). For analyses of atmospheres in paintings from an art-historical perspective, see, for example, Cleveland (2009) and Novak (2019).

are multisensory fusion experiences. In section 3, I will then show how a painter can recreate a particular atmosphere in a painting in part by depicting the ambient light that is typical for this atmosphere. I will make clear what I mean by *ambient light* later on in this paper. In section 4, I will argue that, under appropriate conditions, the depicted ambient light can activate the sensory imagination in such a way that viewers enjoy a multisensory fusion experience that involves the fused quality associated with the atmosphere that the painter aims to recreate. These viewers experience the atmosphere recreated in the painting.

2. Experiences of Atmospheres as Multisensory Fusion Experiences

We often, perhaps always, experience the atmosphere of the space around us.[238] Literature and poetry are rife with descriptions of atmospheres. But here I will take a description of an atmosphere that comes from a philosopher as my point of departure. In her book *Everyday Aesthetics*, Yuriko Saito writes:

> How many of us have experienced going to New York City and absorbed its 'sense of place' by walking on the street, which sometimes vibrates under our feet with the subway passage, noisy with honking taxis, surrounded by skyscrapers, with aroma of burned chestnut and pretzels and the saxophone melody by a street musician wafting in the air? These ingredients together give rise to the atmosphere of vibrancy and zaniness. (Saito, 2010, p. 123)

This quote allows us to point out a number of important features of experiences of atmospheres. First, we experience atmospheres as *expressive qualities* of the surrounding space. In Saito's case, the surrounding space expresses excitement. There is a sense in which this excitement is infectious. We not only experience the space as exciting, we also experience ourselves as being affected by the exciting atmosphere.

Second, experiences of atmospheres are *multisensory* experiences. Saito characterizes the exciting New York atmosphere in terms of tactile sensible qualities (vibrations under our feet), auditory sensible qualities (the honking taxis and the saxophone melodies), olfactory sensible qualities (the smell of pretzels and chestnuts), and visual sensible qualities (the skyscrapers).

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[238] I provide a more extensive discussion of experiences of atmospheres in Jagnow (forthcoming).

Finally, we usually experience atmospheres *peripherally*. For example, when walking through New York, we may be entirely engrossed in a philosophical discussion and pay very little attention to our surroundings. We may nevertheless be affected by the exciting atmosphere. In fact, the experience of this atmosphere may even enliven the experience of our philosophical discussion. Of course, we can also focus on an individual sensible quality of an atmosphere, but we do not need to do this in order to experience the atmosphere.

As I stated in the introduction, I believe that experiences of atmospheres are a special type of multisensory experiences, namely what I called *multisensory fusion experiences*. I will first explain what I mean by a multisensory fusion experience and then provide two reasons in support of this claim.

We often experience objects through multiple sense-modalities at the same time. For example, when a car approaches you, you will simultaneously see and hear it. Similarly, you may simultaneously see a rose and smell it. These experiences are multisensory experiences in which you are simultaneously aware of multiple sensible qualities, such as visual sensible qualities, auditory sensible qualities, olfactory sensible qualities, and gustatory sensible qualities. But the phenomenal character of each of these sensible qualities is determined entirely by the sense-modality through which is experienced. We now know from various experiments that sense-modalities can influence each other. For example, in the case of the McGurk effect, one might hear a sound either as a *d* or a *b*, depending on the observed movements of the speaker's mouth (McGurk and MacDonald, 1976). But whether one hears a *d* or a *b* sound does not change the fact that the phenomenal character is entirely auditory.

A *multisensory fusion experience*, in contrast, is a multisensory experience that involves a sensible quality that we cannot experience through one single sense-modality. In other words, a multisensory fusion experience is a multisensory experience that involves an entirely new sensible quality. As I indicated in the introduction, I will call these sensible qualities *fused sensible qualities*, or *fused qualities*, for short. Casey O'Callaghan suggests that flavors are plausible examples of fused qualities, such as the mintiness of mint-flavored ice cream.[239] The idea here is that an experience of mint-flavor fuses taste, touch, and retronasal smell together into a unique quality that cannot be experienced through one single sense-modality. I find this

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[239] See O'Callaghan (2019, pp. 74-77).

example very plausible from a phenomenological point of view. When I experience the mintiness of mint-flavored ice cream, it does not seem to me that the experience is exhausted by the sensory qualities belonging to taste, touch, and retronasal smell. Rather, I experience the individual sensory qualities as fused together in a way that results in a new sensible quality. It is possible, at least to a certain degree, to focus one's attention on individual sensible qualities, say, for example, on the smell. But this is different from experiencing the mint-flavor.

There are two reasons for thinking that experiences of atmospheres, such as the one described by Saito, are multisensory fusion experiences. The first reason is that we can sometimes recognize an atmosphere in a different place. For example, when one walks through a forest on a sunny day, hears the birds singing, and feels the warm air on one's skin, one might recognize the very same atmosphere that one experienced previously when one was walking through a different forest. Similarly, under the right circumstances, one might recognize the atmosphere of a particular restaurant when one visits another similar restaurant. But, if it is true that we usually experience atmospheres peripherally, that is, without paying attention to the individual sensible qualities, this is best explained by saying that we recognize the atmosphere because we recognize the distinct fused quality associated with it, that is, the sensible quality that results from the fusion of individual sensible qualities.

It might help here to think of the similarity to O'Callaghan's example of mint-flavor. When eating mint-flavored ice cream, you may not pay much attention to the individual sensible qualities, that is, to the retronasal smell, the individual taste qualities, such as the sweetness, and the tactile properties. Nonetheless, you will be able to recognize the mint-flavor when you eat mint-flavored ice cream again. In my view, this is possible because mint-flavor is a distinct and recognizable fused quality.

The second reason for saying that typical experiences of atmospheres are multisensory fusion experiences is that we can experience the same atmosphere even if certain individual sensible qualities change. Suppose you are walking through New York and experience the exciting atmosphere described by Saito. In this case, many of the individual sensible qualities will change constantly. You will see different buildings, the honking of the cars will become more or less intense, the smells will change, and the sounds of the street musicians will become louder or softer. Nevertheless, you might still be able to experience the exciting atmosphere. In fact, it would make little sense to speak of the exciting New York atmosphere if you could

experience it only in one single location. This fact is best explained if we assume that we experience the different sensible qualities as fused together into a distinct sensible quality that can persists even if those individual sensible qualities change. There are of course limits to this. But a certain degree of stability is necessary for the continued experience of an atmosphere.

Again, considering the example of mint-flavor might be helpful here. When you eat mint-flavored ice cream on different occasions, the individual sensible qualities may vary to some degree. Perhaps, the ice cream has a slightly different consistency and is sweeter. But, within certain limits, you will nevertheless recognize the distinct fused quality of mint-flavor.

To summarize: We experience atmospheres as expressive qualities of the space around us. For example, the New York atmosphere described in Saito's quote expresses excitement. At the same time, we are affected by atmospheres. The exciting New York atmosphere makes us exited. Experiences of atmospheres are multisensory experiences, that usually involve visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile sensible qualities. Moreover, these sensible qualities are fused together in a way that results in a distinct fused quality, that is, a quality that cannot be experienced through a single sense-modality.

3. Recreating Atmospheres in Paintings

In this section, I will show how a painter can recreate a particular atmosphere in a painting in part by depicting the ambient light that is typical for this atmosphere. I will proceed in two steps. I first argue that the light present in a scene, the ambient light, is often a particularly important factor in determining the overall phenomenal character of an atmosphere.[240] I then show how a painter can depict the ambient light that is typical for a particular atmosphere.

Let me begin with a remark about the way in which we experience the sensible qualities associated with atmospheres. We usually experience colors and shapes as instantiated in particular objects. Perceptually, an object simply has a certain shape and color. We also usually experience smells and sounds as emerging from particular objects. For example, we hear a ringing as emerging from a particular bell and a smell as emerging from a particular flower. However, we can also experience sensible qualities as divorced from particular objects. This is very well illustrated by the way in which Saito describes the sensible qualities associated with

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[240] For a more detailed analysis of ambient light and its function in paintings, see Jagnow (forthcoming).

the exciting New York atmosphere. She writes that the aroma of burned chestnut and pretzels and the saxophone melody by the street musician are "wafting in the air," and that "the street" sometimes vibrates under our feet and is noisy with honking taxis. The expressions "wafting in the air" and "the street" refer to the surrounding space, rather than to particular objects. I will call sensible qualities that we experience as divorced from particular objects *ambient sensible qualities*. We can then say that we experience atmospheres, in part, by experiencing ambient sensible qualities. Given what I have said in the previous section, the experience of ambient sensible qualities gives rise to a distinct fused quality.[241]

I also think that we usually experience the light present in a scene as an ambient sensible quality, that is, we experience light as filling the surrounding space without experiencing it as emerging from particular objects or light sources.[242] I will call light that we experience in this way *ambient light*.[243] It is true that we cannot literally see light. Rather, light is what allows us to see particular objects and their properties. But this does not mean that we cannot experience light as an ambient sensible quality. One way to see this is by means of the following scenario. Suppose you are in an entirely dark room and turn on a flashlight. At first, the flashlight illuminates only a small portion of one wall. In this situation, you will experience a dark room with a partially illuminated wall. Suppose then that you turn on other flashlights that illuminate other walls and slowly increase the sizes of the illuminated portions of the walls. You will eventually no longer experience the space as dark. At this point, the space around you will appear to be filled with ambient light. We do not need to worry here at what point this shift happens. The shift is most likely going to be gradual. The scenario nevertheless shows that there is a difference between experiencing a dark room with partially illuminated walls and experiencing a room that is filled with ambient light.[244]

Ambient light has a remarkable phenomenal complexity, that is, the phenomenal

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[241] As I mentioned above, I believe that we can focus on individual sensible qualities, say on the sounds of the street musicians while still experiencing the atmosphere. But what is important for my argument is that a new fused sensible quality is also part of the experience.

[242] This is not to deny that we can also experience light as emerging from a particular object, such as when we see a light beam emerging from a flashlight or a lighthouse.

[243] I want to emphasize that I do not use the term *ambient light* in the sense in which it is used in photography, where it refers to the light that a photographer does not bring to the shoot. I also do not use the term as it is used in indoor design, where it refers to the lighting that provides the overall illumination of a room.

[244] It is possible that we sometimes experience a space as filled with darkness. But I will not argue for this here.

character of ambient light can change along a large number of dimensions. In order to see this, consider the light in your living room. In the early morning on a sunny day, the light will have a low color temperature and appear to have a warm reddish tint, it will have a low angle of incidence, and it might be relatively dark.[245] Later in the day, the light will become more bluish, the angle of incidence will be much larger, and it will also be much brighter. On a sunny day, the light will be sharp, and on a cloudy day, it will be diffuse. The ambient light will also appear to be distributed differently through different regions of your living room. For example, it will appear brighter near the windows and darker in places that do not receive as much light. The light can also enter your room directly, as, for example, when it comes directly from the sun, or indirectly, as, for example, when it is reflected by some other object, say a large wall or a house. Finally, the ambient light might also be more static or more dynamic. Suppose, for example, that the light that enters through the windows is filtered through trees that move in the wind. In this case, the ambient light will change continuously. Summarizing this, we can say the phenomenal quality of ambient light is complex and can change along the dimensions of color temperature, brightness, diffusion, distribution, direction, and directness/indirectness. In addition, ambient light can be static or dynamic with regard to these phenomenal dimensions.

Ambient light often plays a particularly important role in determining the overall phenomenal character of an atmosphere. Consider the two images in Fig. 2. The images show the same room, the same *scene*, illuminated in two different ways, namely once with a yellowish light and again with a bluish light. We experience the room either as filled with yellowish ambient light or as filled with bluish ambient light. Since we kept the scene the same, and since we do not experience any non-visual sensible qualities, the only difference concerns the phenomenal quality of the light that fills the room. And, yet, there is a very big difference with respect to the experienced atmosphere. The room in the image on the top has a warm and lively atmosphere. In contrast, the room in the image on the bottom has a cool and calming

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[245] I use Color Temperature as short for Correlated Color Temperature (CCT). CCT is a specification of the color appearance of the light emitted by a light source, relating its color to the color of light from a reference source when heated to a particular temperature, measured in degrees Kelvin (K). The CCT rating for light is a general "warmth" or "coolness" measure of its appearance. Reddish light with a CCT rating below 3200 K is usually considered "warm," while bluish light with a CCT above 4000K is usually considered "cool" in appearance.

atmosphere. I used images here to make this point. But I think that it is clear that ambient light also often plays an important role in determining the overall phenomenal character of an atmosphere in a natural scene. Suppose, for example, that you have an apartment with view of the ocean. You may always see the same scene, but its atmosphere will change dramatically, depending on the quality of the ambient light.[246]

Figure 2: Room illuminated in two different ways

A painter whose aim is to recreate the atmosphere of a certain place can do so by depicting the scene and the ambient light present in this scene. I will not say much about the depiction of the

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[246] I also want to mention that there is some empirical evidence that experiences of atmospheres in photographs correlate with experiences of atmospheres in the photographed scenes. Salters and Seuntiens (2011) demonstrated that it is possible to use simulations on a screen or on printouts for the evaluation of atmosphere characteristics. Having subjects evaluate the atmosphere of a typical office room under different types of illumination, they showed that although the absolute values of these evaluations differed between real life, computer display, and printout, the relative values followed the same trend.

scene. I just want to point out that if a painter wants to create a painting that is able to elicit an experience of a particular atmosphere in its viewers, as we see, for example, in Pissarro's *Snowscape*, the painter needs to choose an adequate scene. Since we can experience the same atmosphere in different places, the painter needs to choose the right *type* of scene, say a certain kind of snowscape. But, as the two images in Fig. 2 show, in those cases in which the ambient light plays a large role in determining the atmosphere, it is equally important that the painter depict the right kind of ambient light. Given what I have said in the previous paragraph, this requires that the painter modulate the phenomenal qualities of the depicted ambient light in such a way that the resulting phenomenal character matches that of the ambient light associated with the original atmosphere.

Many painters have explored how to depict ambient light.[247] An excellent example is Monet's famous painting *Grainstacks* (1890) in Fig. 3. This painting is part of a series in which Monet was trying to capture the changing atmosphere during different seasons and at different times of the day, or what he calls, "instantaneity." He writes:

> The further I go, the better I see that it takes a great deal of work to succeed in rendering what I want to render: "instantaneity," above all the enveloppe, the same light spread over everything, and I'm more than ever disgusted at things that come easily, at the first attempt.

The passage makes clear that Monet was particularly interested in what he called the *enveloppe* – "the same light spread over everything." As I understand him, he uses the term *enveloppe* in this quote to refer to the depicted ambient light. In order to capture the atmosphere of the sunny and warm late summer afternoon, Monet focuses closely on the phenomenal character of the ambient light present in the scene. Most noticeably, the ambient light has a low yellowish-reddish color temperature, illuminates the scene from a low angle (which is indicated mostly through the long shadows), and is very diffuse (which is indicated by the hazy air). Moreover, the ambient light appears highly dynamic – it seems to shimmer – an effect that Monet achieves through his use of broken colors.

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[247] For a detailed analysis of the techniques that allow painters to create atmospheres, see, for example (Gurney, 2010).
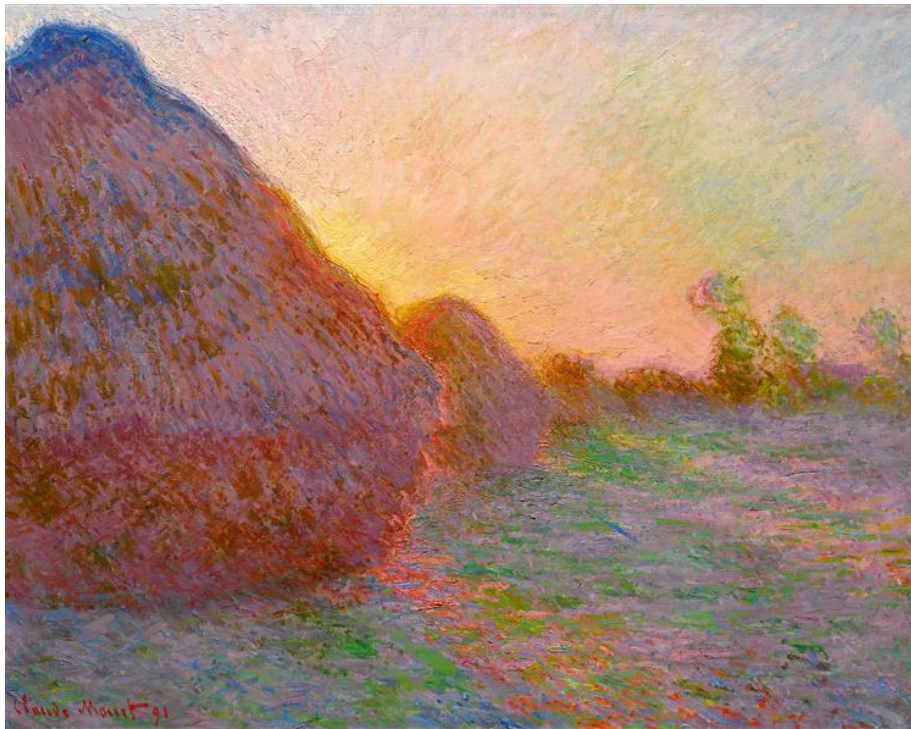
Figure 3: Claude Monet, *Grainstacks*, 1890

Before concluding this section, a clarification is in order. I argued above that ambient light often plays an important role in determining the atmosphere of a scene. But there are also situations in which the ambient light is less important. For example, you may experience the exciting New York atmosphere during different times of the day when the ambient light is rather different. The fact that ambient light can play a more or less important role in determining the atmosphere of a scene has to do, in part, with the fact that the phenomenal character of ambient light can be more or less noticeable. On a cloudless day at around noon, you will probably not notice the ambient light very much. However, this is different, for example, when the light is yellowish-reddish, as when you observe a beautiful sunset, or bluish, as when you experience a cold and sunny winter day. In other words, ambient light becomes particularly noticeable when some of its phenomenal qualities, such as the color temperature, become particularly salient. I think that it is plausible to say that ambient light plays a larger role in determining the atmosphere of a scene when it is more noticeable, that is, when one or more of its phenomenal qualities become particularly salient.

To summarize: We usually experience the surrounding space as filled with light. I called the light that we experience as filling the surrounding space *ambient light*. Ambient light is

phenomenally complex. The phenomenal quality of ambient light can vary along multiple dimensions – color temperature, brightness, distribution, state of diffusion, direction, directness/indirectness, and whether or not these phenomenal dimensions are static or dynamic. The phenomenal character of ambient light is often an important factor in determining the overall phenomenal character of the experienced atmosphere. In those cases, in which the ambient light present in a scene plays a significant role in determining an atmosphere, a painter can recreate this atmosphere by depicting both an appropriate scene and the right kind of ambient light. In order to depict the right kind of ambient light, the painter has to modulate its phenomenal qualities appropriately.

4. Multisensory Fusion Experiences of Paintings

In the previous sections, I argued that experiences of atmospheres are multisensory fusion experiences, and I explained how a painter can recreate an atmosphere by depicting the scene and the ambient light present in that scene. In this section, I will argue that, under appropriate conditions, the depicted ambient light can activate the sensory imagination in such a way that viewers enjoy a multisensory fusion experience that involves the fused quality associated with the atmosphere that the painter aims to recreate.

In order to make this case, I will put forward two arguments. First, I will present a phenomenal contrast argument in order to show that the ambient light depicted in a painting can activate the sensory imagination in a way that elicits a multisensory fusion experience. Second, I will argue that, if everything goes well, the fused quality of the multisensory fusion experience just is the fused quality associated with the atmosphere that the painter aims to recreate.

The phenomenal contrast argument proceeds as follows. I first describe a phenomenal contrast between the experiences of two paintings that depict different ambient light and elicit experiences of different atmospheres in their viewers. I will then argue that this phenomenal contrast is best explained by saying that the depicted ambient light activates the sensory imagination in such as way that it elicits a multisensory fusion experience.

Compare the visual impression that you have when you look at Pissarro's *Snowscape 1872* with the visual impression that you have when you look at Sisley's *A Village Street in Winter 1893* (Fig. 4). Both paintings depict winter scenes. The space in Pissarro's *Snowscape*

is filled with cold, bright, bluish ambient light. In contrast, the space in Sisley's *A Village Street in Winter 1893* is filled with warm, brownish ambient light. As a result, there is an impressive phenomenal contrast between the experiences caused by the two paintings. But this phenomenal contrast is not just a contrast in visual phenomenology. I experience the light in Pissarro's painting as accompanied by a slight sense of "coldness," and I experience the light in Sisley's painting as accompanied by a slight sense of "warmth." I assume that this is similar for other viewers. I put "coldness" and "warmth" in quotation marks to indicate that I use these terms to refer to the nonvisual phenomenal aspects of the two experiences. I will later argue that the nonvisual aspects of these two experiences are not exhausted by sensations of warmth and coldness. But, for now, "coldness" and "warmth" just refer to the nonvisual aspects.

Figure 4: Alfred Sisley, *A Village Street in Winter*, 1893

I believe that the best explanation of this phenomenal contrast is that what I described here as "coldness" and "warmth" designate, at least in part, two different fused qualities that result from the activation of the viewer's sensory imagination.[248] In other words, the phenomenal contrast is the result of two different multisensory fusion experiences. In order to support this conclusion, I will now consider possible alternative explanations of the phenomenal contrast.

First, one could suggest that the phenomenal contrast is a difference in cognitive phenomenology, that is, it is a result of different cognitive states that accompany the experiences of the paintings. But this seems highly implausible. Suppose, for example, that when I look at Pissarro's painting, I *think* that the painting makes a cold impression on me, and that when I look at Sisley's painting, I *think* that the painting makes a warmer impression on me. There are at least two problems with this explanation. First, it does not seem to me that the phenomenal contrast is a contrast in cognitive phenomenology. Second, I could think the opposite, namely that Pissarro's painting makes a warm impression on me and that Sisley's painting makes a cold impression on me. But this would not switch the sensible qualities of my experiences of the two paintings.

Second, one might suggest that we can explain the phenomenal contrast by appeal to moods or feelings that accompany the visual experiences of the two paintings. Again, like in the previous case, moods and feelings can change, but the impressions of "coldness" and "warmth" remain the same. The phenomenal character of the ambient light might cause certain moods and emotions, but not the other way around.

Third, one could try to explain the phenomenal contrast by appeal to the deliberate employment of one's sensory imagination. For example, one could suggest that when I look at Pissarro's painting, I *imagine* some sensory impression, say, cold snow under my feet, and that when I look at Sisley's painting, I *imagine* another sensory impression, say, slightly warmer snow under my feet. In other words, one might try to account for the phenomenal contrast by appeal to the sensible quality's *warmth* and *coldness*. According to this suggestion, the phenomenal contrast would involve literal experiences of coldness and warmth. But this is equally implausible. Even if I don't actively and consciously imagine having these sensory

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[248] Sensory imagination here refers to our ability to imagine sensible qualities that belong to all sense-modalities, that is, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile sensible qualities. The sensory imagination that is able to produce fused qualities is multisensory.

impressions, I will still experience the phenomenal contrast. And just like with the previous two explanations, I could imagine the snow in Sisley's painting feeling somewhat colder than the snow in Pissarro's painting. But this would not switch the sensible qualities. Thus, the impressions of "coldness" and "warmth" may lead me to imagine cold and warm snow under my feet. But not the other way around.

Fourth, in response to my argument in the previous paragraph, one could now suggest that the phenomenal contrast is the result of a kind of synesthetic experience that comes about through the unconscious activation of the viewer's sensory imagination. More specifically, one could suggest that the blue color that is so prominent in Pissarro's painting causes a synesthetic experience in which we experience blue as literally cold, and, similarly, that the brown color that is so prominent in Sisley's painting causes a synesthetic experience in which we experience the brown as literally warm. Since we do not feel coldness or warmth on a specific part of our bodies, one would have to say here that the synesthetic experiences involve a faint and unspecific sensation of warmth and coldness.

Although this fourth proposal points in the right direction, it is still problematic. I suggested above that the best explanation of the phenomenal contrast appeals to the viewer's sensory imagination. I therefore think it is right to say that the phenomenal contrast may involve faint and unspecific sensations of warmth and coldness. However, the present proposal has two shortcomings. First, appeal to color alone, that is, to blue and brown, is unable to account for the subtle differences between experiences of atmospheres in paintings. We could imagine, for example, a painting in which blue tones are prominent, like in Pissarro's painting, but that elicits an experience of a different atmosphere in its viewers. It is possible, for example, that the blue tones are used to depict a scene at night, like in Fig. 5. Given this, it is more plausible to say that the sensory imagination is not activated by the color alone, but rather by the phenomenal quality of the depicted ambient light together with the scene. Second, even if we accept this, it is still implausible that the phenomenal contrast can be exhaustively explained in terms of this kind of synesthetic experience. We can recognize an atmosphere in a painting if we have experienced that atmosphere before. But, as will become clear from my next argument, recognition of an atmosphere in a painting requires a fused sensible quality in addition to, or perhaps even in lieu of, various sensible qualities, such warmth and coldness.

This concludes the phenomenal contrast argument. If my argument is accepted, we can

best explain the phenomenal contrast between the experiences of the two paintings by saying that the ambient light depicted in them activates the sensory imagination in a way that causes two different multisensory fusion experiences, that is, two experiences that involve different fused qualities. But this raises a question. Why should we think that the two fused qualities are the fused qualities associated with the atmospheres that Pissarro and Sisley wanted to recreate in their paintings? In other words, why should we think that the fused quality that we experience when we look at Pissarro's painting is the same as the fused quality that is associated with the atmosphere of a cold and sunny winter day? And why should we think that something like this also holds for the experience of Sisley's painting?

My main reason for this claim is based on the fact that we can recognize the atmospheres in these paintings. Consider again Pissarro's painting. When you look at his painting, and everything goes well, you will experience the winterly scene with its unique atmosphere. When asked to describe the atmosphere, you will probably say that it is the typical atmosphere of a cold and sunny winter day. You may also be more specific. You may add, for example, that this is the typical atmosphere of cold and sunny winter day in mid-afternoon. Yet, no matter how much detail you add, it is clear that you recognize the atmosphere depicted in the painting. But, as we have seen above, the ability to recognize an atmosphere is best explained by appeal to the distinct fused quality that results from the fusion of the individual sensible qualities. This strongly suggest that the fused quality of the experience elicited by the painting just is the fused quality associated with the atmosphere of a cold and sunny winter day in mid-afternoon.

I argued in the second section that experiences of atmospheres are multisensory fusion experiences. If what I have said in the previous paragraph is right, we can now explain the fact that paintings are able to elicit experiences of atmospheres in their viewers, even though they are purely visual objects. This explanation goes as follows. We have experienced many different kinds of atmospheres. Experiences of atmospheres involve distinct fused qualities that result from the fusion of different ambient sensible qualities. In many cases, ambient light plays a particularly important role in determining the emerging fused quality. It is then plausible that, under the right circumstances, that is, if the painting depicts the right kind of scene, and if the viewer has experienced the atmosphere before, the depicted ambient light will activate the sensory imagination in a way that produces the distinct fused quality associated with that atmosphere. When this happens, the viewer will experience the atmosphere.

This explanation does not exclude the possibility that paintings elicit experiences of unfamiliar atmospheres. If my explanation in the previous paragraph is correct, the sensory imagination is activated by the visual experience, and, most importantly, by the experience of the depicted ambient light. Under the right kind of circumstances, it should then also be possible to activate the sensory imagination by depicting ambient light that is associated with an unfamiliar atmosphere. One way in which this might happen is when the depicted ambient light is sufficiently similar in certain respects to the ambient light associated with a familiar atmosphere. In this case, the similarity will suffice to activate the sensory imagination in the same way as the ambient light associated with the familiar atmosphere. The experienced atmosphere would nevertheless be different because the depicted ambient light is different. Consider the atmosphere in James Abbott McNeill Whistler's painting *Nocturne: Blue and Silver* (Fig. 5). When I first encountered this painting, I had not experienced the kind of bluish ambient light depicted in it. But the painting, nevertheless, elicits an experience of a very calm and quiet atmosphere in me. I think this is possible because I have experienced a similar kind of calm atmosphere associated with a similar kind of ambient light before. The fact that the ambient light here is uniformly blue modifies and enhances the impression of calm and quiet. The fused quality is novel. But the experience builds on a familiar multisensory experience.

Figure 5: James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Silver*

Before concluding this paper, I would like to draw the reader's attention to some of Goethe's remarks in his *Theory of Color*. Goethe's observations have, of course, had a large influence on painters, and especially on painters who are interested in atmospheres. I believe that if we interpret these remarks in the right way, they lend further support to my argument in this paper.

In Part V of the *Theory of Color (1810)*, which is entitled the "Sensory-moral effects of colors," Goethe describes the impressions elicited by different colors. For example, he writes about yellow:

> We find from experience, again, that yellow excites a warm and agreeable impression. Hence in painting it belongs to the illuminated and emphatic side. This impression of warmth may be experienced in a very lively manner if we look at a landscape through a yellow glass, particularly on a gray winter's day. The eye is gladdened, the heart expanded and cheered, a glow seems at once to breath towards us.

What is interesting here is that Goethe is not describing the effects of pure colors, such as yellow printed on single page. Rather, he first speaks about colors in paintings. Presumably, he is thinking of what I called ambient light and describing the fused quality elicited through the depiction of ambient light with a yellowish color temperature. He then mentions the effect of looking at a wintery landscape through yellow glass. But looking at, say, a snowscape, through a yellow glass changes the perceived illumination. The scene appears to be filled with ambient light that has a yellowish color temperature. If this is the right interpretation of Goethe's remarks, he is describing the effects of ambient light on the experience of atmospheres, both in paintings and in natural scenes, rather than the effects of pure colors.

To summarize: In this section, I argued that, under the right circumstances, depicted ambient light can activate the viewer's sensory imagination and, in this way, elicit a multisensory fusion experience, that is, an experience that has a distinct fused quality. I also argued that the fused quality just is the fused quality associated with the atmosphere whose ambient light has been depicted in the painting.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that paintings can elicit a special kind of multisensory experience in their viewers, namely what I called a multisensory fusion experience. A multisensory fusion experience is an experience that involves a novel fused quality. If my argument holds any water, we experience many paintings not just visually. Rather, we experience these paintings literally with all of our senses. However, it is easy to overlook this fact. For, first, when we experience atmospheres in paintings, we do not usually actively imagine individual sensible qualities. As I said at the beginning, when looking at Pissarro's *Snowscape*, we can actively imagine what the cold snow under our feet would feel like or what it would sound like. But we usually do not do this. And, second, the distinguishing feature of a multisensory fusion experience is a fused quality. Such sensible qualities are difficult to grasp and understand, precisely because we cannot assign them to a single sense-modality.

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Resentiment, Artivism and Magic

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ABSTRACT. Wars for imperial domination; terror caused by climate change; growing rift between excessively rich and powerful, and masses living under threshold of poverty; these and other ghosts are haunting contemporaneity. Artists respond, even mainstream cultural institutions are willing to prove that they are pillars of social responsibility by exhibiting and supporting artworks engaged in solutions, protesting, and subversion. Artistic activities have to be researched as to their different tactics in opposition to hegemonic strategies which are here to strengthen or maintain global regime of power. These artistic practices can be divided into three groups: ressentiment, artistic activism or artivism, and art's magic power. The first one is a typically modern phenomenon related to struggle between cultural pessimism and hope, and between avant-garde and decadence. The second and the third decide differently from where the power of art to change the world comes – from the ability to persuade and mobilize people to act outside the artworld through rational argumentation and opening a public space for deliberation, or, from the magic ability of artworks to create heterotopic worlds which influence situation by radiating imagination and desire to dream alternative way(s) of life. In presentation, these practices will be exemplified by three cases: Oliver Frljić theatrical work (especially one concerning Yugoslav nostalgia and denigration); Documenta 15 with its excessive politicization (especially allegedly anti-Semitic project of Taring Padi); and Venice biennale 2022 curated by Cecilia Alemani following the Milky way of surrealist dreams and desires.

In the leaflet published about the exhibition "The Figurative" at *Cukrarna* cultural centre in Ljubljana (which is not former *cukraszda* or patisserie but former sugar factory) for the opening on April 4, 2023, curators Alenka Gregorič and Mateja Podlesnik announced:

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From today's perspective, all epochs are generally considered important, even turning points, frequently times of crisis, often unbearably difficult and unrelenting. Nowadays, this is no exception, for we live in a time when long established systems and many values have been shattered or are no longer valid. The current crises, from the changes in climate to the centres of war, put us in fear and anxiety, in relentlessness and in a sense of spiritual sterility and intellectual paralysis, so that without the right orientation, we often find ourselves in an alienated word. (Gregorič and Podlesnik, 2023)

These sentences come as introduction to exhibition of those Slovene visual artists who kept the figurative alive from the Second World War up to now. We can't find the manners of post-modernism here, with its negation of crisis as modern way of dealing with historical time, and we can't approach these announcements under terms of contemporaneity into which all three historical times collapse. It is clear and simple image of modernity again, but radically concerned with the possibility that our times are apocalyptically pregnant with catastrophe. The consequence of such understanding of our times is that art must do something about it if it sticks to its founding idea and mission – if art can't do anything about it, it isn't worth to care about art at all. This return of radically modernist vocabulary which we can find everywhere, in art and beyond, we could understand as retrogressive reproduction of modernity and modernism, or, as another try to proceed beyond modernism because of its catastrophic results for nature and society. It is well known that ground-breaking earthquakes of history had first to express themselves in the language of previously dominant discourse; for instance, secularization started as introduction of new religious understanding, brought out by protestant movements; or, introduction of the modern republic interpreted its revolutionary agency wearing Roman republican robes at first. (Marx, 1995, pp. 5-7) New never appears as radical novelty but covered with robes of continuity. Giving three examples of artistic engagement with present crisis of humanity (*resentiment*, artivism and magic) I claim that dressing in modernist robe declares intention to fight with results of modernity and against the ideology of modernism on its own field, and that present exit of art from the field of culture into the political is driven by the need for radical change which intends to show that there is world and life beyond modernity.

1. Ressentiment

Ressentiment, if it is allowed to use French expression, is not just resentment. Its roots are deeper and belong to typically modern phenomena like dandyism, melancholy or mal du *siècle*, spleen, decadence, *Entartung* (Max Nordau; Nordau 1898) or *Entkunstung* (Theodor W. Adorno; Adorno, 1974, pp. 32-33) and cultural pessimism. *Ressentiment* is the opposite of avant-gardism, but at the same time its potential result, a bitterness of failure and experience of lost faith in progress and salvation of this world, an affect coming from offense and deception of historical movement. There is no progress with our cause because there never was progress, claims *ressentiment*. Max Scheller mentions this statement on modernity and its progress as the most typical feature of *ressentiment*. (Scheller, 2018) This uneasiness (*Unbehagen*) in modernity and modernism is the first response we can detect in art's approach to the crisis of contemporaneity which immediately got rid of postmodern optimistic interpretation of the state of humanity after the end of history, and introduced melancholic relationship with the past and dystopic attitude to the future together with longing to re-establish the shattered dream that something better than the end of history is still possible. In art, we can now feel this current strongly, but its structure includes acceptance and protest, ironically and sarcastically exposing the weakness of *ressentiment* response to the state of things. As a good case of such confusing approach, we have theatre of Oliver Frljić and (as one of numerous cases of his controversial staging) *The Ristić Complex* which is inspired by much larger story about famous director Ljubiša Ristić from 1968 generation and his approach to Danilo Kiš complex story - novel *The Tomb of Boris Davidovich*.[250] When this book appeared in 1976, it became an instant bestseller at home and abroad; I remember that, as editor of Slovene journal *Problemi* I immediately proposed to Nande Miklavc a translation of the first story with the same title as the whole book, but, when it appeared in journal still in 1976 it was already just one of two immediate translations. Why instant bestseller? One reason was its subject – communist revolution together with Soviet and Eastern Europe violent and tragic

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[250] Danilo Kiš, 1976. *Grobnica za Borisa Davidovića: Sedam poglavlja jedne zajedničke povesti*. Beograd and Zagreb: BIGZ and Liber; in English:Danilo Kiš, 1978. *A tomb for Boris Davidovich*. Dallas: Dalkey Archive Press. Also available at: https://oceanofpdf.com/authors/danilo-kis/pdf-epub-a-tomb-for-boris-davidovich-download/ . (1.6.2023)

history including new treatment of "Bukharin syndrome";[251] another reason was contemporary reading which understood it as a post-modern relativization of historic progress together with a hint that future promised by communist revolution is already behind us; in addition, there was and still appears polemics about its originality or plagiarism because whole parts are taken from other sources. All this and more attracted young theatre director Ljubiša - Ljuša Ristić who arrived in Ljubljana for the first time in 1974 and proposed to direct Kiš novel for Pekarna theatre in 1976. There were problems with socialist censorship which did not like that Slovene theatre gets involved with Serbian controversy about Kiš and his plagiarism which was evidently a try at political persecution of author who later published a book of his answers to accusations. But as *A Tomb for Pekarna: nearly documentary drama* by one of the founders of Pekarna theatre Ivo Svetina from 2010 tells, everything was ready to go public when at the beginning of summer Ristić together with two actors "escaped" from Ljubljana to Split where they were engaged by the summer festival. The staging of a tomb of revolution started again in 1977 when a group of directors and authors from all parts of Yugoslavia including Ljuša Ristić founded KPGT[252] – a theatrical project to stage texts all around Yugoslavia. Under this umbrella, Ristić came back to Ljubljana, this time to Mladinsko theatre (it means "youthful", but the institution doesn't translate it because *Mladinsko* became a trade-mark), and in 1980 staged *Missa in A-minor* as another version of *Tomb*'s dramatization at a larger distance from the book as in 1976, but now about optimistic tragedy and tragic violence of revolution as seen from contemporaneity combined with 1968 demand for continuation of revolution because the first attack on future did not reach its final end. This production became legendary and still appears in the history of theatre as its proverbial political turn.[253] Ristić crossed all over

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[251] Syndrome being a combination of symptoms which witnesses that a certain cause is organizing desease in question, Boukharine syndrome represents a set of symptoms from Boukharine process when he admitted to completely unbelievable crimes going back to times before the revolution. The process was available to whole world's public and encouraged otherwise pro-Soviet intellectuals and artists to start doubting that everything is right in the Soviet Union. This doubt developed into accusation, as in the novel by Arthjur Koestler *Darkness at Noon* (1940) whose hero Roubashov is novelist's replacement for Boukharine.

[252] KPGT, short for Kazalište, Pozorište, Gledališče, Teatar, names theatre in all Yugoslav languages standing during 1980s for the idea of many nations – one country, staging the same theater pieces under different or the same directors in different Yugoslav republics.

[253] "Slovensko mladinsko gledališče (SMG) v Ljubljani, kjer je predstava nastala, je v začetku os3emdesetih let prevzelo vodilno vlogo v oblikovanju političnega gledališča v Jugoslaviji, ki ga je razumelo 'predvsem kot umetniško dejanje in zaradi tega tudi v njegovi socialno poetični dimenziji, revolucija ni žretje lastnih otrok, ampak opredmetenje človekovih sanj in želja', zapišejo člani gledališča." ("The Slovenian Youth Theatre (SMG)

Yugoslavia with his directing, and found good support in Subotica and in Budva, but he still could not enter Belgrade theater – he was expelled from the capital after his student opposition engagement from 1968. His graduate piece by Feydeau staged in Yugoslav dramatic theatre of Belgrade *A Fleece in her ear* from 1971 was so popular that it became the longest living piece in history – up to 2014 when the last actor from the 1971 died. After 1990, Ristić still had two passions: to get in Belgrade back victorious as theatrical director and theatrical entrepreneur, and to keep going Yugoslavia as revolutionary federal state. This second passion obvious in founding of KPGT developed into political engagement with Yugoslav Left – Jugoslovenska levica JUL founded in 1994 whose president he became in 1997 (leading figure was in reality Milošević's wife) when it got 34% of vote at Serbian elections and entered into coalition with Milošević's Socialist Party (a direct successor of the Serbian League of Communists). Jul collapsed after this term and disappeared, but Ristić got his theatre in Belgrade at the premises of former sugar factory called Šećerana, completing this name of the place with the formal name of KPGT. It exists still and has just entered investment project with Belgrade municipality to build monumental cultural centre there, while KPGT will continue to function as its theatrical unit. Ljuša finally got what he was longing for, but everybody else from Yugoslav culture was asking why he had to engage in Serbian politics in such clumsy manner at such a bad moment with such wrong people? *Complex Ristić* in Frljić's title has in mind two questions which came from this: one, why Ristić became such prominent figure of non-prominent party, and how to understand his life work in theatre considering this decision? In the last years of Yugoslavia and the first years of post-Yugoslav wars this meant to support engagement in wars together with ethnic cleansing. Frljić's *Complex Ristić* is a ressentimental commentary and interpretation of that enigma, and his Mladinsko casting provided in 2016 for presence of an actor who appeared in Ristić's Missa in 1980. In her text for theatrical journal, Dragica Potočnjak, acting in 1980 and in 2016, expressed her ressentiment:

> I find it unworthy to write about banalities. Particularly when writing about things that shouldn't be

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in Ljubljana, where the show was created, took a leading role in the design of political theatre in Yugoslavia, which was understood "primarily as an artistic act and therefore in its socially poetic dimension, the revolution is not the eating of one's own children, but the tangible of human dreams and desires", written by the members of the theatre.") Taken from Gržinić, Marina and Aleš Erjavec (1991). *Ljubljana, Ljubljana: Osemdeseta leta v umetnosti in kulturi (Ljubljana*, Ljubljana: The 1980 in Art and Culture), Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, p. 65.

banalised. And yet in the last couple of decades, this is exactly what has happened. Everything gets so damn banalised. Even the worthiest things – faith and hope ... love – are turning into a banality. And the world is quicksand, incessantly gobbling up everything. This is why the performance The Ristić Complex, which I call Missa for Yugoslavia is no longer played in a minor key. Or a major key. It has been left without tonality. It is a requiem which doesn't liberate, does not deceive the auditorium with faith or hope in anything. Least of all, in some long-gone revolution. It doesn't burden itself with taking leave from it either. There were too many of these rituals of goodbye anyways. One of the most beautiful ones was written by Danilo Kiš. In The Tomb for Boris Davidovich. we also bade goodbye to Yugoslavia. Whoever still loves her resurrects her in memories. Whoever hates her resurrects her from the pulpits of daily politics. Missa for Yugoslavia is not resurrecting a corpse. It is not about nostalgia. Because nostalgia, too, is in this case banal. (Mladinsko, 2016)

The outcome, after blood flows across the scene, is both *ressentiment* and resentment. The public is expecting, if not a sentence of Ristić's jump from theatre to war, at least an explanation of this complex misunderstanding. What we get is how easily any theatre turns from theatre to the theatre of war. Or, that theatre was already a theatre of war before any blood was sprayed around the theatre stage. As we well know, the place where war goes on butchering mostly civilians is called – a theatre of war.

2. Artistic Activism or Artivism

The second way of contemporary art to become a movement for change in the space outside art is called artivism, and this term achieved theoretical meaning through Slovene theatre researcher Aldo Milohnić who used it to give a name to civil society's movements which used aesthetic means of protest for their communication at the site of protest and to reach general public through new media. One of Milohnić's comments about such practice which was eminently theatrical, and performative was that it crosses a line of art's autonomy. Brecht's suggestion to use art as a weapon, and his similar saying that "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.", is a result of wrong attribution. The first to say that was Lev Trotsky (in *Literature and Revolution*, 1925). But – and that is what I want to show – it means that art as a weapon deserves a criticism of hammer more than criticism of mirror. This, however, brings out many confrontational issues, for instance, Kassel *documenta 15* (2022) curated by Indonesian group *ruangrupa* had artivism and its postcolonial and

decolonial thorn used to put together an engaged and excessively political program. One of these excesses happened because of allegedly antisemitic project done by the *Taring Padi* group. It is true that this scandal which gave *documenta* 2022 exhibition its recognizable image even after the panel was covered happened in a country which has to be more cautious about antisemitism than anyone else. But it also happened in a country whose extreme right attacks Islam and Muslims on daily basis, including an attack which happened before the opening of the exhibition on a site provided for Palestinian artists. The intervention by *Taring Padi* was developed as *lumbung:* a site for meeting of people (we would say that it is a site for participation of public in the art project), and the panel images suggested what could and should be talked about. Among these images were figures of Mossad agents (Mossad participated in Indonesian genocide under Suharto), but with hog's trunk, and caricature of a Jew with sidelocks, cigar and SS symbol on his hat. Long before *documenta* started and before (after two days) high panel entrance into lumbung was covered, on January 19 (2022) organizers issued a statement on artistic and academic freedom which included dialog proceeding in tolerance and freedom of expression. (Statement 2023) They explicitly rejected any external interference with artistic freedom. Despite such statements, pressure was so strong that this work had to be hidden. It spites of covering, it is still the most visible art project of *documenta*, after Hamas attack on Israel and Israel's return even more so when all different positions about such politicizing of art turned into purely political positions and vehement criticism of one or the other side in conflict which long ago stopped to care about human rights and non-involvement of civilians: civilians on both sides are main target of both sides. To present villains with hog's trunk and make them recognizable using Nazi stereotypes is politically illiterate and artistically cheap, of course, but this work deserves something more than just an easy criticism because both in criticism and in defence of it, political differentiation between Israel and Jews, between antisemitism and criticism of Israel's politics was introduced. This differentiation allows criticism of Israeli politics and disallows antisemitic racist discourse to support criticism. From this point of view, *Taring Padi* expressed its criticism of Israeli politics using antisemitic stereotypes, one equalising Israeli secret police Mossad with pigs as a sign of filth in both religions, and another claiming that the proverbial Jew is just an extension of Nazi Schutzstaffel – SS. Looking at this outrageous expression from another perspective, we can find there a connection, even equalizer between Israel and Jewish nation. The first equalizer

is hidden in strong support for establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. This support included the idea of liberal against national socialist final solution of Jewish question. On the side of European and other countries where antisemitism flourished in modernity, founding a Jewish state meant that their countries can get rid of Jewish question for good, if not of all Jews too. On the side of Jewish nation, to have a state of their own meant solution of Jewish question as well, as with a state of its own they will become a normal nation. To confirm both reasons for establishment of Israel, this state has a constitutional principle which makes acceptance of any Jew who wants to migrate to Israel obligation of Israeli state. This institution makes repetition of Holocaust preventable and offers a permanent asylum for all victims of antisemitism. As Israel was not established in an empty space and on a virgin soil, the conflict of Arabs with Jews with anticolonial background and the conflict of Jews with Arabs in anti-Nazism discourse was imminent. To overcome it, one should be aware that Israel is a state of guarantee against antisemitism, and that Israel is itself a by-product of modern antisemitism at the same time. Without having that in mind, artivism supporting Palestinian cause will necessarily fall into hole of antisemitism while criticizing Israel, and artivism supporting Israel will get lost in colonial ideology. With artivism, art is taking sides in struggles and conflicts, and it inherits complex contexts which cannot stand simplification of public gesture. Be it as it is, artivism is penetration of art into other fields and domains which cannot defend its activist expression invoking artistic autonomy because it has been thrown away in the first place. Artivism has to accept and implement rules and laws of these fields and domains as its own, and not to impose modern art circumstances like autonomy of art and its position free of any ethical objection. Artivist is a citizen of at least two fields expected to know and understand regulations of both. If we compare this example with student graffiti and slogans from 1968, we see that there are more sophisticated and more simplifying approaches. In contemporaneity, simplifying is understanding of the political field in terms of bipolarity ("us" and "them"), while contemporary global political field is complex and multipolar. This simplification deserves the label *schund* in its original 19th Century meaning of simplicist literary genre which defined popularity according to belief that people's understanding of the world can be only simple. To follow Clement Greenberg, one could say that there are just two ways of artivism: avant-garde and *schund*.

3. Magic as Agency

The third kind of response to world's troubles makes the work of art a spiritual event capable to move people into agency through not-rational (not necessarily irrational) subconscious drive. Some of it was present as curatorial concept and selection of artworks for 2022 Venice Biennale. Its curator Cecilia Alemani explained: "*The Milk of Dreams* takes its title from a book by Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) in which the Surrealist artist describes a magical world where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of the imagination. It is a world where everyone can change, be transformed, become something or someone else; a world set free, brimming with possibilities. But it is also the allegory of a century that imposed intolerable pressure on the definition of the self, forcing Carrington into a life of exile: locked up in mental hospitals, an eternal object of fascination and desire, yet also a figure of startling power and mystery, always fleeing the structures of a fixed, coherent identity." (Alemani, 2022) Magic practice of activism had first to readmit belief in power of art and of artwork, a belief which has been studied by Terry Eagleton as *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990): "Anyone who inspects the history of European philosophy since the Enlightenment must be struck by the curiously high priority assigned in it to aesthetic questions." (Eagleton, 1990, p. 1) This priority was realized as "disenfranchisement of art" (Arthur Danto's formulation) which gave priority to philosophical rationalization and explanation of artistic imagination. (Danto, 2004) Surrealist avantgarde project taken by Alemani as signpost for Biennale introduced activism in its second phase when automatism following psychoanalytical method was found too passive for the Thirties. At that time, Salvador Dali introduced paranoia as an active artistic grip which, following Marxism and its Eleventh Thesis, does not present the world but changes it. Magic is neither mysticism nor religious practice. It is a practice involving an object of magic power, an object which art has a power to produce. At first, magic practice needs to restore belief that art has special power to launch agency and cause action. Magic power of art is something illusory, but it still functions, and is immensely like the structure of commodity fetishism. Taking this into account, art of this kind becomes subversive and includes knowing that conspiracy is how the capital sucks blood of the generic being of humanity. And that is reality magic, a magic which was involved with reading *Capital* at Biennale 2015: not as something to follow with attention, turning it into understanding, but as a prayer in the church of art.

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Moral Disgust and Imaginative Resistance

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ABSTRACT. Unlike the emotional responses of fear, horror or anger, the role of moral disgust in our engagement with fiction has not been adequately studied. The main aim of this paper is to examine the role of disgust in moral reasoning in order to establish a basis for tackling some key problems in our engagement with fiction, such as imaginative resistance. Drawing insights from phenomenological accounts, moral disgust is seen as a potentially rational response to our engagement with morally deviant perspectives and narratives. In the first part of the essay, it is argued that moral disgust is caused by the narrative under which an agent organizes, colours, and presents their actions - and, consequently, the value-laden load they attach to those actions. The second part of the essay examines the hypothesis that moral disgust functions as a psychological boundary that limits our ability to imaginatively engage with fiction. The paper concludes by showing how moral disgust relates to certain versions of imaginative resistance that involve first-personal imaginative engagement with the perspective of evil characters in morally deviant fictional worlds.

1. Introduction

In this presentation I will investigate the hypothesis that moral disgust is related to a key problem in philosophy of art, namely imaginative resistance. On the first part of my presentation I will suggest an account of moral disgust, and on the second part I will explore the hypothesis that moral disgust functions as a psychological boundary that limits our ability to imaginatively engage with fiction. I will conclude, first, that placing fictional characters' evil actions or behaviours within a narrative that confers upon them moral justification strikes us as a perversion of the value framework that is potentially dangerous and corrosive towards our own moral system and triggers the reaction of moral disgust. Second, I will relate moral

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disgust to certain versions of imaginative resistance that involve first-personal imaginative engagement with the perspective of evil characters in morally deviant fictional worlds.

2. What is moral disgust?

In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean contemplates the possibility that an innocent man may be imprisoned through his own [Valjean's] fault. The thought of such behaviour makes him feel *disgust*:

> to let things take their course, to let the good God do as he liked, was simply horrible; to allow this
> error of fate and of men to be carried out, not to hinder it, to lend himself to it through his silence,
> to do nothing, in short, was to do everything! […] that it was a base, cowardly, sneaking, abject,
> hideous crime! For the first time in eight years, the wretched man had just tasted the bitter savor of
> an evil thought and of an evil action. He spit it out with disgust. (Part I, Book Seven, pp. 205-206)

It seems that in our daily lives, we evaluate acts as evil or morally reprehensible - from simple mistakes and pettiness to theft, hypocrisy and murder. Sometimes, however, our reaction goes beyond the parameters of moral disapproval and manifests itself as a revulsion towards moral violations such as betrayal, deception, servility or plotting against an innocent (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). While some argue that moral disgust is merely a metaphor describing an emotional state of anger or contempt, others contend that it is a distinct psychological state, that distinguishes itself both from physical disgust and other moral emotions. Scholars who support the existence of moral disgust agree that it serves as a mechanism to avoid morally reprehensible acts or behaviours that are contagious and capable of undermining social cohesion. However, they do not seem to be able to explain which properties are responsible for contagiousness, and, whether we always perceive it as such. On the one hand, assessing contagiousness requires sensitivity to the subject's contact history (Rozin et al., 2009, p. 121) and, in this sense, is linked to monitoring a subject's mode of action. On the other hand, as we follow a series of events or vicious acts and the subject's mode of action, we also become aware of how the agent himself presents or explains these acts. Therefore, I believe that for a better understanding of moral disgust, we should move away from approaches that focus exclusively on contagion, and look at phenomenological approaches that focus on disgust as a reaction to both the mode of action and the agent's own integration of the acts into an explanatory

framework.

Sara Heinämaa (2022), building on the positions of Kolnai, Sartre and Kristeva, argues that moral disgust is similar to physical disgust: both are affective reactions to behaviours and modes of action, rather than to types or motives for action. According to Heinämaa, there is a common structure to experiences of disgust, whether they involve physical stimuli (e.g., slimy substances, decaying bodies) or vicious behaviours. This common structure in the experience of disgust consists in their appearance as disproportional: in the case of moral stimuli, we perceive a disproportion between the way one behaves and the content of one's action. We do not, for instance, expect Hannibal Lecter to adopt the 'gastronomic, elegant and artistic attitude he displays towards his victims', because this seems out of scale and disproportionate to the heinous crimes he commits. Analogously, what is morally disgusting about the actions of serial killer Charles Manson is the 'quasi-political and quasi-religious tone he gives to them' (Heinämaa, 2020, p. 388).[255]

The disparity between the content of the act and the attitude of the agent that Heinämaa draws attention to, in my view arises from the way in which the morally wrong act is presented - that is, from the way in which the agent invests her vicious behaviour with value. I claim, in other words, that moral disgust concerns the agent's narrative: the way in which she thinks about, connects and explains a series of events or actions (by herself and others), attributing to them a unified value and moral content. We feel moral disgust because we perceive an asymmetry between the content of the agent's vicious actions and the way the agent herself interprets, evaluates and presents her actions.

Disgust identifies morally vicious ways of viewing reality and motivates us to avoid engaging with narratives that may "contaminate" our own moral perception.[256] Summing up,

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[255] A problem in how Heinämaa formulates her position is the use of Robert Audi's view of the 'manner' of a behaviour as a basis for the claim that moral disgust is an emotion of an adverbial type, i.e. it is directed at the manner in which an act is performed and not at the kind of act itself. However, there is an ambiguity in the examples of Hannibal Lecter and Charles Manson that Heinämaa cites, as they seem to address how an act is presented by the agent himself. There is a difference between how an agent acts (how, say, he commits the crime) from how he himself presents his action. This paper takes into account the positions of Kristeva and Sartre, on which Heinämaa is based, as well as Miller's, to place emphasis on the way the act is presented in the agent's narrative. I am grateful to Katerina Bantinaki for urging me to clarify this point.

[256] Phenomenological approaches tend to challenge theories based on contagion (Heinämaa, 2020, p. 382). However, an approach based on phenomenological premises on moral disgust is not necessarily incompatible with the recognition of the functional role of emotion: accepting the position that the functional role of moral disgust concerns the avoidance of contaminating behaviours does not entail that what is perceived as morally disgusting is connected to contagiousness or to beliefs about the contagiousness of certain types of behaviour.

my claim is that the incorporation of the agent's vicious actions or behaviours in a narrative that offers them moral, political, or religious justification strikes us as a perversion of our framework of values. Moral disgust is not a reaction to particular features of morally wrong actions, but a potentially rational emotional reaction to our engagement with morally deviant perspectives and narratives.

3. Moral Disgust and Imaginative Resistance

The question I want to examine next is whether moral disgust, understood as a reaction to the way a narrative presents vicious behaviour, affects our engagement with the fictional work. Is it possible, in other words, that moral disgust acts as a psychological boundary that limits our ability to engage imaginatively with fiction? I will attempt to contribute to the discussion about imaginative resistance by exploring the role of moral disgust in our imaginative engagement with deviant moral fictional worlds. I will argue that the difficulty in imaginative engagement with a work of art hinges on the feeling of moral disgust that is caused by the narrator's distortion of the moral order.[257]

We experience moral aversion not because of the representation of morally problematic characters or actions, but because of the way the narrative presents them: as embedded in a fictional world in which what is morally wrong appears as socially acceptable and obligatory. In such cases, the fictional world *appears to us as morally repugnant*. As I will attempt to show, although we usually accept the narrative's propositions as fictionally true, and thus take the narrator's perspective and through it relate to the main characters, moral disgust functions as a mechanism of psychological resistance to the narrative or, alternatively, as a mechanism that prevents a perspective-shifting in order to imagine ourselves in the hero's shoes. The problem, in other words, arises from the role of moral disgust in relation to certain imaginative mechanisms that are expected to be activated when we relate to the narrative. But let us look more specifically at what we mean when we refer to imaginative engagement with a work of art.

When we follow the plot unfolding and, furthermore, regard the (moral) premises of the

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[257] The idea that moral disgust as a reaction to morally contaminating behaviours is associated with imaginative resistance, has recently been highlighted (Tuna, 2018) and empirically explored (Black & Barnes, 2017), but not yet sufficiently investigated.

narrator as true in the fictional world, we take his perspective and engage with the plot. The way the narrator describes events (using, for example, adverbs such as 'fortunately', 'surprisingly', 'unfortunately', 'obviously', etc.) and the heroes, reveals an evaluative attitude towards them, e.g., of irony, approval, sympathy, contempt (Walton, 1990, p. 366). In this sense, our access to the story and fictional heroes is mediated by the narrator's perspective and, therefore, our engagement with the characters draws on the value system within which the narrator has placed them. His perspective is embedded in the way we perceive the story's characters and, depending on the type of narrator, this may be more or less transparent.

In many cases, the way the narrator presents the story allows us to do something more than merely activate a kind of imagination to contemplate counterfactual possibilities: it also enables us to become emotionally involved with the attitudes of the characters, which requires of us a kind of 'genuine rehearsal, a "testing" of a point of view and an understanding of what it is like to experience it' (Moran, 1994, p. 105). While this kind of imagination is not required for engagement in every work of fiction, nor is it the only mode of imaginative engagement, I think we should acknowledge that a better understanding of certain works requires the reader's first-personal imaginative engagement.

For instance, Alexandros Papadiamantis's novel *The Murderess* will have achieved its aim if we end up feeling sympathy for the old Hadoula because the narrative compels us to enter her mind and to imaginatively experience her disturbed mental state and her divergent ideas as somehow convincing and coherent. This is different, however, from a case of counterfactual reasoning and an attempt to understand what can happen when a person's mind "outgrows itself". Even though Hadoula commits heinous crimes while in a state of delusion, we relate to her because we can for a time fictionally adopt her anxieties, fears, bitterness - perhaps even her murderous impulses. We enter imaginatively into the moral world of the story (Dain, 2021, p. 261) by taking a character's perspective - in other words, by participating in a shared ethical framework that is broader than any set of fictional parameters.

A central way in which we first-personally engage with the fictional universe draws on the imaginative reconstruction of the characters' experience through a mechanism of simulated imagination (Currie, 1995; Steuber, 2006; Goldie, 2000).[258] Simply put, we can use our

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[258] The entire discussion assumes that we react empathically or can adopt the perspective of fictional characters in much the same way we engage with real agents.

imagination to switch perspectives, which allows us to simulate or recreate first-personally the thoughts or feelings of someone else. This idea leads to two main possibilities for ways of first-personal engagement with fictional characters (Goldie, 2000). One possibility is to imagine that *we ourselves are the character* and take her perspective on the fictional world - that is, to imagine the actions, thoughts, and feelings as she experiences them. This process is referred to as 'empathetic perspective-shifting' (Goldie, 2000) or 'other-oriented perspective-taking' (Coplan, 2004). This type of imaginative engagement with a work of fiction can be attained when I imagine *centrally* the character's narrative - that is, what a character knows, believes or feels, through an awareness that the hero is the source of my perspective and that this perspective primarily belongs to her.[259] Essentially, empathic imagination is a strong case of perspective-shifting, since it requires one to try to imagine being someone else, as having the characterization of the fictional hero.

A second possibility is to adopt the character's perspective by imagining that *we* are in the character's shoes while and experiencing what he or she feels, knows or perceives. This process is also referred to as 'in-his-shoes perspective-shifting' (Goldie, 2000),[260] or as taking the other person's perspective but by using myself as the starting-point (self-oriented perspective-taking) (Coplan, 2004). This is a less demanding type of perspective-shifting since we retain some of our own characterisation and adopt certain aspects of the fictional character's characterisation in order to imaginatively reconstruct his narrative.

4. Moral disgust and empathetic resistance

Thomas Szanto (2020) recently attempted to explain some cases of imaginative resistance through the above distinction between the two different types of imaginative reconstruction of

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[259] The term 'central' is Richard Wollheim's and he uses it to describe the imaginative process by which the subject does not imagine the narrative of the other from an external point of view, but from his or her own perspective. For example, when I imagine a swimmer in this way, I do not imagine myself swimming in the ocean from a point high above the sea; I imagine myself swimming in the ocean from the swimmer's point of view. I don't imagine the expression of fear on my face, because I don't see my face. What I do imagine is having the experience of salt in my mouth, of being swept along by a very strong current, of being scared (see Vendler, 1979, p. 161).

[260] According to Goldie, an agent's characterisation/description includes his or her particular character traits, emotional dispositions and other aspects of his or her personality (e.g., being kind, being consistent, having a phobia of dogs, being depressed). It also includes non-psychological items about him or her (being a lawyer, growing up in Alabama in the 1960s) (Goldie, 2000, 198).

the first-personal perspective of a vicious person. More specifically, Szanto attributes imaginative resistance to an inability to empathetic perspective-shifting when the narrative fails to provide an adequate characterization of the hero. Here, Szanto argues, empathetic perspective-shifting is replaced by in-his-shoes perspective-shifting. However, this attempt at perspective shifting also fails when our own moral-psychological premises conflict with those of the hero. For Szanto, in other words, we experience resistance to imaginative engagement with a narrative either as a result of a failure of empathetic perspective-shifting, or because of an inability for by in-his-shoes perspective-shifting.

Let's take a closer look at what happens when we attempt to relate imaginatively to a morally familiar fictional world. In order to enter imaginatively into the narrative universe, we draw on or presuppose information about the larger fictional moral context that is not included in the narrative. Given that a fictional world does not differ significantly from the real one as far as the moral code is concerned, we draw on our own tacit background knowledge, - a network of skills, abilities and behavioural dispositions that provide us with information about the world (and moral judgements). In other words, the way we perceive virtues and vices, whether in life or in art, depends and draws on a practical knowledge of how to act that is shaped by our upbringing and our participation in the relevant social practices. Moral character functions as a 'second nature' (McDowell, 1996) which allows us to perceive a moral reality by seeing an action as right or wrong, and to determine the reasons for our actions.

The problem arises when, in order to engage first-personally with morally deviant fictional worlds, the narrative requires us to accept as fictionally true propositions morally false ones. This means that we must isolate our own background knowledge and access the background knowledge of the character of the morally divergent fictional world, so that we may imagine that we are this hero and therefore have his thoughts and moral sentiments. And it is precisely because the fictional ethical framework differs substantially from ours, empathetic perspective-shifting needs to include all those aspects of the agent's characterization that differ from ours, the dispositions that influence conscious beliefs and feelings, even though the agent herself does not explicitly attribute these dispositions to herself.

Szanto claims that the empathetic perspective-shifting only fails when there is 'insufficient narrative information and characterization. This is information that would normally allow me to succeed in isolating my own moral perspective from that of the other'

(Szanto, 2020, p. 800). On the other hand, when, Szanto claims, the narrative provides a rich characterization of the hero - that is, it provides the adequate moral-psychological and other information - then even if the character's moral sensibilities and dispositions are radically different from my own, it is possible for me to relate empathically with her. In other words, if a substantial description of the character is available, then we can isolate our own background knowledge in order to access the background knowledge of the character within a morally deviant fictional world and thus empathically relate to her.

Szanto's thesis correctly identifies the connection between first-personal imaginative engagement and imaginative resistance. But it downplays the difficulties, in the form of the reader's tacit background knowledge, in empathetic perspective-taking, while relying on a distorted view of how we relate to another agent's mental states.[261] As I argue, the fact that Szanto's connects imaginative resistance with difficulties in first-personal engagement relies on a practically impossible assumption about empathetic perspective-taking. Suppose, for instance, that there is a version of Papadiamantis *The Murderess* in which the narrator identifies with the perspective of the old Hadoula and presents her act of murdering little girls as socially and morally right. If I engage in empathetic perspective-shifting, I am imagining that I am Hadula herself and reasoning morally like her, so that the murders of little girls are justified. Suppose also that the story provides a rich narrative context for the fictionally true propositions, a context that is coherent and clear (e.g., little girls pollute the social fabric, the girls' mothers back Hadula's decision since there's nothing worse than being born a woman, etc.), and that, furthermore, I am able to isolate my background knowledge.

However, as Goldie (2011) explains, in the context of this attempt to empathetic perspective-taking what I can do is undertake a reflective engagement with a set of mental states and a knowledge that should be in the background.[262] That is to say, in attempting to take the fictional character's perspective, I do not reconstruct a set of beliefs and dispositions

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[261] The following discussion draws on my earlier work on she mechanisms of empathic response to artworks (Kyprianidou, 2017), which was based on Peter Goldie's theses on the adoption of a perspective as it appears in his later work (Goldie, 2011).

[262] They are not, that is, conscious mental states to which we relate reflectively (e.g., beliefs, desires), as Dustin Stokes (2006, pp. 403-404) seems to think when he talks about 'backgrounding' actual conscious states in order to imagine counterfactual propositions. These are implicit, irreducible, expectations and beliefs that actors have regarding their shared beliefs about a familiar world.

to which I relate in a non-reflective way, but I objectify them and, as such, I do not relate to them first-personally. But, in fact, the primary kind of engagement with psychological dispositions and background knowledge is non-reflective.[263] For example, part of being evil brings into the picture dispositions that are in the background and are implicitly activated, even though the agent does not explicitly attribute them to himself. Objectifying morally deviant beliefs and dispositions means that we do not 'surrender ourselves' to them, but maintain instead a psychological distance. Since, therefore, there is no appropriate first-personal engagement with dispositions and beliefs that make up a character's description, our own implicit background knowledge gets in the way of the effort to empathically adopt a perspective. In particular, in narratives of evil heroes in morally divergent fictional worlds, our own dispositions that direct our moral perception cannot be set aside or 'silenced' but are always already linked to specific reactions, such as moral disgust. So contrary to what Szanto claims, it is not that empathetic perspective-taking fails because the narrative might not provide a substantial description of the fictional character; it fails because it is practically impossible. Therefore, imaginative resistance cannot be explained as a failure of an empathetic perspective-shifting.

I now turn to the hypothesis of the less 'ambitious' type of first-personal engagement, in-his-shoes perspective-shifting, - imagining, that is, that we are in the position of the evil hero within an 'immoral' fictional world. Szanto argues that, in this case, we experience imaginative resistance that results from the conflict between, on the one hand, our beliefs, moral and psychological perceptions and emotional dispositions and, on the other, the characterization of the hero. I would like, however, to propose a different explanation of imaginative resistance to in-his-shoes perspective-shifting, by taking into account the difference between relating to an evil character within a familiar fictional world and relating to an evil character within an 'immoral' fictional world.

As we have already seen, it is not generally difficult for us to feel sympathy with evil heroes or to side with them if the narrative demands this. When we operate within a familiar fictional world we are generally able to imaginatively 'test' their perspectives, because we are not afraid of being morally tainted or of risking moral corruption. The familiar moral

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[263] For these reasons, moreover, in his later work Goldie (2011) rejects the empathic adoption of a perspective as incoherent, because it issues in a distorted picture of how we know our own mental states.

framework acts as a safety net within which we feel safe to relate to evil characters within the background of our imaginative engagement with the narrative. We are not required to change our background beliefs: the fictional moral context is not substantially different from the actual one. The narrative, for instance, treats Tony Soprano, the leader of a New Jersey mafia family, sympathetically. Yet, it is clear that in the fictional universe of the television series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007, HBO), Tony is not only facing legal prosecution, but is also a villain (Carroll, 2013, p. 372). But one can still sympathize with him because, among other things, he possesses certain positive values (e.g., intelligence or fortitude) or exhibits certain moral behaviours (e.g., love for his family) (Carroll, 2013). I might wish to take his perspective perhaps because I would like to experience what it is like to be powerful, ruthless, and above the law. Given, however, that the fictional moral context remains clear and that, moreover, I am not required to change my background beliefs, the narrative does not threaten to contaminate my broader moral perspective on the world. As a result, I do not experience moral disgust.

The problem of imaginative resistance emerges when in-his-shoes perspective-shifting requires 'opening up' to a corrupt fictional world whose values I must imaginatively espouse in order to relate first-personally to the desires of an evil hero. As first-personal engagement with the narrative requires us to imaginatively evaluate the world in a morally objectionable way, moral disgust is triggered as a guardian of our value system: what we desire to desire is an indication of our moral character (Stokes, 2006) which we seek to safeguard against 'testing' perspectives that may contaminate our evaluative stances and dispositions. Our resistance towards perspective-shifting within an evil world is not difficult to explain, given that fiction can often change or influence the way we think about certain moral values: *Anna Karenina*, for example, may 'soften' our attitudes towards adultery. Changing our perspective by putting ourselves in the shoes of the evil character and fictionally experiencing what it is like to live in a world with a completely different value system seems to carry the risk of altering some preferences, dispositions and attitudes.[264]

So, while we have argued that the empathetic perspective-shifting is an impossibility, in-

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[264] A further examination of these topics is necessary in order to assess the role of moral disgust in the conative imagination, but also its possible connection with 'transformative experiences' (Paul, 2021). I leave this topic for a separate discussion.

his-shoes perspective-shifting in an immoral fictional world is not desirable. Engaging with morally deviant perspectives and narratives causes moral disgust, which is a potentially rational response to the possibility of moral corruption.

5. Concluding Remarks

Moral disgust functions as a cautionary affective mechanism that prompts us to control our first-personal imaginative and affective engagement with characters within fictional worlds that are evaluatively discrepant. It activates a resistance to imaginative engagement, since we do not wish to change our perspective by putting ourselves in the shoes of the character of such an 'immoral' fictional world, which in turn prevents us from engaging first-personally and experientially with the narrative. It is an open question whether the present analysis applies to every instance of imaginative resistance, since it remains unclear if all instances of imaginative resistance can be explained in the same way.

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Values in the Air:

Musical Contagion, Social Appraisal and Metaphor Experience

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ABSTRACT. Music can infect us. In the dominant approach, music contaminates listeners through emotional mimicry and independently of value appraisal, just like when we catch other people's feelings. Musical contagion is thus considered fatal to the mainstream view of emotions as cognitive evaluations. This paper criticizes this line of argument and proposes a new cognitivist account: the value metaphor view. Non-cognitivism relies on a contentious model of emotion transmission. In the competing model (social appraisal), we catch people's emotions by appraising value through their emotional expressions. Social appraisal debunks the main motivation for non-cognitivism and offers fruitful insights into musical contagion. Combining it with metaphor theory, I claim that musical contagion involves experiencing the music as a metaphor for emotions and values. Just like people infect us as we appraise value through their emotional expressions, music contaminates listeners because they hear it *metaphorically-as* some emotional expression and hereby appraise it *metaphorically-as* some value. As infectious music "sounds like" emotions and values, cognitivism is safe.

1. Emotional Contagion: Musical and Social

Music is infectious. One may perceive an Irish lament as sad, and this may fill one with sadness. One may feel jolly as one finds the *Looney Tunes* theme music merry. A tensed flamenco piece may evoke and provoke agitation. In musical contagion, the emotion felt mirrors the emotion *perceived* in or *expressed* by the music. In this respect, music is like people: people's feelings are contagious. For instance, you may catch a friend's anxiety by hearing their trembling voice.

The emotion caught echoes the emotion *perceived* and *expressed* in other people's faces, voices, or posture. *Modulo* relevant differences (for one, music is not a person), musical and social contagion are analogous in important respects. These are two kinds of emotional contagion.

Emotional contagion can inspire poignant aesthetic experiences. Sometimes, listeners feel awe as they appreciate how a musical piece superbly expresses some feelings and even succeeds at stirring these feelings in them. For instance, the musical theme of Hitchcock's *Psycho* aptly portrays anxiety to the point that it may prompt anguish. Feelings particularly escalate when musical and social contagion operate jointly, for instance when the tense music mirrors the character's expressions of terror (Marion's screams, tremor, her eyes wide open). Feelings are even more acute in shared musical experiences. When listening to Barber's *Agnus Dei* in a concert hall, seeing my partner having tears in their eyes may amplify the sadness I felt in echo with the music so much so that I can't resist but dissolve into tears. Alongside cross-modal and collective aesthetic experiences, the joint power of musical and social contagion peaks in many social contexts. Consider how one's sorrow at a funeral can reach its climax when mournful music starts while one is crushed by other people's desolate faces, slumped posture, and weeping tears. Or consider how, as you joined a party, the catchy sound of Los del Rio's *Macarena* conspires with people's laughter, festive dancing, and other jubilant displays to exhilarate you. Contagion even shapes political feelings. For instance, in protests, both angry music and people's expressions of outrage magnify feelings of indignation. Last but not least, contagion plays a pivotal role in emotion regulation. When feeling sad, one may resort to, say, upbeat music to lift one's spirits, exploit social contagion and join playful friends, or combine both strategies and indulge in Rio de Janeiro's Carnival. Emotional contagion is powerful.

Most importantly, musical contagion is key to understand emotions, as it threatens the main theory of emotions in philosophy and empirical disciplines. Emotions involve many facets, such as physiological reactions, action tendencies, as well as facial, vocal, and postural expressions. Yet, according to cognitivism, emotions fundamentally are experiences of values or, at least, comprise cognitive evaluations (Tappolet, 2016, Deonna & Teroni, 2012). For instance, sadness is typically characterized by crying, frowning, slow walking speed, and the tendency to stay silent. Now, or so claim cognitivists, sadness fundamentally is (or at least

involves) appraising something as unfortunate or bad news. Feeling sad about a separation is experiencing this event as unfortunate. However, this description is at odds with music. When sad music infects us, we do not appraise some unfortunate event. And rightly so: nothing bad happened. Therefore, musical contagion questions cognitivism (the *Musical Challenge*). In fact, the dominant conception – a dogma in the empirical sciences – is non-cognitivist: music infects listeners through mimicry of emotional displays independently of cognitive evaluation (Juslin & Laukka, 2003, Koelsch, 2014). This approach is motivated by an influential model of social contagion, namely primitive contagion: we catch other people's feelings by mimicking their emotional expressions without the resort of appraisals. As social contagion is non-cognitive, so is musical contagion. Cognitivism is thus flawed, or so goes the argument (Davies, 2013).

This article criticizes this anti-cognitivist line of argument in light of recent developments in affective sciences. Studies on emotion transmission reveal that social contagion is not as primitive as initially thought. Social appraisal is now an established framework that can model social contagion along cognitivist lines: we catch other people's emotions by perceiving their emotional expressions and hereby appraising value. People catch the tension in the air as they perceive, say, apprehensive faces and – through this perception – appraise some threat in the environment, which renders them tensed. Social appraisal thus debunks the main non-cognitivist line of argument. Moreover, it can be used to develop a new cognitivist account of musical contagion when incorporated with metaphor experience: the value metaphor view. Experiments reveal that music expressive of emotion is perceived as being *like* an emotional expression. When music sounds sad, it is perceived as being like a person sobbing and walking slowly in the manner characteristic of sadness. As such, because emotional expressions serve to indicate values (as per social appraisal), infectious music is perceived *as if* it portrays values, such as threats and unfortunate things. Developing this idea in terms of metaphor experience, I propose that music contaminates us because we experience it *metaphorically-as* some emotional expression and hereby *metaphorically-as* some value. Infectious music "sounds like" emotions and values. This explains its contagious power and a great deal of its charm.

I proceed in three steps. Section 2 clarifies the *Musical Challenge*. Section 3 criticizes the main motivation for non-cognitivism (primitive contagion) and contrasts it with social appraisal. In section 4, I present and develop the value metaphor view with the help of social

appraisal. Cognitivism is safe: social appraisal and metaphor experience can rescue it.

2. The Musical Challenge

To render the puzzle more poignant, I adopt five assumptions.

First, I assume that musical contagion elicits garden-variety emotions (e.g., sadness, joy, anxiety, tenderness, etc.). I thus ignore solutions to the challenge that appeal to being moved or moods (see Lauria, 2023's review).

Second, I assume that the felt emotion mirrors the emotion *perceived* in or *expressed* by music. This correspondence includes cases where the feeling is not strictly identical, yet is sufficiently similar, to the emotion portrayed (Cochrane, 2021).

Third, I assume that mirroring emotions can be fitting (whether they constitute musical understanding or not). Feeling sad in response to sad music can be appropriate (*pace* Kivy).

Fourth, I assume that musical contagion is (in important respects) analogous to social and physiognomic contagion (namely, contagion by non-sentient beings, such as the weather). For reasons of space, I leave aside physiognomic contagion.

Lastly, as common, I focus on pure music. Contagion by music with lyrics or programmatic music can be readily explained by the situations portrayed (consider love songs). But why would music *alone* elicit garden-variety emotions?

The problem appears clearly by presenting cognitivism. According to cognitivism, emotions essentially are representations of values (e.g., threats, losses, bad news, etc.) or, at least, involve value appraisals. Whether emotions are evaluative judgments, analogous to perceptions of value, or evaluative attitudes, they involve evaluative cognition. In this view, emotions have intentional content (e.g., you feel sad about a breakup). Emotional content is the object or situation evaluated: you're sad about the breakup because you evaluate *the breakup* as unfortunate. The relevant evaluation is the emotion's formal object (e.g., bad news for sadness). Of course, evaluations can go wrong, in which case the emotion is inappropriate (you shouldn't feel sad; this relationship was toxic). Cognitivism is incompatible with non-cognitivism, i.e., the claim that emotions do *not* involve evaluations, as in the idea that emotions are pure bodily feelings (Madell, 1996). It is compatible with some bodily feelings views as long as bodily feelings involve evaluations (Prinz, 2004). We are now in a position to formulate the challenge.

You hear Daft Punk's *Veridis Quo* for the first time. It starts with a simple sonic structure that lasts the entire song. The melody is ethereal. It immediately strikes you as melancholic and grave. As it progresses, it's as if the music is wandering through a journey of turmoil and desolation. It evokes bittersweet tenderness. Yet your ultimate feelings are sadness, melancholy, and nostalgia.

How are we to understand these emotions? Consider sadness. According to cognitivism, sadness is experiencing a situation as unfortunate/bad news. Applying this view to *Veridis Quo*, you should experience the music as unfortunate/bad news. But this seems far-fetched. For one thing, it sounds odd to say that you feel sad *about* the music (you rather enjoy it). Surely you do not appraise the music as unfortunate/bad news. The challenge generalizes. For instance, anxious and happy music may infect you, yet there is no threat nor good news. There is nothing to be sad, anxious, or happy about. Musical contagion does not involve the relevant evaluation.

The *Musical Challenge* consists in two challenges.

Content Challenge: Emotions have intentional content. Yet the contagion-induced emotion is not *about* the music.

Value Challenge: Emotions involve evaluations/formal object. Yet the contagion-induced emotion does not involve evaluation/formal object.

If emotional content is the object evaluated (as per cognitivism), the *Content Challenge* depends on the *Value Challenge*. You're not sad about the music because you do not appraise it as unfortunate. I focus here on the *Value Challenge*, as it threatens cognitivism's core.

(i)   Musical contagion elicits garden-variety emotions.

(ii)   Cognitivism: Emotions involve formal objects/evaluation.

(iii)   (i), (ii): Musical contagion involves formal objects/evaluation.

(iv)   (iii) is false.

(C_1)   Cognitivism does not capture musical contagion.

(C_2)   Cognitivism is false.

Most scholars embrace C_1 (Koelsch, 2014). C_1 supports C_2: If cognitivism cannot capture contagion, it is false (Davies, 2013). Conversely, C_1 supports non-cognitivism: emotions (including contagion-induced emotions) are pure feelings. Let us explore non-cognitivism.

3. Non-Cognitivism: The Argument of Social Contagion

Examining non-cognitivism about musical contagion in detail goes beyond the scope of this paper. In this section, I modestly present – and debunk – one of its main motivations, i.e. non-cognitivism about social contagion. The canonical argument for non-cognitivism runs as follows:

(i) Musical and social contagion are analogous.

(ii) Social contagion is non-cognitive (primitive contagion).

(C) Musical contagion is non-cognitive.

Recent developments on emotion transmission – particularly social appraisal – offer reasons to doubt (ii): cognitivism can explain social contagion. This undermines the aforementioned argument and opens the path for a cognitivist approach to musical contagion.

3.1 Primitive Contagion

To scrutinize (ii), let us present an influential account of social contagion.

Mary enters a coffee shop. The barista is anxious: he is fidgeting and his voice is shaky. Mary synchronizes with him and starts to feel anxious; the barista contaminated her. This is an illustration of primitive contagion, i.e., the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize with other people's facial, vocal, and bodily expressions of emotions, which induces the same emotion (Hatfield et al., 1993). This process is typically unintentional, uncontrollable, and unconscious. It involves two stages:

(1) *Mimicry*: One unconsciously mimics another person's emotional expressions (Mary's muscles tense in synchrony with the barista).

(2) *Feedback*: Physiological feedback induces an emotional feeling (Mary feels anxious as she feels her muscles tensed).

Numerous studies support (1) and (2) (Hatfield et al., 2011). Emotional expressions, such as smiles and laughter, are highly contagious. For instance, newborns tend to cry when hearing

other newborns cry. Mimicry is pervasive. Moreover, physiological feedback impacts emotional experience. For instance, people are more amused by jokes when they have to contract zygomatic muscles and hereby adopt amusement's facial expression (e.g., by holding a pen in their mouth). Mimicry and feedback explain social contagion irrespective of cognitive appraisal.

Similarly, studies suggest that musical contagion involves mimicry (Koelsch, 2014). For instance, contagion with sad (vs. happy) music activates corrugator (vs. zygomatic) activity as in frowning (vs. smiling). Strictly speaking, musical mimicry differs from interpersonal mimicry: for one thing, music has no body to imitate (Davies, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars consider that the mechanism is similar: perceiving emotional displays automatically induces emotions independently of cognitive evaluation. For instance, Davies (2013) argues that emotional contagion is the transmission of an emotional state or appearance via the perception of the emotional display. Mary catches the barista's anxiety simply by perceiving his trembling voice. Her emotion is caused by the emotion perceived but is not *about* it; she feels anxious *tout court*. The emotion has no content because it does not involve the relevant evaluation: Mary doesn't appraise, say, the barista as menacing. Similarly, with music, the mirroring emotion is caused by the music but is neither *about* it nor involves evaluation, because the music is not appraised as, say, unfortunate or menacing. Listeners catch the emotion by perceiving the emotional display. Despite Davies's qualms about primitive contagion's focus on motor mimicry, the canonical argument remains. As social contagion is non-cognitive, so is musical contagion.

3.2 Social Appraisal

Things are more contentious, however. Recently, psychologists have described in detail when and why people mimic emotions (Hess & Fischer, 2014). Contagion and mimicry are more selective than was initially assumed. For instance, they do not happen in adversary relationships: seeing one's enemy struggling may elicit *Schadenfreude* rather than struggle. Emotional mimicry requires affiliative bonds – it is displayed more often towards friends than strangers – and involves appraising emotional expressions as appropriate. For instance, at funerals, laughter mimicry is reduced because laughter is deemed inappropriate (Kastendieck et al., 2021). As mimicry involves interpreting the expression in the social context, contagion

is not so primitive. Moreover, although mimicry and feedback impact the emotion's intensity, whether they suffice to arouse emotion alone is disputed.

Social appraisal is now the influential and cognitivist alternative model of emotion transmission: emotions are transmitted via indirect value appraisal (Manstead & Fischer, 2001; Scherer & Grandjean, 2008). This involves two steps. First, one perceives another person's emotional expression. Second, one appraises value through this perception, which elicits the same emotion. By perceiving the barista's trembling voice, Mary appraises some threat and, as a result, feels anxious. Indeed, emotional expressions have the function of communicating emotions but also of indicating values. Perceiving emotional expressions thus provides information about value appraisals. In fact, people constantly infer evaluative significance from emotional expressions (Dukes & Clément, 2019). When one integrates information drawn from other people's emotional expressions into one's own appraisals of situations, one feels the same emotion. This may occur automatically and unconsciously or in a top-down and conscious manner. Of course, we do not always uptake people's expressions into our own appraisals. Social appraisal requires appraising expressions as reliable (e.g., appraising emoters as trustworthy). Social appraisal can be used to model social contagion as follows:

Social Appraisal: Contagion with a subject S feeling the emotion E results from (1) perceiving S's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the situation as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

Let me draw two important conclusions. First, *Social Appraisal* undercuts the motivation for non-cognitivism that invokes primitive contagion. This argument relies on a contentious model of emotion transmission that competes with *Social Appraisal*. This suffices to switch the burden of proof. Non-cognitivists should explain why their model is preferable to the cognitivist alternative. Appealing to social contagion *per se* cuts no ice. Even if emotion transmission can take both routes (primitive contagion and social appraisal), non-cognitivists should explain why musical contagion takes the former (vs. latter) route.

Second, if musical and social contagion are analogous, social appraisal offers a new approach to musical contagion: music contaminates listeners through indirect value appraisal. Just like Mary feels anxious because she appraises threats by hearing the barista's tone of voice,

tense music infects listeners because they appraise threats by hearing tensed emotional expressions in music.

> *Indirect Appraisal*: Contagion with music M expressing the emotion E results from
> (1) perceiving M's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the acoustic situation
> as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

This proposal assumes that perceiving musical expressiveness is (to some extent) comparable to perceiving emotional expressions. This is plausible. Studies reveal that perceiving musical expressiveness relies on the similarity music bears to emotional expressions, particularly affective prosody (Peretz, 2001). For instance, sad music is similar to the way sad people talk (e.g., low pitch, low volume, slow tempo, dark timbre, descendent intonations, and minor mode). Both contrast with the acoustic profile of cheerful music and happy voices (high pitch, high volume, fast tempo, high pitch range, ascendant intonations, major mode, and staccato articulations). Music is thus somehow perceived as if we were hearing a person vocalizing their emotions. If perceiving expressiveness is similar to perceiving emotional expressions, and if the latter involves value appraisal (*Social Appraisal*), musical contagion may involve value appraisal as well. Music expressive of emotion would indicate values, like people do when expressing emotions (see, however, Huron, 2015).

Indirect Appraisal implies that mirroring emotions are illusory, as there is no relevant value. Tense music cannot indicate threats; there aren't any. This is problematic if one thinks that mirroring emotions can be appropriate. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in this proposal. After all, sad music sounds *as if* someone were expressing sadness and thus *as if* something sad had happened. Although no one is sad and nothing bad happened, it nonetheless sounds like it. Let us articulate this idea.

4. The Value Metaphor View

Sometimes, music sounds *like* emotions and emotional expressions, say, grief and weeping; but it also sounds *like* values, say, awful things. In listening to *Veridis Quo*, it is *as if* a tormented person were expressing her feelings – *as if* the music were running erratically, looking down heavily, and mourning. The music sounds *as if* something deplorable and tragic

happened. Hence it makes me feel sad. This idea is analysed in terms of metaphor experience: infectious music is experienced metaphorically-as emotions and values.

This proposal embraces cognitive metaphor theory: metaphors are not merely linguistic devices; they primarily are ways of *conceiving* or *experiencing* the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It cultivates the burgeoning interest in metaphor to elucidate music's emotional power (Lauria, 2023). For instance, Peacocke (2009) argues that expressiveness consists of hearing music *metaphorically-as* emotion. The main originality of my proposal is its cognitivist emphasis on metaphors for values.

4.1 Clarifying the Proposal

In musical contagion, listeners attribute a property to the music, namely that of being isomorphic to emotion and to value in the way characteristic of metaphor.

> *Value Metaphor*: Contagion with music M expressive of emotion E results from experiencing M *metaphorically-as* the emotion E and, thus, *metaphorically-as* the value V (the formal object of E), which induces E.

Leaving aside issues concerning the content of the experience (Peacocke, 2009), my proposal is liberal regarding the determinate property attributed. The mapping between music and emotion hinges on various properties of emotions, such as prosody, posture, and physiological changes. Sad music can be experienced as isomorphic to a sad person, sad voice, sad posture, or sad arousal. Similarly, music can be mapped into thick value concepts, axiological prototypes (e.g., death for bad news), or situations where values stand out (e.g., funerals). That said, since my argument recruits social appraisal, I focus here on the mapping between music and emotional expressions.

My account is also liberal regarding consciousness. The property can be attributed consciously or unconsciously, and explicitly or implicitly. In my description of *Veridis Quo*, the property is consciously attributed. But it needs not be so (e.g., when contagion is unconscious). Besides, in my description, the attentional focus covers both the music-emotion and the music-value isomorphism. But it needs not be so; listeners may only attend to one dimension of the isomorphism (say, the music-emotion mapping) or oscillate between both.

Phenomenologically speaking, the music-emotion mapping is the most salient. In fact, the evaluative mapping is based on the emotional mapping: listeners experience the music metaphorically-as value *in virtue of* experiencing it metaphorically-as emotion.

4.2 The Argument from Social Appraisal

Let me develop my proposal by offering one line of argument that appeals to social appraisal. Social appraisal is only one route the evaluative mapping can take: there are other relevant interplays between emotions and values. Roughly, the argument runs as follows:

(i)   Experiencing metaphor is experiencing an isomorphism between two entities that involves the selection and transfer of their salient properties.

(ii)   Listeners map acoustic features of infectious music into emotional expressions.

(C_1) Listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as emotional expressions.

(iii)   Perceiving emotional expressions elicits the same emotion through social appraisal.

(C_2) Listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as values.

Let me present each premise.

The first premise is a minimal definition of metaphor experience that recruits three typical features of linguistic metaphors. (1) Metaphors rely on isomorphism or structural similarity between two objects that typically belong to distinct domains. When one says "life is a journey", one means that human existence is made of discoveries and obstacles, delights and struggles, just like, say, a 12-hours train journey. Human existence is similar to journeys in some respects. (2) Importantly, metaphors involve the detection of *salient* properties of objects, i.e., features that immediately come into mind when people think about them (Black, 1955). When you think about journeys, you immediately think about excitement, obstacles, destinations, etc. Salient features may not be actually exemplified by the objects; commonplaces suffice. (3) Crucially, metaphors exploit the isomorphism, i.e., they invite one to transfer the salient features from one domain onto another, which results in thinking of say,

life in terms of a journey. Experiencing metaphor is experiencing this kind of isomorphism. Although the transfer of properties occurs at the subpersonal level, it is phenomenologically salient: you experience something in terms of another.

Back to music. As mentioned, studies on expressiveness reveal that musical features are systematically mapped into emotions, at least for basic emotions such as sadness, joy, fear, anger, and tenderness (Juslin & Laukka, 2003). The most influential theories explain these data by the correspondence between music and emotional expressions, particularly vocal and postural expressions (Davies, 2013). This is premise (ii). These findings support C_1: listeners experience infectious music metaphorically-as emotional expressions. As studies describe the isomorphism between music and emotional expressions, the first criterion for metaphor experience is satisfied. Moreover, perceiving expressiveness relies on salient features of music and of emotional expressions. When thinking about expressions of sadness, weeping and slow movement immediately come to mind. As these correspond to salient features of sad music, the second criterion is met. Lastly, the transfer of properties is phenomenologically salient: sad music *sounds* sad. This interpretation of the data is disputable and there are alternative interpretations, notably in terms of resemblance (Davies, 2013). Still, empirical evidence clearly fits our minimal definition of metaphor experience, which suffices to highlight the plausibility of C_1.

The third premise is social appraisal, viz.:

Social Appraisal: Contagion with a subject S feeling the emotion E results from (1) perceiving S's emotional expressions, and (2) appraising the situation as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

Combining (iii) with C_1 (infectious music is experienced metaphorically-as emotional expressions), *mutatis mutandis*, yields C_2:

Value Metaphor: Contagion with music M expressive of emotion E results from (1) perceiving M metaphorically-as the expression of E, and (2) appraising the acoustic situation metaphorically-as instantiating value (E's formal object) through (1), which induces E.

If one prefers, this argument can be formulated with the idea that emotional expressions serve to *indicate* values. If emotional expressions indicate values, hearing music metaphorically-as some emotional expression amounts to experience it as metaphorically-indicating value. Here is another gloss. As listeners process infectious music in terms of emotional expressions, and as processing infectious expressions involves appraising value (*Social Appraisal*), infectious music is processed in terms of value. To put it in phenomenological terms, music can sound *as if* some value were instantiated, because it can sound *as if* some emotion were expressed, and because perceiving infectious emotional expressions comes with value seemings. This argument assumes that social appraisal can be literal or metaphorical, and that both kinds operate similarly.

4.3. Unfolding the Analogy

Social appraisal elegantly illuminates musical contagion. Let me elaborate by using six facets of social appraisal.

1. In social appraisal, the value appraisal depends on the perception of emotional expressions. Similarly, in musical contagion, the music-value mapping depends on the mapping between music and emotional expressions.

2. As in social contagion, the "value appraisal" in music can be unconscious and automatic or conscious and effortful. As Peacocke (2020) describes, articulating the music-emotion mapping sometimes requires effort; titles offer important cues. The same holds for the music-value mapping. Social appraisal espouses the diverse forms of musical contagion.

3. As emphasized, mimicry and contagion do not always happen when perceiving emotional expressions; they require affiliative bonds. Similarly, musical contagion does not always occur when perceiving expressiveness (*pace* arousal theorists); musical bonds are required. Indeed, unlike the perception of expressiveness, musical contagion depends on listeners' musical preferences, personality traits, and current mood (Peretz, 2001), which are various dimensions of musical bonds.

4. As in social contagion, music may fail to contaminate listeners when they deem the emotional display inappropriate. For instance, one may perceive *Macarena* as happy, yet fail to catch joy, because one finds the song annoying. There are various aspects of aesthetic

(in)appropriateness, such as the accuracy of the music-emotion mapping, musical skills, originality, and aesthetic values.

5. In both social appraisal and musical contagion, the interpretation of the emotional display is shaped by social context. Like laughter may not spread at funerals, hearing a techno song in the same context may exasperate rather than invigorate one. Musical contexts also matter. For instance, a musical performance may succeed at expressing some emotion yet fail to respect the codes of relevant musical genres or period, which may prohibit contagion (the performance is deemed inauthentic, clumsy, or outrageous).

6. Importantly, just like social appraisal induces mirroring emotions, the music-induced emotion is elicited by the music-value mapping.

The value metaphor view can thus rebut the *Value Challenge*. After all, musical contagion involves evaluative cognition – just like social contagion does in *Social Appraisal* – albeit through the veil of metaphor. Unlike *Indirect Appraisal*, mirroring emotions are not necessarily illusory. They are fitting when music truly is isomorphic to emotional expressions and thus to values. Just as feeling tension in the air may be appropriate when threats are lingering, feeling anxious in listening to tense music can be the right response to the interplay between music, anxious displays, and threats. As social contagion can disclose the evaluative significance of situations, musical contagion can disclose the significance of music. Explaining how my proposal differs from accounts that appeal to moods and to imagination, and how it can illuminate physiognomic contagion, will wait for another occasion.

5. Conclusion

Approaching musical contagion through the lenses of social contagion proves insightful. Whereas scholars have adopted this line of thought to champion non-cognitivism, I have used it to offer a new cognitivist account that incorporates metaphor into social appraisal. As musical contagion involves appraising music in terms of values, cognitivists need not surrender. Just like one may enter a space and feel threats or other values in the air, listeners may feel *as if* there were threats or values floating in the musical air. Sometimes the two kinds of emotional contagion enhance each other. While we resonate with music, we may as well catch the aesthetic emotions of other people, the emotion expressed in another artistic modality, the emotion conveyed by a group, or the affective tone of the environment. These explosions of

emotional displays and "values in the air" can crystallize into profound experiences.[266]

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From Concept to Image and Vice Versa: the Philosophical Frontispiece

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ABSTRACT. The presence of engraved illustrations and artistic frontispieces in philosophical books published between the 17th and 18th centuries pose a specific problem: the adherence of images to the concepts treated in the text. To this end, collaboration between philosophers and artists becomes essential in order to develop visual strategies that closely connect images and ideas. We can therefore consider two ways of approaching the issue. The first can be defined as 'contextual' since its purpose is the 'staging' of the narrative content of the work, like for example in dialogues. The second category, instead, attempts an iconic translation of the conceptual content: within such 'conceptual' frontispieces, allegories and symbols become elements of a code, taking on a sign value depending on their relationship to the other parts that build up a system of meanings. This is the path followed by philosophers such as Bacon, Hobbes and Shaftesbury. A particularly significant case is the engraving of the *New Science* by Vico (1730), which is intended to represent the dynamic nature of thought and social evolution.

The interest in symbols and emblems, typical of the early modern age, influenced the entirety of literary and philosophical production, increasing the presence of engraved illustrations in books. This paper is dedicated to the analysis of remarkable engravings printed in famous philosophical books published between the 17th and 18th centuries. What I intend to do is to reflect and maybe stimulate reflection on the relationship between image and concept and on the ability, or inability, of the image to represent abstract notions. I intend to do this using specific examples drawn from a disused publishing practice - the artistic frontispiece - but

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nevertheless rich in speculative and theoretical motifs.

For the field of naturalistic research, illustrations have become an integral part of knowledge as a didactic-explanatory support that can actively contribute to the exposition of new scientific theories. On the other hand, the presence and function of images within a philosophical book must be conceived on a different basis since it poses the problem of the adherence of images to the concepts treated in the text. In relation to this, scholars such as Panofsky have affirmed how Neo-Platonism, especially in its Renaissance developments, consolidated an interpretation in a participatory sense of the relationship between ideas and pictures, paving the way for a conception of art as a representation of philosophical knowledge (Panofsky, 1924). In this sense, the image finds its place within the philosophical book, becoming a moment in the manifestation of thought, if not, in the case of frontispieces, an iconic translation of a conceptual content (Simonutti, 2001).[268]

To this end, collaboration between philosophers and painters becomes essential in order to develop visual strategies that closely connect 'philosophical ideas' with 'pictorial ideas'. We can thus distinguish two typical representational modes of philosophical frontispieces. The first can be defined as 'contextual' since its purpose is not the transposition of the philosophical concept but the 'staging' of the narrative content of the work. In this sense, it is particularly suitable for dialogical texts, as demonstrated by Stefano Della Bella's well-known engraving for Galileo's *Dialogue* (1632) or by Robert White's engraving for the first English translation of the *Apology of Socrates and Phaedo* (1675).

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[268] The presence of artistic frontispieces is indeed widespread until the end of eighteenth century when philosophers started to comment only on pre-existing images and works of art to expound their theories rather than commission and elaborate original ones.

Figure 1. Plato (1675), *Apology of Socrates and Phaedo or Dialogue concerning the immortality of soul*,

London: J. Magnes and R. Bentley, frontispiece by Robert White.

To the same category, but in a different way (because here there is a certain use of allegory), belong those frontispieces that intend to quickly frame the polemical content of the treatise. For example, the scene of the frontispiece of Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), drawn by Robert White, is divided into two sections in order to distinguish the philosopher's opponents from his allies: in the centre of the image is positioned an altar symbolising the object of contention (religion), on the left, are the theistic philosophers (Aristotle, Pythagoras and Socrates), surmounted by a laurel wreath, while opposite, on the other side of the altar, is an undone wreath, under which in a melancholic attitude are portrayed the 'atheists' (Strato, Epicurus and Anaximander). It is not difficult to imagine which party the author supports.

Figure 2. Cudworth, Ralph (1678), *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: the first part; wherein, All the*

Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted; and its Impossibility Demonstrated, London: Royston, frontispiece by Robert White.

The second category is more interesting to us because it is properly 'conceptual'. The 'pictorialisation of concepts' takes place fundamentally through allegory, leading philosophers and illustrators to draw heavily on that articulate repertoire of figures codified in numerous collections, such as the famous *Iconology* (1593) by Cesare Ripa, reprinted over the centuries and illustrated countless times. As you can observe from this page of the 1764 edition, science is represented as a woman with winged temples holding a mirror, symbol of reflection, and a globe, symbol of non-contradiction, with a triangle on top, indicating demonstration.

Figure 3. Ripa, Cesare, *Iconologia* (2010), M. Gabriele e C. Galassi (eds.), Vol. 4, Lavis: La Finestra [anastatic printing from 1764-1767 edition], allegory of science by Carlo Grandi.

Concerning allegory, and especially in its baroque evolution and intricacy, Walter Benjamin's analysis of allegory as a visual dissimulation of a conceptual content, signifying "the notness

of what it represents" is well known (Benjamin, 1974). However, it is not the individual allegories that need to be examined here, but rather the compositional aspect of the frontispiece: allegories and symbols are placed within it as elements of a code, taking on a sign value depending on their relationship to the other parts that build up a system of meanings. From this point of view, the visual image can aspire to communicate a complex content such as a philosophical work.

We can find a particularly creative use of the allegorical image in the frontispieces of works by Bacon, Hobbes and Shaftesbury. As for the former, the *Instauratio magna* and reprints published from 1626 onwards of the *Advancement and Proficience of Learning* (1605) present the famous image of a ship crossing the Pillars of Hercules. In particular, the 1640 re-elaboration by William Marshall, has a more complex symbolism in which the two pyramid-shaped columns, the first illuminated by sunlight and the second placed under the moon shadow, represent the natural and philosophical sciences respectively. These are surmounted by the two globes, the *Mundus visibilis* and the *Mundus intellectualis*, from which two arms extend in a handshake, sealed by the inscription: *Ratione et experientia foederantur*. In this way, the Baconian image contributes to consolidate what will become some of the imageries of Baroque frontispieces: the use of classical architecture, the distinction of 'worlds' reinforced by the play of light and shadow.
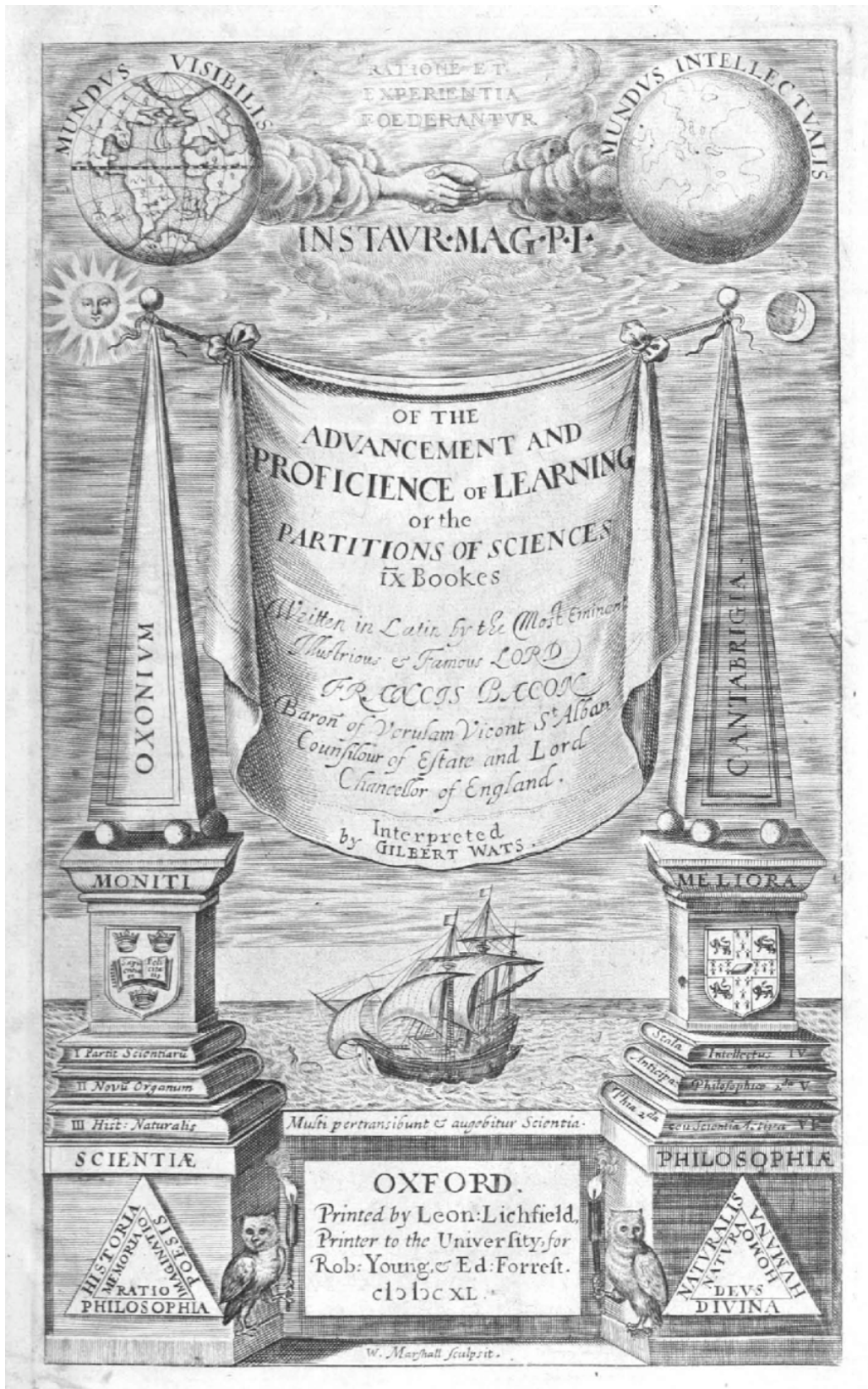
Figure 4. Bacon, Francis (1640), *Of the Proficience and Advancement of Learning, Divine and Human*

[1605], Oxford: Young & Forrest, title page by William Marshall.

But the most famous philosophical icon of the seventeenth century is the engraving of *Leviathan* (1651) depicting the monstrous biblical creature that gives the book its title. Attributed to the French engraver, Abraham Bosse, the drawing presents the half-length image of what is defined by Hobbes himself as an "*automata*" or an "artificial man": the great body of the state, made up of the assemblage of the bodies of its subjects, holding in its hands the symbols of political-military power (the sword) and spiritual authority (the pastoral staff). In his studies, art historian H. Bredekamp suggests to read the Hobbesian image of the social body in relation to a series of precise artistic references - such as, for example, the cosmic bodies of Renaissance iconography or Arcimboldo's composite portraits - and philosophical ones, emphasizing the influence of the modern interest in the automaton and the body-machine (Bredekamp 1999). This famous image represents an important attempt to translate thought into a sophisticated visual solution with a bipartite structure, in which the higher part is dominated by a complex and original allegory while the lower part is characterised by a multiplication of symbols.
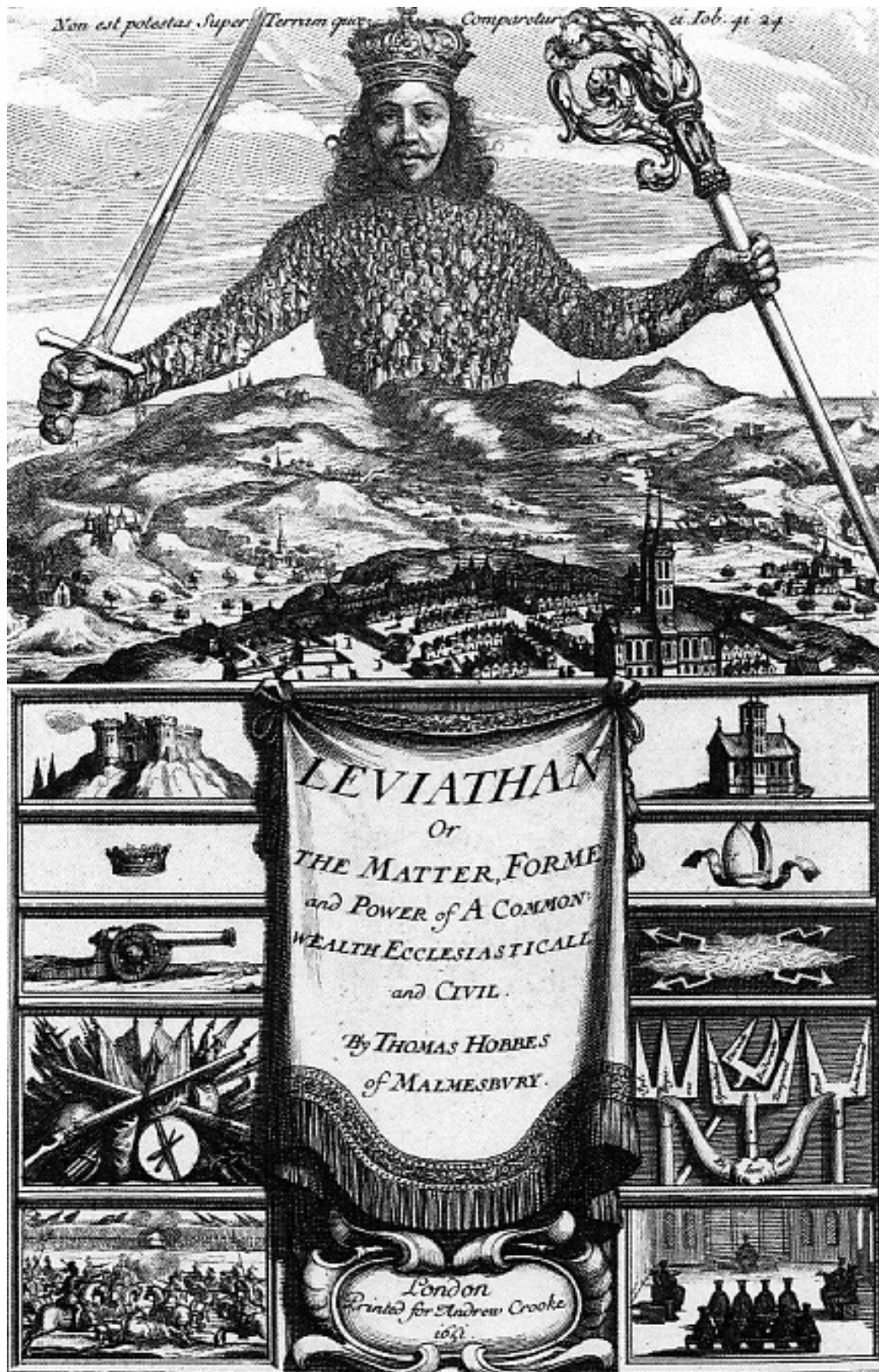
Figure 5. Hobbes, Thomas (1651), *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, London: A. Crooke, frontispiece by Abraham Bosse.

The case concerning Shaftesbury, however, is quite different. It is well known how the English philosopher, aware of the power with which images can express philosophical notions and arguments - not by replacing them, but by reinforcing their content and highlighting new meanings - commissioned rich allegorical engravings for each of the works contained in the three volumes of the second edition of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1714). What distinguishes Shaftesbury's use of visual allegory is the intention to go beyond Renaissance and Baroque emblem books, which merely codified pre-existing ideas. The elaboration of a profound weaving of figures capable of giving shape to new meanings, matures in the context of a thought in which aesthetic sentiment is analogous to ethical sentiment. A particular value is to be attributed to the *Letter concerning Design* in which are collected the instructions addressed to the painter who was commissioned to draw the frontispiece of the treatise *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules* (Paknadel, 1974). The complexity of the allegories therefore requires a paratextual circuit that links the text to the frontispieces, stimulating a comparative reading.
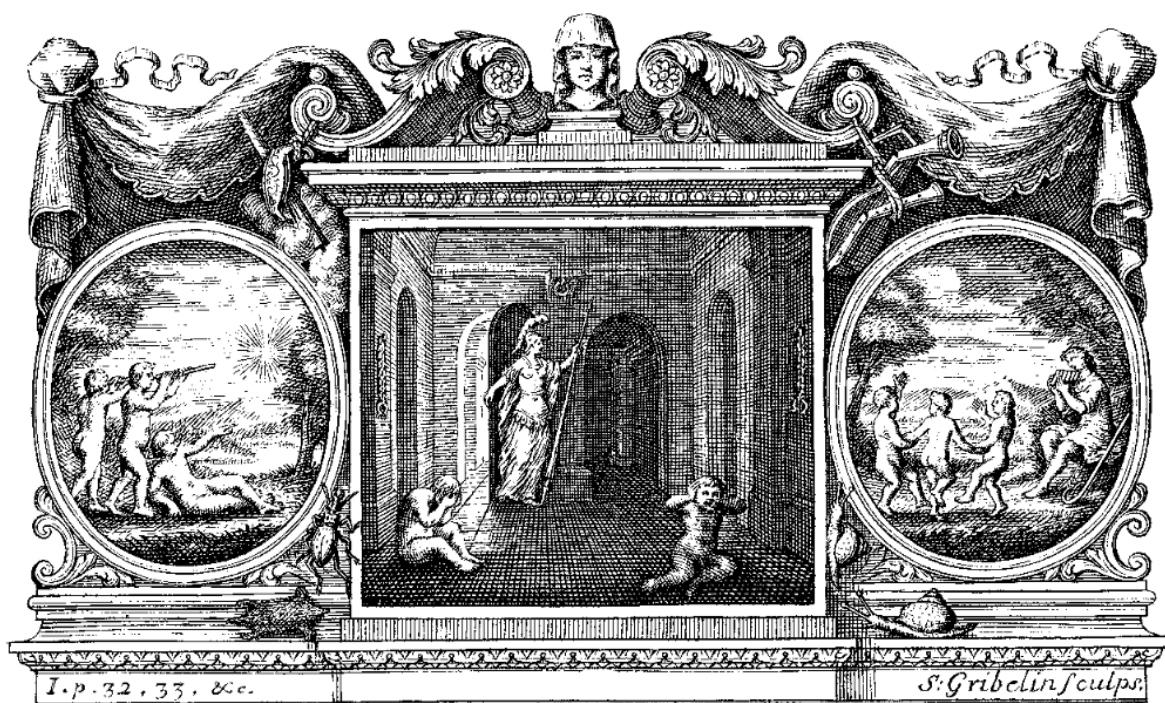

Figure 6. Lord Shaftesbury [Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury] (1714), *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Vol. 1, London: John Darby, illustration by Simon Gribelin accompanying *A Letter*

Concerning Enthusiasm.

A final image I would like to discuss is the *Dipintura*, the allegorical engraving that opens the second edition of Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova* commissioned to Domenico Antonio Vaccaro.

Figure 7. Vico, Giambattista (1744), *Principj di Scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni,*

Napoli: Muziana, frontispiece by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro.

As in Shaftesbury, we have here an attempt to visually summarise the content of the work through a complex allegory which is followed by an explanation. In fact, the *Spiegazione della Dipintura* (the explanation of the painting) constitutes the introduction of the *New Science*: it is a long and detailed *ekphrasis* - a verbal description of a visual element - in which every symbol assumes a precise meaning in relation to the concepts that Vico will elaborate in the text (Crasta, 2019). In Vico's words, the purpose of this introduction is to make the reader conceive l'*Idea dell'opera* (the idea of the work) before reading it and to summarise it with the help of imagination and memory after reading. It must be remembered in this regard that Vico is always attentive to etymologies and therefore the visual meaning of the term idea - from the theme of ἰδεῖν "to see" - must be considered.

Moreover, the *Dipintura* is connected with a minor image placed on the title page. In this illustration we can see the same allegory of the metaphysics - the women with the winged temples - present in the major one, but in a different position and in a more traditional iconic representation: it is no coincidence that this is the same allegory of science we found in Ripa's *Iconologia*. Indeed, as the inscription on the altar also indicates - *Ignota latebat* (she was hidden unknown) - the minor image shows metaphysics as polemically understood by Vico before his proposal of a new science: a purely speculative activity and thus the producer of mere abstractions (Verene, 1987).

Figure 8. Vico, Giambattista (1744), *Principj di Scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle*

nazioni, Napoli: Muziana, title page.

On the contrary the *Dipintura* shows metaphysics as the mediator of the divine and the civil world, and in this way as a moment of connection between the determinism of providence and human action. Vico and Vaccaro, construct the drawing dynamically: first of all, it is metaphysics that rises up outside itself, as Vico writes "in an act of ecstasy", contemplating the triangle, god, no longer in a specular mediation, but trough a frontal gaze. Her attribute is no longer the mirror but a convex jewel - placed on her breast - capable of projecting the ray of providence towards the temporal world of human institutions.

In this regard, some evident iconographic sources can be identified. Firstly, it is easy to see how the *Dipintura* takes up a figurative scheme typical of Baroque painting and remotely modelled from Raphael's famous *Transfiguration*. Within this scheme, the upper part, depicting the empyrean sphere, presents more essential and clean forms, as well as a more diffuse luminosity, in contrast to a lower part, the human world, characterised by convulsive movements and dominated by irregular *chiaroscuro*. Within this figurative scheme, it is therefore the light element, radiating from top to bottom, that creates the dynamic tension between the two halves of the image. On this particular dialectic of light and darkness, the Neapolitan school of painting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concentrated its research, giving rise to a well-defined style whose traces can be seen in the *Dipintura*.

From the point of view of frontispieces, such a pictorial structure proves to be extremely adequate to express the metaphysical theme of light, as evident in the scientific and erudite Jesuitic literature, well known by Vico. An important example is the frontispiece of Athanasius Kircher's, *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1646), a treatise on optical phenomena. These images are presented in their compositional form as variations on the theme of light, understood as a physical reality and, at the same time, as a condition of knowledge, transmitting from side to side through the play of reflections and refractions, highlighting the subjects that will be revealed by the unfolding of the text (Lomonaco, 2019).

Figure 9. Kircher, Athanasius (1646), *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae*, Roma: L. Grignani, frontispiece by Pierre Miotte.

In fact, the principal dynamic element in Vico and Vaccaro's *Dipintura* is the beam of light that connects the three planes of the image, the three worlds: the metaphysical world, the natural world (symbolized by the globe) and the civil world, all the symbols placed on the ground. We can in this respect distinguish three different movements: the vertical movement of the providential ray, the horizontal movement of the evolution of nations (each symbol represents a moment, a stage in civil progress) but also a third movement 'of depth', from the barbarism to the figures representing social institutions (Saint Girons, 2011). The barbarism is represented by the forest, the *selva*, the confused set of trees in the background, on the right of the image, behind the urn, under the globe. In fact, in his explanation, Vico often repeats that the figures come out from the background, they 'emerge' from a shapeless matter.

I will not focus on individual "hieroglyphs".[269] I will simply point out that these are divided into groups. Around the altar are the oldest symbols, those connected with primordial religious rituals. Further on there are symbols related to the fundamental inventions of agriculture (the plough), writing (the alphabet table) and navigation (the rudder). In the foreground, instead, we have hieroglyphs representing the subsequent establishment of political, economic and military power. It is rather on another, more general aspect that I intend to dwell briefly upon and to conclude.

The main theme of the *Scienza nuova* is precisely the emergence of human society - cultural productions such as religion, law, science - through the construction of images; what Vico calls "poetic wisdom", represented in the *Dipintura* by the statue of Homer - the second anthropomorphic figure of the engraving - on which the light beam finally rests. The entire reasoning is in fact based on the assumption that the only sphere that man can really know is the "civil world" because he has made it: so, the principles of a new science of the civil world must be found in what Vico calls the "modifications of human mind". In fact, the origin of the institutions is identified with a creative act: by "poetical" he means the modes of expressions used by the earliest human beings who constructed the "civil world" through "mute acts", pictorial representations that portray ideas by establishing an analogy between images and concepts. It is in this way that Vico elaborates his genealogy of civilisation as an 'iconology'

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[269] This is the word used by Vico to define the set of symbols in the engraving.

of the human mind (Vitiello, 2002). In fact, the construction and understanding of the world takes place through "imaginative universals" - among which we can include "mute acts" - attempts to refer to whole classes of entities without the aid of proper general terms but through the use of particular images. This is the role of myths and fables, and also of the gods of the polytheistic system. In this sense, the *Dipintura*, synthesising the birth and the evolution of the civil world in a visual representation, can be considered a meta-image.

However, Vico does not invite his reader to identify with the archaic structure of mind, with "poetical wisdom". The image here is no longer the unique and total expression of thought: but the combination of image and word becomes necessary. Rather, he seems to demonstrate how images in the modern era can still fulfil the task of expressing conceptual content, proposing a new alliance between imagination and reason. This consideration leads again to the problems stated at the beginning of this presentation on the ways of connecting pictorial and philosophical ideas. The solution that seems to be emerging here concerns the insertion of a dynamic element into the image capable of overcoming the static nature of allegory in function of a visual reading that follows the movement of thought. The meaning of the *Dipintura* is not in the individual allegories and symbols, but in their interconnection, in the movement contained in the image, in the play of contrasts and combinations: the understanding of this engraving responds to a constructivist logic according to which the reader-observer is led to retrace the process of composition of the drawing and thus the evolution of the civil world represented in the image.

The *Dipintura* seems to make explicit something common to each of the cases considered: the effort to translate thought into image is expressed in an articulated composition that attempts to free the image from its apparently 'still' nature. Understood in this way, the experimentation with images that we observed in these philosophical engravings can provide an additional tool for understanding the nature of the images and their relation with abstract thought in more general sense.

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Revisiting the concept of the end of art

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ABSTRACT. This paper reanalyses the issue and the concept of the end of art as a biased, ambiguous and (from the aestheticians´ point of view) controversial phenomena. The aim of the paper is not to place the end of art in different era, or to concrete artistic tendency, but to analyse and refocus on the issue of the end of art as such. Central part of the paper is the assumption that in order to evaluate the problem correctly, we must first accept the end of art as a purely theoretical concept, with all its connotations and implications. Afterwards we can approach the issue more critically. The issue of the end of art will be dealt with on two levels. At the first level we will identify all the situations that can be understood as an aspect(s) of the end of art; concretely the paper will introduce ontological, axiological, historical, interpretational and receptional end of art/situation of the end of art. The second part of the paper will build upon the argument that our history is full of these situations, and that we can understood the end of art, under certain condition, as a milestone of the history of art.

1. Introduction

The development of fine art of the 20th Century can be defined by at least three significant theoretical concepts: the death of the author (Barthes, 1977),[271] the poetics of open work (Eco,

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[271] When Roland Barthes (1977) wrote his famous essay *The death of the Author* (published first in 1967) he focused on the rising issue of the place of the recipient in the existence of art. His approach tried to highlight that the "source of the artwork" is based no more only on the intention, activity, and mental state of the author. He was not trying to say that authors are dead or not important anymore, but that this concept, and this role of it in the ontology and epistemology of art, is no longer dominant.

1989)[272], and the end of art (Danto, 1984).[273] All three of them have the same basis: abandoning and questioning the traditional concepts and notions of the theory of art. They react to the rejection of the classical structures and forms of art, and represent a similar mode of thinking that identifies a necessary and incoming change in art, and its further theoretical revision.

Even if the death of the author and the poetics of open work are, to some extent, present in the thoughts about the end of art (they cover the axiological and ontological issue of the end of art as a concept), and they are a reaction to some aspects of the situation that initiated the concept of the end of art, the paper will explicitly focus only on the end of art as a concept and will work with the other two concepts only to the extent of exploring this issue. Another reason to write only about the end of art is the fact that the end of art, with its Hegelian tradition, almost romanticist melancholy, and a dialectic of "new" (inferior) and "old" (extraordinary valuable) was, with its controversy, maybe the most visible, and, at the same time, least discussed concept. At the same time, the discourse of the end of art did not bring any productive perspective (with some exceptions[274]), because theoreticians were divided into two groups: a) the critical group of theoreticians that agreed with the absence of quality in contemporary art (therefore a group of theoreticians that confronted/compared old and new forms of art) and b) the group of theoreticians claiming that the outcome of the theory was based on the wrong choice of methodology, and declined the validity of the theory of the end of art.

In recent years, we can see a growing interest (Wolek, 2022) in the issue of the end of art, maybe determined by the new situation in the art world, especially the discussion about AI

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[272] *Open Work* (published first in year 1962) has neither axiological meaning nor axiological nature: it is not an alteration for aesthetic or any other value. Openness, understood as the fundamental indeterminacy of an artistic message, is a constant of every work in every age, and is not a tendency that only emerged with modern paintings. The structure of open work must be seen as a general model that describes not just a group of artworks, but a group of artworks in a particular receptive relationship to their recipients. The first prerequisite for any possibility of the existence of an open work is the understanding of the artwork as a malleable mode. Openness, which in Eco's (1989) understanding, is an adequate label for the new dialectic between work and performer, must be understood in relation to conventions.

[273] We need to distinguish between the concept of the end of art, and the end of the history of art (Belting, 1987), even if the second one is a direct derivation of the first one or rather a disciplinary reaction to the first one. Belting argued that the crisis in art is a direct reaction of the inner issues within the disciplines of the history of art, and that the discipline as such, need to be reviewed and renewed.

[274] It is highly questionable whether Danto's classification of art, through the optics of the end of art, can be considered a productive contribution, since he was only developing his own approach. His identification of post historical art, on the other hand, is a useful way of identifying new poetic and a great contribution to the issue on the definition of art (see Danto, 2014).

art, and therefore a need for new ontology or different and more "stable" (maybe humanist) definition of the art. As a significant contribution to this issue, we can name the translation of Danto´s *After the end of art* into Czech (2021), growing interest in Danto by Šárka Lojdová (2019, 2023) or Raquel Cascales (2019) the Prešov project (2018-2020)[275] focused on the revision of the concept of the end of art based of Hegel´s thoughts that produced, for example, some publications about the real contribution of Hegel´s thoughts in this concept (Kvokačka, 2018), about different productive methodology to avoid the end of art as a real danger for art (Makky, 2019a; Sošková, 2018, 2019), and papers trying to find the historical, axiological, and theoretical beginning of this concept (Makky, 2018a, 2018b; Migašová, 2018), and some revision of the concept itself (Makky, 2019b). The evaluation and actualization of the concept is, therefore, necessary, but this "rethinking" should not be just an actualization in the "date" of the end of art as was Danto´s (1984) thinking an actualization of Hegel's thoughts and his triads.[276] The system and mechanism of the end of art as such needs to be evaluated and critically reviewed.

Therefore, the end of art, is understood in this paper as a declaration of artistic decline,[277] or identification of such an intensive and dynamic change in art that it forced various theoreticians to reminisce "melancholically" towards "old" art and despise new art.[278] We can assume that the announcement of the end of art, is a reaction, or outcome, of the identification of a big change, or even main transformation of art, and is, in some sense, a response to this future change/crisis. At the same time, it may be a theoretical reaction to the intangibility of "the new", "the different", and the inability to propose a functional methodology for further

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[275] The title of the project, led by the late Jana Sošková, was 150 Years of the "End of Art" in Reflections and Analyses of Philosophical, Aesthetic and Art Theories.

[276] Hegel (1975) considered that the final stage (note that he speaks about *final stage*, not definitive stage) of the evolution of the art, self-awareness of absolute spirit, was the period of romantic art, but Arthur Danto (1984) assumed, instead, that the end of art arrived with Andy Warholl and his *Brillo box* (1964). Hegel was convinced that the absolute spirit cannot any longer evolve in the field of art, but Danto has different reasons to set the end of art in the 20th century. The same concept, different approach, reasoning, and motivation.

[277] The disillusionment with cultural development and the subsequent harsh criticism of actual artistic production is not an achievement of the twentieth century, but appeared long before Hegel announced the end of art, despite the fact that in his case it was not a reaction to the level of criticism and value standards of art (see Makky, 2018a, 2018b and Winckelmann, 1986).

[278] Too much criticism leads to the idea of art's failure, as evidenced by the very concept of the end of art. Jana Sošková concluded that the end of art was (and therefore probably always will be) only the announcement of an axiological crisis that manifested itself in society and which art naturally tried to reflect or was affected by (Sošková, 2010, p. 118).

understanding or research of art. Within this frame of thinking, there is not only one possible issue, or reason, that can conclude in the identification of the end of art, and I am convinced that these reasons can result in different scenarios, classifications, or understanding (maybe even the acceptance) of the end of art. The purpose of the paper is therefore a revision of the concept of the end of art, with the hypothesis that we need to accept and understand the end of art as a possible milestone in the history of art, and as a solely theoretical concept but I would like to stress that this revision will be not a reconstructive kind of approach, summarising every respected authority in the given issue. The aim of the paper is not to decide whether the end of art truly appeared and was reality once, in other words, whether Hegel, Danto, Belting, or others were right, or wrong, but to analyse different aspects of the theoretical construct of the end of art, and their consequences in the understanding of art development.

Any new, or actualised, approach of the concept of the end of art needs to be based on four arguments:

A) the critique of the concept of the end of art cannot result from a biased position, but from a correct non-unilateral examination of art and its theoretical grasp;

B) the rejection or the acceptance of the end of art has to work with a complex, correct, and specific object of examination (art) which has to be theoretically defined and classified. A definition of art (even a working definition) is a condition/requirement of such a formulated theoretical aim;[279]

C) the analysis of the end of art also requires a theoretical examination of its beginning and development, for which an examination of the conditions of the birth of art and of the forms in which it existed *at the beginning* are needed;[280]

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[279] The definition of art has always been discussed by theorists in some form or another, but the discourse had never gained such intensity in the past as after Weitz's (1956) critique of the possibility of definitions of art. The essentialist and anti-essentialist camps embarked on a sharp critique of each other and brought forth several approaches (institutionalist, functionalist, contextualist, cluster definition…), mostly based on necessary and sufficient conditions, i.e. on precisely the criteria that Weitz rejected and questioned. The debate on the definition of art is not yet over, it has just been muted for a while, but the current situation around AI art raises a new need for definitions (see, e. g.: Davies, 1991; Stecker, 2013).

[280] The origin of art also determines, from a definitional (Levinson, 1979) and ontological point of view, the moment that determines the future direction. In fact, it is not the moment itself that is important, but the activity from which art originated, if it did not originate as a separate specific activity (cult, dance, increasing the chances of survival, reducing stressors) and the reasons for this origination or profiling of artistic activity (see Davies, 2010, 2012; Dyssanayake, 1995, 2009).

D) the examination of the end of art requires an analysis of those transformative processes which could have been determining or colliding, and not only stating a specific deviation and examining of the final phenomenon and situation.

Even if these four arguments are crucial for the revision of the concept of the end of art, the paper cannot analyse them separately, or defend their logic. In this paper, they are simply a background for further analysis, and the aim of the paper is not to discuss them. I will bear in mind that if we want to rethink the concept of the end of art, we need to accept it only as a concept, and try to work with it, not necessary argue, that it's misleading or wrong. This acceptance can create a different viewpoint in the evaluation of the concept, but it can also open some argumentative options. The aim of the paper will be fulfilled in two parts. The first part will identify all the situations that can be understood as an aspect of the end of art. I will argue that if we decide to accept the end of art, we cannot express it as the "final stage of art" but as a way of narration (Danto, 2014), expressing the situation in the art world, or as an identification of change in the art world. I will therefore argue that we can identify different ends of art, or a different situation of the end of art. The second part of the paper will build upon the argument that our history is full of these "ending" situations, but that does not mean that the end of art as the final stage of the evolution of art is real, rather that the development of art is full of different successes and "errors", or, seemingly, errors. This attitude does not change even if we consider AI art.

2. The ends of art or multiple/different situation of the end of art

Usually, Hegel, Danto, and Belting are considered to be representatives of the theory of the end of art, but their approach can be defined only as the identification of the axiological and historical limits of art. However, if we accept the end of art as of form of a criticism of new and different art forms, the development of art, or the outcome of such criticism, we need to analyse all the different reasons for such a critique, or different motivations for theoreticians to announce the end of art or authors that helped with the identification of possible art crisis. Furthermore, those reasons are not just axiological or historical. The forthcoming distinction is an outcome of analysing more theorists than just Hegel, Danto, or Belting who explicitly

named the end of art, and is also the outcome of analysing of an approach by authors with the same logic of art criticism, but without the explicit announcement of the end of art. Authors belonging to the analysed material are for example: Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, Jan Joachim Winckelmann, Umberto Eco, James Elkins, Wolfgang Welsch and others. We can identify different situations of the end of art, or different aspects of the end of art, that are present thorough of the history of art, and theory as such. Those situations of the end of art are: (a) ontological, (b) axiological, (c) historical, (d) interpretative, and (e) receptive.

2.1 The ontological end of art, or the ontological situation of the end of art

Based on the approach of Georg Didi-Huberman (2006), one can speak of two beginnings, or rather of dualistic beginning, of art history.[281] However, if art history began twice, at least one of them must have ended, or both existed at the same time.[282] Walter Benjamin anticipated this when he concluded that art history did not exist. He demanded that art history should finally begin, or rather begin to exist again. That is to say, they began to exist again in the form, as Benjamin writes, of a "history of the works of art themselves" (Didi-Huberman, 2006, pp. 96). Having said that, Benjamin is not merely asking for the history of art to begin anew, he is purposely searching for his own object of history. He asks for the being of art and questions its actual existence, or he questions the ontological status of art and demands a revision of the history of art. In fact, he does not want "art history to really begin", but for a new art to emerge that will confidently answer the challenge of the reproductive arts (Benjamin, 2008), and for art history to begin to write about this new art. In his theory, the existence of art depends on two categories: (1) here and (2) now, which determine the originality of a work of art and guarantees its existence. In order for art to be the subject of history, it must exist and exhibit specific features that distance (and classify) it from other physical and metaphysical realities. When Benjamin demands the preservation of an aura that determines the originality and unmistakability of the artwork, he is demanding not only uniqueness, but also an ontological

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[281] The history of art began twice: first with Pliny the Elder and a few centuries later with Giorgio Vasari (Didi-Huberman, 2006).

[282] If one history of art disappeared, it had to be replaced by another history (perhaps not in the sense of the ancient understanding of art). Belting's (1987) thesis of the end of art history then has merit and justifies the revisionist conceptions of art history that emerged in the 1980s calling for the emergence of a new art history (Kesner, 2005).

guarantee of the specific existence of the artwork (Benjamin, 2008). He describes the whole danger of the extinction and decline of art through a critique of technical reproducibility, which distorts and 'dissolves' the aura of the work of art. The ontological certainty that the work of art, at least ostensibly, brought with it is disrupted by the admission of the reproductive arts, [283] and the whole concept of art is called into question. By this disposition and this danger, he identifies the ontological hazard to the existence of art, and therefore identifies situation, that is, in the paper, explained as an ontological situation (danger) of the end of art.

The ontological situation of the end of art occurs when art loses its being, its characteristic features, its uniqueness, its identity; its aura. It is most visible when we are unable to distinguish the original from the copy, or even from some object of everyday use. The ontological base of the work of art is therefore questionable, because the identity, and essence of the work of art extinguishes/disappears. In the Heideggerian (2014) sense, art loses what its source is and what creates it. In the Benjaminian sense, it is the absence or disappearance of the essential quality, the "fine thread" that connects all art across time to its original nature, when art was an instrument of the cult and was closer to religion than to art in the true sense of the word. Once art loses its specificity and uniqueness, a situation can arise that, when two similar objects are placed side by side, not only can we not tell which is the original and which is a copy/falsification, we don't even dare to determine which of those objects is art and which is not. Such an end of art can occur in two cases:

1) the work loses its contextual specificity and is no longer part of the art world: it loses its value and justification to be considered art,

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[283] "From a photographic plate, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense" proclaims Walter Benjamin (2008, pp. 24-25), revealing the problem that "technical reproducibility" implies for art history and its development. A serious ontological problem of the identity (or commensurability) of the value of the original and its copy emerges. Benjamin rejects this possibility altogether, or questions the consideration of the original copy. Martin Heidegger (2014), on the other hand, argues that correspondence to beings has long been taken to be the essence of truth. Heidegger's account of reproduction gives the possibility to think about correspondence. About the correspondence between the original and the copy or the original copy and, from an aesthetic perspective, it is important; from an artistic perspective, the copy is not so serious and thus Heidegger puts the aesthetic and the artistic in polarity. The problem is that, paradoxically, the existence of art need not then be tied to the original, and thus art becomes even more elusive. Nelson Goodman (1976) refuses to identify the aesthetic value of the original and the copy, no matter how identical the fake looks. According to him, the mere fact that there is an aesthetic difference between two seemingly identical images is reason enough to search for an aesthetic difference (Goodman, 1976).

2) the specification of art loses its identity and the interchangeability of two seemingly identical objects is quite normal.[284]

2.2 Axiological situation of the end of art, or axiological end of art

In the interaction and reflection of contemporary art, we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, art is ascribed lofty ideals (based on classical art),[285] often understood as conditions for the definition and existence of art, and at the same time, contemporary art is unable to fulfil them; on the other hand, art as such has lost its significance and social (not historical) justification or reach and critical energy/responsibility towards society. In this respect, it is very easy to perceive the failure of art, since "As is clearly seen in the case of painting, the more reduced the social impact of an art form, the more widely criticism and enjoyment of it diverge in the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, while the truly new is criticized with aversion" (Benjamin, 2008, p. 36).

The intention of moving towards an ideal (whatever we imagine by it in the classical or modern sense, it is always a goal to be attempted to be fulfilled), towards some central value of art, is in itself, limiting and determining, or temporally expiring. Winckelmann (1986), as the theorist who turned his attention to ancient art and in effect predetermined the future direction and limits of "our" art, speaks of the perfection of art by its constant pursuit of the ideal of beauty as its own goal of fulfilment. In his preference for Greek art, which alone reached the pinnacle of artistic creation and thus became an eternal ideal worthy of following (it is an artistic realization that reached as close as possible to the (Platonic) ideal of beauty and offered the recipients an approximate but still obscured idea of the goal), he identified several limits of "Western art". On the one hand, it is the very notion of the goal itself, which is of a past nature, and such art will always be bound by a certain time, space, and cultural schema;

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[284] It can be clearly seen that the problem of the ontological indeterminacy of art, or the ontological moment of the end of art, is closely related to the definition and impossibility of defining art in relation to other realities. In this way, the definitional problem and the issue of the possible announcement of the end of art constantly support and nourish each other. This problem has reappeared in a new and significant way with the advent of AI art.

[285] Already, in antiquity we can see three basic ideals of human existence that had not left us even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is the good (ethics), truth (philosophy), and beauty (art), which were often merged in a single ideal. Winckelmann believes that art is an essential part of our existence and elevates us to the better (Stromšík, 1986, p. 26), demonstrating exactly this way of thinking and programmatically subscribing to the ancient tradition (Winckelmann, 1986, p. 123).

on the other hand, it is the belief in the existence of an ideal that can be successfully fulfilled or achieved: one is accustomed to speak of a golden age. This is a logical error in reasoning and a real assumption of the axiological failure of art.

The axiological situation of the end of art was thoroughly demonstrated by Arthur Danto (2003), who, in fact, tried, in his approach, to identify a new "ideal" model of art, which, in his view, could be not based on beauty any longer. In fact, the result of his research and examination was a state of disappointment, since he found the new ideal and model even fell into a definitional crisis, but clearly came to the conviction that beauty had long since ceased to be the dominant category of art. His scepticism stemmed from a more "classical" conception of beauty, and he was unwilling to admit any other view, thus coming to the conviction that art was finished.

In determining any values of art (whether they are exclusively artistic and aesthetic, or otherwise), we may, sooner or later, come to believe that art does not meet our expectations, given that art is constantly transforming. It follows that if we live by the praise of past art, we live in error and self-deception; if we live in understanding with contemporary art, we are open to possibilities and cannot slip into a regressive conception of art (as a result of the failing of the linear/progressive understanding of art). The idea of some ideal is always treacherous. In the pursuit of it, in the event of failure, disappointment, and criticism of the failing practice sets in. In the case of achieving the ideal, there is the unexpected belief in the inadequacy of the ideal's requirements or the notion of identifying a mistaken ideal because it was so easy to achieve. The ideal imposes expectations that cannot be achieved; otherwise, it would not be an ideal, and therefore the true ideal cannot be reached in any way.

2.3 The historical situation of the end of art, or historical end of art

Winckelmann (1986), to a certain extent, also caused the possibility of the existence of a historical situation of the end of art, when he accepted the art of ancient Greece as the eternal model of European art. The problem is not in his choice, since ancient art has been preserved to a large extent and has inspired other European art, i.e., it has served as a model for a long time. The problem is partly in his logic. He does not look at antiquity (specifically Greek classicism) merely as a golden age of art, but as a model to be imitated and renewed, as an ideal to which we can only aspire. In his conception, Winckelmann condemned Western art to

constant striving, with no possibility of a successful end. He essentially closed art into an unsolvable loop. Finally, the great emphasis on repeating what had already been said and on copying past forms and models is a textbook example of what the end of art entails. If we follow Winckelmann's delineated reasoning, we condemn art because we can consider ancient art, which was the (unrepeatable) golden age of art, as the only existing ideal, even though we should continue to work towards it. Quite simply, we must fail in the historical sense. Such a direction can only lead to a repetition of what was already there and cannot bring new forms. If the aim of art is to copy, then art is doomed by the expression of this conviction, but if art were merely to be inspired by ancient art and to approach its "elusive" aura, then the situation would be quite different.

Winckelmann:

a) closed the history of art into a loop of repetition of a certain pattern that could not be achieved;

b) accepted only the repetition and imitation of the Greek classics as if the imitation of other models would lead to failure;

c) in ignoring the differentiation between the original "Greek" art (Pliny) and our condescendingly labelled Western art (Vasari), the fallacy of identifying Western art with the whole range of art of the Greek classics was created (see Makky, 2018).

The historical end of art or the historical moment of the end of art occurs at the moment when the historical role assigned to art (by someone)[286] is emptied or fulfilled. In the same way, it can be said that the historical end of art depends on the optics (the moment and place)[287] of the

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[286] In this regard, we are faced with institutional mechanisms that must be approved and accepted by social instances. The role of art cannot be determined by just anyone, and in this respect, it is not elitist. Let us assume that the historical role of art can only be determined by a theoretician who is devoted to the issue and whose conception is based on an understanding and appreciation of art. However, this is not enough. It is only through theoretical acceptance and followers (direct or later) that a theory gains credibility and enters the knowledge or world of art (see Dickie, 1974).

[287] Just imagine a situation where the history of art would not have begun with Pliny the Elder, or Giorgio Vassari (as Didi-Huberman notes), or even in a Western world setting, but, for example, had been formulated by Egyptian scholars of the ancient world. If such writings were the basis of an understanding of art, if they articulated the

formulation of the theory or history of art, and therefore it can be assumed that any theoretical formulation of the goals of art, leads to its end, if the theorist and cultural practice is not willing to accept any transformation of the established forms or processes. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1975) is the theorist who (perhaps first) drew attention to the historical end of art, which comes about through the fulfilment of art's historical function.[288] Its historical function is determined by the three stages of the artistic representation of spirituality, that is, by the threefold relation of the idea to its formation (Hegel, 1975), and when art reaches the last stage and is no longer able to do more, for the sake of the absolute spirit, its duties must be taken over by religion. The finitude and triadic nature of his thinking does not change the fact that he chose to determine what function art is historically meant to fulfil, but art does not, then, end in the intent of this thought because it is unable to achieve its goal, but paradoxically, precisely because it has achieved it. However, the other goal (historical, idealistic) of art no longer exists. Art is unmasked in its culminating phase, since the very development of art leads to the realization of the lack which it contains (Hegel, 1975). The historical moment of the end of art is, then, a response to the exhaustion of its own goal, but it is not set by art itself, but by someone outside the world of art.

2.4 Interpretational situation of the end of art or interpretative end of art

Umberto Eco (1989), with his *Open Work*, disrupted the integrity and permanence of art and aptly pointed to its openness, instability, and dynamism: thus, all the attributes that goes against any attempt by theorists to grasp and "stabilize" the work of art. At the same time, he pointed to the inclusive nature of the boundaries of the artwork, which requires and needs its own interpretation. I have never claimed (as a proponent of Eco's approach) that, without interpretation, a work of art does not exist at all, I merely assumed that it is not complete in its totality: it is disembodied and loses something essential. Interpretation can present a work of

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ideals of art and its desired goals, it is conceivable that the current form of art would be moving in a different direction.

[288] Hegel (1975) also identified another moment when art leaves its contours, or rather its designated place. This is a situation in which more ideas enter into art (as they should), as art incites judgements in us. "The philosophy of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (Hegel, 1966, p. 11). The situation described here arises when art becomes complicated and breaks out of its established (normative) understanding or deviates from the development or goal that has been explicitly set for it.

art in an entirely new perspective or offer diametrically opposed findings depending on the perspective that is taken in experiencing the work of art. For this reason, in relation to the proclaimed interpretive end of art, we are interested in two borderline/extreme cases of aesthetic interpretation entering the scope of the artwork and its ontological being: (1) absence, (2) overexposed presence of the interpretative possibilities.

We can, thus, speak of a dualistic interpretational end of art. The first situation speaks of the failure of interpretation and the absence of new meanings, or the preservation of form and aesthetic experience, the loss of layers of meaning; the second possibility speaks of exactly the opposite situation. So many interpretative conclusions are made or can be made, or are accepted that the original artefact loses its shape and its form is as if it had been interpretively overcome and distorted. In the first case, the work of art disappears for the reason that it is transformed into a mere proof of human skill that has nothing to say. The testimony is obscured, and we end up identifying individual shapes or stimuli but are unable to uninterpret the whole. It is merely a matter of describing the formal component of the artwork, or of explaining the primary/obvious meanings (in Panofsky's dictionary, of revealing the pure forms). Contemporary art is so complex that it requires "particular involvement on the part of the audience, contemporary poetics merely reflects our culture´s attraction for the 'indeterminate'. For all those processes which instead of relying on univocal, necessary sequence of events, prefer to disclose a field of possibilities, to create 'ambiguous' situations open to all sorts of operative choices and interpretations" (Eco, 1989, p. 44), and this is how we arrive at the second situation, or the possibility of the interpretative end of art.[289] A work of art is as much the result of individual interpretations as it is a result of contextually determined facts and the efforts of the author, but if the meaning, findings, and conclusions are layered to such an extent that they completely obscure the work of art, a collapse occurs. In such a situation, the artwork represents the overlay of the interpretive planes of the received object, thus altering the range

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[289] The second situation is directly linked to the problem of the limits of interpretation, which has been dealt with at length by Umberto Eco (1989, 1991) and Culler (1992), and immanently raises the question of the openness of the work of art. The problem of boundaries (the rights of the interpreted object), or the problem of over-interpretation, is primarily related to the notions of "unbounded semiosis" (based on Peirce) and "hermetic drift" (Eco, 1989; 1991, pp. 23-26; 2010, pp. 65-105). Briefly, one could solve the problem by arguing: to say that a text/artifact/phenomenon is potentially semantically unbounded is not identical with the belief that interpretation is not governed by any rules or boundaries. It always has an object, and its containment does not consist only in the realization of the interpretative act (Eco, 1992).

of its meaning, sense, and, often, form. It is as if it is no longer necessary to find out what semantic nuances the perceived object actually evokes, and which are additionally created by the recipients or merely (in the intentions of institutional theory and practice) by the space and context of display or the manner of presentation. The loading of new meanings is not a problem at all. The problem is when the original artwork disappears and only its interpretations remain.

2.5 Receptional situation of the end of art or receptive end of art

The receptional situation of the end of art, or the reception aspect of the end of art, is the outcome of the interpretive situation. Even if, in the spirit of Eco's theory, the work of art opens itself up to new interpretations, the layering of new meanings can cause over-saturation of the recipient and can lead to the disappearance of the work of art a as part of the art world. Wolfgang Welsch (1990) perceived, identified, and named this situation very clearly. Without explicit warning, he addresses the situation where the aesthetic aspect or the receptivity to the aesthetic aspect of art disappears, the situation when one is over-saturated with different stimuli and suddenly unable to adequately select them. He no longer neither filters nor accepts everything or is immune to everything, which is why Welsch points to an important situation where a certain dimension of the work of art seems to disappear. In fact, he speaks of the symptom of the end of art, when art as a receptive phenomenon disappears from existence. Eco (1989) thinks in a similar way and much earlier than Welsch.[290] As a receptive situation of the end of art, a situation can be identified where we cease to feel (aesthetically), despite the measures we take against it. Then the end of art may occur, but not the end of art as a whole, rather the end of art for us as recipients. The base for this remark is our understanding that the first step towards art is its reception and if this first step in approaching of the work of art disappears, also the art, sooner or later, disappears.

The given distinctions show various moments of the development of art that can be present within some art pieces, or art periods, which, if more situations of the end of art appears

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[290] "The process of aesthetic pleasure is thus blocked and the contemplated form is reduced to a conventional formula on which our overexperienced sensibility can now rest. [...] n fact, it no longer stirs any emotion in us and is thus unable to entice either our imagination or our intelligence into new perceptual adventures. Its form is temporarily exhausted. Often, to rejuvenate our dulled sensibility, we need to put it in quarantine. [...] But time might not be enough to reawaken pleasure and surprise and to resurrect a particular form for us, which means either that our intellectual development has atrophied or that the work, as organization of stimuli. was addressed to an ideal addressee who does not correspond to what we have become" (Eco, 1989, pp. 37-38).

within one work of art, can make it more problematic. Paradoxically, all the mentioned situations are circumstances that are relatively common for art and occur regularly. The end of art is also understood in this sense to be temporary and variable, as a way of failing a certain aspect of art and its naming, but that does not mean that art has ended as a tendency, as a phenomenon, as a process, as a product of human endeavour. Hypothetically, the situation in which all the above-mentioned situations of the end of art come together may occur, and only then can we talk about the end of art as a whole; the definitive end, but I believe that we as a race (if such a situation arises) will not be here anymore since art-like activity is typical for human beings.

3. The End of Art as a Milestone of the History of Art

As was already mentioned, I understand the end of art as a form of theoretical reaction on the contemporary condition of art. However, the end of art, or the identification of multiple situations of the end of art, can be understood as a turning point in the history of art. A turning point in the meaning that traditional art is no longer suitable, and new art forms need to find their recipients and theoreticians.

Walter Benjamin (2008, p. 38) defines the situation of the turning point in art history when he writes: " The history of every art form has critical periods in which the particular form strains after effects which can be easily achieved only with a changed technical standard-that is to say, in a new art form." In the light of constant development, the history of art could be seen as an endless transformation of established rules and forms (see, e.g., Mukařovský, 1966). [291] They are intertwined by the initial rejection of new tendencies by referring to the past (perhaps an anachronism) and their gradual acceptance, which is no longer in the hands of the individual, but of society. The individual (usually the artist, but also a curator, art critic, or other institutional representative [Danto, 1964; Dickie, 1974]) can only submit a work for consideration and hope for its acceptance: institutionalists believe that cultural institutions and their mechanisms of judgement are the arbiters of the acceptance of an artwork (Dickie, 1974).

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[291] One can speak of an alternation of aesthetic norms that represent an artistic tendency or style that has its own internal morphology and rules. The aesthetic norm, (mostly) considered as a rigorous pattern, dynamizes the development precisely by the possibility of its own violation (Mukařovský, 1966; Michalovič, 1997), and thus in the true sense of the word it loses its normativity and turns into a non-norm (Mathauser, 2006, pp. 81-82), which demands novelty and creativity.

However, the real turning point in the development and understanding of art occurs when a new work is innovative to the extent that it creates a contradiction to the preferred artistic practice (it does not build on it, it opposes it in a way), causing a dilemma as to whether or not it should be acknowledged, and is the culminating point of further development.

The definition of individual situations of the end of art can be understood as a mapping of different possible turning points in the development of art, which may have found themselves isolated or in greater concentration. The last question to the problem of the end of art may therefore also be: When did the last end of art occur? Given the historical, ontological, and above all, axiological, situation of the end of art, which has been probably most often understood as a manifestation of the end of art, we should start with ancient and classical art, as that form of artistic tradition, which has, in fact, ended. Having said that, art evolves and transforms by leaps and bounds, not gradually and naturally. Aesthetic norms are violated by works of art and by the activity of authors who have multiple predecessors. They are visionaries not because they are just next in line in a gradually changing art world, but because they somehow "skip" the phases that logically and technically should follow and accelerate the change of art. The aesthetic norm is indeed transformed gradually, but this succession is only an expansion of its boundaries until it is replaced, superseded, and actually shattered by a new aesthetic norm that is never just another form of the old one.

There are many ways and possibilities to identify the reality that has actually changed in art with the advent of modernity and postmodernity, but such an identification would require much greater analyses and even separate studies. Foucault (1994) was convinced that the main principles of western culture are the word and image. He was not alone in this approach, as Mitchell (1994) has thoroughly shown. However, their approach was based on representation as the primary aspect of art. From their point of view, we should consider either the emergence of Impressionism or the exhibition of Duchamp's Fountain (1917) as a turning point in the poetics of art. They can be understood as a subversion of the mimetic principle and an undermining of the formal qualities of art that had been adhered to for centuries; however, it can be assumed that what we are really looking for is not a single moment that changed everything and brought the last end of art, but a so-called transitional period. Be that as it may, I must sketch this line, or at least this period of time, even if it is only a working theory. It could be understood as an illustration of the logic at stake in understanding the end of art, as a

(greater or lesser) landmark in art history. It seems to me that most acceptable is to define the last end of art by two events. The first landmark is the year 1872, when Claude Manet painted his Impression. The dissolution of all mimeticism and the preservation of only reference, which is typical of modern art, or the reduction of resemblance to basic, often even abstract lines, was thus manifested to its greatest extent. The second landmark was in 1895, when the invention of film was presented to the public, which, in contrast to Impressionism, was able to capture an optical likeness, but without investing it with atmosphere, and showed the public that realism in art was dead, and that it was left to speak only of suggestion, denotation, and reference. Mimeticism has disappeared and its function has been taken over by other, new arts. The end of art was therefore not a question of hours or days, but of years, and I am convinced that, just as in 1872, the world of Western art began to crumble definitively and nothing could save it, so, in the same measure in 1895, is there a purging of old art. At least the European scene was ready to build a new art at the beginning of the 20th century and art history could start anew (Didi-Huberman, 2006). If we add to this premise Benjamin's issue of reproducibility as a turning point in our history, then the year 1900 can be defined as the beginning of art after the end of art. However, this was just the last end of art, but I believe, that a similar situation with similar impact on the development of art occurred in the past at least once.[292]

4. Conclusions

The end of art can be understood as:

A) a milestone in the development of art and its history;

B) a critique of art based on the absence of some immanent property/reality of art;

(C) the end: a hypothetical possibility of one end is regular only as a catastrophic scenario).

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[292] The working hypothesis is that there are at least two "ends of art". The ancient tradition as a base for our culture, is not in fact, the first tradition that was responsible for art. We should not forget prehistoric art, so different to ancient art, and so important for the creation of specific "modern" poetics: important on an anthropological base. If we integrate the notion of prehistoric art to the issue, we could create three stages of art history: prehistoric art (art before the beginning of art), the ancient tradition (art before the end of art, or so called "western art") and contemporary art (art after the end of art) (see Makky, 2019).

The paper identifies different situations of the end of art that are based on different reasons of theoretical rejection of some art. These situations are; ontological, axiological, historical, interpretative, receptive. If more than one "situation of the end of art" occurs at the same time, it is regarded as a crisis of the developmental stage of art, and can result in the announcement of the end of art. Small "ends of art" are regular and are commonly understood as a change of the artistic style, or aesthetic norm. The end of art can be understood in this sense as a temporary and variable moment, a way of failing to comment on a certain aspect of art and define it.

All these classifications, possibilities, and hypotheses lead me to conclude some kind of a dualistic conclusion, that probably closes the issue in the best way and presents two possibilities (though optimistic) of perception of the issue:

(1) The (true) end of art has never occurred and even if it has, we do not know about it.

(2) The end of art has occurred so many times that we have become accustomed to it: the smaller ends are, at the same time, new beginnings that create new styles and artistic trends (or are initiated by them), the larger ones are the real historical milestones.[293]

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For the Snark was a Boojum.
Towards a Positive Aesthetics of Literary Nonsense

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ABSTRACT. Literary nonsense plays an uncomfortable role within the systematization of aesthetics: either excluded from the field altogether or forcibly fitted within some other well-established theories, it seems not worth considering on its own. Th aim of my contribution is to take up this challenge by setting up a preliminary positive, and autonomous aesthetics for nonsense. I will discuss the empirical and theoretical reasons for dealing with nonsense on its own and attempt to answer the infamous question "why should we care", by individuating a shift from a logical-semiotic conception to a more fitting and more complex literary one. Then, throughout an analysis of the available definitions, I will draw some formal features that a general definition of nonsense ought to have. In the conclusions, it will become clear that the role of readers, along with their interpreting acts, is crucial in order to assess nonsense both as a genre and as a mode. The primary literary example for my research would be a less known poem by Lewis Carrol – *The Hunting of the Snark* (that was indeed a *Boojum*).

1. Introduction

> As to the meaning of the *Snark*? I'm very much afraid I didn't mean anything but nonsense! Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant. So, whatever good meanings are in the book, I'm very glad to accept as the meaning of the book.[295]

The general aim of my paper is to initiate the construction of an aesthetics for literary

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[295] Comment by Lewis Carroll about the "meaning of the *Snark*", quoted in *The Annotated Snark*, p. 17.

nonsense.[296] Attempts in this direction have already been made, either by incorporating nonsense into more established aesthetic theories or by focusing on the negative aspect of "discomfort".[297] I wish to differentiate from these two approaches by proposing an aesthetics that is both autonomous and positive – the reasons for this will become clear in my discussion. Specifically, I will attempt to answer the following questions, one in each paragraph of my paper.

Why should we care at all? It may seem that nonsense can be dismissed as aesthetically irrelevant since it literally just does not make sense. In the overall conception of aesthetics – in its two forms of philosophy of *aisthesis* and philosophy of art – there may be room for ugliness, disgust, and other negative feelings in relation to a work of art. However, discussing something that, at least at a first glance, completely denies the possibility of aesthetic engagement by breaking the basics of the semiotic triangle, seems pointless. I claim, however, that there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to address this matter.

Why is a definition of nonsense necessary to describe an aesthetics of it, and what should this definition entail? In fact, many discussions about nonsense begin with the cautious claim that "one must not define nonsense" or even the "nonsense cannot be defined at all". This leads to some confusion about what nonsense is and what it is not, creating an *ad hoc* mixture of nonsense, obscure language, invented languages, *roman à clé*, gibberish, paradoxical literature, and so on – with the sole aim to support a specific definition rather than others. For this point, I will propose to start with the clear canon of literary nonsense as a *genre* and then move (and expand) towards nonsense as a *mode*. The proposal for a definition is beyond the scope of this paper, but I still want to show the formal features that such a definition should include.

From the sketch of a "form of a definition", it will become clear that nonsense shift the

[296] I am aware that nonsense is not exclusively literary. However, as it will be clear, is primarily and originally literary, both as a genre and as a mode of shaping language.

[297] This is the operation done by two different authors publishing in the same journal two different papers with the same title *Nonsense* in the spawn of few years – respectively Haight, 1971 and Charlton, 1977 on the "British Journal of Aesthetics". The focus on discomfort emerged instead in a recent special issue of the journal "Translation Studies" (see Lukes, 2019) which focuses on the difficulties of translating nonsense, featuring a variety of contributes (including one by Lecercle himself), all above the general direction set up by Lukes with her incorporation of nonsense within a more general "aesthetics of discomfort". There are several specific studies on the corpus of nonsense – i.e., on Carroll and Lear – most of them lacking a specific analysis of nonsense aesthetics, so not worth considering in this context (a good example being Fordyce & Marello, 1994).

weight of the "game of literature" onto the readers' end. This leads to my final question: how is the reader's experience of a nonsense text? I will attempt to answer this in my conclusion, referring to the general empirical reader (rather than the ideal one) with a descriptive stance (rather than a normative one), showing that a non-trivial understanding of nonsense allows readers to challenge common-sense assumptions about language and meaning by exploring unconventional forms and styles.[298]

Since the topic is literary, I will choose my corpus referring to the literary canon (Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear). The scope of the paper is primarily philosophical; therefore, I will avoid lengthy discussions about the context of the chosen texts.

2. The Unbearable Lightness of Nonsense: why Snarks matter.

A defence of the relevance of nonsense must begin with a simple consideration: philosophers have rarely studied nonsense in any depth. At first glance, it may appear that the problem is not interesting enough to spark one of the intricate debates that philosophers often relish.

The initial conceptualization of nonsense in philosophy came from the philosophers of language, starting with the idea of sense. Sense (*Sinn*), as in Frege's original conception, is the general attributed *expression* (or *mode of presentation*) to a singular term. A term may lack a reference (a real referred object) but still possess a sense, as is the case with fictional characters (Frege, 1948). The simple dualistic Fregean conception of sense was swiftly challenged by Bertrand Russel. While discussing the logical status of sentences involving fictitious or non-existing object, Russel notably simplified the fuzziness of *Sinn-Bedeutung* distinction, proposing a logical analysis of this kind of sentences that makes it much simpler to decide whether they are true or false (Russell, 1905). For Russell, the notion of sense – and its negation – was already superfluous for a logical analysis of language. Another area of philosophy that

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[298] I must confess my own philosophical roots: when I will be talking about readers, what I have in mind is the refined phenomenology of reading proposed by Wolfgang Iser and Robert Jauss and, in general, by the so-called "Constance school". The setting is therefore hermeneutical, with a strong attention towards the readers' end. However, since those references are not specifically relevant for the question here discussed, I will not be dealing further with them. The only disclaimer I think is necessary is that I will be referring primarily to singular empirical readers (as those discussed by Iser and Jauss, but also by Umberto Eco) opposed to the textual structure of the ideal/implicit reader; I will not be referring to interpretive communities and collective groups of readers (as in Stanley Fish).

dealt with the notion of sense differently is semiotics. In the well-established "triangle" theory of language (with various proposals by different authors regarding the vertices of this triangle), sense is associated with the entire proposition rather than a singular name. A sentence "makes sense" if it is possible to perform a semiotic translation of it – i.e., if it is possible to move freely among the three vertices of the triangle. A nonsense sentence is one lacking in either the symbol, the referent (the object), or the mental representation.[299]

However, there is another approach, one I am more sympathetic to, that avoids the confusion between sense and nonsense that occurs in logic: returning to literature. Language is shaped by how we use it, and while attempting a general and universal description may seem appealing, one must always consider linguistics *practices* and *usage*. This point is well-established by the evolution of Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought and, I argue, is relevant for my analysis of nonsense. Starting with what Wittgenstein wrote about nonsense in his first major work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, there is a clear distinction between *sinnlos* (senseless) propositions and *unsinnig* (nonsensical) ones. The second kind are those propositions that cannot possibly be understood, as no sense can be attributed to them (TLP, p. 4.003; 4.461; 4.464; 5.525). Note that this still closely related to the logical-semiotic conception: these propositions *lack* something (as it is clear in the *Preface* as well). Wittgenstein's perspective, however, underwent a significant change in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*, where he introduced the concept of *Sprachspiel* and engaged more directly with literature (for nonsense, particularly the work of Lewis Carroll). Nonsense is no longer just a poorly formed language but one of the many language games with equal standing. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's aim in the PI is to "teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (PI, §464). His philosophical approach is an operation of clarification, intending to present the "patent nonsense" of long-standing philosophical problems in an organized and surveyable manner, providing a common ground for different individuals.

Returning to the question of why we should care about an aesthetical analysis of nonsense, even though it has been largely ignored in recent decades, the distinction between a

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[299] It is worth noting that in some formalization the mental representation *is* called sense; there is much confusion in the terminology, but it will become sufficiently clear when switching to a literary point of view.

"philosophical" concept of nonsense (in logic, philosophy of language, semiotics, etc.) and a "literary" approach becomes crucial. In the former case, the problem is non-existent: nonsense is merely *lacking* something, and the question is to determine precisely what that is. In the latter way, nonsense arises from a linguistic practice still employed in our everyday lives. Its usage implies intentionality and the possibility of a positive analysis, the one I aim to establish in my paper. Nonsense, with its mirror concept of sense, deserves an aesthetical analysis for the simple reason that it is used in certain language games. It is not an accidental deviation from the norm, but involves an intentionality that should be considered, at the very least, on par with the one attributed to other "negative" aesthetic concepts like ugliness and disgust, if not more so, as will become clear in the next paragraph.

So, these are the empirical reasons for addressing the subject. Now, for the theoretical reason, which is somewhat elusive and will be alluded to throughout. There is a prevailing meta-philosophical notion that problems in philosophy should be tackled directly. This seems so trivial that it is rarely questioned. The standard argumentative approach is as follows: I have an idea about something, and I start from something else to demonstrate or persuade that my idea about that something is correct, or at least the best fit. Few philosophers would refrain from taking a stance on "big problems" and developing their own theories and ideas around those subjects.

However, I want to try a different approach here. I want to start from the margins, not because I claim that these margins are indeed the centre or that I seek to methodically perform an epistemic or methodological inversion. I want to begin from the margins – in this case, the negativity expressed in the concept of nonsense – simply because these margins are understudied and unexplored. If something interesting and novel is to emerge in the cartography of a concept, it should not come from another examination of the core, but rather from an exploration of the uncharted borders. This exploration presents new questions: How do these border areas relate to other regions?[300] What are the connections that link these border areas to the core? In this case, investigating the unexplored borders calls for a change in perspective, even in methodology. While philosophy might readily dismiss "something stupid" as nonsense, literature must engage with a clear corpus, a tradition, some formal rules, etc. I

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[300] The cartographic metaphor is again from Wittgenstein, as in PI, §18.

believe this approach may shed new light on some old problems for language, but it is a gamble, and there is no certainty that an extensive study of nonsense will definitively clarify the relationship, for example, between truth and language.

3. "A Sham Corbel that supports Nothing": the Form of a Definition.

So, what is nonsense? I could claim that a definition of nonsense is simply not possible, as Haight suggests. Or I could delve into a lengthy distinction between logical, grammatical, and factual forms of nonsense, as Charlton did. Alternatively, I could attempt a definition of what nonsense *does* since it is a linguistic practice. There are numerous ways to approach the problem: a good sylloge of various proposed definitions is available on the website of one of the few individuals both studying and practicing this matter – Michael Heyman. Among the quoted authors in this compilation are Wim Tigges, Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Heyman himself. A significant advantage of the collected definitions is that they all consider the literary aspect of the problem.

I intend to start from these definitions to outline a path for the quest to find a definition for nonsense. I do believe that a definition is possible, and I do not want to avoid the point, as it is crucial. As John Locke narrates in the "Epistle to the Reader" in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, there is no point in discussing a matter if there is no common agreement on a shared definition, since "the greatest part of the Questions and Controversies that perplex Mankind depending on the doubtful and uncertain use of Words, or (which is the same) indetermined Ideas, which they are made to stand for". A definition is, therefore, essential. A significant portion of my research is precisely devoted to this quest. While I cannot expect to solve the problem here, I will suggest a few formal coordinates of the definition.

Form is relevant for nonsense to the extent that all the definitions in Heyman's collection (and even others not considered) shared some common formal features. However, apart from this very specific reason, I truly believe that the quest for a definition derives its value from the fact that any proposal of a construction (since a description is always a construction) *requires* it. Returning to Wittgenstein again: "Remember that we sometimes demand explanations for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the explanation a kind of sham corbel that supports nothing." (in brackets in PI, §217). Being

formal about a definition means acknowledging the formality of the required definition in the discussion. And, perhaps, a definition of nonsense should be *only* formal and *nothing more* than formal, as we are talking about a language game.

Before listing the common formal features, there is another point to address. As seen, the research field lies within the literary domain – i.e., the direct engagement with a nonsense corpus, rather than the pure logical one. This is because practices precede theory, and literary nonsense is primarily a practice. When discussing literary nonsense, it can be useful to distinguish between (i) the practices as they evolved over decades, creating a sense of "participation" in a *literary genre* and (ii) the practices as a theoretical way of doing something (this seems like a short-circuit), i.e., literary nonsense as a *literary mode*. In the first case the bibliography is rich: starting from the "literalization" of the first logician bound to deal with nonsense in a more analytic way – Ludwig Wittgenstein – to one of the few truly literary philosophers of contemporary times – Gilles Deleuze – who engages with nonsense within his more general theory of the event. Up to the most recent studies on Victorian nonsense – the studies of Susan Stewart, Jean-Jacques Lecercle, and Wim Tigges.

What all these works have in common is the constant reference to a precise *literary canon* written in a *specific language* at a *specific time*. Specifically, the works of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, written in English during the Victorian Age. Of course, there are remarkable differences between the two and it may be interesting to study different iterations of nonsense literature, but I will not cherry-pick when referring to either author. My primary example here will be one of the Carroll's later works: *The Hunting of Snark* (published in 1876 by Macmillan) – not to be talking again about the over-abused *Jabberwocky*.

Now, let's delve into the common formal features of a definition of nonsense:

1. Nonsense is not the opposite of sense. While it is lexically generated by its negation, in Wittgenstein's words, *sinnlos* (without-*sinn*, the opposite of *sinnvoll*, i.e., what has no meaning) is different from *unsinnig* (nonsensical). The field of sense encompasses both sense and non-sense: nonsense makes sense as long as it is the convergence point of the "series" where paradoxes are resolved by defying a binary logic of true and false. Nonsense lives and operates in its dual contradictory position of being both *prima facie* without sense and capable of "giving" sense to

its objects. Nonsense can be seen as the virtual pre-thetic field of possibilities where senses are constructed. For example, the Snark can be a Snark or a Boojum. This does not mean that two types of Snarks exist but simply that, at least in the case narrated by Carroll, "the Snark *was* a Boojum". Simple as that: a *different* logical principle of non-contradiction (versus the typical one where something is either A or not A, and of course a Boojum is not a Snark). The world created by nonsensical fiction is precisely coherent in respecting its own paradoxical rules (although it does not *simply* negate some logical rules).

2. Nonsense is set within a context that readers can somehow apprehend and creates a balance in contradiction by exaggerating some formal elements of language while nullifying others. This is well established by Lecercle and Tigges, with Lecercle referring to it as a "conservative-revolutionary genre". Pure gibberish is not nonsense, but gibberish framed within a context that provides some rules for the language game can be nonsense. Lecercle focuses on the description on how nonsense plays with phonetics, morphology, syntax, and semantics by highlighting how canonical nonsense is as syntactically rigorous as it can be – avoiding solecisms – while being semantically unconventional.[301] The way of hunting a Snark is the following:

You may seek it with thimbles – and seek it with care
You may hunt it with forks and hope;
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
You may charm it with smiles and soap – (Carroll, 1962, p. 56)

The "recipe" for the hunt is described with such syntactical precision that it leaves no space for a semantic freedom: the categorial confusion in the paring of objects

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[301] Lecercle specifically refers to a double way for exploiting the formal elements of language in nonsense: *blanking* and *proliferation*. The most common form of nonsense works by proliferating syntax in order to compensate and expose the blanking in semantics (i.e., incoherence, contradictions, inversions, pastiches, etc.). See Lecercle, 2016, p. 60: "The formal excess of syntax compensates for a semantic (material) lack, or incoherence".

has to be taken as true, since it is precisely clear that for that specific action (seeking, hunting, threatening its life, charming) you do need respectively those things and in that precise parings (thimbles, forks and hope, a railway-share, smiles and soap). The freedom resides in the interpretation: how can someone use "forks and hope" to hunt a creature? The reader is therefore invited to take part in this highly linguistic game.

3. Nonsense is genuinely literary. This seems obvious, but it is always a possibility to analyse something in unexpected ways, referring to other forms of aesthetics and other principles. However, with nonsense, one cannot escape its purely literary nature. Lecercle writes extensively about how a nonsense writer should possess a deep knowledge and understanding of the structures of language to create "good" nonsense. Deleuze also delves into linguistic reflections when dealing with nonsense and paradoxes because "the whole problem lies in knowing whether language itself would be working without those entities" (LdS, XII series, my translation) and focuses much on singular words – *portmanteau* words or exoteric words. Nonsense should be constructed as a concept (i.e., *philosophically* as pointed out by Deleuze and Guattari) starting from a practice (i.e., *literary*). In this sense, as also pointed out by Lecercle in his analysis of Humpty Dumpty's theory of language, the literary practice anticipates (both logically and chronologically) the development of some theoretical philosophical problems.

4. There is a narrow technical definition of nonsense and a broad general one. The narrow definition, as stated before, refers to nonsense as a genre with a specific reference to the canon, allowing a distinction not only from gibberish but also from several nuanced forms of "confusing" literature – such as *littérature à clef*, obscurity, aphasia, surrealism, fictional languages, etc. The general definition hints at a definition as a mode, proposing a kind of "gradient for nonsense" that should encompass all those nuances. A good definition should be clear and informative without being overly narrow, making it useful for the construction of a typology.

Those are the formal traits that appear to be necessary for constructing a definition of nonsense. The construction of such a definition is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I would like to emphasize a common trend in the approach to dealing with nonsense, especially evident in the first two points. It seems that nonsense may be resolved on the readers' end rather than on the writers'. The keywords mentioned in the definitions are "rules", "game", and "interpretation", indicating that the field is inherently hermeneutical. Therefore, a promising direction for the analysis may be to explore how readers participate in this language game. This participation is not a matter of emotion, as different forms of nonsense may elicit various emotions in the readers based on the contexts (e.g., Victorian nonsense for social critique, others for satirical or comical reasons, etc.). It is also not solely a matter of construction, as even gibberish can become nonsense in the right context, just as "Snark" is gibberish if we are not aware of 1876 Carroll's book. I will summarize this direction in my conclusion.

4. Conclusion: a Game of Nonsense

Reading nonsense is not a linguistic reading but rather a *lalangue*-istic reading (to use a Lacanian concept): it is neither a "private" language nor a fully public structured language. It has a link with our everyday language (conversation, child's play, etc.)[302], yet it poses some threats to the classical theories of communication (cooperative Gricean theory)[303]. What emerges is a "new order", i.e., a new reality. A reality in which we know (we get the meaning, i.e., we understand what it is said) that it does not mean what is uttered. It is not the case that we read what the author means (since it is *nonsense*), and the author does not mean what they say (since there is a shift between the sign and the referent, which in nonsense is unamendable). It seems that, in true nonsense, we read what the author *did not* mean: i.e., we are reading something else.[304]

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[302] This is very clear when studying the origins of nonsense poetry, going back to the orality of nursery rhymes and children lallation: nonsense language shows something primitive, pre-thetic and pre-representational (this being the very reason why nonsense authors do not like metaphors). This "language" is outside the language laws, it is indeed de-territorialized, and it does re define new borders and new rules.

[303] For this see Lecercle, 2016, ch. 2 "The Pragmatics of Nonsense", where he opposes the agonistic form of nonsense speech (based on the *violence* of language) to the Gricean conception of cooperative conversation.

[304] Interpretation of nonsense shows the characteristics of a negation which is indeed an affirmation of something else, somewhere else, on a different dislocated level or on different incompatible and incoherent levels at the same time (as in paradoxes). Interpretation of nonsense (as the lucid explanation of the Jabberwocky made by Humpty

Nonsense is therefore *non-representational*: there is no hierarchy between text and reality.[305] However, something is *arranged*: reading and interpreting nonsense is as much an act of arrangement as writing it, and this arrangement is rhizomatic (images-objects are blurred together and branched together) and defies the rules of the typical literature by bringing elements of incompatible levels of being into contiguity/co-presence: this is close to what Deleuze and Guattari call "minor literature", i.e. the "revolutionary conditions of any literature" (Deleuze, Guattari, 2016). For literary nonsense, we can again use one of Deleuze's expressions: it de-territorializes language, by proliferating interpretations and always offering *an alternative* to an interpretation. The common territory of language is abandoned. What counts are the links, not the knots, the connections, even if they are not rational, conceptual, etc. Interpretation, always plural, is *required* from nonsense to the reader: one must interpret nonsense and cannot avoid it. However, this interpretation has the same fluid dynamic of a ghost, of a hallucination, based on pure de-territorialized language and made by pure ungrounded and fluid interpretation. A new game of interpretation, with its own set of rules, which immediately follows the first passive-negative moment of discomfort.

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Dumpty) is no more than *our* common-sense interpretation *gone mad*, distorted in a mirror image, since it is required from the text, but it is actually impossible to obtain throughout our everyday hermeneutical processes. It is somehow tragic: one must interpret a nonsense text and cannot avoid it, even if it is a *struggle*, a fight against the text, to look for such an interpretation.

[305] The general idea when such a hierarchy is postulated is that the text may be seen as a trace, an absence, a simulacrum, of reality.

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The many ways of doing philosophy of architecture
(and what they tell us about contemporary philosophy and the place of aesthetics in it)

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ABSTRACT. In this article I first consider why there are such different ways of doing philosophy of architecture, resorting to philosophical sources as diverse as Heidegger and cognitive theory (Heidegger 2008, Pallasmäa 1996, Arbib 2021). I discuss what this shows about contemporary philosophy and the place of aesthetics in it (Miguens 2022, Cavell 1969, 1979, 2005), ending with comments on a film of architects at the drafting table (and not just there), doing their work of conceiving, sketching and designing (Borges de Araújo and Amorim 2023).

There are many ways of doing philosophy of architecture**.** They range from Heidegger-inspired approaches, focusing on issues of culture and civilization, and on human dwelling on the earth (suffice it to think of the 1951 lecture *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* (Heidegger, 2008), cherished by many architects and often part of readings in schools of architecture around the world), to neuroscience and phenomenology inspired approaches, exemplified e.g., by the work of American neuroscientist Michael Arbib (see e.g. *When Brains Meet Buildings*, 2021) or the Finnish architect and longtime professor of architecture in Helsinki, Juhani Pallasmäa (see e.g., *The Eyes of the Skin,* 1996, which has also become a classic of architectural theory). Both Arbib and Pallasmäa focus on the specifics of human perception and action, and their connections to one another, in terms of brain science and phenomenology, respectively. One also finds,

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naturally, approaches to architecture done in terms of aesthetic appreciation, including aesthetic judgment – this is in fact perhaps the most expected approach within e.g., analytic aesthetics. Some of these ways of doing philosophy of architecture center on the objects, the buildings. Some center on the act of doing architecture, in other words, on the conceiving, sketching, and designing done by architects themselves, not necessarily always culminating in a physical object, a building (in fact, more often than not, such conceiving, sketching, and designing does not result in actual buildings). Some other approaches concentrate on aesthetic appreciation and engagement, whether of laypeople or architects. My question is why there can be so many such ways, resorting to such diverse philosophical sources. More specifically, I am interested in what this says about contemporary philosophy and the place of aesthetics within it.

1. Architecture and the Socratic question "How should one live?" The question is who one is.

I want to start by suggesting, following Australian philosopher David Macarthur (2014), that, as philosophy, architecture begins with the question "How should one live?". In the words of Macarthur **"**Architecture, perhaps more than other arts, presents an invitation to philosophical reflection. Like philosophy, it begins with, and continually returns back to, the Socratic question 'How should one live?'**"** (Macarthur, 2014, 88). This question, the Socratic question, as Bernard Williams once called it[307], is common to architecture and philosophy and it can be approached quite diversely. In the case of architecture, the issue of shelter is at stake and thus the question becomes how *one* wishes to live and take shelter. But once we take the question to be how *one* wishes to live and take shelter, immediately we must ask: who is *one*? Or: Who are *we*? Humans? Physical agents? Beings with a specific body and sensorial organs and ways of navigating space? Cultural beings? Taken individually? Taken collectively? Should we read '*one*' in 'one should live' as meaning the person for whom an architect designs a particular building? Or the architects themselves, those who do the designing, what they themselves think? Should we read 'one' as a culture? But which culture then? That of an Amazonian tribe barely leaving traces of its dwelling on the planet, or the urban culture(s) of as complex a place

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[307] See Williams, 1985, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chapter 1.

as the one depicted in, say, Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York* (Koolhaas, 1978)? The local culture? The global culture, if there could be such a thing? What are we to take 'one' in *How should one live*? to mean?

1.1. A clash of conceptions of the human

Different answers to the question about who we are inevitably led to different ways of resorting to philosophy. This is one main reason why there are so many ways of doing philosophy of architecture. There is a philosophical conception of who we are at work in each of the answers and contemporary philosophy in fact has many different (in fact divergent, even clashing) answers on offer to the question regarding who we, humans, are. I will go back to my initial examples by way of illustration. The text by Heidegger I mentioned at the beginning delves into the nature of human dwelling on the earth, its poetic nature, its contingency, its rootedness or unrootedness, its historicity. Asking what it is to dwell, Heidegger reflects on what inhabiting space is: he proposes that dwelling 'animates' space, and infuses it with humanity. Architecture is for and about human experience in space and time; it is the historical and contingent molding of it. As Heidegger puts it in another of his famous writings, 'Der Mensch wohnt an Dichter', or, as in the French translation, *l'homme habite en poète*. Man's dwelling, as a form of being in the world, is a form of poeticizing, in other words, of creating a reality. This then marks how Heidegger speaks in *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* of e.g., rivers and bridges as setting the note for the dwelling of human beings upon the earth, what is to be the journeying and the settling, the whole process the letting-be of the *Heimat*, the home, the country-nation eventually. There are of course political undertones to all of this. Heidegger's particular approach to dwelling does not inspire democratic or universalistic political sensibilities. Some would see here a mythology of *Blut und Boden* and a romanticizing of a (relatively) rural and low-tech life, against dominating technocratic and cosmopolitan views of society. If we are critical of Heidegger's philosophy, we will see mysticism and nostalgia here, a foothold for political fascist rhetoric and the seeds for a discourse against science and technology. If we are not critical of Heidegger and, on the contrary, refer plenty of other questions in philosophy to his work, we will see here a welcome and profound critique of contemporary society. The text belongs anyway, in Heidegger's work, to the period after the *Kehre*, the turn, and to a view of thinking centered on Being and its historicality, and thus to a very particular way of answering

the question regarding who we are, which relates humans to Being, and to expectancy towards the givenness of Being. It is that that marks what dwelling is, what being human is. Even within phenomenology itself, if we do regard Heidegger as a phenomenologist, which is in itself controversial, the answer to the question Who are we? can be very different from all this. Suffice it to think of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *La phénoménologie de la perception,* another favorite of architects, which explores not Being and history but rather the body proper and the role of our body proper and our senses in our being in the world and giving meaning to space[308]. Merleau-Ponty's line, bringing human body proper into the picture is in fact the line that is pursued in my initial examples of the works in philosophy of architecture of Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmäa (*The Eyes of the Skin*[309]) and American neuroscientist Michael Arbib (*When Brains Meet Buildings*[310]). All of them, anyway, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Arbib and Pallasmäa, are thinking about who we are. Each one is looking differently into what, or who, we are, though. I want to suggest that here it becomes important to ask another question: are we or are we not going to find something common to all humans, qua human animals, as it were, perhaps, when we ask the Socratic question, the question 'How should one live' for architecture? Is there something universal, something common to all humans, which is of concern to architecture? Perhaps something to do with cognition, brain, action, something to do with the body proper and the senses, since this is characteristic of the specific physical beings we are?[311] Or is it that there simply is no commonality between human cultures as contingent historic forms of inhabiting space and giving it human shape and that is precisely what matters most, that historic specificity of being and its contingency? Is the way to go, in philosophy of architecture, a search for a more cultural-historical (ontological, if you will)

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[308] Notice, by the way, that the body proper is conspicuously absent in Heidegger's philosophy – he speaks of us, humans, directly in terms of either *Dasein* (in *Sein und Zeit*) or language and Being (after the *Kehre*).

[309] One note of Pallasmäa's book is a diagnosis of the dominance of one particular sense, sight, the 'noblest of senses', in Western tradition and an exploration of the role and importance for architecture, of other senses (the sense of touch very particularly). The proposal is that in its task of bringing a sense of measure and order into the measureless and meaningless of natural space, life-enhancing architecture should address all senses simultaneously (Pallasmäa, Introduction to the 3rd edition).

[310] Arbib's book aims to be a conversation between architecture and neuroscience (written by a neuroscientist and thus with much discussion of the brain) around how we experience buildings and how they could serve us better.

[311] One further question is whether (and how) such view of who we are in terms of cognition and the senses relates to the approach to acquaintance, and its role in judgement. This was pursued by both Borbála Jàsz and Pedro Borges de Araújo in the Budapest roundtable.

notion of who we are, as in Heidegger's investigation of poetic dwelling? If we take the alternative route and search for commonality in cognition and the brain, we end up closer to what we may call our animality. We end up thinking that it is human animals who build buildings, buildings of many shapes, thus extending into the environment the kind of animal human animals are. In fact, this extension of body and its functions to space is something many other animals do. One thing to notice then perhaps, is that what is at stake in architecture does not have its best examples in e.g., the works of star architects (around whom many discussions take place)[312], but in this very basic occupation of physical space by acting and perceiving beings, whether human or not. There is such thing as architecture as something we have in common with other animals. It concerns molding the environment to ourselves, to the kind of being we are, extending our kind of body and mind, and our kind of action, extending it into space and thus giving space shape, a human shape. If we take this to be an important subject matter for architecture, then one small step leads us to pay attention to animal architecture[313]. The topic of animal architectures has naturally not gone unattended by those thinking about architecture. One of the thinkers of architecture I am using as an example, Juhani Pallasmäa, organized in 1995 in Helsinki an exhibition on constructions made by animals, 'from beehives to bird's nests and beavers' dams'. Another way of departing from taking works of star architects to be paradigmatic of what architecture is and does, is to pay attention to folk forms of building, such as, say, Brazil's favelas, or the popular architecture that the Porto school architects (Álvaro Siza's school[314]) carefully studied, and was important for conceiving its way of approaching architecture[315]. Again, such approaches to architecture do not center only, or even especially, on buildings with a claim to art, or high art (think Zaha Hadid in our time, or other examples in the history of architecture – although the question whether architecture

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[312] In fact, Wittgenstein's expression 'architecture as gesture', so well analyzed by Macarthur (2014) is perhaps more useful to think about architecture as high art and not about architecture as a common extension of body and animality into space. About the connection between the idea of extension of body and animality into space, more humble and material views of architecture and the star system of international architecture, see Pallasmaa ((Pallasmaa and Borges de Araújo). In Juhani Pallasmmä's words, in his lecture on Alvar Aalto, published in Portugal (Pallasmaa and Borges de Araújo): "Considering the current orientation of architecture, dominated by eccentric spaces and shapes, new materials and technologies, digital and algorithmic imageries, and international star architects orbiting around the world, a lecture of Alvar Aalto's life's work might appear outdated" See also Aureli, 2013, *Less is more*, for a discussion of minimalism and austerity in architecture.

[313] For a lecture by Pallasmäa on this topic, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tIAW61Uzcs

[314] See https://www.alvarosizavieira.com/.

[315] The concept of critical regionalism, as developed by Kenneth Frampton, should be considered here (again I thank Pedro Borges de Araújo for the references).

indeed is an *art* is, naturally, a question). Anyway, the question of what is and what is not high art is there for architecture, as it is there for other arts (for music, for painting, for cinema…). Notice also that as we chose to go different ways here, the question of the relation of architecture to technology changes shape. To go back to my examples, for many Heidegger comes out as a critic of technological civilization, known for approaching the 'spirit of Technik in its relation to Western metaphysics', whereas e.g. Arbib or Pallasmäa open a way for thinking of technology as, simply and above all, a matter of extension of the human body, senses and action.

My first point is made. I wanted to remind us of how different the philosophical sources are that architects, when thinking about architecture, resort to, and consider why it is so. I suggested that the answer to the Socratic question How should one live brings out clashing conceptions of the human. Philosophy of architecture thus helps itself with the whole spectrum of contemporary philosophy, where such clashing conceptions may certainly be found. This poses a challenge: what makes us choose here? Architects recruit utterly diverse elements from philosophy to think about what they do: from Heidegger to cognitive theory, through Kant, to the many discussions going on in analytic aesthetics on aesthetics properties, aesthetic appreciation, or aesthetic engagement. What makes an architect choose a particular philosophy of architecture, or for architecture? We cannot have it all. Or can we? Is such pluralism tenable? Is it good? It is at least illuminating of how high the stakes in the philosophy of architecture can become. The whole clash of conceptions of the human, of who we are, of human thought and action and how to think about them, is imported into architecture and philosophy of architecture.

1.2. A matter of claim. What we are is not there yet.

As I said at the beginning, there are also approaches to philosophy of architecture that simply center on aesthetic appreciation, in particular on aesthetic judgment. I will thus now look closer into the issue of judgment. If we concentrate efforts on aesthetic judgment, as Borbála Jàsz and Pedro Borges de Araújo did[316], whether it be the judgment of a general audience appreciating buildings in public space (with or without mediators as Borbála Jàsz put it), or of architects

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[316] I am referring to the Budapest panel contributions.

themselves, when involved in their conceiving and designing process (as Pedro Borges de Araújo prefers to think of it), then we find ourselves when doing philosophy of architecture, somehow closer to the philosophy of other arts and the issues discussed therein. One aspect under which to consider aesthetic judgment, whether it regards architectural objects or other objects, is the aspect *acquaintance*. Still, here I want to focus on another aspect of judgment, the aspect *claim*. For that I will bring in a philosopher, Stanley Cavell (Cavell, 1969, 1979), who although he wrote much on aesthetics, did not work on architecture particularly[317]. Still, something he had to say about the nature of aesthetic judgment matters here. In "Aesthetic Problems in Modern Philosophy" Stanley Cavell asks about aesthetic judgments: Who is the 'we' of aesthetic judgment? Where does its universality lie? Whereon does its claim rest? (Cavell, 1969a, Miguens, 2022). I want to suggest that yet another way of approaching the question of who we are can be found here. In asking such questions, Cavell is trying to articulate the connection between the *we* of ordinary language philosophy, the search for What do we say when? as a touchstone for a philosophical investigation, with Kant's attention to the universal voice, as it is expressed in aesthetic judgment. He is proposing to see the claim of aesthetic judgment as such universal voice, or, in Cavell's own terms, as a claim to community. The 'we' therein, then, is a middle position between oneself (myself, here and now, judging) and humans considered collectively, as it were. So, Cavell's answer to the question Who are we? When considering judgment as claim is that we are not there yet. *What we are* is a striving: we are a striving for a community, a community that is not there yet. Cavell's whole project for philosophy centers precisely on this notion claim (as the title of his opus magnum, *The Claim of Reason*, shows). Another aspect is important here for my purposes. For Cavell, the importance of the notion claim, and the work it does in our thinking about thinking, is reflected in the importance of aesthetics for philosophy. Elsewhere I tried to spell out the nature of Cavellian questions for philosophy, which arise from this view of judgment. They mark his characteristic view of aesthetics as fundamental for philosophy. What is at stake is not restricted to artistic objects, or a separate realm of human lives having to do with art and aesthetics only, or isolatedly. Some such questions are: "What is speaking for oneself? (..) How can an

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[317] Although in his last writings (Cavell, 2005) there is much on Heidegger on dwelling, namely contrasting Heidegger's approach to dwelling and settling with Emerson and Thoreau (in the last case, especially in *Walden*). Cavell does not find any praise of rootedness in these authors, on the contrary.

individual voice ever be shared? How can I speak for others, or be in a situation where others speak for me? What is recognizing others, being recognized by them, or recognizing a community? How is it possible to escape from expressionlessness? What responsibility do I have for the way language means? What is consent and dissent? Is there such a thing as agreement with oneself, in the same way that there is agreement and disagreement with others? How do you come to have not only your own voice but a voice capable of articulating something new, for example, something artistically new? And how can this singular voice that articulates the artistic new ever be shared?" (Miguens, 2021, p. 91, my translation).

According to Cavell, these questions are questions at work in aesthetic judgment. They spell out the nature of aesthetic judgement as *claim*. This is thus yet another way of answering the question of who we are – what we are is not yet there, judging aesthetically is a striving at something new for a community of thinkers and appreciators. Naturally, it is not easy to articulate how this element of aesthetic judgment (the universal voice, the community, the hope of agreement), an element that involves language and conception, relates to the aspect of acquaintance. That is further work for those concentrating on judgement.

2. What is in a film – a conclusion.

The Budapest panel on Philosophy of Architecture ended with a film (Borges de Araújo and Amorim 2023, *Two Hands to Philosophize*)[318]. The film intended to bring into the discussion some important aspects of architects' thinking of themselves as architects, as they go about their day-to-day work. By 'architects' thinking of themselves as architects' I do not mean now their reading Heidegger, or Merleau-Ponty, or Arbib, or Pallasmäa to reflect on what architecture is, or on what who we, humans, are, but rather their thinking about their act of doing architecture (the actual sketching, designing, conceiving of buildings to be). What the film shows is two architects working together on this, (much of the time) on their drafting table. Pedro Borges de Araújo called it 'two-hand thinking'. With that expression, he means to bring out motor skills as ways of thinking. The two architects in the film are thinking with their hands while sketching. They are solving problems by doing. They are also thinking together without

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[318] For those who want to view the film in its entirety, it can be accessed on the MLAG (Mind, Language and Action Group, Institute of Philosophy – University of Porto) webpage at https://mlag.up.pt/ or requested by email to af.autofocusproject@gmail.com.

exchanging words. They are correlating their own motor faculties, motor skills, movements (we see in the film movements of hands, as they sketch, delete, correct, sketch again), with the ways we humans, as agents, move in the world. The point is that a project in architecture is a project by agents in the world, taking the constraints of the world into what is being projected– and that this is in fact something common to architects' work and to any agent exercising its agency in the world. So, the film shows hands doing the thinking. What does this mean? It means that articulations between the brain and whatever is there (the world, we usually call it) are taking place. It means that common ground is being found between the mind of one and the mind of the other of the two people working at the drafting table. It means that transit between subjective, objective and intersubjective dimensions of the situation is taking place. These are dimensions, as it were, of the thinking-which-is-action that is going on. Such thinking is being done to solve problems, the kind of problems architects solve doing their sketching and thinking. Architects, at least some architects, thus come to encounter, some problems for philosophy of architecture which are also problems of philosophy of action and philosophy of mind. Problems at stake in the philosophy of architecture are not just the problems going under the heading of 'aesthetics', as if there was such a thing as a self-contained domain called aesthetics, related to art and specific objects of art. What is at stake in the philosophy of architecture are not just these familiar problems in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. What is at stake are more general problems about the nature of thought and action, what it is to be human, and what it is to be in the world. But even these can be understood in quite different ways.

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Between Art and Philosophy. Patterns of Baxandall's Criticism

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ABSTRACT. In my paper, I outline a tentative philosophical reading of some core issues of Michael Baxandall's work in art history and criticism. To do this, I discuss his sustained reflection on two core philosophical aspects of his idea of art criticism: the problem of a possible historical explanation, and the problem of the relation between images and language. I underline the relevance of this second issue through a close reading of his article *The Language of Art History*. I then try to show how Baxandall's position can be clarified by reference to Danto's account of metaphor and aboutness in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Delving into the metaphorical ground of aboutness I discuss how, following Baxandall, the metaphor may be seen as a chief device by which language can say something about images.

1.

To begin with, I feel I have to clarify how my topic fits in the framework of a philosophical society, interested in aesthetics. Why should we dedicate our time to the work of an art historian, as Michael Baxandall was, since that is another type of attention to the artistic dimension? And, even more, since he himself, throughout the whole spectrum of his career, has always stressed that his views about art and art history were deliberately presented as "sub-theoretical"?[320]

Well, the first relevant thing we have to consider is another aspect of Baxandall's self-representation which has to be taken seriously, just as his many understatements have to. In interviews, he stressed his viewing his work as that of an art critic, rather than that of an art

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[319] E-mail: davide.mogetta@phd.unipi.it The present text is a very slightly revised version of the one I have read in Budapest. I wish to thank the participants for the discussion.

[320] See Baxandall, 1985a, p. 13. Later on in the book he discusses his (purported) moving "from a very low and simple theoretical stance" (Baxandall, 1985a, p. 35).

historian. Directing our attention toward art criticism can be an effective way to grasp the philosophical relevance of his work. Why would it be so?

If we do not understand art criticism just as the attitude of *evaluating* artworks, but rather as an attempt at finding the proper way of possibly appreciating them, its philosophical relevance comes to the fore right away, although still superficially. Seen in a deeper way, the point of art criticism might be seen as a continuously displayed (and exercised) attention to the conditions of possibility of discussing the artwork – while discussing the artwork itself. I think we see this in the exemplary instances of criticism. Walter Benjamin provides a notable philosophical example. Think of the beginning of his essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*:[321] it does not just define the spectrum of art criticism, but also its being a problematic account – in the sense of going into the problems proper of the artwork, and of going by the same token and at the same time into the problem of developing that same account. But that would be another story to discuss.

2.

In his book on Aby Warburg, George Didi-Huberman has stressed this philosophical connection as the basis of art history and has further specified it. Reflecting on Winckelmann's model of historical explanation while aiming at explaining Warburg's, Didi-Huberman writes that "there is no history of art without a philosophy of history […] just as there is no history of art without a philosophy of art" (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 4).

The point at issue consists not so much in stating that every case of art historiography implies, on the author's part, certain assumptions in the fields of the philosophy of history and in the philosophy of art; this could either be a truism (be these assumptions conscious or not) or a false statement. It is false to some, if our imagined art historian does not hold anything relevant from a philosophical point of view; it is a truism to others, if, inquiring philosophically in the work of an art historian, we discuss philosophically the assumptions, or the induced assumptions, of the art historian's work. I say this briefly just for the sake of showing that these 'either… or…' are altogether irrelevant. The thing truly at stake is not so much that one art history holds certain positions in the philosophy of history or art, or implies something in these

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[321] See Benjamin, 1996, pp. 297-299.

fields; it is, much more, that every history of art *must* imply two fundamentally philosophical issues, which may be discussed by both philosophers or non-philosophers, but which remain philosophical in their tissue. These philosophical problems may as well be characterised as problematic clusters.

The first of them, under the label of "philosophy of history", could be seen reflected in the very general question: how is it possible to explain and understand works of art that have been produced in the distant past? This leads to a multitude of questions, some of which should be pushed up to the metaphysical level of asking if, and how, the past itself exists as a given, as something out of which these works come. But even without pushing the discussion up to this level (or for instance, pushing it up to that level and then going back), of the immediate form of the historian's challenge with his subject matter is about the said thing: how possibly to understand it properly (that is, not anachronistically) and explain its peculiar historical charge. (One could, obviously, enlarge this problem with or without the temporal factor in the transcultural one of anthropological studies.[322])

The second problematic cluster, to further use this expression, pertains to, in the broadest sense, what should the research object be: namely, what art is. To this, the historian may object that this question is far too large and that he may choose to adhere to the definition of art relevant for the period of his concern. What he will not be able to escape, though, is the specification of this question in one which must be seen as universally applicable while being specifically pertinent to each and every artistic genre. It is the question of how the historical, scientific discourse, can deal with the specifically artistic dimension it is about: how am I to discuss poetry? or how am I linguistically to discuss works of visual art? (Following Baxandall, this will be my chief interest.) These are specific instances of the more general question, which bears the characteristics of a fundamental philosophical issue.[323]

But we have met these problems by referring to the field of art history, and not of art

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[322] Baxandall's *Patterns of Intention* is open to be discussed under this viewpoint. A work in this direction should account for Baxandall's reflection on the philosophies of history of Karl R. Popper and especially of Robin G. Collingwood (a good starting point for this may be the wide panorama discussed in the first part of Ginzburg, 2015). I cannot discuss here, for reasons of space, why the reference to Collingwood seems to me more promising. In any case, this reference has been discussed in Iversen & Melville, 2010, and Davis, 2015.
[323] The critical relevance of this philosophical issue (and the other way around) seems evident, for example, in the case of Arthur C. Danto.

criticism. Even if we allow that the connection I have proposed between the two indeed holds, it may still have to be shown why it should be relevant, for these issues, to discuss art criticism instead of art history.

I would hold that art criticism should be regarded as a fundamental dimension of art history itself.[324] With reference to these two problematic clusters one could show how, in art criticism, they manifest with notable intensity. For example, because art criticism may imply the addition, to the historical side, of the question of understanding not only past but generally *other* cultures; on the side of the philosophy of art, because it implies a sustained discussion of its possibility which has to be shown the reader for art criticism to be convincing. I think that the relevance of art criticism in this constellation is that it is in this *practice* that the connection between these two problematic clusters comes to the fore. And although it is something present in art history itself, it is in art criticism that it is gained.

This connection is each time anew at stake in art criticism since the primary concern of the art critic is that of making the work trans-historically or trans-culturally available, through the means of a language that cannot be the same as that of the work (let alone non-linguistic works of art). The art critic's discourse, therefore, must have the peculiarity of being at the same time transparent and opaque. This duplicity of the critic's discourse reflects the duplicity of its chief problem. When coming close to the artwork with critical language one must never forget its historical (or cultural) alterity; when letting it sweep away in a distant time or cultural space, in order to understand its specificity, one cannot let it altogether disappear from the discourse. The same goes for the visual interest. Renounce to discuss it because it is not directly accessible to language, and you have lost it; assume it to be completely available to language, and it cannot be considered in its specific visuality anymore. This does not sum up to saying that these two clusters are poles between which one must find an equilibrium: they are the extremes that are continuously embodied in critical discourse and are posited by this discourse itself.

The relevance of studying Michael Baxandall lies in the fact that he has developed this issue in various ways – both directly and indirectly – across his body of work. I propose to

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[324] This, at least, if we think about it following Baxandall. At the end of *Patterns of Intention* he writes that "if one looks at the origins of modern art history and art criticism, which are in the Renaissance, it is noticeable that really it arose out of conversation" (Baxandall, 1985a, p. 137).

study the outlines of an idea of art criticism through the configuration it shows in his work, which showcases these issues clearly, I think. In this sense, the answer to "Why Baxandall?" is, mainly, for the fitness of his work to be used to study these problems; and I hope this will be – obliquely as it might – shown by my contribution.

A pivotal role in my research is played by *Patterns of Intention* (1985), his most 'theoretical' book. But for the sake of brevity, I will focus on how the issue of matching words and pictures can be explored from a philosophical perspective starting from a paper of his, tightly connected to the book itself.

3.

In the period ranging between the Sixties and the Eighties, the world of art history saw many upheavals and harsh discussions in the context of diverse theoretical approaches and methodologies: many paths seemed to open up.[325] Baxandall refrained from active engagement in the contemporary theoretical and methodological debates, even if his *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*,[326] had certainly changed the landscape of the discipline. Among other things, he introduced the notion of *period eye*,[327] still relevant today in art history as well as in visual culture studies.[328]

One should not infer from this that he was an uninterested spectator, obviously. An article published in 1979 in the "New Literary History", entitled *The Language of Art History*, demonstrates Baxandall's perspective: the foundation of that theoretical debate was fundamentally flawed.[329] Baxandall tackles the premises of 'theory' and 'interpretation' (and their connection) altogether. He wants to let aside discussions about method and explore the potential of art-critical writing. I will now closely examine specific aspects of this article, which, as said, are further elaborated upon in *Patterns of Intention*.

The article kicks off with a section slyly titled "dialogue declined": Baxandall refuses to enter the discussion on the status of art historical research without first discussing the premises

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[325] For an overview, see the last part of Rossi Pinelli, 2014, pp. 452-490.
[326] Baxandall, 1972.
[327] See, among others, Langdale, 1998.
[328] And he played a major role (even if, maybe, less directly) in the diffusion of the studies on *visual culture* itself, see Alpers 1983, p. xxv: "What I propose to study then is not the *history* of Dutch art, but the Dutch *visual culture* — to use a term that I owe to Michael Baxandall".
[329] Baxandall, 1979. The article was later republished as *The Language of Art Criticism* (Baxandall, 1991).

of that field. He asks, then, what should be understood as "theory": he implies that there are concerns in art history that transcend specific methodologies, such as 'Marxist' art history, as an example. And he writes, "the issues I most worry about in art history – a term I use interchangeably with art criticism – fall into two main groups. One group is connected with the visual interest of works of art; that is our staple. The other group is connected with how one can and cannot state relationships between the character of the works of art and their historical circumstances" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 455). We are becoming acquainted with this landscape, and together with the author, we will concentrate on the first issue.

The initial point he presents holds significant philosophical significance. The object of interest being works of visual art, one has to find a way to stick to the specificity of the visual dimension of the artworks themselves: their visual interest. Maintaining this clear differentiation between the visual dimension of artworks and the language employed to analyse them is characteristic of Baxandall's standpoint. He emphasizes that the words used by art historians to highlight visually compelling elements of the artwork "are not so much descriptive as demonstrative" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 455).

This includes the presupposition that, in fact, is a characteristic of art critical (or historical) discourse – the presence of the artwork, which is available in some way (physically or in reproduction or memory) to the hearers of the art critical discourse. This has the consequence that this type of discourse assumes the aspect of a sort of pointing; further, the spectator, and listener, are forced to compare between the discourse and its object. One instigates the hearer "to supply a degree of precision to broad categories by a reciprocal reference between the word and the available object. It [the language] is ostensive" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 456). The usage of terms specific to the artworld, furthermore, prompts a sophisticated reaction in the listener, who tries to match the word – such as *chiaroscuro* or even a straightforward term like *square* – not only with the specific artwork at hand but also with references to prior uses of the term and other artworks.

From these observations, two primary elements emerge. First, that there is an inherent problem in aligning universally applicable terms with the object to which they are ostensively referred; second, that understanding this relationship is something that sets the listener to work, not just by swaying between words and objects, but also supplying knowledge to sharpen the words in relationship to objects. The connecting tissue of these two elements is that the

language Baxandall discusses is *au fond* an indirect language, or, as he writes, "oblique or tropical" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 457).

The third section of the paper is devoted to an analysis of this indirectness. There are three types of "words" that can be summarised in the scheme on page 458.

Type I and I. *bis* words, *Similia* and *Matter of representation* "point to a kind of visual interest by making a comparison of some sort, often by metaphor" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 457), and in the particular case of those referring to the matter of representation, they take up the represented object as if it were actual. So, you will have a rhythmic figure, or an agitated figure.

Type II words are those that we refer to maker, that is, to the action or agent that produced them: so, you will have a calculated figure here or there, say, a virtuosity.

Type III words are supposed to work as to describe the effect of the artwork on the beholders, or a reaction on the part of the beholder, like, for example, a disturbing effect.

We define them as comparative or metaphorical (Type I), causal or inferential (Type II), and subject or ego words (Type III).

But if we take a closer look at the scheme and the relationship between the various kinds of indirectness that revolve around the object, we get the feeling that there must be a sort of theoretical, if loose, hierarchy between them. Baxandall in fact writes that all of these words are "projections of the subject, the speaking beholder" (Baxandall 1979, p. 458); and this may be obvious. However, what extends beyond this apparent truism is that indirectness is a characteristic essential to them all, and specifically this indirectness is not an inert element but something that the beholder must actively work with. It is because of this, I would say, that they are not just "in a weak sense metaphorical" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 458), as Baxandall writes. I note, in passing, that his analysis may well be extended to sentences and not be confined to words of the "artworld".

All we have seen brings to a reflection on the basic paradox of any activity that tries to linguistically make accessible works of visual art:[330] Baxandall contends that the linearity of language cannot be matched with the pace and gait of seeing a picture. This may well be true, but what to do, then, with our indirect art critical words (and sentences)?

Baxandall's answer could be thus summarized: one can only try to exercise the basic

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[330] See Baxandall, 1979, p. 461.

paradox with which we are faced. The possibility given to the art critic is to embrace the ostensive character of the critical language and to take it to its limits. Baxandall's own proposed way of doing this – inferential criticism – is defined in this connection. What I would like to emphasise, albeit briefly, is that at the bottom of this possibility, we meet what is construed as an impossible act, that is, finding words perfectly matched with pictures. There is a negativity at play in his definition of his own "inferential criticism", then, which has a peculiar form: images are such negatives of language, and vice versa, that nonetheless do not exclude each other, even if in an actual opposition. It is precisely because our description addresses our thoughts about pictures, and not these directly (or a mental event in the painter's mind) that this allows us to say something about the picture itself.[331]

Let us now focus for a little on Baxandall's "inferential criticism". In his practice, Baxandall tried to give particular focus to what we have seen are, in his scheme, Type II words: causal or inferential, in being inferential as to cause. These are, according to him, "the main vehicle of demonstrative precision in art criticism. They are active in two distinct senses. […] [C]ausal words deal in inferred actions and agents. At the same time they involve the speaker in the activity of inferring and the hearer in the activity of reconstructing and assessing the pattern of implication" (Baxandall, 1979, pp. 461-462).

There are two extremely relevant sides to this explanation. First, it implies the connection between the historical question and that on the possibilities of language with respect to visual artworks: the inferential activity Baxandall discusses is that of re-constructing the context of the artwork, and re-enact it in the understanding and explanation of it. It is worth noting that the requirement for historical references is not derived per se but as an essential element of the linguistic effort to understand an image. This connects us immediately with the second relevant side of this definition: the power of inferential words is, in Baxandall's account, their ability to prompt activity on the side of the speaker (and hearer) in rendering active – by inferring – the negative relationship between images and words about them. To put it concisely, I would say that inferential criticism renders evident how the historical dimension of the explanation of the

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[331]Michael Ann Holly has written that "the inadequacy of language and the impossibility of historical recovery are the two negative premises from which his ultimately affirming work derives" (Holly, 2013, p. 83); she tends to read Baxandall's point of view as fundamentally post-modernist and sceptic.

artwork is a dimension of the essentially metaphorical linguistic attitude towards it, while the metaphors themselves, through which we try to grasp the artwork, are historically tensed.[332] For how diverse may their type of attentive inflection be, "critical 'tact', writes Baxandall, and historical 'grasp' appear as very much the same thing" (Baxandall, 1979, p. 463).

4.

To delve into these topics, I will try to gain insights from Danto's philosophy of art, particularly his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.[333] Definitive proof of as early, direct exchange between them remains unprovable. What is certain is that Danto's work on the philosophy of history[334] plays a significant role in Baxandall's book, and that, the other way around, not only did Danto write an insightful review of *Patterns of Intention*,[335] but over the following decades he remarked on his admiration for Baxandall's inferential criticism. It was, for Danto, particularly close to his own way of doing art criticism. [336]

       To clarify the scope of my argument, I wish to emphasise that I will not consider later developments in Danto's work, especially regarding his subsequent acknowledgment of the significance of aesthetic ideas. To that I would only say, in any case, that it seems to me that such a development is not terribly at odds with his previous work.

       However, it is essential to revisit a fundamental aspect of Danto's ontology of art. In brief, Danto's ontology posits that an object can be considered a work of art if and only if it embodies meaning. It hinges on the coexistence of two conditions: embodiment and aboutness. Both these elements must be present in the object for it to be designated and comprehended as an artwork. This short definition of the spectrum of the possible artworks is summarised in the catchphrase "embodied meaning" by Danto himself.[337] I would like to stress this. It seems to me that Danto, in later works, underlined the results of that book letting the arguments in their favour get a little out of focus. What I think we lose a little sight of is, mainly, the relevance of

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[332]See Williams, 2015, p. 94.

[333] Catherine Lord and José A. Benardete have linked Baxandall to Goodman, see Lord and Benardete, 1991. I think their account and the one proposed here may be integrated.

[334] Particularly Danto, 1965, and Danto, 1966 (see Baxandall, 1985a, *passim*).

[335] Danto 1986.

[336] "Michael Baxandall, a historian I totally admire, identified what he calls "inferential criticism". [...] And that is what I think I spontaneously tried to do" (Danto, 1994, p. 14).

[337] The catchphrase is still present as such in Danto, 2014, even if he further develops his theory in this book.

the metaphor: it is the metaphorical structure of the work of art that allows him to account for the embodiedness of meaning, and the projective force of the embodiment that the artwork is. The metaphorical structure of the artwork plays a pivotal role, enabling it to convey not only what it represents but also *how* it is about what it is about.

Now in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, the study of metaphor holds a prominent position, particularly in the final two chapters: *Works of Art and Mere Representations*, and *Metaphor, Expression, and Style*. However, the metaphorical dimension is subtly interwoven into earlier arguments. An illustration of this can be seen in Danto's critique of the theory of imitation, where he reframes the significance of imitation in the realm of the arts. Imitation can only be comprehended as an "*intensional* concept" (Danto, 1981, p. 68) so that something can be an imitation of *x* without implying that such an *x* must exist. It would be off-topic to discuss this account of imitation, but I wish to underline its discussion on the basis of its intensionality.

The intensional hero of the book is, of course, the metaphor itself. Its presence in Danto's argument ranges from the consideration of the structural relationship between art and descriptive language to its fundamental role in the definition of the transfiguration of the commonplace itself. As a matter of fact, Danto uses the expression of *metaphorical transfiguration* while explaining the difference between artworks and mere representations:[338] this distinction allows him to finally define the artwork firmly. The metaphorical device is a fundamental structure of the work of art. This, again, must be understood in an intensional way: the locus of metaphoric expression should be seen in the representation itself, and its modality, rather than in the reality represented, which may as well not exist.[339] The artwork is a *transfigurative representation*, and "to understand the artwork is to grasp the metaphor that [...] is always there" (Danto, 1981, p. 172).

Two aspects become particularly relevant when considering this in the context of Michael Baxandall's work. Danto draws a connection between the metaphor and the enthymeme, citing Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a reference point. This reference implies that an essential aspect of the metaphor is that it "involves a complex interrelation between the framer and the reader of the

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[338] See Danto, 1981, p. 168.
[339] On the prospective power of the metaphor in Danto's account, and its theoretical consequences, see Goria, 2018.

enthymeme" (Danto, 1981, p. 170), compelling the mind into action. Danto, here, is thinking of the work's effect on the spectator. There is yet another facet of the metaphor that should be considered in this context: its significance within the language of the art world. Danto swiftly touches upon terms of the artworld jargon, initially highlighting that these terms are often understood as "jokes or metaphors".[340] He later explains that this is so because the structure of the artworld's language mirrors the relationship between artworks and mere real things. In other words, it is inherently metaphorical. Furthermore, this implies that criticism – the task of comprehending artworks and rendering them accessible – must delve into the concepts and presuppositions implicit (and covered) in the kind of collapsed enthymeme that an artwork is. This, by the way, reiterates the significance of the historical dimension.

5.

These structural similarities between Danto and Baxandall seem striking. However, it is important to note that the latter never embraced an ontological definition of art, nor did he construct a purely theoretical account of it. Nevertheless, I think that it is crucial to emphasize how Baxandall's acknowledgment of the inherent impossibility of language to fully capture the visual interest of the discussed artworks transforms, exactly because it does remain impossible, into an opportunity made possible through the use of metaphorical language.[341] Observing Danto's work, we could argue that this necessity arises because metaphorical language aligns perfectly with the metaphorical structure of artworks. If this sounds aporetic – because impossibility and possibility are in this case one, and yet they are opposite – let me conclude by recalling a point made earlier.

I suggested that there is a strange negativity at work in the relation between words and images as it is thought by Baxandall. With a last hint, I would like to point out that the same seems true for the structure of the metaphor as portrayed by Danto, even if we can only say this by taking his position to the extreme. The metaphorical structure enables artworks to inhabit a realm where they *simultaneously* exist as real and unreal. Even Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, for instance, must be as real as the 'real' Brillo Boxes are, to *negate* their mere reality.

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[340] See Danto, 1981, p. 155.
[341] This active charge seems to me to offer enough ground to resist the "post-modernist" or "sceptic" consequences that otherwise may be drawn from Baxandall's work.

The opposition between words and images, as that between artworks and mere real things, or ordinary language and art critical language, may well not be overcome. And yet, at the same time, this opposition is not merely about the mutual excluding negation of opposites – due to the metaphorical fabric that enables a connection between them. These are, in my view, issues that demand ongoing exploration. Examining art criticism through a philosophical lens may provide a means to navigate the intricate relationship between art and philosophy.

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Fiction as Representation. Or the Verbal Icon Revisited

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I shall argue for the representational character of literary fiction. The aim is not to defend a theory of fiction as representation but to highlight the iconic or experiential nature of literary fiction. Drawing mainly on Beardsley (1981, 1982) and Matravers (2014), I shall outline a notion of representation that helps to make sense of literary fiction as a specific kind of representation or verbal depiction. Literary language gives presence, vitality, and force to the represented world, but verbal representation like visual representation requires the imaginative collaboration of the reader. In addition to grasping the linguistic meaning of the text, the reader must make sense of the actions and attitudes of the characters and consider them, together with situations and events from the author's point of view. Imaginative collaboration involves more than adopting a propositional attitude of make-believe towards the sentences' content. It also encompasses mental activities such as visualising, empathising, responding emotionally, and entertaining expectations and desires in response to the represented content. As it is often defended, it is in the reader's experience that the world of a novel comes into existence. This is not to say that the reader creates the work; rather in understanding a literary work, the reader's experience is closely tied to the mode of presentation and perspective of the work.

1.

To claim that a novel or a poem represents actions, people, thoughts, feelings or a world is not surprising. It is to state that they refer to actions, people, thoughts, and so on. Or that they are about those things. Often, a novel is about other, more abstract themes, such as love, hate, friendship or disappointment. But when we use the term 'representation', we are more likely to be talking about

singular things.

In any case, representation is an umbrella concept, and in the context of the theory of fiction or the philosophy of literature, representation is often used in the very general sense of sign. In Peircean terms: [a representation] "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity". But in a narrower sense, representation is just visual denotation; that is, visual reference (as in Goodman's theory of symbols). In this sense, the idea of literary fiction as representation sounds odd since literature is not a visual symbolic system.

However, Charles Peirce considered also that symbols (that is, conventional signs like words or sentences) may have iconic interpretants. For instance, the word 'green', which is 'verde' in Spanish or 'vert' in French, refers to the colour of things like grass, or some apples. But beyond its conventional, arbitrary, meaning, the word 'green' may produce in a reader or a listener images, sensations, and feelings. Peirce thought that these mental states were also part of the understanding of the word; in his terms, they were interpretants, more precisely, *iconic* interpretants of a symbol. The simple verse "Verde que te quiero verde" ("Green, how I want you green") by Federico García Lorca owes its aesthetic quality in part to the effect provoked by the repetition and the metaphoric use of the word 'green'.[343]

In their influential 1956 book, *The Verbal Icon,* William K. Wimssatt and Monroe C. Beardsley claimed that literary works are icons. The idea is different from Peirce's, but they were also interested in pointing to the non-entirely conventional – symbolic meaning of literary works. According to them, literary works are aesthetic objects which gain their meaning not entirely by convention. Later on, Beardsley (1981) refers to literature as "verbal depiction".

Eventually, representation is often also linked to the idea of making something present or bringing something to presence through language or another symbolic medium.[344] My talk is in this line of understanding representation linked to the sensorial and emotional experience of what is represented. Thus, a preliminary idea would be that a literary work is a representation and makes the interpreter undergo a certain experience of its content.

2.

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[343] The poem is called "Romance Sonámbulo", and the verse "Green, how I want you green" is repeated throughout the whole poem. 'Green' here seems to refer to the colour of a balcony, but also to the reflection of the moonlight on the flesh and hair of a gypsy girl on the balcony.

[344] For Arthur Danto this making something present through its representation leads to the idea that artistic representations embody their meaning. The work of art does not literally identify the representation and its content, but metaphorically or symbolically. The work of art is a symbol that embodies its content. See Danto, A., *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,* Ch.1.

Contemporary accounts of fiction framed by speech act theory claim that fictional sentences are a kind of illocutionary act. With a fictional utterance, the writer of a novel or a poem doesn't seriously assert, ask, promise and so on anything because she does not believe or intend the audience to believe the content of the sentences. Instead, the author prescribes the reader to imagine or make-believe the content of the utterances. That is, imagination or make-believe is considered the adequate propositional attitude towards the content of fictional utterances. Imagination is here characterized negatively in contrast to belief. As a propositional attitude, to imagine or make-believe fictional propositions, whether true or false, consists in entertaining them in the mind without being affirmed or denied.

Nevertheless, even in the context of imagination theories, some authors (Walton, 1990, Stock, 2011) have pointed to the insufficiency of such accounts of fiction. Kendal Walton notices:

> Occurrent imagining, as we ordinarily understand it and as we need to understand it in order to explain representation, involves more than just entertaining or considering or having in mind the propositions imagined. Imagining (propositional imagining), like (propositional) believing or desiring, is *doing* something *with* a proposition one has in mind (Walton, 1990, p. 20).[345]

Walton famously characterizes the kind of imagining involved in the understanding of representational artworks as one of make-believe, in which the work is a prop in a game of make-believe in which the subject is immersed.[346] Walton (1990) is mainly devoted to propositional imagining mandated by propositions or propositional content in the case of visual artworks, however, he insists that "the mandated non propositional imaginings are a distinctive and important part of our games of make-believe" (Walton, 1990, p. 43).

3.

From the outset, some authors have challenged these theories, which see fictional utterances as special illocutionary acts, in which the speaker or writer does not seriously utter something and

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[345] Or in Kathleen Stock's words: "…were this claim, that a prescription to imagining is necessary and sufficient for fictive utterance, devoid of any detail about what is supposed to be involved in the imagining in question, then it would be unattractive" (Stock, 2011, p. 156).
[346] The game consists in "imagining *doing* or *experiencing* something (or *being* a certain way)" (Walton, 1990, p. 29).

consequently prescribes her audience to imagine the content of her utterances. Monroe Beardsley claimed that fiction does not consist of the utterance of a special illocutive act, but the representation of illocutive acts. The key idea is that "Fiction, …, is the representation, not the performance, of illocutionary actions" (Beardsley, 1981, p. 295).

> A novel's writer is not performing a special kind of speech act, but representing it:
> When a text is produced that could be used to perform an illocutionary action of some recognisable kind, and enough of the requisite conditions are present or presupposed to permit the kind to be recognized – but not enough for such an action actually occur – then we have representation, a verbal depiction (Beardsley, 1981, p. 297).

Consequently, the reader understands the sentences, including the illocutionary force they would have if they were used in an ordinary communicative context. Interpretation is logically prior to considering them a performance or a representation of the action. Therefore, the understanding response is basically the same in both artistic and non-artistic contexts. The main difference for Beardsley lies in the relation between author, text and reader. In a literary context, unlike in ordinary contexts, the reader's interpretation of the text does not consist in grasping the intention of the author. Since the author is not performing any illocutionary act, what she intends to convey is not at stake. The meaning of the literary work is not the author's meaning, but the representation meaning.[347]

Besides, the literary institution is different from ordinary communicative institutions: the author works in isolation, writing, correcting, and rewriting, to produce a text. She does not interact with the reader, and the reader does not interact with her. Unlike in ordinary communication, where the utterer or the context can dissolve ambiguities or indeterminacies, a representation is a finished product whose interpretation consists in making it work. Indeed, for Beardsley, this is a reason for the indeterminacy of literary texts: "It is part of what makes fiction appeal to our own imagination, as readers, since it leaves possibilities open – indeterminacies – for us to fill in as we like" (Beardsley, 1981, p. 311)

A consequence of this representational theory of literature is that any literary text presupposes the existence of an implicit utterer. The representation is of illocutionary acts,

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[347] That is what Beardsley calls "detachment of reference".

consequently, someone should be supposed to utter them. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with this sentence: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice". According to Beardsley, Gabriel García Márquez is representing the utterance of a fictional persona who does really perform the illocution. On this point, Beardsley agrees with defenders of those imaginative theories of fiction maintaining that the reader is to imagine someone telling the story, an implicit author. To postulate an implicit author is a necessity of Beardsley's theory as it is for those who consider that a story needs always a storyteller, or that in order to make truth in the fiction the narrated content it is required to imagine someone actually asserting the content.

Pratt's notion of representation as a possible use of assertive utterances does not imply these anti-intuitive consequences, even if on many occasions an implicit narrator is also presupposed. Mary Louise Pratt (1977) claims that in storytelling, assertions are not used to inform about some facts, convey a belief, or make the addressee believe it. Assertions are just one kind of representative speech act, which can be used to state the truth of certain facts, in an ordinary communicative context, or to display these states of affairs, in literary contexts. That use is not absent in ordinary context, but is characteristic of the literary context where assertions represent *tellable* state of facts:

> In making an assertion whose relevance is *tellability*, a speaker is not only reporting but also verbally displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it. (Pratts, 1977)

The relation with truth is set aside, and the relevance of the represented facts presented lies in the unusual, unexpected, that is, the *tellable* character of the content. The content of fiction or storytelling is displayed for contemplation, evaluation and response. Pratts emphasises the genuine status of literary (including fictional) speech acts, as representational speech acts, non-parasitic of other illocutionary acts, and neither representative of other illocutions.

Now, Beardsley and Pratt's theories do not imply that the readers' interpretative activity is different from the interpretation of other illocutionary acts. For Beardsley, the represented speech acts are verbal depictions, for Pratt their content demands to be contemplated. Both

authors appeal to a visual vocabulary. But in what sense can be explained or merely described the perceptual character of linguistic or verbal depiction or representation?

4.

The phenomenology of reading has been predominantly considered imaginative, that is, imagination replaces perception, and some authors speak about quasi-perceptual experiences. But eventually, some fiction theories tend to blur the distinction between adopting an epistemic attitude of imagination towards the propositional content of fictional sentences, and the mental state in which understanding the work consists. This is one of Matravers' critiques of theories that link fiction with a specific illocutionary act requiring the reader an attitude of imagining the utterance's content instead of one of believing. He claims that the epistemic attitude of imagining instead of believing does not make the difference between fiction and nonfiction: "…it is independently implausible to think that what goes on when we read fiction is very different than what goes on when we read non-fiction" (Matravers, 2014, p. 47).

Actually, imagination occurs in non-fictional contexts. For instance, some months ago two news stories had Spanish citizens attentive to TV and the press: four Colombian children were lost in the jungle after an aeroplane crash (https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-06-10/colombias-four-missing-children-found-alive-after-40-days-in-the-jungle.html).[348] The news struck readers and listeners as an adventure story, with a relatively happy ending when the children were found alive. The readers were driven to imagine the supervenience efforts of four siblings, lost in the dark and humid jungle of Colombia, eating herbs and being bitten by mosquitos after the aeroplane crash that killed their mother and the aeroplane pilot. Journalists were committed to the truth, but also to tell a story as astounding as true, and make the readers not only believe but also respond to the extraordinary of the event, admire the big daughter for her smartness, the indigenous communities for their knowledge of the jungle, imagine the panic during the fall, the death of the adults in the plane, etc. For days, people spoke about the news with their colleagues in bars and cafés and were expectant about the outcome. We followed the course of the events and recreated imaginatively the children in the jungle. A dog of the rescuers became a character in the story too. Journalists narrated the story in some way or

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[348] Sadly, today's news about Hamas' terrorist attack against Israeli civilians and Israel's indiscriminate response against the Palestinian population in Gaza occupy our attention.

another, looking for clarity, veracity, and explanation, but also to arrest the curiosity of the reader. To inform about the facts, they had to arrange the elements temporally and by relevance, select details, and describe local geography and atmosphere. And of course, there were better and worse ways of reporting what was happening and the outcome. Doing it in the best way possible was doing it from a journalistic point of view or a "fictional" point of view? Looking to convey true events (and they were *tellable* if any) or to present the events and their protagonist as vividly as possible?

Matravers (2014) argues that imagination does not distinguish between fiction and non-fiction and that the relevant distinction is between confrontation and representation. Whereas in the case of representations the interpreter does not have the opportunity to interact, in the case of confrontations she has the opportunity to intervene in the events.[349] Besides, Matravers argues that there is no radical difference in the way readers interpret texts that are representations, fictional or non-fictional. The events mentioned above were written to prompt imagined mental states, but this does not turn the reports into fiction. Matravers proposes looking at representations, instead of kinds of illocutionary acts prescribing imagination, to solve the problems that a theory of fiction seeks to solve.

Still, he makes a distinction between thin and thick representations. While the former permit easy access to their content, thick representations require more attention to the mode of presentation, and because of that are harder to interpret. Obviously, there is a continuum between thin and thick representations, but thick representations are closer to what literary or fictional representations are. The news about the Colombian children in the jungle are thin representation, because the interest, even if imagination is called to understand the sequence of events, lies in the information about actual facts, and not in the way in which stories are narrated.

Matravers uses the psychological notion of mental models to describe the operations involved in reading a text. Following Johnson-Laird, he claims that understanding a text involves "(constructing) a mental model", that is, an iconic map of the world, of a possible world in case we are dealing with a fictional representation. Mental models "…allow language

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[349] In the case of the plane crash, we were mere spectators, with no possibility of intervening, and I fear that the same is true in the case of the war between Israel and Hamas. But we can speak out or vote for parties that take a certain line in face of the events. When it comes to past historical events, we are inevitably just spectators.

to be used to create representations comparable to those deriving from direct acquaintance with the world" (Johnson-Laird, quoted in Matravers, 2014, p. 397).

Mental models necessary to interpret thin representations are easily constructed. But literary works are or aspire to be thick representations. The mode of presentation itself is relevant, and the construction of mental models is harder. Imagination plays an important role in literature and fiction, but understanding the text/representation precedes adopting an epistemic attitude towards its content. The mental operations involved in understanding fictional and non-fictional texts are the same. Moreover, in the case of thin representations, readers are free to add imaginative details, while imagination is constrained to the text in the case of thick representations.

Matravers (2014) points out the operations involved in reading: the first is "automatic encoding", as competent readers in a language encode the linguistic meaning of the text automatically. Second is looking for "local coherence", which means to articulate temporally, spatially and causally the content of the sentences. Third is looking for "global coherence", which in literary texts demands more effort. Understanding thick representations, such as literature and good fiction, requires a greater effort to find global coherence. The imaginative effort requires the articulation of temporal and spatial elements, the connection between characters, actions and personalities, or the perception of the importance of details, which is not explicit. It requires the exercise of mental operations, independently of the fictional or documentary character of the text. Lately, "participatory responses" are those affective responses of a reader towards the literary content. In any case, thick representations, such as literary text require competent readers and, Matravers states, "…the subsequent mental models are going to be rather vague and sketchy" (Matravers, 2014, p. 73).

Matravers' proposal underlines the thick nature of literary representation, which is thought of as the difficulty to produce mental models, that is, to interpret the text. Mental models are thought of as iconic. Like Kantian schemas, they act as a mediator between concepts and intuitions, or language and reality, and facilitate the representation of reality as if we had direct acquaintance with it. The difficulty of thick representations comes from their mode of representation, the opacity that characterizes literature.

5.

The distinction between thin and thick representations reveals a conception of understanding as the construction of mental models of represented objects and events, which I would like to resist. It is not that thick representations are opaque with respect to the object, or that the mental models are "vague" and "sketchy". The problem is that mental models fall too short of the experience of reading a text. Gibson speaks of thick narratives instead of representations in a different sense. According to him, thick representations are "'thick' by virtue of possessing an especially rich kind of descriptive content" (Gibson, 2011, p. 75) Moreover, in these narratives, thick concepts, those that convey evaluative together with descriptive content, predominate: "[thick concepts] convey information about the object under scrutiny that is sufficient to situate it at a precise point in the space of value" (Gibson, 2011, p. 76) My point is that thick narratives are those that provide a more complex, richer, deeper experience of the represented object. Not just because of the use of thick concepts, but because the entire mode of presentation – that is, the style and literary writing – and the perspective from which the story is presented enable understanding as experience.

A comparison with visual representation may be illuminating. Consider Georgia O'Keeffe's *New York Street with Moon* (1925). Following Wollheim's account, to understand the painting is to have a particular perceptual experience of a particular view of New York at night. The experience is one of seeing–in, which is not the same kind of seeing as seeing face to face, nor of seeing an arrangement of colours and shapes. At a basic level, we see certain things in the canvas: buildings, lights, the twilight sky and the moon between the clouds. It represents New York, and we recognise some skyscrapers and the tower of one of the city's Neogothic churches. Besides, we see them in an unusual vertical format and from an unusual point of view, and we are aware of colours, contrasts, other details of the composition, and O'Keefe's style. The experience is twofold, a unique experience with these two aspects: the recognitional and the configurational. The experience of the medium of representation cannot be separated from the object of the representation.[350]

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[350] Walton (1990) would consider the experience as one of imagining seeing the objects represented. In the debate between the two authors, Wollheim argued that Walton's explanation eludes the configurational aspect (what I think is true). The same remark could be made about fiction theories focused on the content of stories and narratives. Walton considers that any case of painting or drawing requires imagination instead of perception, dissolving the difference between fiction and non-fiction in these media.

By considering "seeing-in" as the class of experience that the viewer has in front of a painting, Wollheim underlines the incommensurability of seeing face to face and seeing a painting. To interpret a painting is to undergo such an experience. That is to say, interpreting a painting does not consist in grasping (seeing, imagining or imagining seeing) the visual appearance that the object would have in a real-life experience. It is the experience of the artwork. My point is that understanding a literary work is similar to understanding a painting in its representational character, which amounts to having an adequate experience of the work. Not of the real or a possible world beyond the text, but of the work itself. I would say that in a sense the work is transparent and opaque. Transparent because the world of the work is such as it is presented, there is nothing to discover behind the representation. Opaque because the representation is always from a particular point of view and in a particular way of writing and ordering the elements of the story.

6.

In conclusion, the content of literary works is not linguistic meaning but experiential (iconic) meaning. That is, literary works are not communicative artefacts, designed to convey information about facts existing behind them. Understanding and appreciating novels or poems involves experiencing the things represented as they are represented. We take on the things to be interpreted: characters, actions, motives, the sense of the narrative or the value of the details such as they are presented to us by the text.

Besides, in comparison with pictorial representation, something like Beardsley's anti-intentionalism can be assumed: intentionality cannot be understood in the Gricean sense of a speaker's reflexive intention. Even if intentional, the creation of a literary work may lack the kind of reflexivity that linguistic meaning requires according to Grice. That is, grasping the content of the work is not identical to recognising the author's intention through the sentences of the text. The work succeeds when it provides the reader with material to have an experience of the world of reprentation. Since the content is not linguistic meaning, there may be different interpretations, i.e., different experiences of the same work, which will give rise to different worlds. Issues of correction concern criteria for discriminating the adequacy of experiences according to intentionality - understood from different approaches as the actual cause of the work, hypothetical intention, aesthetic value, etc.

Understanding a literary work requires the articulation of different voices, perspectives, and times represented, in search of global coherence, in a complete experience. The mere juxtaposition of details, descriptions, or the rhythm of the language, can all be relevant to the reconstruction of the world of the work. Understanding is not only about doing something with the propositions of fictional sentences, but also with the scenarios, characters, or atmospheres that are the content of those sentences. The collaboration of the reader is therefore inevitable. Mental operations such as articulating and constructing global coherence, putting things together and making sense, together with automatic sensory or emotional responses give unity and integrity to the text:

> The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination. (Iser, 1971, p. 284)

In addition to the linguistic meaning of the text, perlocutionary effects such as simple iconic interpretants of words and phrases, and more complex iconic interpretants - perceptual or emotional – produced by metaphors and symbols characterise literary understanding. Finally, Beardsley was right that some illocutions are represented and not performed; for instance, those of the quoted dialogues and monologues. When characters talk to each other, or themselves aloud or in their heads, we hear their thoughts as we act them out in reading. For literary language can be the representation of both spoken and unspoken sentences. And, more interestingly, some representations are of "unspeakable sentences" (Banfield, 1982), as those of the narrator expressing the character's thoughts or their mental states. This is because literary sentences are not just representations of illocutionary acts. They are representational illocutionary acts that enlarge the realm of what can be represented.

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Objects at Work:
How Do Artefacts Work Aesthetically in Everyday Organizational Life?

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims to open up new analytical perspectives on the uses and roles of artefacts and space design in everyday organizational life, by addressing the aesthetic dimensions of the everyday world of *work* and drawing attention to the aesthetic *agency* of artefacts. The first section addresses theoretical–methodological issues to lay bare specific principles and methods for analyzing the aesthetic character of organizational life, space and actions, and answering the question of how do objects work aesthetically to shaping habits, behaviors and lifestyles in organizations. The second section provides an application through two case studies: the new space of co-working *Stables* (2020) that repurposed recently the former Austro-Hungarian imperial stables in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), and the new brand buildings of *Bosch Engineering Centers* in Cluj-Napoca (2020) and Holzkirchen, Germany (2022). I argue that these are not mere cases of practices of renovating and repurposing spaces or urban regeneration of former industrial sites. Rather they exemplify blatantly the role that aesthetic elements play in mediating action, control and performance in organizations as well as the different "aesthetic imperative(s)" in postmodern organizations, including the issue of their "artification" when compared to modern organizations.

1. Introduction

Everyday Aesthetics (EA) has largely focused on the analysis of our world of *objects* and

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provided consistent contributions to understanding "the aesthetics of design" (Forsey, 2013; Iannilli, 2019), the "moral–aesthetic judgments of artefacts" or other key aspects of the everyday "aesthetic life", such as the role of ambiance and "the aesthetic texture of mundane life" (Saito, 2007, 2017). However, on the one hand, the EA's research scope included typically the *private* world – dwelling at home surrounded with artefacts –, while eluding another major area of our everyday life/experience, the everyday world of *work*. On the other hand, it often brings into play the notion of "object" – thing, tool or artefact – without taking into consideration a proper questioning of the ontological aspects it might raise. Such as, what mode of existence is that of an "object" and how does it co-respond to that of the "subject"? Are objects simply passive stuffs or should we consider instead their *agency* – the capacity for action on human subjects?

This paper aims to open up new analytical perspectives on the uses and roles of objects/artefacts and space design in everyday organizational life. On the one hand, by questioning the notion of "object" and drawing attention to the aesthetic *agency* of artefacts/ objects highlighted by various philosophical theories, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer's practical hermeneutics (1988), Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) with the precise role granted to non-humans (2005) and the pluralism of modes of existence (2012), and Graham Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology (2018, 2020). On the other hand, by addressing the aesthetic dimensions of the everyday world of *work* and examining it with the analytical-descriptive language established by philosophical aesthetics. Unlike EA's mainstream approaches, which usually pass over it, Organizational Aesthetics (OA) considers the aesthetic as a characteristic of everyday *organizational* life and explores the work relations, objects and spaces through the lens of aesthetic principles. Afterward, I apply these principles and methods through two case studies: the new space of co-working *Stables* (2020) that repurposed recently the former Austro-Hungarian imperial stables in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), and the new brand buildings of *Bosch Engineering Centres* in Cluj-Napoca (2020) and Holzkirchen, south of Munich (2022).

2. Theoretical and Methodological Issues: Key Principles and Methods of Analysis

2.1. The aesthetic agency of artefacts/objects

To put it shortly, Gadamer's notions of the reciprocal "belongingness" (*Zugehörigkeit*) of "subject" and "object" and the "fusion of horizons*"* of present experience and tradition in the process of understanding capture some of their key ontological characteristics: i) tradition, which encompasses institutions and life-forms as well as texts and artworks, is not a mere, passive "object" for a "subject" (as nature is for natural sciences); it is itself a "subject", that is, endowed with agency; ii) the transformative character of the aesthetic experience (of art): this is an event of understanding in which both the "subject" and "object" of experience are transformed; iii) the aesthetic experience, as an experience of understanding, is a key means of an ontological self-formation (Gadamer, 1988, pp. 230–232, 271–278, 311–318, 340–341, 416–419).

Latour's Actor-Network-Theory goes farther than Gadamer who recognizes artworks' capacity for action: for Latour, "objects too have agency". With the notion of "actor-network" he gives *non*-humans a type of *agency* that "is more open than the traditional natural causality": objects (including non-human organisms) are "actors" in the sense of their capacity for action in social relations; in this way, "the couple human/non-human should be substituted for the insurmountable dichotomy between subject and object" (Latour, 2005, pp. 10-11, 63, 70–73). More recently, Latour uses the notion of "pluralism of modes of existence" in order "to get ourselves out of the prison of the Subject/Object division", to rethink the "network" as *a* mode of existence among others and to highlight the ontological singularity of both common things and technical objects as well as of values – politics, law, religion (Latour, 2013, pp. xxv–xxvii, 6–8, 10–12). His project of re-categorization also includes, in Chapter 14 "Speaking of Organization in its Own Language", "to ask what it means to act and to speak *organizationally*" in order to reveal the "paradoxical situation of organization" (Latour 2013, pp. 389–390).

Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) advances an *aesthetic* conception of things related to the domains of aesthetics and design. The basic principles of OOO, outlined in

Harman (2018), are as follows:

> (1) All objects must be given equal attention, whether they be human, non-human, natural, cultural, real or fictional. (2) Objects are not identical with their properties, but have a tense relationship with those properties, and this very tension is responsible for all of the change that occurs in the world. (3) Objects come in just two kinds: *real objects* exist whether or not they currently affect anything else, while *sensual objects* exist only in relation to some real object. (4) Real objects cannot relate to one another directly, but only indirectly, by means of a sensual object. (5) The properties of objects also come in just two kinds: again, real and sensual. (6) These two kinds of objects and two kinds of qualities lead to four basic permutations, which OOO treats as the root of time and space, as well as two closely related terms known as essence and *eidos*. (7) Finally, OOO holds that philosophy generally has a closer relationship with aesthetics than with mathematics or natural science. (Harman, 2018, p. 10)

In short, Harman views OOO as "an extremely broad method in the spirit of actor-network theory, but one that rescues the non-relational core of every object, thus paving the way for an *aesthetic* conception of things" (Harman, 2018, 168). In *Art and Objects* (2020) he addresses in detail the relation between art and OOO aesthetic theory, which "conceives of art as activating a rift between what we call real objects (RO) and their sensual qualities (SQ)" (Harman, 2020, p. 8). In the meantime, he preserves for "object" a far broader meaning than solid material things – as "anything, including events and performances, can count as an object as long as it meets two simple criteria: (a) irreducibility downward to its components, and (b) irreducibility upward to its effects" (Harman, 2020, p. 2) –, and holds the same basic principle of the non-relational autonomy of objects:

> As a philosophy committed to the autonomous existence of objects apart from their various relations, OOO endorses the basic formalist principle of the self-contained object, while flatly rejecting the further assumption that two specific *kinds* of entities – human subject and non-human object – must never be permitted to contaminate each other. (Harman, 2020, p. x)

Instead, OOO defends the unusual claim that their (beholder and artwork) contamination constitutes "a third and higher object", which "is the key to shedding new light on the ontology of art" (Harman, 2020, pp. 11, 173).

This kind of topic or questioning is already at work in the so called "strong" version of OA (Strati, 2000, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2014, 2016; Gagliardi, 2006; and Warren, 2008, among others), which cultivates an increased methodological awareness of the specific and weight of concepts employed in the aesthetic study of (everyday life in) organizations.

2.2. Principles for Exploring the Aesthetic Character of Organizational Life and Space

Next, I draw on specific contributions of the "strong" version of Organizational Aesthetics to lay bare some key principles and methods for analyzing the aesthetic character of organizational life, space and actions. In brief, these principles include the following notions and viewpoints[352]:

1) Defending a new conception about the nature of organizations that reframes the ontology of organization. First, by the notion that an organization is not a stable, permanent object, but an "ongoing phenomenon", a product of specific processes and practices that also refer to aesthetics. Thus, temporariness and mutability are distinctive features of organization, which is as dynamic as human actions and interactions. Along these lines, an "organization *is* aesthetic", meaning that the *aesthetic* (element) is a "constitutive feature of organizations", not a simple decoration (Strati, 2000, p. 30; Strati, 2008, pp. 230–31; Witz, et al., 2003, pp. 43–44; see also Ratiu, 2017, pp. 179, 181). Moreover, the organization's "symbolic landscape" is constituted by organizational artefacts, together with individuals and their embodied-sensible, "tacit knowledge", which is essential for organizational practices and the formation of "communities of practice" in organizations (Strati, 2010b, pp. 885–888; Strati, 2014, pp. 120–123; see also Ratiu, 2017, 182).

2) On this basis, OA makes new claims about the experience of organizational life and its aesthetic dimension: a core principle is that organizations should be understood in terms of relationships between aesthetics and materiality. The "strong" accounts look for and emphasize the *material*, *sensible*, and *emotional* dimensions of everyday life and work relations in organizations; they demand as well attention to the *corporeality* of human action in

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[352] For a previous extended analysis of these principles, see Ratiu, 2017.

organizations, as thematized by early French phenomenology and Georg Simmel's sociology of the senses where the body is treated in regard to its "capacity for sensory knowledge and social relations" (Strati, 2010b, pp. 880-883; Strati, 2013, p. 228; see also Ratiu, 2017, pp. 180, 182).

3) Another core principle is that organizations should be understood in the context of "post-social relations"; that is, "those relations among individuals and groups which are intermediated, or indeed generated, by the capacity for action of organizational artifacts" (Strati, 2014, p. 109). Hence, the emphasis on the presence of both *human* and *non-human* elements in the everyday routine of organizations and the *agency* of physical/organizational artefacts: these are protagonists or "actors" in the ongoing collective construction of the aesthetic meaning of organizational process, because of their capacity to arouse aesthetic feelings and emotions, at a pre-cognitive level (Strati, 2010a, pp. 84-85; Strati, 2014, p. 110; see also Ratiu, 2017, p. 182).

These principles strongly impact on the actual research design and agenda. New methods of analysis using alternative ways have been established, such as the innovative "sensual methodology" set up by Samantha Warren (2008). Its aim is to unveil the "felt meanings" of organization's members about their organizational life, based especially on their sensory encounters with(in) the world of work. This illustrates well the challenges of an aesthetic agenda in organizational research:

- "the inextricability of aesthetic experience and judgments from objects that provoke them" entails a clear need for the "material world" to be brought within the aesthetic frame of reference;
- the "ineffability of aesthetic experience" and the "non-verbal nature of aesthetic knowing", as the aesthetics pertains to embodied, sensuous experience, asks for new means to read (or stimulate) the alternative languages within organization members – e.g., "life-history narratives", "photo-interviewing" or "photo-elicitation", that is, obtaining and discussing photographs of work environment taken by participants;
- the "intersubjectivity of aesthetic judgments" presents a further challenge to aesthetic research on organizations, that of "contextualization"; it asks for new means to account for socio-cultural influences on aesthetic judgments when

gathering aesthetic data – such as an "aesthetic ethnography" (Warren, 2008, pp. 561, 568-573; see also Ratiu, 2017, p. 183).

These principles and methods are helpful in exploring the complex roles that organizational artefacts and physical spaces play in everyday life at work, and in answering the question of how do objects work aesthetically to shaping habits, tastes, behaviors, and lifestyles in organizations; and then, in exploring the questions or challenges of aestheticization or "artification" of everyday contexts, particularly the world of *work*.

3. Application: Two Case Studies on How Do Objects Work Aesthetically in Organizations

I propose to answer these questions by applying those principles and methods through two case studies: the new spaces of co-working *Stables* (2020) that repurposed recently the former Austro-Hungarian imperial stables in Cluj-Napoca (Romania), and the new brand buildings of *Bosch Engineering Centers* (BEC) in Cluj-Napoca (2020) and Holzkirchen, south of Munich (2022), both subsidiaries of The Bosch Group – a global supplier of technology, services and consumer goods.

Figure 1. *Bosch Engineering Center*, Cluj-Napoca, 2020 ©Bosch Engineering GMBH

The new building of *Bosch Engineering Centre* in Cluj-Napoca is located in the vicinity of a

former industrial site, yet located in the central area close to the historical city center. Since 1860 there was a Tobacco factory, replaced in 1962 by a clothing–textile factory, "Somesul". Like other old factories in Romania, after 1989 this factory went into decline and its buildings were demolished in 2007-2008. *The Office* business center was built in that place.

Figure 2. *The Office and Record Park with the old Stables*, Cluj-Napoca 2017

This former industrial site included the stables of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that are approximately 200 years old and, in the past, also housed a Romanian textile factory (the former "Argos" industrial platform). Instead of being demolishing, the old stables buildings were rehabilitated and converted in 2020 as spaces of co-working, named *Stables*, which includes dedicated and private offices, conference rooms, networking spaces and work-cafes. *Stables'* buildings are integrated into the large-scale *Record Park* project, a mixed one with residential spaces, as well as retail functions and office spaces. Together with *The Office* business center nearby, it forms the largest business hub in Cluj-Napoca.

Figure 3. *Stables co-working spaces*, Cluj-Napoca, 2023

Are these buildings – *Bosch Engineering Centre* and *Stables* – cases of practices of renovating and repurposing spaces or urban regeneration of former industrial sites? Certainly, yet they are more than that. I am rather interested in them as they exemplify blatantly the role that aesthetic elements play in mediating action, control and performance in organizations as well as the different "aesthetic imperatives" in modern and postmodern organizations.

3.1. Aesthetic Mediations: the Aesthetic Imperative and Agency in Modern Organizations

Before starting the study of these organizational spaces, I would like to remind a noteworthy example of an innovative account of the aesthetic dimension in organizational life. This was provided by Robert W. Witkin's article "The Aesthetic Imperative of a Rational-Technical Machinery: A Study in the Organization Control through the Design of Artifacts" (2009), an amended version of the original study published in 1987. Here Witkin introduced the notion of "aesthetic imperative" and critically highlighted the organizational control based on the agency of artefacts and the disciplining of "organizational presence". The key question he raised was "how do aesthetic factors contribute to action and production?" The main aim was to

understand the nature of both modern organizations and organizational action, which was itself seen as an aesthetic accomplishment (Witkin, 2009, pp. 59–60).

In his case study, Witkin focused on the aesthetic correlates of the ideal-typical modern organizations – the large, formal organizations that Weber referred to as "rational-technical machineries" for the production of goods and services, and the generation of profits. The example proposed by him was a meeting room at Unilever, an Anglo-Dutch multinational company, typical of many such rooms in organizations all over the world in the 1970s–1980s. The description has payed attention to the styling of both organizational *artifacts* and *subjects*. In brief, the design of buildings, furniture and furnishing, the organization of physical space, the use of colors and texture, and organizational artifacts of all kinds were characterized by the sharpness and simplicity of line, the suppression of color, and the preference for planar. The attire and personal presentation of members using the room looked similar: they were dressed in the conventional business manner with dark suits, plain in color and smooth in texture, which give a dual impression – of obscuring the sensuous life of the body, flattening it and restricting its possibilities for expression, on the one hand, and of practicality and effectiveness, on the other (Witkin, 2009, pp. 64–65).

Witkin's core idea is that all these aesthetic correlates of such "rational-technical machinery" are integral elements of an aesthetic system, or an "aesthetic imperative". This is capable to calling out an "organizational presence" in the members and imposing a definite "aesthetic discipline" on them. Conveyed in negative terms, the imperative here consists in the "suppression of sensuous values", which are expressive of the individual as a "living subject" – such as body's relations, moods and tensions –, and the "emphasis on the linear and planar". Still, as Witkin rightly observes, this imperative can be also conveyed in positive terms, as the cultivation of certain values of importance in organizational context: practicality, effectiveness, power and charisma. These are seen as organizational rather than personal attributes and having their sources not in personal life but in organizational relations and functions (Witkin, 2009, pp. 65–66). Thus, in a modern organization, the "aesthetic imperative of flatness" – the preference for clean lines, plain and smooth surfaces, and sharp contrasts – plays a significant role in mediating organizational behavior and action by calling out "appropriate" attitudes and responses in members:

The development of an organization as a 'rational-technical machinery' gives rise to an *aesthetic imperative* characterized by those familiar elements of modernist design: the sharpness and simplicity of line, the suppression of color, the smoothness and hardness of tactile values, and the preference for planar forms. By such aesthetic means, *modern organization* [like Unilever] successfully cultivate, in their members, a presence through which the organization is made and remade; this presence is characterized by the separation of head and body, of work life from private life, of rationality from sensuous values, of production from consumption, and of organizational function from personal expression. (Witkin, 2009, p. 68)

According to Witkin, this aesthetic imperative and the structure of action are converging in case of modern organizations defined as "rational-technical machineries" (Witkin, 2009, p. 67; see also Ratiu, 2017, pp. 185–186).

A question can be raised as to whether Witkin's findings and notions of "aesthetic imperative" and "aesthetic discipline" or "control" apply as well to ordinary organizational life in the so-called "postmodern" organizations of today.

Many authors have observed that these encompass different work patterns and include promotion of new ways of thinking and doing that break away from the previous *modus operandi* of modern organizations. While the former were based on linear and goal-directed planning, controlled order, stability, continuity, rationality, measurability, and predictability, postmodern organizations emphasize instead creativity, spontaneity, inspiration, passion, improvisation, experimentation, and constant innovation (Linstead and Höpfl, 2000; Darsø, 2004; Adler, 2010; Saito, 2012, pp. 2–3; see also Ratiu, 2017, p. 187). However, while the particular aesthetic system or "imperative of flatness" that underlined modern organizations seems to have lost its influence (as it did in the art world), a certain system of aesthetic values is still modeling organizational practice and life. What would be the characteristics of the aesthetic system or "aesthetic imperative" today? How do artefacts, materiality, design, and atmosphere shape everyday organizational life in organizations?

3.2. Stables and Bosch Engineering Centers: Uses and Roles of Artefacts and Space Design in Everyday Organizational Life

To answer, I provide, in the first step, a visual analysis of these spaces/organizations combined with a discourse analysis of their (inaugural) legitimizing statements.

Let's have a look first at the *exterior* and *interior design* of these buildings or their "material world": the organization of physical spaces and their style, the use and qualities of *materiality* – colors, textures, lines and forms that enables them to be experienced aesthetically and to collectively construct the aesthetic meaning of organizational processes.

The co-working space *Stables* embraces overtly a postmodern style, a *fusion* between historic and contemporary functional–technological style, in opposition to the "familiar elements of modernist design" – the "emphasis on the linear and planar" and the "suppression of color" –, reported by Witkin (2009, p. 68) in his case study at Unilever in 1980s. The renovation project preserved the historical footprint of the building and key material elements such as cast-iron pillars, wooden beams and brick cladding.

Figure 4. *Stables – dedicated desks*, Cluj-Napoca 2020 ©Stables

The furniture includes, for example, wood chairs and stools covered with natural textiles and comfortable sofas with colorful pillows with vegetal prints motifs or abstract symbols; sofas with cushions having the brown color of the wood; small round tables and decorative objects in glass or metal, and carpets with floral and geometric motifs.

Figure 5. *Stables – conference center*, Cluj-Napoca 2020 ©Stables

Figure 6. *Stables – open space*, Cluj-Napoca 2020 ©Stables

Statements of *Stables*' officials attest their intention to create a particular sense of place through materiality and design:

> By arranging this space, we wanted to keep a perfect balance between history and the present. […] The name *Stables* emphasizes precisely the fusion between the historic building and the new space arranged in art-deco style, adapted to the needs of contemporary people, having a functional and technological style. (Christophe Weller, founder and CEO of COS-Corporate Office Solutions, main shareholder of *Stables*; Marius Mârza, Managing Partner *Stables*; in: Colt, 2020)

According to *Stables* architect, Laura Dragomir, the interventions through new elements in the old building – architectural details that complement the original basic materials, preserved and refurbished, such as wood, brick, and cast iron – were intended to highlight its specificity. In particular, "the integration of Art-Deco inspired elements, most of them designed and executed specifically for the new office spaces, gives the unique character of the space":

> The wooden beams and brick inherited from the old merge with geometric and rounded shapes, stylized and repetitively combined, vegetable prints motifs and abstract symbols, furniture pieces with rounded shapes, pastel color combinations and elegant textures. (…) Symmetrical lighting fixtures, stained glass windows and mirrors are among the design touches taken from the Art-Deco style adopted by the architects (…) Mirrors are the key element in achieving expansion effects. They actively participate in the feeling of discovery in traveling through the space, especially in traffic intersections. (Laura Dragomir, *Stables* architect, in: Bogdan, 2022)

This building/description offers a good example of the *agency* of physical artefacts and space design through the aesthetic feelings and emotions they may arouse. The aesthetic qualities and design of organizational *artifacts* – their surface, texture, color, form, reflection, and other physical characteristics based on the specific materiality of the objects, such as the use of wood vs. metal or concrete – all work to activate a particular experience of *ambiance* or *work atmosphere*: one closer to the warmness or pleasantness of a household, a sense of being at home, rather than a neutral or cold working space. Along with the *fusion* between the historic and art-deco style, this mediates an "organizational presence" characterized by the *fusion* of work life and private life, and a workstyle or experience embedded in an *art-like* environment.

Bosch Engeneering Centers (BEC) in Cluj-Napoca and Holzkirchen – which are subsidiaries of The Bosch Group, a global company comparable to Unilever whose office room was the object of Witkin's analysis in 1987/2009 –, display intentionally a *work atmosphere* similar to that described at *Stables*, focusing on *creativity, freedom*, *innovation, flexibility* and *cooperation*.

Figure 7. *Bosch Engineering Center*, Holzkirchen, 2022 ©Bosch Engineering GMBH

Although their architecture looks closer to modernist style, except some wood insertions, these centers are defined and promoted as being "more than just an office building" – they are "attractive spaces for creative tasks": "The new location's defining characteristic is its *campus atmosphere*, providing an ultramodern and *creative* working environment that offers *freedom* for *innovation* and *flexibility*." (Press Release Bosch Engineering GMBH: New Campus in Holzkirchen, July 12, 2022; my emphasis.)

Both Bosch's buildings are characterized by a mix of work and relaxation spaces. At BEC-Holzkirchen, "on the first floor, along with offices and lab facilities, there is a health and

relaxation zone, a café, a staff restaurant, and a customer-meeting zone."

Figure 8. *Bosch Engineering Center – Entrance area,* Holzkirchen 2020 ©Bosch Engineering GMBH

One finds the same space design/organization at BEC Cluj-Napoca: new spaces and functions are added to the open space offices: cafés and recreation areas – gym area, playgrounds, gardens, terraces, and many other facilities. The Advertorial (2020) at the opening of BEC Cluj-Napoca refers overtly to this mix:

> In addition to innovative workspaces such as shared offices and open spaces, diverse meeting rooms, training rooms or custom-designed relaxation areas, the new building offers various facilities such as underground parking, bicycle racks, medical center, gym area and customized spaces, such as the Design Thinking areas or the Engineering Hub. The latter will serve both the development of internal Bosch projects and as a venue for events such as hackathons, academic competitions or other projects dedicated to students. Up to 70 percent of the existing furniture in the office spaces was designed and customized by small local manufacturers and family businesses, thus reiterating the company's support of the local ecosystem. (BEC Cluj-Napoca, Advertorial

2020)

Figure 9. *Bosch Engineering Center*, Cluj-Napoca 2020 ©Catalin Hladi

Figure 10. *Bosch Engineering Center,* Cluj-Napoca 2022 ©Catalin Hladi

The styling of organizational artifacts and the material environment in these buildings bring out the *corporeality* of human action in organization and a fusion of *work* and *play*, as seen in the gym area and other custom-designed relaxation or playground areas. Moreover, they convey a playful spirit or *playfulness* – as seen in the academic competitions or other projects dedicated to students hosted here, such as Bosch Future Mobility Challenge 2022.

Figure 11. *Bosch Engineering Center – Bosch Future Mobility Challenge*, Cluj-Napoca, 2022 ©Nicu Cherciu

The *aesthetic qualities of dress* directs toward a similar "organizational presence". The attire and personal presentation of members at BEC Holzkirchen consists of casual-business dress, distinct from the conventional business manner with dark suit and tie reported by Witkin at Unilever in 1987. The emphasis on the impression of "practicality and effectiveness" is obvious; yet this kind of dress does not restrict the "sensuous life of the body", rather unveils it and extend its possibilities for self-expression. All these elements mark aesthetically an "organizational presence" different from the "suppression of sensuous values" in modern organizations: instead, it allows and displays the *corporal* and *emotional* dimensions of everyday life and work relations, which are expressive of the individual as a "living subject"; it includes equally organizational function and personal expression, production and consumption, work life and private life.

Figure 12. *Bosch Engineering Center*, Holzkirchen 2022 ©Bosch Engineering GMBH

It is worthy to note that "the aesthetic qualities or properties are not only *formal* (harmony, symmetry, balance, contrast, repetition, and unity) and *expressive or sensory* (color, sound, etc.); these are also *representational* properties for *identification* (symbolic value, history, congruency with values and goals, etc.)" (De Groot, 2022, p. 4). The Press Release on the opening of the new Bosch Campus in Holzkirchen (2022) calls attention as well to the intended use of aesthetic dimension *of social interactions* for mediating action, control and performance in organization. The aesthetic qualities manifest in *actions*, *relations* and *atmosphere* may convey and boost up the values and goals pursued by the organization, such as *creativity, cooperation*, and *productivity*:

> The idea is to encourage both *creativity* and *productivity*. Behind this versatile workspace is the Smart Work concept that Bosch has already implemented at other of its locations. This encourages *a new and modern style of cooperation,* marrying the best of both worlds through a smart mix of

on-site and off-site working. Associates are therefore free to organize their working day. What counts, in the end, is what this work delivers. (Press Release Bosch Engineering GMBH: New Campus in Holzkirchen, July 12, 2022; my emphasis.)

To conclude this part, I would say that these organizations manifest tendencies opposite to typical tendencies of the "aesthetic imperative" in modern organizations: unlike the demand of "radical separations" noticed by Witkin (2009, p. 68), there is instead a *fusion* of work life and private life, of head and body, of rationality and sensuous values, of production and consumption, and of organizational function and personal expression. The aesthetic qualities manifest in *artefacts, space design* and *atmosphere* as well as the aesthetic dimension of *social interactions* play a significant role in mediating organizational behavior and action by calling out attitudes and responses in members specific to postmodern organizations: new ways of thinking and operating, notably the focus on self-discovery and self-expression, creativity, inspiration and innovative ideas, sharpening of one's perception/aesthetic life, and an intense *art-like* work experience.

4. Future Challenges: the Artification of Postmodern Organizations

That conclusion opens up the issue of the "artification" of postmodern organizations, seen as one of the key future challenges in the world of *work*.

There are various readings of recent changes in postmodern organizations' values and operating systems after adopting such intense *art-like* work experience and transposing the cardinal values of artistic competence (see Ratiu, 2017, pp. 187–189). Here I briefly take up the account of 'Everyday Aesthetics and Artification' (2012) by Yuriko Saito that addresses these new ways of thinking and operating in terms of *artification.* This designates "the introduction of artistic practice and aesthetics into areas not usually associated with them", in particular in workaday environments, whether it is in business, industry, and organizational operations. In brief, "artification", as a new concept and practice, encourages us to experience various aspects of our daily or organizational lives from an artistic viewpoint (Saito, 2012, pp. 1–2).

The value of artification strategy in organizations is controversial. While some authors highlight its benefits (Darsø, 2004; Adler, 2010), Saito is skeptical on whether what works

effectively in art – the focus on self-discovery, self-expression, and so forth – is readily transferable to real life affairs or the organization life without the accompanying emphasis on expanding one's "horizon" and engaging in "self-critique". This is because, if exclusive, such focus can inversely lead to "un-reflected self-aggrandizement" (Saito, 2012, pp. 3–4). More important and problematically is, in Saito's view, the fact that the adoption of artification strategies for organizational purposes could provoke some tricky consequences, if it is indiscriminate and uncritical. Therefore, she critically examines the idea of "artified life" and expresses deep concern with some possible problems, in particular in case of the "artification" of organizational practices or operations. The main arguments are as follows.

First, according to Saito, such artification would leave no room for ordinary, practical matters of work and life, and would dilute the very intensity and specialness we seek through it. Another problematic consequence is that aesthetic judgments would take precedence over other judgments, whether moral, social, or political, since "an indiscriminate artification program implies that every aspect of life, self, organization, and society becomes justified by its contribution to the artified whole" (Saito, 2012, p. 4). Third, a major difficulty arises from the fact that, unlike the art world which is subjected to public assessment or critical interpretation, artified practice in organizations is closed to public scrutiny, reflection or challenge. And, without a critical discourse, it would end up enhancing the conformist attitude (Saito, 2012, pp. 6–7). Therefore, Saito concludes that, in case of organizational daily life and operations, artification or permeability of the boundary between art and work-life is a twofold strategy: "While something may be gained […], there is also a price to be paid by both art and business". This price could be the undermining of the intended purpose and the value of art in a workaday environment and organizational practice, in favor of an opposite anaesthetizing effect and conformist attitude (Saito, 2012, p. 8; see also Ratiu, 2017, pp. 188–189).

These arguments are sound. It is possible that the artification strategies in organizations trigger unintendedly such costs. However, on the one hand, it should be noted that, just as the aesthetic does not identify with the artistic, the aesthetic dimension of organizational life which is discussed here is much broader than the artified operations or practices in organizations.

On the other hand, organizations as well may be open to the outside world, "to public scrutiny, reflection or challenge." As already seen in the case of BEC Cluj-Napoca, spaces such as "the Design Thinking areas or the Engineering Hub serve both the development of internal

Bosch projects and as a venue for events such as hackathons, academic competitions or other projects dedicated to students".

Figure 13. *Bosch Engineering Center – Bosch Future Mobility Challenge,* Cluj-Napoca, 2022 ©Nicu Cherciu

Likewise, BEC Holzkirchen states publicly that "a key characteristic of the campus concept is its *connectivity with the outside world*". As the site manager Jens Hofmann explains:

> We want to create a place where people from Bosch, ITK Engineering, and the world outside can meet and work together. In the future, the campus will stage, for example, networking events with other companies and also *open its doors to visits from the general public*. (Press Release Bosch Engineering GMBH: New Campus in Holzkirchen, July 12, 2022; my emphasis.)

Certainly, such statements are not taken for granted and these aesthetic systems/imperatives and their effects (beneficial or not) should be verified. This article is a work in progress: the visual-discourse analysis will be followed (pending approval) by semi-structured biographical and photo-interviewing with members of these organizations, based on the "sensual methodology" outlined by Warren (2008). The aim is to unveil the "felt meanings" of

organization's members about their organizational life and to verify their felt "aesthetic life" and "tacit knowledge", which are essential for organizational practices and the formation of "communities of practice" in organizations.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on specific contributions by various philosophical theories highlighting the aesthetic *agency* of artefacts/objects and by Organisational Aesthetics, in the first part I addressed some theoretical and methodological issues in order to lay bare specific key principles and methods for analysing the aesthetic character of organizational life, space and actions. Among these: understanding organization as an ongoing phenomenon, a product of specific processes and practices that also refer to aesthetics; highlighting the agency of organizational artefacts in the context of "post-social relations", that is, intermediated by non-human actors; using alternative ways, such as the "sensual methodology", to address the *material*, *sensible*, and *emotional* dimensions of everyday life and work relations in organizations (Strati, 2000, 2014; Warren, 2008; Ratiu, 2017). These principles and methods have proved helpful in exploring the complex roles that organisational artefacts and physical spaces play in everyday life at work, and in answering the question of how do objects work aesthetically to shaping habits, behaviours and lifestyles in organizations.

In the second part, I applied these principles through two case studies: the new spaces of co-working *Stables* (2020) and the new brand buildings of *Bosch's Engineering Centres* in Cluj-Napoca (2020) and in Holzkirchen (2022). I argued that these are not mere cases of practices of renovating and repurposing spaces or urban regeneration of former industrial sites. Rather these cases exemplify blatantly the role that aesthetic elements play in mediating action, control and performance in organizations as well as the different "aesthetic imperative(s)" in postmodern organisations, including their "artification" when compared to modern organisations. This paper added to existing literature on these topics (Witkin, 2009; Saito, 2012) by providing, in the first step, an in-depth visual analysis of the above-mentioned spaces/organizations and a discourse analysis of their inaugural legitimizing statements. These will be followed by interviews with members of these organizations, based on the "sensual methodology" outlined by Warren (2008), aiming to unveil their sensory encounters with(in)

the world of work.

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The Implications of Mistakes About Art: Ontological and Epistemological

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ABSTRACT. The paper discusses real and imaginary scenarios in which mistakes are made the 'art-status' of an object. The paper analysis this in terms of the belief of an agent when faced with an object, and whether and how that belief might be well-founded. Mistakes are then analysed as having one kind of inaccurate, or badly-founded beliefs about objects. The paper argues that the assumption that an object has already been made an artwork is necessary for a belief that something is an artwork. This assumption distinguishes such instances from so-called 'designation' events, in which an agent constitutes something as an artwork. Designation requires an attempt to make a new artwork, whereas to mistake non-art for art does not. Indeed, the belief that something is an artwork already specifically excludes that possibility. It's argued that the same principle applies even if we all make such a mistake: Instances are distinguished if, when further information emerges, we choose to recognise a mistake or not. Also, this is a choice about the object's art-status from this time onwards, but does not anywhere specify the basis of this choice, which can be principled or pragmatic.

1. Mistakes Do Happen

Consider a scenario in which Brown looks at a fire-extinguisher attached to an art gallery wall. Brown believes that the fire-extinguisher is an artwork and, on this basis, that he is experiencing an artwork. Brown subjects the fire-extinguisher to a searching interpretation based his knowledge of the history of art and other factors that he deems appropriate. However, the fire-extinguisher is there solely to comply with health and safety regulations. This is an example of

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a person making a *mistake* about art. People can make many kinds of mistakes about art, and this one, specifically about the status of an object as an artwork, or if you like, the classification of that object as one member of the set of artworks, is of a particular kind and has implications both ontological and epistemological, for art and perhaps for artwork authorship.

In real life, we know we can make this kind of mistake: According to Ravi Shankar, the audience at the 1971 Concert for Bangladesh at Madison Square Garden took his group's long tuning up (necessitated by the heat of the arena) as its first performed piece.[354] And there is a rich occasional seam of instances in which an artwork has been taken to be rubbish to be cleared away by cleaners or members of the public.[355]

Moreover, there is recognition of the possibility of this kind of mistake within the philosophy of art: Mistakes are feature in some of Danto's indiscernibles thought experiments, such as that in the Transfiguration of the Commonplace (1981, pp. 1-3), in which a disgruntled painter's sabotage results in the 'wrong' identical red square replacing an artwork within a gallery, trade on replacing artworks with non-artworks and thus depend upon the possibility of mistakes.

So, in both life and in philosophy we *do* recognise that we can make mistakes and that we can theorise on the basis of assumed mistakes about artwork status.

2. Required Commitments for Mistakes

One point can immediately be made: Stating that the classification of objects as artworks can be wrong pre-supposes that it can be *true or false* that an object is an artwork independent of one's beliefs. Any theory in which art-status can exist independently of the recognition or experience of an object will have factual bases for whether an object is or is not an artwork - (since the world can be divided into two exclusive sets - the set of artworks and the set of non-artworks). Thus, the possibility of mistakes does imply that we hold a view in which believing

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[354] In *A Concert for Bangladesh* Apple Films 2005. Dickie (1974, p. 174) makes a point relevant to the Ravi Shankar case: "Performances do not occur on the stage at all times; in fact, they occur relatively infrequently, so temporal cues are given to indicate that the aesthetic object of a play is about to begin (the house lights dimming and going out) and beginning (the curtain going up)."

[355] See for example This from 2015: https://www.theguardian.com/global/shortcuts/2015/oct/27/modern-art-is-rubbish-why-mistaking-artworks-for-trash-proves-their-worth. Or this from 2001 https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/oct/19/arts.highereducation1. Or this from 1999 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/485270.stm [All accessed on 01/10/2023]

something to be an artwork, or a non-artwork, is not sufficient to make that thing an artwork.

But what if we deny this? Perhaps with that hoary old suggestion that art is whatever I say it is. Since this is so, I cannot be mistaken. Well, denying this view, (even if you don't hold the 'whatever I say it is' view) entails that claims, attributions or refusals of artwork status could, no matter how deluded, never be wrong, since they would be indexed to the particular claim being made. And all these clearly can be wrong, are wrong, have been wrong and will be wrong. Denying this would also permit each of us to construct our own private catalogue raisonné constituted solely by our beliefs, with some of us no doubt saying 'yes', and others 'no', to the very same object, and a person to turn everything into art, or indeed hold that nothing is art, and for neither of these positions to be wrong, or even contradictory.

And again, this is not correct – some claims, attributions or refusals, clearly can be wrong. There has always been as long as there has been art, a history of the world separate from the history of art, so that at any time only some of the total number of artefacts in existence art artworks. This simple empirical or historical fact, is prima facie evidence of constraints about 'art'' actually in operation – hence why only some things are artworks, and that there are settled members within the class of artworks. Sclafani (1975, p. 456) makes these points clearly: "Without logical constraints on artmaking and arthood the concepts 'artist' and 'work of art' are rendered vacuous. Without such constraints anything anyone said about 'art' would be right and this only means nothing that anyone said would be right." Simply put, the possibility of making mistakes then is one constraint placed on art and art-status is just one among the many things about which my beliefs can be mistaken, and about which I can be corrected.

The commitments required for an analysis based on the idea of a 'mistake' are then: (i) that mistakes *can* be made; (ii) that criteria exist separate to a person's experiences or beliefs through which mistakes can be identified and (iii) these criteria will also operate in forming the *response* to identified situations that bear on art-status.

This presupposes no actual basis for the division of the world, the choices, challenges or criteria involved, merely that one is possible - and that questions or disputes can be settled by criteria separate to a person's experience or beliefs.[356] In fact, I propose that each theory or

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[356] Diffey (1979, p. 21) illustrates a non-institutional corrective for an institutional account. See McFee (1985) for a view on the truth conditions of institutional concepts as applying to art. McFee (2005) states, "… taking an

proposed definition of art will generate its own criteria for mistakes on the terms of that theory; moreover what counts as evidence for a mistake may also depend on what theory of art is operating.[357] As an basic idea, therefore, 'mistake' can be applied across many different particular theories of art.

Call the set of all artworks at any time *t* the 'catalogue' of artworks. Now, the membership of this set will often be contested, and unclear, even to experts in the field, or even to philosophers. Its membership at any time *t* will depend on one's theory of art at *t*, both on what one thinks artworks are, and on how one thinks things can become, or cease to be, artworks. For instance, some people might suggest that this division of objects could be made on the basis of an object's perceptual, aesthetic or non-relational properties so that only those objects that possess such properties appropriately can be within the catalogue of artworks. An institutionalist may instead insist that it is the institution of the Artworld that determines the art-status of an object, and thus membership of the catalogue. Yet, even so whether any particular object has the right relation to the institution of the Artworld remains a fact that can be settled by criteria separate to a person's experience or beliefs.[358] It is only the fact of the possibility of mistakes and that criteria exist separate to a person's experiences or beliefs through which mistakes can be identified, that is needed.

There is also no commitment required to there being any substantive reason why an item might be within or without the catalogue artworks. Indeed, there is no commitment required to there being such a settled reason or reasons. There is only a commitment to there being a catalogue of artworks at *t.*

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artwork for a (merely) aesthetic object is *mis*taking it, misperceiving it …. We take objects to have a structure they *could* not have - as though a crack in a wall *seemed* to spell a loved one's name: it not only did not so, it *could* not so". This idea of mistaking is sufficient for the arguments here.

[357] Searle (1969, s.2.7, pp. 50-53) argues for a distinction between brute facts which can exist independently of human culture and "institutional facts" which are only true or false within a set of constitutive rules. So here, the institution of the artworld constitutes the rules against which the question has a factual answer. Stecker (1997) does not think that institutionalists can be mistaken about art status.

[358] Diffey (1979, p. 21) illustrates a non-institutional corrective for an institutional account. See McFee (1985) for a view on the truth conditions of institutional concepts as applying to art. McFee (2005) states, "… taking an artwork for a (merely) aesthetic object is *mis*taking it, misperceiving it …. We take objects to have a structure they *could* not have - as though a crack in a wall *seemed* to spell a loved one's name: it not only did not so, it *could* not so" Searle (1969, s.2.7, pp. 50-53) argues for a distinction between brute facts which can exist independently of human culture and "institutional facts" which are only true or false within a set of constitutive rules. So here, the institution of the artworld constitutes the rules against which the question has a factual answer. Stecker (1997) does not think that institutionalists can be mistaken about art status.

3. Artwork Regarding

Having established the potential factual basis to claims about art-status, with the idea of the catalogue, I now wish to introduce another quasi-technical phrase concerning the beliefs of a subject – 'artwork regarding'. This means simply that an agent believes that what she is experiencing *is* an artwork. It does not specify any distinct kind of experience but only that an agent thinks that they are experiencing an object within a certain classification. This belief does not have to be true or even well-founded.

This idea is in many ways the analogue of 'the catalogue' in that it simply describes a fact without implying any content behind, or supporting that fact. The commitment simply is to there being an extension of a catalogue of art; the commitment is simply to agents having artwork regarding experiences. Put simply, when someone has an artwork regarding experience of something that is within the catalogue of artworks, then their beliefs are correct – if this is not the case then they make a mistake: either of not-recognising an item within the catalogue or of artwork regarding something that is not in the catalogue. We now have a commitment to an extension of art, and to a belief that something is art. This will suffice to generate a framework for the analysis and import of mistakes about art-status.

So, we can now say that Brown was having an artwork regarding experience when looking at the fire-extinguisher because he believed it to be an artwork. However, his artwork regarding experience was mistaken because it was based on inaccurate beliefs about the facts that determine whether the fire-extinguisher was an artwork. This is why, if given further evidence was brought to his attention that undermined or contradicted his previous beliefs, for example, that the fire extinguisher was there to meet health & safety regulations, Brown would change his beliefs and agree that it was not an artwork: Brown would concede the mistake of his artwork regarding on the basis that it was an object that was not within the catalogue of artworks.

When Brown enters the art gallery, he expects artworks to be present. He visits in order to pay regard to some objects that have already been made as artworks. He believes that the conditions for him to experience objects as artworks have already been met. Once there he believes that the fire-extinguisher is one of those objects - an artistic artefact. So, Brown thinks, when he experiences the fire-extinguisher, that all the activity that made that artefact into an

artwork has been completed by other agents before he came to the gallery and his experience is based on this assumption. Moreover, it is such an assumption that prompt him to attribute that status to it, to regard it as such and perhaps attempt an interpretation. Without this assumption he would not regard it as an artwork – so the assumption is necessary to his belief and to his regard.[359] So, Brown makes a factual mistake if he thinks that he is experiencing an artwork, a mistake which is based on the factual inaccuracy of that assumption and which remains true whether he realises it or not.

This marks the difference between the Brown case and those in which an agent designates a fire-extinguisher as an artwork. It seems that that this has, and will happen, and the possibility of this remains within this analysis. In that instance, there would a supposition by an agent that a new artwork will be made through their regarding, (assuming it is successful). However, Brown, is not acting in such a way that he intends to make an artwork and add an item to the catalogue.[360] Nowhere in Brown's thoughts, experience, intention, or reason as he stands and regards the fire-extinguisher as an artwork is there any connection with artwork-making. Indeed, Brown's intentional action in paying regard to the fire-extinguisher specifically excludes such a presumption. Indeed, he would deny he was trying to make an artwork or being a creative artist at that moment if asked. He could of course, leave the gallery having never discovered it, dreaming his dreams of the great fire-extinguisher artwork.

4. Art Regarding: A Sub-Distinction

Thus, we have a distinction in art-regarding between *recognitional* art-regarding, and *constitutive* art-regarding.[361]

The assumptions required for recognitional art regarding are different and incompatible

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[359] Diffey (1969, p. 146) makes a similar point.

[360] Davies (1991, pp. 177-178) similarly offers a distinction relating to maker's intentions, in the example of a tour guide who intends her audience to view the Grand Canyon as art. Davies argues that the difference between this and a conceptual artist who includes the Grand Canyon within an artwork might be that the latter intends that it should be regarded *as* an artwork, whilst the former intends that it should be viewed *as if* it should be regarded as an artwork. Whatever the detail, the intentions are clearly different.

[361] Dilworth (2003, p. 49) outlines a 'constitutive interpretation'. For Dilworth a constitutive interpretation, if performed on an object, constitutes it as an artwork. This amounts to saying that such constitutive interpretations can, in certain circumstances, be sufficient to make an artwork. Constitutive art regarding would be such an interpretation.

with those for constitutive art regarding. This is marked by what happens if each belief faces a challenge in those presumptions.

For recognitional art-regarding the result of the challenge is, as we've seen, to alert Brown to a *mistake* he makes about the artwork status of an object. For constitutive art-regarding the result of a challenge is a potential *failure* to make something an artwork.[362] One challenge relates to the basis of my beliefs about the status of an object, the other to the status of the object itself. So, Brown's recognitional artwork-regarding cannot constitute an artwork-making action nor can his belief that the fire-extinguisher has already been made into an artwork serve to thereby make it into an artwork.[363]

An artwork-making action requires an intention, or supposition, by an agent that a new artwork will be made, and the existing catalogue of artworks enlarged, as a result of performing this action (assuming it successful). As Levinson (2002, pp. 370-1) states: "There are admittedly many cases of attractive, merely utilitarian objects subsequently treated as artworks by some individual or individuals, counter to, or in the absence of any artistic intentions on the part of their creators. But it is an error, I suggest, that this makes such objects into artworks: audiences, appreciators, consumers cannot make things art merely by treating them as such".

The acceptance of the artwork-status of an object in most cases is assumed, implicit and collective. That's what happens when we go to art galleries. However, sometimes we might doubt the sufficiency of a claim of someone to have made an artwork or be uncertain about something's status, especially if further information comes to light that draws doubt upon the established, collective, implicit classification.

When faced with a disputed claim to have made an artwork, or to an object of which we are uncertain, we have the choices to: (a) withdraw our claim, the artwork-status of the object falls and we recognise a mistake; (b) to sustain our claim to artwork status despite further knowledge. This is the scenario Brown is faced with.

However, let's imagine Brown goes to the gallery with his friend Rowe. They both regard

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[362] In both cases we are in the situation of the experimenter at the beginning of an application of the method of indiscernibles. When we find out what differentiates the situation from that which we take it to be, we will understand it differently.

[363] Iseminger's 'adverbial' view of artifactuality deals with similar situations in a closely related way. He states (1973, p. 12): "… a piece of driftwood, just lying there, or a rainbow in which we find and appreciate aesthetic properties, is not thereby artefactualised to any degree." Iseminger's view allows him to distinguish between (on his terms) doing something and regarding something and thus between artists and critics.

the fire extinguisher as an artwork, both perhaps are uncertain and look for a wall label or information sheet as supporting evidence, and both then receive the confirmation that it's there for fire safety reasons. Brown admits his mistake, but Rowe - a vain but wily philosopher of art - refuses to admit a mistake and insists he was engaged in constitutive art regarding.

This action – or choice – by Rowe, is then one that can be successfully or unsuccessfully challenged by Brown, or others. A successful challenge to *this* choice means that Rowe has failed to make a new artwork *now* – it says nothing about the fire extinguisher before this time. The absence of a successful challenge to this choice means that Rowe (and us by our acceptance) have acted so to add something to the catalogue of artworks, that would not have been there, or which would have been subject to challenge, had we not acted.

This means then that we *do* have criteria for distinguishing successful from unsuccessful constitutive artwork regarding instances - and both from mistakes. And that perhaps Rowe is the author of this artwork.

But what if we *all* make a mistake? Is collective art-regarding sufficient to produce an artwork, and in effect collapse the difference between recognitional and constitutive art-regarding?

5. Collective Mistakes

Perhaps there are competing and qualified intuitions about this question – I'm not sure even what Levinson or Isimenger would think if the extent of regard was large and longstanding enough.

However, the above analysis of the Brown scenario provides a structure: We distinguish instances by whether, if further knowledge comes to light, we choose to recognise a mistake (and so rescind artwork-status) or to accept the object as an artwork.

Again, that's just a statement of the available decisive outcomes arising from these scenarios, it says or offers nothing about the bases of arriving at one outcome or another. Discovering further evidence that would affect our attribution of artwork status[364] forces a choice on us - and it's this fact – the existence of the choice - which is of interest, since the

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[364] Whilst we could not be collectively unaware of health and safety regulations, we could easily be unaware of an artist's diary that said "this thing (x) is not an artwork and was not made or intended as such. It's simply where I wipe my brushes" (for instance).

necessity to choose is derived from the possibility of mistakes about art-status. The fact that we decide that a choice has to be made shows that we recognise that our acceptance that an object is (or is not) an artwork subject to revision and that mistakes are potentially correctable and that there are criteria for correcting them.

We can recognise that some fact or facts about the history of the artefact, or its contextual presentation undermines its being an artwork. This renders our beliefs that it is *already* one and our belief that we are recognitionally artwork-regarding, mistaken – that's the first scenario. Yet we can also choose to ignore this putative deficit and retain the object as an artwork – that's the second.

Within that first scenario we will recognise that what has happened to this artefact before has not necessarily been sufficient for it to already be an artwork. Otherwise, this choice would not be forced upon us now. The existence of the choice means the artefact's claims to being an item within the catalogue of artworks has been somehow undermined, and so with it, our beliefs that it has already been made an artwork. Thus, we are now unable to unproblematically regard it as art as we did before and we look doubtfully on our past artwork regarding experiences. Once we have this doubt about the artwork's status, the question is whether the decision to keep the object as an artwork constitute an artwork-making action over that object by a later authority? The following considerations might suggest it can:

Since an object can gain or lose its previous assumed status as an artwork, a positive decision to retain it within the set of artworks is necessary for that object to be an artwork. Such choices can be described as artwork-making since they are based upon a different set of considerations and knowledge from that which originally permitted the objects inclusion within the set of artworks and which in turn, by being thrown into doubt, permit the choice to recognise the object as a mistake. The presumption operating in the decision to retain scenario is that we should act so to add an object to the catalogue that would otherwise be excluded (as a mistake) in order to retain its presence within the catalogue despite the new doubts that have emerged. The explicit exercise of this choice acts as insurance against the object being correctly regarded as a mistake in the future. Conversely a positive decision to remove the object from the catalogue of artworks is also needed. Either way, whatever choice we do make is a choice about whether the object is to be an artwork or not *from this time* onwards.

This is despite the fact that the choice is to *retain* the artefact within the catalogue of

artworks. This is because the choice to recognise the artefact now, and its ongoing inclusion within the catalogue of artworks, can itself be successfully or unsuccessfully challenged. A successful challenge to this choice means we have failed to make an artwork *now*.[365] An unsuccessful challenge or the absence of a challenge to this choice means we succeed in making an artwork now. In this latter case we have acted so to add an artefact to the catalogue that would not have been there, or would have been subject to ongoing challenge, had we not acted. So, the decision to retain, is effectively a decision to constitute the artefact as an artwork, since, without this new actively positive decision made in the light of undermining evidence about its original inclusion, the artefact would be excluded from the catalogue from this time onwards, and be regarded instead as a mistake. In short, this choice is constitutive of the art-status of an artefact whichever way we choose.

Given this, within this choosing scenario we have criteria for distinguishing (a) successful new artwork making actions, (b) unsuccessful new artwork-making actions and (c) mistakes.

The unchallenged or unsuccessfully challenged choice, and so an example of (a) might be when icons from dead religions are accepted as artworks now when we know they were not made as such. A successful challenge to a positive constitutive choice (and so (b)) might be a claim that Duchamp *did* make the Sears Building into an artwork so that it is an artwork within his oeuvre now. The original Brown scenario is (c) where the claim of art status is withdrawn and an individual mistake acknowledged.

Collective level acceptance that a mistake had been made can occur when objects such as Benin Bronzes, or Indigenous Australian Ceremonial Objects are returned to their original contexts. What's of note however, is that for all these cases, we are told *that* we have to make a choice but not *why*.

6. Philosophy and Pragmatics.

In philosophy the 'why' may come from the substantial theory of art we are using to decide on the extension of the term 'artwork' but in messy reality, there will be pragmatics in play.

Intuitions in particular cases appear to depend on whether we can garner any further facts

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[365] A claim might be contested for instance, with calls for further discussion of the evidence presented.

or knowledge about the object and the salience of these facts for something's status as an artwork. There's also how those facts interplay with other ideas such as property, religious or human rights. It's likely that for collective 'mistakes' there is a debate about which choice we should make when forced and that these debates will centre around those pragmatics.

It's important to note however, that whilst pragmatics might operate in how we deal with discoveries of error they do not impinge on whether or not the discoveries are actually of errors. This is a pragmatism that acknowledges our epistemological frailties. It recognises that mistakes about art status can be made, and have, as a matter of fact, been made and will continue to be made. It does not provide a conceptual loophole that prevents mistakes from being dealt with should our imperfect knowledge become perfected, or our pragmatic decision-making change focus.

Note that although I have described this choice as constitutive, and therefore quite substantive in the matters that it considers, the fact of the choice, pragmatics aside, still does not anywhere specify the bases of the choices, challenges and success criteria operating for each of the outcomes. Thus, the choice can occur across and within many different particular theories of art. The choices (a), (b), or (c), for an artefact might for instance, be based on how well it fulfils the, or a dominant, function of art at the time of the choice. Indeed, if the functional aim of art at this time is one that can be described independently of how an object is made or the agent making it, then this will have already determined the objects over which a choice has to be made, as well as the substance of the choice that *is* made. Faults in how an object was made, for instance, may be considered of little importance given its great functional efficacy. The opposite may be true for a theory that says art is necessary consciously made as such etc. etc.

What count as reasons and evidence for a possible mistake, and what count as reasons and evidence for what to do when faced with a possible mistake will depend on what theory of art is operating at that moment. The pragmatics in play will also come from within a theoretical approach. Indeed, what could be counted as pragmatics will depend on the more foundational theoretical beliefs about in operation within the scenario of choice.

It's possible, of course, that there may be different, competing and ultimately incompatible theories of art operating in a particular scenario, in which some assert, and others deny, a mistake. There will, however, always be that scenario of choice and outcomes and

always be some basis for the choices that get made – both sides of a dispute would give their own reasons and the argument would then ensue between different theories of art, applied to this artefact and this scenario.

This position - that retrospective claims of artwork status, if successful, are re-described as contemporary claims of successful artwork-making actions – reveals these instances as another example of cases in which the making of the object and the making of the artwork are the result of different making choices at different places and times. The choice scenario renders such objects as potential ready-mades, ready for co-option as artworks or discarding from the world of artworks. This, in turn, forces on us the question of who is the author of these newly made artworks? This will be another choice - about authorship - born of a different set of presuppositions and intuitions, with the same potential for mistakes and disputes and subject to its' own pragmatics.

In terms of its aesthetic worth, or the ways in which it matters to our lives, the object is not altered pre- and post- the artwork author's actions. This is in marked contrast to the aesthetic effect of, for instance, Michelangelo's working on the marble to make *David,* where the re-classification of the material as an artwork is perhaps the least of his achievements and incidental to its worth as a physical artefact. This is the sort of discussion that will enter into the pragmatics of the authorship question, but I would suggest that unless the addition of this new piece radically alters the recognised achievement of an artist (a fire-extinguisher added to the oeuvre of Philip Guston for instance) the pragmatics will nearly always side with the author of the object, perhaps with an apologetic footnote. What is interesting is that this is a radically different pragmatics to that which we apply to any kind of co-option of physical artefacts by artists where artwork authorship always follows the art maker, as opposed to the artefact maker.[366] That this is so perhaps marks the difference between a purely re-classificatory act that tracks our epistemological situation, and which may amount to technical authorship, and a revolutionary ontological re-classificatory act which makes something that was not authored, into something else altogether, an authored thing, an artwork no less.

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Common Belief and Make-believe

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ABSTRACT. On Walton's account of make-believe, unknown facts concerning the existence and nature of props can influence fictional truth. Inspired by Lewis's and Walton's discussions of import of fictional truth, I explore the shape and tenability of a version of Walton's theory that avoids such interference of unknown facts, by making fictional truth rely on participants' *common beliefs* about props: conditional principles of generation are only valid if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game of make-believe. I discuss two possible objections to this version of Walton's theory that are both based on the intuition that fictional truth should be something that is objective and independent of participants' mental states.

1. Walton's hidden Stump

In Walton's (1990) highly influential theory of the representational arts, the concept of make-believe (or imagination) plays a crucial role in the analysis of fiction and fictional truth. In short, some proposition p is true in a game of make-believe f (i.e., is a fictional truth of f) iff participants of f are prescribed to imagine p. Different kinds of rules determine what we are to imagine in different games of make-believe. For instance, fictional truths can be generated by so-called 'principles of generation' (i.e., conditional rules), in combination with props (i.e., things in the actual world that principles of generation apply to). Suppose Gregory and Eric are in a garden and decide to pretend that tree stumps are bears. Let's call this the 'stump-game'. The stumps are the props that generate fictional truths in combination with conditional principle of generation P:

P If there is a stump at location *x*, participants are to imagine that there is a bear at

x

Thus, if there is a stump left of Gregory, the boys are to imagine that there is a bear left of Gregory, and hence it is fictional (true in the stump-game) that there is a bear there. Stumps can be props (as in this ad hoc stump-game), but representational works of art are also props, e.g., *The Hobbit* is a prop that (amongst other things) makes it true in my *Hobbit*-game that a hobbit finds a ring.

This paper investigates the interplay between props and prescriptions to imagine (and hence fictional truth). To this end I focus on the often noted (e.g., Lamarque (1991); Howell (1996); Toon (2010)) feature of Walton's account that in a scenario where Gregory and Eric fail to spot a particular stump (e.g., because it is hidden behind a bush), it is *still* fictional that there is a bear there. Given their principle of generation and given the existence of the stump, it is true in their fiction that there is a bear lurking behind that bush (even though nobody imagined this).

An inactive hiding bear seems innocuous enough. However, I suggest that we can change the scenario such that the unknown fact of the hidden stump is detrimental to the 'plot' of the fiction: Suppose Gregory and Eric also agreed that it is true in their game that a group of ducklings is about to waddle by and every bear in the garden has to be paralysed (e.g., by touching them) in order to ensure safe passage for the ducklings. Let's call this game the 'ducklings-game'. The children paralyse every bear (i.e., touch every tree stump) they see, decide that they are done, congratulate each other, and terminate the pretence. Neither Gregory nor Eric ever finds out that there was an additional stump behind this bush. Unfortunately for the ducklings, on Walton's account, it is still true in the ducklings-game that one bear is left awake. Gregory and Eric will never realise this, but they failed to rescue the ducklings in their fiction. Although the boys imagined being hero's and imagined ducklings happily waddling through the garden after they left, actually it's true in their game that the ducklings were slaughtered in a fury of yellow feathers, quacking and blood.

This paper explores the shape and possible complications (section 4) of an alternative version of Walton's theory that avoids such unwelcome interference of unknown facts about props, by making fictional truth rely on participants' 'common beliefs' about props. Before

presenting the proposal (section 3), I will present its main inspiration: Lewis's and Walton's usage of the notion of common belief in their discussions of principles for import of fictional truth (section 2).

2. Analysis 2

It is a commonplace that there are more things that are true in a fiction than those that are explicitly stated or shown. For instance, it is an explicit, direct, or – in Walton's (1990) terminology[368] – 'primary' fictional truth of the Sherlock Holmes novels that the rooms at 221B Baker Street "consisted of a couple of comfortable bed-rooms and a single large airy sitting-room" (Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*). This is explicitly stated in the text of the Sherlock Holmes novels (i.e., the prop in the Holmes-game) and hence we are mandated to imagine this (i.e., it is true in the fiction). However, it is *also* true in the Holmes-world that water is H_2O, that whales are mammals, and "that Holmes does not have a third nostril" (Lewis, 1978, p.41), even though this is never stated in the novels, nor follows from anything that was stated in the novels. Several authors (e.g., Beardsley (1981); Lewis (1978); Ryan (1980); Wolterstorff (1980); Walton (1990)) have discussed principles of importation of such implicit, indirect or 'implied' (Walton, 1990) fictional truths. They often compare the intuitive appeal of two analyses: one that takes the *actual* world as a basis for fictional background information, and one that takes the audience's *beliefs* about the actual world as a basis. The leading question in these discussions is whether unknown or little-known facts of nature should be allowed to influence fictional truth.

In the following, I focus on discussions where the latter principle is formulated using the concept of common belief: Lewis's (1978) Analysis 1 and 2, and Walton's (1990) Reality Principle and Mutual Belief Principle. I will discuss Lewis's counterfactual analysis of the 'In fiction *f*, ϕ'-operator for verbal narratives as an intensional operator, i.e., as quantifying over possible worlds. Walton's discussion (1990, section 4.3) closely follows Lewis's, except that Walton's principles are formulated for verbal *and* nonverbal props.

Lewis discusses several modal analyses, of which Analysis 1 and 2 are the final (and,

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[368] Actually, Walton (1990, p.143) emphasises that his 'primary'/'secondary' distinction is not exactly the same as the often used 'explicit'/'implicit' distinction. Unreliable narrators, for instance, may explicitly state *p* while *p* is not a primary truth of the fiction.

according to Lewis, best) candidates. Lewis's Analysis 1 takes the actual world as basis for background information that is imported into the fiction. Roughly, a fictional world is as much like the actual world as the text allows. The fiction operator is thus analysed as a counterfactual, i.e., what is true in f is what would be true if f were told as known fact in our world. In other words, we take the actual world as our 'starting point' and see what it would be like if f were told as known fact. A simplified representation of Analysis 1:

(1) "In f, ϕ" is true iff in all possible worlds where f is told as known fact that are most similar to the actual world, ϕ is true[369]

Analysis 1 makes it true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that 221B Baker Street has one living room. Since this is explicitly stated in f, this is true in all worlds where f is told as known *fact*. Moreover, Analysis 1 makes it true in the Sherlock Holmes novels that water is H_2O. Worlds where the Sherlock Holmes novels are told as known fact *and* water is H_2O are more similar (or 'closer') to the actual world than worlds where the Sherlock Holmes novels are told as known fact and water is *not* H_2O. Analysis 1 thus correctly predicts the fictionality of such background information.

Analysis 1 also makes little-known and unknown facts relevant to fictional truth. On Analysis 1, whatever is actually the case will also be true in the fiction (unless explicitly contradicted by it). But, given that my partner went to the supermarket yesterday, is this then also true in the Sherlock Holmes novels? We may consider such import odd but relatively harmless (similar to the inactive hiding bear in the stump-game). However, as Lewis argues, little-known or unknown facts can be detrimental to the plot of a fictional narrative. This can lead to counter-intuitive results. For instance, in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, Holmes claims to have solved a murder case by showing that someone has been killed by a viper that climbed up a bell rope. It is not explicitly stated that Holmes is correct. Gans (1970) has argued that, since vipers cannot actually climb ropes, either it's true in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* that the snake reached its victim some other way, or Holmes has not solved the case at

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[369] Cf. Walton's Reality Principle: "If $p_1,...,p_n$ are the propositions whose fictionality a representation generates directly, another proposition, q, is fictional in it if, and only if, were it the case that $p_1,...,p_n$, it would be the case that q" (Walton, 1990, p.145).

all. Either option is counter-intuitive; Holmes is always right!

To avoid this, Lewis introduces Analysis 2. A simplified representation:

(2) "In f, ϕ" is true iff in all possible worlds where f is told as known fact that are most similar to the community of origin's overt conception of the actual world, ϕ is true[370]

The "community of origin's overt conception of the actual world" consists in the 'general common beliefs' about the actual world in the community of origin of the relevant fiction. p is 'common belief' (see e.g., Lewis (1969); Schiffer (1972)) within some community c iff everyone in c believes that p, everyone in c believes that everyone in c believes that p, everyone in c believes that everyone in c believes that everyone in c believes that p, etc.[371]

Analysis 2 still imports truths such as that water is H_2O. This was common belief between Doyle and his readers. However, information such as that my partner went to the supermarket yesterday or that vipers cannot climb ropes is not imported into the fiction. Although a single reader of the Sherlock Holmes novels may personally have believed either of these things, (and it may even become overt belief sometime after the fiction has been published) it is *not* common belief within the community of origin and hence *not* part of what is true in the Sherlock Holmes novels.

3. Common Beliefs about Props

In this section I explore to what extent a similar 'common belief-move' would be possible in Walton's framework to deal with unknown facts *about props* influencing fictional truth, i.e., I will explore whether the notion of common belief may also be relevant for the analysis of *explicit* fictional truths (rather than just for the analysis of *implicit* fictional truths as discussed in section 2).

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[370] Cf. Walton's Mutual Belief Principle: "If $p_1,...,p_n$ are the propositions whose fictionality a representation generates directly, another proposition, q, is fictional in it if and only if it is mutually believed in the artist's society that were it the case that $p_1,...,p_n$, it would be the case that q" (Walton, 1990, p.151).

[371] See section 4.2 for the notion of *general* common belief. See Vanderschraaf and Sillari (2014) for a discussion of potential issues with the notion of common belief and related concepts.

3.1 Motivation

At this point the reader may wonder about the motivation for such a project, especially since (as will become clear later in section 4) we will need to resort to additional theoretical machinery to make it work.

The main motivation behind this project is the observation that intuitions concerning fictional truth in the ducklings-game scenario are unclear and not uniform across people. Whether the reader thinks that there is a problem to solve here (or whether they think that the current paper proposes an unnecessary twist on an established theory), is going to depend on their intuitions concerning fictional truth in the ducklings-game scenario. Although some theorists report experiencing no unease with Walton's prediction of the ducklings' death, most theorists and laypeople report some level of uncertainty concerning fictional truth. It is not obvious to this latter group that we should indeed accept that (without Gregory or Eric ever knowing this) the children failed to rescue the ducklings in their fiction. There seems to be at least *some* intuitive appeal to giving a little more authority over fictional truth to Eric and Gregory, given that it is *their* game. The current paper explores to what extent we can make sense of this conflict in intuitions. Given that it is at least not obvious that Walton's theory offers the right predictions in the ducklings-game scenario, we thus have a theoretical justification for exploring alternative analyses of fictional truth that may account for this.

Second, we can motivate the current project by drawing a parallel between the discussions on import and the discussion of the ducklings-game. The ducklings-game scenario mirrors Lewis's bell rope scenario; Both scenarios' raise the question of whether unknown facts of nature should be allowed to influence fictional truth (implicit fictional truth in the bell rope scenario, explicit fictional truths in the ducklings-game scenario), and in both scenario's the unknown fact of nature has far-reaching consequences for the plot of the fiction. Just as for the ducklings-game scenario, intuitions vary concerning the correct analysis of imported fictional truth. As both Lewis and Walton admit, it is unclear whether Analysis 2 is necessarily superior to Analysis 1 in all cases.[372] Moreover, intuitions concerning fictional truth in cases

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[372] Walton (1990) suggests that analysis 1 may fare better with respect to moral facts (cf. the debate on 'imaginative resistance' Gendler (2000); Weatherson (2004)).

like Lewis's bell rope scenario vary across people. It is not clear to everyone (e.g., to Gans (1970)) that Analysis 2 indeed gives the correct predictions in this case. Drawing this parallel gives us a meta-theoretical motivation to explore whether (just as Lewis and Walton resort to the notion of common belief in their discussion of bell rope-like scenario's) a similar common belief-move would be possible for the ducklings-game. If theorists (including Walton) question whether we should allow unknown facts to ruin the plot of a fiction in the case of implicit fictional truths, why would we (without questioning) let unknown facts ruin the plot of a fiction in the case of explicit fictional truths? The current paper investigates this (previously unexplored) part of the logical space of possible analyses of fictional truth, brought to light by the ducklings-game scenario.

Although the current proposal (concerning the analysis of explicit fictional truths) is thus inspired by Walton's (and Lewis's) discussion of implicit fictional truth, it is *not* meant to be 'true to Walton' and deviates from his original theory in important respects (see section 4). The aim of this paper is not necessarily to argue in favour of this common belief version of Walton's theory, but simply to explore its shape and tenability; Do we absolutely *have to* bite the bullet concerning the ducklings' deaths, or is there a viable way out?

3.2 Proposal

On a common belief version of Walton's theory, conditional principles of generation are only valid (or 'proper') if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game of make-believe, e.g., all participants believe that the prop exists, all participants believe that all participants believe that the prop exists, etc. A principle such as *P* is thus ruled out. Rather, Gregory's proposal to pretend that "stumps are bears" has to be understood as (implicitly) quantifying over stumps whose existence and nature is common belief, rather than simply over *all* stumps (within the garden). In other words, the general formula for conditional principles of generation (i.e., "If *p*, then participants are to imagine that *q*") is reformulated as "If it is common belief between participants that *p*, then participants are to imagine that *q*". The principle of generation guiding the stump-game is thus:

> *P'* If it is common belief between Gregory and Eric that there is a stump at location
> *x*, then Gregory and Eric are to imagine that there is a bear at *x*

If the actual world is such that it is common belief between the children that there is a stump left of Gregory (i.e., Gregory believes this, Eric believes this, Gregory believes that Eric believes this, Eric believes that Gregory believes this, etc.[373]), then they are mandated to imagine that there is a bear left of Gregory, i.e., this is true in their game. Similarly, if it is common belief that there is *no* stump at *x*, then it is true in the stump-game that there is *no* bear at *x*. In case the children have no common beliefs about there being a stump at location *x* or not (e.g., because they simply haven't explored this part of the garden yet), there will be no mandate to imagine that there is a bear, nor a mandate to imagine that there is none. It will thus be indeterminate whether there is a bear at *x* in the fiction. As Gregory and Eric collectively explore the garden, their common beliefs about the presence or absence of stumps at different locations will grow in number and hence the set of fictional truths concerning bears will grow, making truth in a game of make-believe a *dynamic* notion.

On this version of Walton's theory, unknown facts about props no longer influence fictional truth. Reconsider the ducklings-game. Even if there actually is a hidden stump at *x*, if the children commonly believe there to be no stump at *x*, there will be *no* mandate to imagine that there is a bear at *x*. Hence it will *not* be true in the ducklings-game that there is a bear there. The children commonly believe that they have touched all relevant stumps and therefore it is simply true in the ducklings-game that they rescued the ducklings.

Interestingly, since the account requires *common* belief, it makes truth in a game of make-believe a *collaborative* notion.[374] If Gregory spots the hidden stump at *x* but chooses to ignore it (e.g., because it's getting cold and he wants to quickly finish the game), it will *not* be true in Eric and Gregory's game that there is a bear at *x*.[375] This will even be so in case Eric *also* spots the hidden stump and similarly chooses to ignore it. Gregory may even have noticed that Eric also saw the hidden stump and hence believe that Eric believes that there is a stump at *x*! Still, if the children don't acknowledge this 'publicly', their beliefs about this stump fall short of

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[373] I assume the principle of positive introspection (see Rendsvig and Symons (2019)): If *a* believes that *p*, then *a* also believes that *a* believes that *p*, etc. In other words, our attitudes are transparent to ourselves. Hence everything that *a* believes will also be 'common belief' in a community that only has *a* as a member. The proposal thus does not exclude solitary pretend play as a type of fiction.

[374] I leave the question of whether games of make-believe can also be guided by mere 'common acceptance' (see e.g., Stalnaker (2002)) (e.g., when participants lie about props), to future research.

[375] We might say that this is true in a game that Gregory plays individually with the stumps.

common belief, it is *not* true in the ducklings-game that there is a bear at *x*. Of course, this cannot go on forever. If Gregory and Eric end up face-to-face staring at the stump, or some third party publicly points out the hidden stump to them, then they can no longer avoid the mandate to imagine that there is a bear at *x* (and the need to paralyse it). They would have to change the rules of the game to avoid this fictional truth now.

4. Possible Objections

On Walton's original theory, fictional truths and worlds are independent "from cognizers and their experiences". They are "like reality, [...] 'out there,' to be investigated and explored" (Walton, 1990, p.42). The objections discussed in this section hinge on the intuitive appeal of this idea: that fictional truth should be somehow objective and independent of participants' mental states.

Before discussing these, however, it is important to specify to what extent the proposed account is in fact incompatible with this idea. On a common belief version of Walton's theory, fictional truth is guided by our common beliefs about props, rather than directly guided by these props. In this respect, the account makes explicit fictional truth (contra Walton) depend on cognizers' mental states or "what people think" (p.42). However, as in Walton's original account, fictional truth is still independent of what participants do and do not *imagine*. If it is common belief that there is a stump at location *x*, then participants of the stump-game will be mandated to imagine that there is a bear at *x*, and hence this will be true in their game. This will be true even if participants for some reason fail to or refuse to imagine that there is a bear at *x*.

4.1 Discovering the previously hidden Stump

A defendant of Walton may object along the following lines: Sure, there may exist games with principles of generation such as *P'*, but if participants do not agree on this explicitly, then they are simply not playing that kind of game. If Gregory says "all stumps", then it simply is *all* stumps (and not covertly all 'common belief-stumps'). The fact that engagers with fiction indeed accept the consequences of their rules (so specified) is evident from the reaction we, according to Walton, may expect from the children in case they realise that they were mistaken

about there being a stump somewhere:

> "False alarm. There isn't a bear there after all," [...] "We were mistaken in thinking that, in the world of the game, there was a bear there." [...] They do not say that fictionally there was a bear which evaporated when they approached, nor that it is *no longer* fictional that a bear was there at the earlier time. (Walton, 1990, p.37)

Likewise, in case the children realise that they were mistaken about there *not* being a stump at x (e.g., they find the hidden stump during their stump-game, even though they previously believed that there was no stump at x), they will say that it was fictional *all along* that there was a bear at x. Walton has a ready-made explanation: The prop was at x all along and hence made it true in the fiction all along that there was a bear at x. On the adjusted framework, however, fictional truth is dependent on common beliefs about props. Hence before the children find the stump, it is true in the game that there is *no* bear at x, but after they find the stump, it is true that there *is* a bear at x!

To avoid the counter-intuitive result of bears evaporating or popping into existence in the stump-game, the common belief version of Walton's theory will have to somehow explain the intuition that it's true in the fiction that there was a bear at x *all along*. We have to allow for retroactively changing fictional truth. This means that we need to allow for the following in the previously hidden stump scenario (I denote the real and fictional timeline respectively as t_n and t'_n): At t_1 (when the stump has not been found yet) it is true in the fiction at t'_1 that there is no bear at x. At t_2 (when the stump has been found), however, it is true in the fiction at t'_2 *and* at t'_1 that there *is* a bear at x. Something that was false in the fiction at t'_1 thus later becomes true in the fiction at t'_1.

The common belief version of Walton's theory naturally allows for such retroactive changes in fictional truth. To see why, consider how the discussed principles of generation relate to (fictional) timelines. Arguably, principles of generation for stump- and ducklings-games (whether we go for Walton's original theory, or for a common belief version of Walton's theory), have an implicit time variable:

> P_t If there is a stump at location x at t_n, participants are to imagine that there is a

bear at x at t'_n

> P'_t If it is common belief between Gregory and Eric that there is a stump at location
>
> x at t_n, Gregory and Eric are to imagine that there is a bear at x at $t'n$

We can formulate P_t and P'_t in this way because for the stump- and ducklings-games the fictional timeline parallels the actual timeline, i.e., the fictional events are happening 'right here, right now'.[376] Given that stumps usually do not move around, the time variable in P_t normally has few consequences for fictional truth. P_t, for instance, predicts that, in case a stump is relocated (e.g., lifted by an excavator) from location x at t_1 to location y at t_2, it is true in the fiction that a bear is at x at t'_1 and at y at t'_2. For the common belief version of Walton, the time variable in P'_t has more direct consequences. Reconsider the hidden stump scenario: Once the children find the stump at t_2, it very probably becomes common belief that there was a stump at x *all along*. In other words, at t_2 the children commonly believe that there was a stump at x at t_2 *and* that it must have been there earlier as well, at t_1. Hence, given P'_t, it becomes retroactively true in the stump-game that there was a bear at x at t'_2 *and* t'_1. It is thus *not* true that in the fiction a bear pops into existence at t'_2. Rather, it is true in the fiction (but only from t_2 onwards) that there was a bear there *all along*.

We have independent reasons to allow for retroactively changing fictional truth as (our knowledge of) props develop(s). Introduction of a new character during an act of storytelling or pretend play can make it retroactively true in the game of make-believe that this person existed all along. This will be true in case their existence was not previously contradicted (e.g., the children are still exploring the garden), and in case their existence *was* previously contradicted (e.g., the hidden stump scenario). For instance, an unreliable storyteller may initially describe their protagonist as an only child and only half-way through their story reveal that they are actually not an only child by introducing a secret sibling. Similar retro-actively changing of truths in games of make-believe may be required for deceptive narrators such as Christie's Dr. Sheppard in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, a detective novel in which the audience finds out at the end of the story that the narrator was the murderer all along.

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[376] This is not necessary for fiction or pretend play in general (e.g., children can pretend to be roman soldiers under Caesar's reign or space pirates in a distant future).

4.2 Missing out on fictional Truths

Suppose twelve children play the ducklings-game and only Gregory failed to see the hidden stump. Or suppose that Mia reads a copy of *The Hobbit* that has pages stuck together and accidentally and unknowingly misses the part where it is stated (amongst other things) that Fíli and Kíli are brothers (*p*). Walton has a ready-made explanation for why it seems that Gregory and Mia miss out on the fictional truths (obvious to others) that there is a bear at *x* and that *p*: They are not perceiving the (part of the) prop that makes this fictional. On the common belief version of Walton's theory, however, if one participant doesn't share a particular belief about a prop, it will not be a *common* belief and hence cannot influence fictional truth. How do we explain our intuition that Gregory and Mia *are* (unlike the others) missing out on fictional truths? I consider two possible strategies that work to different degrees for Gregory's and Mia's cases.

4.2.1 The majority's Truth

First, as Lewis (1978) and Walton (1990) do in their discussion of imported fictional truths, we may switch to a version of the theory that requires mere 'general' common belief, i.e., *p* is general common belief in *c* iff *most* members of *c* believe that *p*, *most* members of *c* believe that *most* members of *c* believe that *p*, etc.[377] Such a move will not affect the discussion of Gregory and Eric's ducklings-game. They are only two and hence 'most' participants is 'all' participants. However, in the ducklings-game played by 12 children, it will be general common belief that there is a stump at *x* and hence it will be true in their collective game that there is a bear at *x*. Gregory is thus missing out on fictional truth.

Similarly, because most readers of *The Hobbit* will not have pages stuck together (and believe this about other readers, etc.), *p is* true in their collective game and hence Mia is missing out on fictional truth. Note that this strategy only works for Mia if we (contra Walton) assume

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[377] 'Most' can be understood as 'more than 50%' or we might work with a higher threshold. Alternatively, we can allow for a graded (or 'fuzzy') notion of fictional truth. Arguably, we have independent reasons for adopting such a notion because (common) beliefs can be graded anyway (see e.g., Brandenburger and Dekel (1987); Stinchcombe (1988)).

that readers of a novel play a collective game, rather than that they all play their own individual game with the prop. Moreover, on this strategy it will *not* be fictional that *p* if the majority of the readers of *The Hobbit* have these two pages stuck together due, for instance, to a large-scale printing error.[378]

4.2.2 Representation Truth

The second possible strategy, based on Walton's notion of fictional truth of a 'representation', is probably better suited to Mia's case. Walton draws a distinction between 'ad hoc props' that are pressed into service for a single game of make-believe (e.g., the stumps in the stump-game), and 'representations' (or works of fiction), i.e., things that possess the social function of serving as props in games of make-believe. Artworks such as novels, paintings, sculptures, theatre plays, etc. were specifically designed for this purpose and thus count as different kinds of representations (or works of fiction). Although "[p]eople can play any sort of game they wish with a given work" (Walton, 1990, p.59), only games that accord with a representation's function are 'authorised' for it. For instance, it is *The Hobbit*'s function to serve as a prop in games in which it is true that Fíli and Kíli are brothers, not in games in which they are father and son, or games in which it is undetermined whether they are brothers. To play the latter kind of game is to misuse the work of fiction. Fictional truths of a representation are those propositions that are true in *all* authorised games for this representation.

Simply put, although Mia was (supposedly) using the correct principles of generation, her game was based on only part of the text of *The Hobbit* and hence falls short of an authorised game.[379] Since fictional truth of a representation is what is true in *all* authorised games, we cannot allow incomplete games to count as authorised. A game based on just the first three sentences of *The Hobbit* could then also count as authorised and hence hardly anything would be true in *The Hobbit*. Authorised games have to be games that are based on (beliefs about) the entire prop. Mia, playing an unauthorised game, thus misses out on fictional truths *of the representation*. An interesting feature of this second strategy is that it only works for representations: Gregory does not miss out on fictional truths *of a representation* since the

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[378] Easter eggs in films and videogames arguably have a similar effect.
[379] This is true independently of whether the majority of readers plays such a game.

stumps (being ad hoc props) do not authorise any games.

5. Conclusions and further Questions

In this paper I have explored the shape and tenability of a version of Walton's theory of make-believe in which unknown facts about props *cannot* influence fictional truth since conditional principles of generation are only valid if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game. The fact that this version theory makes fictional truth depend on common beliefs raises some additional questions relevant for future research (and possibly also for the discussion of implicit fictional truth). First, the fact that people can have graded beliefs (about props) hints at the need for a graded notion of fictional truth. Second, given that people can lie about their beliefs (about props), can games of make-believe also be guided by mere 'common acceptance'? Last, it would be interesting to explore a normative version of Walton's theory in which fictional truth depends on what the children can reasonably be expected to believe about the stumps.

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seems paradoxical, will assume great and deep significance when we have once reached the point of applying it to the twofold seriousness of duty and of destiny; it will, I promise you, support the whole edifice of the art of the beautiful and of the still more difficult art of living (Schiller, 1967, p. 80).

Here, we have a paradox: "Man is only completely human when he plays" and a promise: "this paradox is capable of bearing the whole edifice of the art of the beautiful and of the still more difficult art of living". Rancière will reformulate this thought as follows: "there exists a specific sensory experience that holds the promise of both a new world of Art and a new life for individuals and the community, namely the *aesthetic*" (Rancière, 2010, p. 115).

By reformulating Schiller, Rancière effectively operates two major displacements that re-design the aesthetic horizon of the community and of everyday life. However, the crucial point here is to set the distance from this horizon, that is, to reflect on the limitations of the work of art as a model for a community and on the other hand, on the divergences between the idea of an art of living and that of an aestheticized life. If we want to summarize the challenge presented here, this could be in the form of the following question: How could the notion of the aesthetic as a specific experience lead to an "aestheticization of common existence" (Rancière, 2010, p. 116) that would be in line with both the art of the beautiful and the art of living?

2. The aesthetic and the topological ground for the various forms of aestheticization

The aesthetic in Rancière is primarily a matter of repartitioning the sensible. On this ground, it is useful to introduce the difference between *aisthesis* and *poiesis*:

> The function of *poiesis* is to produce a sensible element that verifies the power of thought immanent to the sensible. The dimension of *aisthesis* is then the relation of the work to its origin and this relation of aisthesis to itself, a redoubling of *aisthesis*" (Rancière 2000, p. 21).

On another instance, Rancière set out from the beginning that "what aesthetics refers to is not the sensible. Rather, it is a certain modality, a certain distribution of the sensible" (Rancière,

2009a, p. 3). This idea of distribution implies a certain intensity of the sensible along with an appropriate space for operations that can support various modalities of the sensible that are aesthetic in essence. The notion of topology can be quite useful in this kind of setting. Topology refers to a spatial condition that permit the thought and actualization of properties and relation among elements such as the senses. As a term, the topological is more suitable to capture the modalities of the aesthetic comparing to the spatial. For instance, the topological permits to think the aesthetics of beautiful in terms of a particular as well paradoxical condition, namely *aesthetic efficacy*, that is a "paradoxical kind of efficacy that is produced by the very rupturing of any determinate link between cause and effect". For Rancière, it is "precisely this indeterminacy that Kant conceptualized when he defined the beautiful as what is represented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 7).

The repartition of the sensible that produces a certain intensity of the sensible in its simplest and most essential form is a matter of a doubling of the senses. This is a crucial point for understanding on a first instance the relation between Kant and Rancière. In fact, Rancière admitted that the text "that has framed the space of aesthetics" is Kant's *Critique of judgment*, setting out that this has been as well his "guiding thread in the construction of a tentatively more comprehensive concept of aesthetics" (Rancière, 2009a, p.1). The apprehension of a form according to Kant entails the doubling of the sense; there is the sense of the given and a sense produced out of it. This means also a certain relation between the senses which, in a dynamic manner, can take the form of a re-configuration of the given. This is what Rancière calls 'the aesthetic dimension' or 'dissensus': "It is another kind of relation between sense and sense, a supplement that both reveals and neutralizes the division at the heart of the sensible" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 3). From this, we can deduce that the relation between the senses can be seen as a generic form of aestheticization. In other words, the aestheticization can be understood as a process of producing or intensifying the aesthetic.

On the other hand, in order to understand the variation in the meaning and the use of the term 'aestheticization' Rancière proposes a reconsideration of the works of arts in terms of their autonomy or heteronomy. In fact, autonomy in what Rancière calls the *aesthetic regime of the arts* is the autonomy of a mode of experience and not of a work of art. (Rancière, 2010, p. 116). This experience refers not only to qualities of a work of art but also to qualities that do not belong to it. The manifestation of what is art along with what is not art, that is, what it

wasn't destined to be part of the work of art, is a kind of a 'free appearance', an experience of the free play of the aesthetic. To illustrate this point, Rancière refers to the Greek statue known as the Juno Ludovici, stated by Schiller at the end of the 15th letter. It is about a goddess. However, the working of time, the play of its temporality, the distance between, on the one hand, its initial purpose and state and, on the other hand its current becoming and loss of certain attributes, amount to a situation where the goddess "wears no trace of will or aim". It is about a configuration that emerged freely, out of any intention or planned action: "The statue thus come paradoxically to figure what has not been made, what was never an object of will. In other words: it embodies the qualities of what is not a work of art" (Rancière, 2010, p. 117).

In this case, 'free appearance' is the appearance of what has not been aimed at as art. It is free in the sense that "it ceases to be a suspension of the oppositions of form and matter, of activity and passivity, and becomes the product of a human mind which seeks to transform the surface of sensory appearances into a new sensorium that is the mirror of its own activity" (Rancière, 2010, p. 118). From this re-contextualization of the 'free appearance' emerges as well a new ground for the free play, or in this context, for the aesthetic play. Thus, aesthetic play becomes "a work of aestheticization".

Correspondingly, Rancière designates that in the aesthetic regime of the art, "art is art to the extent that is something else than art. It is always 'aestheticized', meaning that is always posited as a 'form of life'" (Rancière, 2010, p. 118). From this point on, the aesthetic as well as the aestheticization process can be seen in relation to operations of framing and constituting a world defined by a specific content given to the art-life axis. In other words, there are different scenarios where aestheticization acquires different meanings depending on the politics of aesthetics, that is, on the presuppositions associated with the constitution of a community, the coordinates of a common world, the framing of a new collective ethos.

Following the lines of Schiller's aesthetic thought and its political and ethical implications, "matters of art are matters of education" and art, as self-education, "is the formation of a new sensorium – one which signifies, in actuality, a new ethos" (Rancière, 2010, p. 119). The vital questions here, considering the various historical projects of 'art becoming life', from Schiller's epoch and onward, concerns art and the political project of dwelling in a common world. There could be a variation of answers, drawing from the historical experience, that extend from aestheticization being a substitution of politics to aestheticization being linked

to a certain conception of design that is committed not only to creating objects "but a sensorium, a new partition of the perceptible" (Rancière, 2010, p. 122). The latter case, aestheticization as the generation of sensorium, entails the multiplication of temporalities of art, scenarios of latency and reactualization, attributing to art a metamorphic status, recognizing the aesthetic in co-operation with a 'heterogeneous sensible' (Rancière, 2010, p. 124).

Of course, there is always the danger of doing too much in either direction. This is a kind of danger that Rancière has given the name of entropy. On the one hand, associated with a generic form of an 'end of art' thesis, there is an entropic situation of 'de-aestheticization'. On the other hand, the procedures of aestheticization in the form of a re-aestheticization could lead to entropic situation where 'everything becomes artistic'. So, given this sketch of the different meanings that the concept of aestheticization can take, my aim will be to further clarify the possibilities offered by the aesthetic and to secure an aestheticized ground for the edifices of the art of beauty and the art of living.

3. The concepts of life and beauty under the aesthetic regime of the art

Now, I will try to analyze further this relation between art and life by asking: what idea of art and what idea of life? I will start from the idea of life; we have to have in mind a certain idea of life. For Rancière this idea of life is an idea under the aesthetic regime of the art which can be opposed to the idea of life under the representational or poetic regime of the arts where the primacy is attributed to an idea of organicity, to an idea of a whole "within which a principle of unity, a principle of proportion and concordance, governs the multiplicity". In the representational regime of the art, life is the "life of an organism". And beauty is defined by "the adjustment of the parts of the organism that makes them concur to same end" (Rancière, 2017, p. 598). If I spoke earlier about a paradoxical kind of efficacy, namely, what Rancière calls aesthetic efficacy, we should now consider a reverse operation, Rancière calls it respectively, aesthetic separation. This term or operation facilitates the understanding of the idea of life under the aesthetic regime of the art works; this idea of life is performed,

> by disconnecting and rearranging the relation between the notions at play in the definitions of the
> ends of art and the criteria of beauty; disconnects the power of the form from the implementation of
> a concept, the appearance of the beautiful from the perfection of an organism and the use of a thing

from its utility (Rancière, 2017, p. 597).

Those disconnections and rearrangements create the unity between two apparently incompatible ideas of the relation between life and art: (a). Life as the inner power animating the autonomous, aesthetic, mode of being of the beautiful. And, (b). Life as the extended reality to the ends of which art must be subdued. The unity of life and art, which is a unity of life and life, is manifested in its full conception in Kant's *third critique* where we find for the first time a problematization of the "contradictions and the paradoxes through which art and beauty, finality and lack of an end are connected in the aesthetic regime" of the art (Rancière, 2017, p. 598).

Life as specified by Kant in the first paragraph of the "Analytic of beauty" is related to a radical disjunction, a form of aesthetic separation: "The representation of the beautiful is not referred to the object; It is referred entirely to the subject, indeed to his or her feeling of life" (Kant, 2000, p. 89). The aesthetic separation means that the unity of art and life "always presupposes a lack or a supplement, something that is aside, imperfect, supplementary, useless, or endless". Aesthetic separation can be related to the opening up of space for the free play of the cognitive faculties. And, according to Rancière,

> this is the first formulation of an idea that will return again and again as refrain in Kant's analysis: the finality of the beautiful is to animate the life of the faculties in the subject, to produce a consciousness of their free play, to strengthen this state of animation and allow it to reproduce itself. In short, the subjective finality of the beautiful is to make life feel life. But what kind of life is this? What does this kind of life imply? (Rancière, 2017, p. 598).

Rancière will try to answer these questions by taking as its basis the example of the *flowers as free natural beauties* in Kant. For Kant there are two kinds of beauty: (a). *Free beauty*, which presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be, that is a beauty free of concept. (b). *Adherent beauty*, which presupposes a concept of what the object ought to be and the perfection of the object in accordance with it, that is a beauty adhering to a concept, a conditioned beauty. So, the flowers are free natural beauties and the explanation given by Kant is the following:

> Hardly anyone other than the botanist knows what sort of thing a flower is supposed to be; and even

the botanist, who recognizes in it the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no attention to this natural end if he judges the flower by means of taste (that is, to judge its beauty). Thus, this judgment is not grounded on any kind of perfection, any internal purposiveness (finality) to which the composition of the manifold is related (Kant, 2000, p. 114).

So here, "the success of the feeling of life provided by the flowers implies the dismissal of any knowledge or consideration of their constitution and finality as living organisms". And, "the form that pleases is not the form given to that object by the concept of what it must be. In the free beauty of the flower, life manifests itself as a global power indifferent to the differentiation and harmonization of its functions". In such a situation, aesthetic finality is a valid form of aestheticization because it is separated from "any kind of objective finality, any perfection of the object" (Rancière, 2017, p. 599). In a more detailed way,

> the subjective finality experienced in the aesthetic judgment must not only be distinguished from the external finality, which is utility, but it must also be distinguished from what is readily contrasted with the criterion of utility, namely, the criterion of internal perfection of the work seen as the achievement of an artistic will (Rancière, 2017, p. 599).

Here, once more, we have the manifestation of the aesthetic regime of the art, of an aestheticization process versus the organic considerations of the art in the representational regime. And this is why, beauty, according to Kant, "has nothing to do with internal finality or the perfection of the work". Rather, there is this kind of aesthetic separation where beauty, on the contrary,

> points towards a form of harmony that cannot find its achievement in itself. It points towards an improvement, an intensification of life whose destination is to be communicated, to take part in an improvement of a collective form of life based on the intensification of a capacity to share (Rancière, 2017, p. 599).

A basic principle in the aestheticization process under the aesthetic regime of the art is that *the success of beauty is not the success of art*. Beauty is not dependent on the application or observation of any set of rules. On the other hand, beauty is not dependent either on any artistic will. This point could be easily understood on the basis of the distinction between artistic

beauty and aesthetic beauty. In the latter, the feeling of beauty is independent of any concept determining our judgment. In nature, in the case of the free beauties of nature and the example of the flowers this condition, according to Rancière, "is easily fulfilled since we ignore flowers' vital organization". However, in the case of the artwork there is a doubling of the form: "our judgment on the form of the representation is mediated by the consideration of another form, and this is, the form that the artist has wanted to carry out on his medium" (Rancière, 2017, p. 599).

Paradoxically, this doubling of form implies an imperfection rather than a coherent, assured whole. The notion of aesthetic separation as presented above is the sign of an inevitable epistemological loss. Art is the practice in which the knowledge of a thing does not include the capacity of achieving it for the very simple reason that nothing guarantees that knowledge can be translated in a form without any loss or deviation. There is always a form of loss, a kind of aesthetic separation that provides the condition that the artwork,

> can only approximate beauty and foster the aesthetic feeling inasmuch as it escapes itself, as it is not defined by its own perfection but by the imperfection and the supplementation that make it the vector of an enhancement of life, which also includes a specific form of socialization (Rancière, 2017, p. 599).

So, the form of aestheticization that is of importance in our analysis is that one that stems out of the "the distinction of three forms of finality – external objective finality, internal objective finality, subjective finality" along with Kant's dismissal of internal objective finality which has been intended as the proper end of art in the representational regime. Apparently, the basic vector of aestheticization, the principle of aesthetic feeling, is subjective finality. But, according to Rancière,

> the very dismissal of internal objective finality, the dismissal of the mode of perfection provided by the paradigm of the organic body, opens the possibility for a form of conjunction between subjective finality and external objective finality or utility. It opens the possibility of a conjunction between the absence of the end of the beautiful and the commitment of art to the production of a collective life (Rancière, 2017, p. 600).

This modification to the system of ends and finalities regarding art, life and the beautiful, points towards the expression of the vitality of a new life, the weaving of a fabric of a new life, "the fabric of a living community" (Rancière, 2017, p. 615), that is the possibility of a conjunction between the art of the beautiful and the art of living.

4. Aestheticization and communities of transformed sensation

In *Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community* Rancière unfolds a thought line that begins from the presupposition that a proposition can function as 'artistic operation'. The proposition chosen by Rancière brings together some of his most important conceptual threads: community of sense, dissensus and ontology of art. This proposition is actually a poetic statement in the 'White Water Lily', a prose poem by Mallarmé: *Apart, we are together.* This statement is paradoxical. A starting point for understanding this paradox is that Mallarmé's proposition designate an aesthetic place, a topos, a human community of 'transformed sensation'.

Describing the artistic work, Rancière provides the necessary ground for the apprehension of the conceptual relations involved in the topological and ontological considerations of art:

> What the artist does is to weave together a new sensory fabric by wresting percepts and affects from the perceptions and affections that make up the fabric of ordinary experience. Weaving this new fabric means creating a form of common expression or a form of expression of the community" (Rancière, 2008, p. 3).

The idea of community can be considered as a spacious concept that permits the co-existence of various elements that could be thought as bodies in a larger or metonymical sense providing thus the conditions for plotting spatial and temporal assemblages of human and non-human entities. On the other hand, there is a certain political-aesthetic dimension at play. For Rancière, a community of sense is "a frame of visibility and intelligibility that puts things or practices together under the same meaning which shapes thereby a certain sense of community" (Rancière, 2009b, p. 31). This approach can be seen as an aestheticization process, a doubling of the senses in the form of a partition of the sensible, that is, a certain cutting out of space and time that binds together practices, forms of visibility and patterns of intelligibility. On these

respects, a community of sense can serve as experimental ground for testing the conceptual horizons of the other and of the heterogeneous, opening thus a productive field for the different relations of sense to sense that permit to re-arrange and re-consider the spatial presuppositions of artistic practices.

The idea of community in Rancière can be traced back to Kant and Schiller and can be understood in terms of promise and possibility rather than as an actual and existing state of things. In this sense, community is not restricted to an idea of individual being together; it is about a community of sense. In *Disagreement* Rancière provides a concise definition of aesthetics as "partition of the perceptible as well as discourse on the perceptible"; this discourse is autonomous, meaning that there can be "an evaluation of the perceptible that is distinct from any judgment about the use to which it is put" (Rancière, 1998, p. 57). Rancière refers to the Kantian reasoning in the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* and the example of the palace employed by Kant for supporting the thesis that the aesthetic satisfaction derived from a mere representation of an object is indifferent with regard to the existence of this representation (Kant, 2000, p. 90). It is in this way that the world of a virtual community is constituted, a *sensus communis* that presupposes a principle of universality: "By 'sensus communis' […] must be understood the idea of a communal sense, i.e., a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (a priori) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as whole" (Kant, 2000, p. 173).

The transcendental foundations alluded here to the idea of communal sense have as effect, the demise of the representational norms since the principle of universality can be seen as a force of de-hierarchization. Rancière clarifies this idea of communal sense: "Human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together" (Rancière, 2008, p. 4). On these grounds, aestheticization can be understood as a political and communal process, as a way for elaborating a new ontological tissue for what it means materially and symbolically *being together*.

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The Impression of Music: Edmund Gurney's ideas about music in *The Power of Sound*

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ABSTRACT. *The Power of Sound* by British pianist and theoretician Edmund Gurney (1849-1888) has long been treated as an obscure if valid addition to the philosophy of music. In contrast to much of the literature in that field, which is usually built upon a systematic vision putting music and its building blocks at the top of philosophical priorities, Gurney's book is a discussion-driven work, combing already published papers and involving serious addition to the dispute about the scientific vs speculative understanding of the world, music and human perception. Gurney – much better known as a psychologist or a philosopher – has been a trained musician and later in his life a concert pianist, both of which have given him substantial insight into the world of music. His devotion to music, as confirmed by his friends, has always been unshaken. He saw music as the greatest pleasure in life. Gurney became a concert pianist, and although his career ended abruptly, he was remembered as the most capable and amazing musician among his friends. When in 1880 Gurney published his *Power of Sound* he hoped to combine his knowledge and understanding of science (physiological and physical) and apply it to his experience and love of music, advocating the ability of music to lift people's spirit and help them endure life's difficulties. Gurney hoped to explain music's inner workings as well as convey his beliefs in music's potential for social and

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individual development. Unfortunately, the book's reception was slow and rather indifferent. It is only today that the Power of Sound regains its proper place among musical literature. The author of this paper aims to present the two concepts that are introduced by Gurney in the XIV chapter of *The Power of Sound*. Gurney describes music using the terms expression and impression. Both of these terms are treated by Gurney as two types of musical effectiveness, two ways in which music acts and is received. The author of The *Power of Sound* prefers the latter (impression) to the former, however, from today's perspective the term expression which was used throughout the twentieth century, both to describe the object and the subject's state of mind, has been often discussed in aesthetics, while the concept of impression remained connected to the behavioral reaction of the listeners and nothing more. The author of this paper explains presented concepts in reference to Gurney's aesthetics as well as to contemporary understanding of aesthetic qualities and the aesthetic experience. Following Roman Ingarden's and John Dewey's applications of the concept of aesthetic quality for their theories of aesthetic experience, she ventures to shed light on the possible understanding of impression. The author of the paper concludes her paper with suggestion that the category of musical impression, although confusing at times, may provide a way of describing the experience and understanding of music independently of a particular emotional effect or behavioral consequence, stressing the aspect of immersion in the process of following the music and the inner ideal motion in the music itself.

> The important thing in musical comprehension, he holds, is the grasping of individual parts as they occur… (Levinson, 1993, p. 181)

1.

Edmund Gurney (1849-1888) is usually remembered as a psychologist studying mind transference, hypnosis, or hallucinations. His contribution to psychology and philosophy of mind is substantial. He has written on the issues of great importance hardly studied and poorly discussed before. As in the case of many intellectuals, Gurney's interests were varied. He was concerned with philosophical questions and at the same time committed to answering at least

some of these questions using experimental methods. In the age of the most rapid scientific development, as it must have been seen at the time, Gurney belonged to those, for whom the questions of transcendence or matters of specifically human perceptual potential, seemed most pertinent and highly at risk of being disregarded due to lack of scientific merit. Gurney, who distinguished himself at school with his intellect and talent for languages, received a prestigious scholarship to study at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was resolved to study those questions and many more. He proved to be an excellent student and a gifted researcher. Between 1883 and his death in 1888 Gurney devoted himself to psychical and psychological research, for which he is known the most, researching difficult and elusive phenomena of the human mind's functioning, among those telepathy, hallucinations, or hypnosis. He was the co-founder of the *Society for Psychical Research* (S.P.R.) and in 1883 became the *Society's Honorary Secretary*. Although he held no fixed religious beliefs his attitude towards supernatural and spiritual remained not only neutral and curious but also rather anxious. It seemed that finding evidence of a supernatural order would give more meaning to human existence, as Gurney thought that "The keynote of life without Supernaturalism is resignation: the keynote of life with Supernaturalism is hope."[382]

Gurney was also an educated musician and a gifted pianist, who at one point in his life attempted a solo career. His capabilities and devotion to music, as confirmed by his friends, have always been unwavering. Music was his greatest passion and an unsatisfied love (Myers, 1972, p. 36). Although his pianistic career has been cut short, it might have been the very impulse behind his extensive work on music *The Power of Sound* published in 1880, that rarely received a deserved recognition. Rollo Myers in his text on Gurney expresses his disbelief, saying:

> It is something of a paradox that what is possibly one of the most original and important treatises
> on musical aesthetics ever written (…) should seemingly have won so little recognition... (Myers,
> 1972, p. 36)

In what follows, I would like to introduce the concept of impression used by Gurney to explain the great beauty and power of music, putting it in the context of Gurney's more general ideas

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[382] Quotted after https://people.elmbridgehundred.org.uk/biographies/edmund-gurney/.

and beliefs on music. In an attempt to understand the presented concept of impression, I am going to use the concept of aesthetic quality, as it was defined in the wider context of the theory of the aesthetic experience. In doing so, I will be following John Dewey's and Roman Ingarden's insightful theories of aesthetic experience. My aim here is to introduce the concept of impression concerning contemporary aesthetic experience and art appreciation. I will also turn to Jerrold Levinson and his understanding of Gurney's view on music perception and values. In conclusion, I will use both the concept of impression and the idea of careful and open listening to explain the reception of music and musical works and the pleasure thereof as consisting most of all of the following musical sounds as they appear as unified and complex motion. The idea of the impression of music as explained by Gurney implies that music's ability to make an impression comes from music's inner motion – the process of music development as perceived and followed by an engaged mind.

2.

As suggested before *The Power of Sound* has not been given the attention it deserves. It is only today that the book regains its proper place among musical literature and is seen as a valid addition to the philosophy of music. In the second half of the twentieth century, Gurney's work was discussed by philosophers of music, among others Jerrold Levinson, who devoted his book Music in the Moment to developing a theory of the perception of music based on Gurney's *The Power of Sound*.[383] Still, ideas put forward in *The Power of Sound* are hardly known to a wider public. As Rollo Myers persuasively suggested, a work of such a wide scope should be better known and studied much more carefully. It is with this realization in mind that I undertake to present Gurney's ideas about music, its affective power, and social and individual meaning.

Let me start by introducing some general views on music put forward by Edmund Gurney at the beginning of his work. The author maintains that the book has been written for anyone interested in music without any prior knowledge or experience in either writing or playing music. Gurney set out to explain music to those, who already cared for it but knew very little

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[383] See Jerrold Levinson, "Edmund Gurney and the Appreciation of Music", *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 42, Art, Interpretation, and Reality (January 1993), pp. 181-205, Jerrold Levinson, *The Music in the Moment*, Itaca: NY, Cornell University Press, 1997, and Review: "Music in the Moment": A Discussion, *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 16, no 4, 1999, pp. 463-494.

about it. In his attempt to explain the subject popular and cherished already, he assumes that knowing how music is perceived is vital for its understanding and enjoyment (Gurney, 1880, p. v)

> My chief object, after certain preliminary explanations, has been to examine, in such a way as a person without special technical knowledge may follow, the general elements of musical structure, and the nature, sources, and varieties, of musical effect; and by the light of that inquiry to mark out clearly the position of Music, in relation to the faculties and feelings of the individual, to the other arts, and to society at large. (Gurney, 1880, p. V)

Gurney wanted to illuminate the most important functions of music and the way music is perceived. His ambitious and discussion-driven work encompassed already published texts as well as newly developed argumentation. Gurney discussed current scientific works including Helmholtz's *Tenempfingungen*, which he believed to be a "groundbreaking" achievement in the area of physics on the understanding of sound, although declaring his disagreement with Helmholtz's findings, and Darwin's views on music. *The power of sound* stands out as the attempt to review important scientific contributions to the understanding of music while at the time providing a personal account of its understanding and importance. Still, it seems to me, the most important among Gurney's beliefs is his approach to music's potential for social and individual betterment. In the beginning of *The Power of the Sound*, Gurney writes:

> It is my growing conviction (…) that this art, if its conditions were better understood, might do far more for numbers in all classes, who at present feel at sea in it, and get comparatively little out of it; (…) that it has a unique message for the uncultivated and ignorant… (Gurney, 1880, p. vii)

However general and vague this might sound, Gurney seemed to believe that music might help people who listen to it. He believed that it could provide a positive attitude and change lives by installing hope and enabling inner development. Just how that might be achieved was never explained in detail. Gurney believed in the emotional power of music, in its ability to affect the listeners profoundly in an emotional way:

> …melody is a thing which is every day giving varying degrees of pleasure of a most positive kind to thousands and thousands of people of every conceivable variety of class, character, habits, and

mental and physical constitution; a pleasure, moreover, which is capable of seeming to many of these by far the most intense and perfect that they can attain through art (Gurney, 1880, p. 110)

…the prime characteristic of Music, the alpha and omega of its essential effect: namely, its perpetual production in us of an emotional excitement of a very intense kind, which yet cannot be defined under any known head of emotion. (Gurney, 1880, p. 120)

The effects of music upon the listening self is, in Gurney's view, both immediate and impactful. No mediation, image, or association of any kind is needed for it to be profoundly affective (Gurney 1880, p. 121)[384]. And the affective results of listening to music are based not on sound itself, but on a special combination of sound, therefore melody or melodic order (ibidem).

Gurney admits that music is affective in an emotional way, but he is willing to go even further to find a more objective reason for this pleasant reaction upon listening to music. Compering music and musical forms to the forms in architecture, Gurney concludes that while in appreciating the architectural shapes and forms, the viewer responds to the general forms and that is contingent upon human development, in music, the listener reacts to the particular forms as included in the movement as they are being listened to (Gurney, 1880, p. 122). He explains his beliefs pointing to small children even before the age of 4, who are capable of receiving and copying music in its movement, its melodies, and rhythms within, well before they may be capable of recognizing or appreciating the abstract forms or shapes properly, suggesting that the initial response to music is not mediated through knowledge or understanding of abstract forms (Gurney, 1880, p. 120).

3.

In the *Power of Sound* Gurney sets out to illuminate the functioning of music in reference to the scientific knowledge available at the time. Gurney's *Power of Sound* is full of references and arguments concerning current theories and claims, which sometimes have lost all or most of their appeal. The ambitious task of illuminating the inner workings of music in reference to the up-to-date scientific theories has a historical rather than philosophical value for us today. However, Gurney was concerned with aesthetical issues even more than with the questions of

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[384] On page 122 in a footnote Gurney goes as far as to stress that the auditory form is enjoyed from infancy. He says: *the enjoyment of auditory form in embryo must be referred back to an incalculable distance, and had as great a priority in the evolution of the race as it so perpetually has in the case of individual human infants* (see Gurney 1880:122).

natural sciences. He was concerned with explaining what is responsible for the beauty of music, its effects on listeners; its importance to individuals and society at large. According to Jamie K. Kassler, there are two primarily aesthetic questions, to which Gurney seeks answers throughout his book.

(1)   How judgments about beauty are possible, given the variety of individual and national tastes?

(2)   How music with little or no definable expressive quality can still possess a distinctive impressive or pleasure giving quality? (Kassler, 2011, p. 32)

There are, of course, many more questions equally important to the author, like the question of the scientific grounding for musical functions and their effects, the question about expression and the possibility of distinguishing expressive musical features, or the question about feelings expressed by music and their importance in relation to musical beauty. However, the second question outlined by Kassler is what concerns me the most here. Not just the possibility of affecting listeners by music which isn't [overtly] expressive, but the very nature of impression of music, that Gurney considers primary and essential.

It is important to notice that Gurney uses the concept of impression in his book in more than one way. It seems to me that he uses impression in a more general way when he admits that music in impressive in its nature, and then in a more specific or narrow sense that is still very general when he explains that music may be impressive but not expressive and that the expression of music is always in some way dependent on music impressiveness. I will come back to that.

In this general sense, music is impressive when it affects listeners directly. It impresses by itself. Negatively, Gurney says, it is not when something outside of musical work and often quite different from it may be linked to it. Impression is when the music affects the listeners by itself while the music lasts. Gurney talks about the impressiveness of music as something that has to do with music's ability to provide the listener with an experience of unity, in which they identify with the musical process.

Gurney explains:

> In melody, (…) there is perpetually involved something more even than a suggestion of movement, namely, a direct impulse to move… (Gurney, 1880, p. 103)

And further:

> It is the oneness of form and motion which constitutes the great peculiarity of melody and of the faculty by which we appreciate it (Gurney, 1880, pp. 164-165)

These passages make it clear that the impression of music Gurney discusses isn't only emotional. Further on in the chapter on ideal motion (chapter VIII *Melodic forms and the ideal motion*) Gurney explains that to identify the essential elements that give pleasure to the listening subjects, one ought to follow the process of perception of music rather than focus on the musical forms. He postulates turning "to the actual process by which Music is followed", and translating "the phraseology of form" into the "phraseology of movement". Gurney also states that in a process of listening to music, the movement and form are blended (Gurney, 1880, p. 164). Only than one may realize that "the oneness of form and motion" (Gurney 1880, pp. 164-165) is responsible for the "great peculiarity of melody" (Ibidem).

> When a melody is familiar to us we realize it by a gradual process of advance along it, while yet the whole process is in some real manner present to us at each of the successive instants at which only a minute part from it is actually engaging our ears. (Gurney, 1880, p. 165)

And further still:

> I can think of no better term to express this unique musical process than Ideal Motion (…) ideal in the primary Greek sense of *idea*, ideal as yielding a form, a unity to which all the parts are necessary in their respective places (Ibidem)

In the process of perceiving a melody, Gurney explains, one doesn't just take it as an external presentation, instead one feels being in it as if "something evolved within ourselves by a special activity of our own." (Gurney 1880, p.165) However complex and strange this may sound, Gurney describes, I believe, some things very important in the way listeners listen to music. The process of music – the processual movement that leads the listening ear on – must always

be engaging. Otherwise, the listeners lose their interest in it. Naturally, some phrases may be more engaging than others, and some melodies are easier to follow, but essentially if music is being listened to, the mind follows the movement in it and in following the mind is one with the movement. It may not always happen in the same way, but what makes the experience of music is just such an understanding of musical qualities as leading and pulling the mind making the motion feel uniquely subjective.

4.

In Chapter XIVth of *The Power of Sound*, Gurney talks about impressive versus expressive music, and he uses the contrast between the two terms to explain better what he means. Expression points to the world outside of musical work linking melody, rhythm, or musical structure with images, ideas, or feelings, while impression affects the listening subject in a unique way pointing to music itself. Both of these terms are treated by Gurney as gateways to understanding music's ability to affect the listener. Music as expressive and music as impressive are two types of musical effectiveness, two ways in which music acts and is received. However, stating the difference between these two kinds, or aspects, of music, Gurney also maintains that music, which is expressive of other phenomena, must also be impressive. It must impress the listener with its beauty. He claims that *no music is really expressive*, if it doesn't also *impress*, as having the *essential character of musical beauty* (Gurney 1880, p. 314). This statement alone is quite confusing. The impressiveness seems now linked to beauty, which is never defined or explained by Gurney. The listener is led to understand that Gurney takes both impression and expression to be the most important qualities of music, however, from the previous statements it follows that while music doesn't need to be expressive, if and when in fact it is, it is also impressive (Gurney 1880, pp. 314-315). According to Gurney, impressiveness is in this sense more primary. I would gladly agree with Gurney, believing that while expression or expressiveness of music might only be reached and needed for some listeners, anyone who listens to music is led by music's ability to impress.

> …the particular sense of excitement belongs to a state of consciousness known only in the realisation of music, and [is] not essentially referable to any mode or exhibition of feeling belonging to times when music is not being realized (Gurney, 1880, p. 338)

Gurney describes impression: "as something wholly unimaginable apart from the special manifestation" in music (Ibidem, 60). In contrast to this description, the expressive quality in music, as mentioned before, creates in us "a consciousness of images, or of ideas, or of feelings, which are known to us in regions outside Music" (Ibidem, 312). "The impressiveness which we call beauty resides in the unique musical experience", says Gurney. It follows that the expression:

> is subordinate (1) in the sense that it is far from being a constant element; (2) in the sense that not in it, but in the independently impressive aspect of Music, must be sought the explanation of the essential effect of the art; and that the very intensity of which musical expression is capable, so far from being explanatory, is one of the prime mysteries to be explained (Gurney, 1880, p. 338).

Let me stress, then, that according to Gurney, music perception and appreciation do not depend on identifying the expressive element brought by the music (the images, ideas, or feelings associated with it), nor on recognition of the large [architectonic] structures of musical forms; it is the aural process itself, in which the listener follows each small musical bit one by one, that reveals the beauty of music. Jerrold Levinson explains this as follows:

> Gurney's view is clearly inimical to one that many music theorists seem often to subscribe to implicitly — namely, that elucidation and awareness of large-scale structural relations is of great and primary relevance to the understanding of musical works, and that the whole is indeed as important as the parts, if not more so.
> (…) What is crucial, according to Gurney, is involvement in the musical progression from point to point, the local movement from note to note and phrase to phrase. The essential form of music is located there, he would claim, and not in architectonic vistas beyond aural experience. (Levinson, 1993, p. 182)

And further

> The experience of music is fundamentally a matter of an individual impressions of short extend (Levinson, 1993, p. 183)

I must admit that even the above explanation of the impressive quality of music is still rather

vague. However, what is clear is this. (1) impressive qualities of music and therefore the impression in music is its primary function, and (2) whatever this impression is, it may be seen as the very source of specifically musical beauty. Let me ask then, despite Gurney's numerous attempts to illuminate the musical process, what is the most important quality in music. From Gurney's analysis, one must infer that it is movement and a specific musical quality of moving. It is the process of tones changing one into the other and following in one direction. This movement does not only seem theological but it seems inspired, necessary, and still free. If the aesthetic qualities, as it often seems, are so difficult to define, perhaps, in this case, the quality of impressiveness in music may be seen as having to do with the movement and gradual change. It is on those very features of moving and changing that the aesthetically valuable qualities – as Ingarden would have termed it – are based (Ingarden, 2005, p. 226). However, the aesthetic quality found in artistic works is often identified with the way something appears or may be described as, in this case, the quality itself seems to be as much in the movement as in the mind perceiving it.

John Dewey, in *Art as experience*, describes the organic experience as filled with aesthetic quality. The quality itself, however, is not explained or described in any way throughout the book. The reader can guess what this aesthetic quality may be, as the process of experience is more successfully outlined by Dewey. Perhaps a similar situation may be said to occur in Gurney's *The Power of Sound*. As we learn from the author about the way music is followed and grasped, by agreeing with him and realizing that this description is much more attuned to what we have experienced as listeners, we may see that the musical quality that we seek is right in front of us. The impressiveness of music seems to be the music's ability to draw attention and drive it in one direction. There is one more way to describe the musical quality of impressiveness by following John Dewey's later text from 1965 *Aesthetics Experience as a Primary Phase and as an Artistic Development* (Dewey 1965). There Dewey builds upon his earlier explanations of organic experience as being a matter of fulfilment and completion, to suggest an understanding of the creative process in art through the development of an initial phase. "A continuation, – explains Dewey – using intelligent selection and arrangements of the natural tendencies of natural events" (Ibidem). The process, thus explained is more than the appearance, more than what it isn't. It may only be identified through being in it, through the development itself. Similarly, with impressiveness of music, isn't something, one may observe,

but rather it needs to be experienced and felt. The difference between the second description in Dewey's text, which places the stress on the development allows one to understand how the process of music, in music, may be the quality which the listeners identify with beauty. The very development that Gurney is talking about is the development called the Ideal Motion. The development of listening subject who is one with the music. The aesthetic quality we are looking for in music appreciation as much as in art appreciation seems to be present in the very process of perception. The impressiveness of music lies within the engaged following note after note of the musical process.

Conclusion

To sum up, let me say that the impressive quality in music seems to be, Gurney is quite persuasive in this respect, the very quality, that brings out the beauty of music. This quality – both complex and immediately experienced as the subject of listening – is the most important quality in music. To say precisely what it is, would be impossible as, (a) it appears in the very process of listening, and (b) it is one with the flowing of tones and rhythms, combining movement and form. It is why listening and attending to sound is soothing and demanding at the same time. It is in the pushing and pulling of the listening ear. This outstanding quality of the music may be recognized as part of the process of perception, while the process in the music is being internalized so well that it feels as if it developed from within the listening subject itself. (Gurney, 1880, p. 165)

Gurney understands the impressiveness of music as the source of beauty and consequently the most important element of perceiving and appreciating music. The comparison to Dewey's explanation of aesthetic quality as the primary element of an organic experience, should be helpful in better understanding, how in reference to music and the aesthetic experience of music, it is the quality of impression or being impressed that makes the experience of music whole and allows the listening subject to feel immersed in the process of listening. On the other hand, Roman Ingarden in his explanation of aesthetic experience, follows the qualitative element in the experience as the element of meeting and communal dialogue. He conceives of perceiving and interpreting the work as based on the features and elements found. These then provide a communal meeting ground and sustain the dialogue. Yet, in both of these accounts of aesthetic experience, the aesthetic qualities, named or not, are

essential for the process of experiencing as well as its consequences. Similarly, in Gurney's understanding of music's ability to impress the mind, the following of the inner motion in music and the subsequent immersion in it, brings out the music's beauty and drives the listening subject's experience. As the fulfilment for Dewey and the dialogue and meeting for Ingarden visons of aesthetics experience, in Gurney's theory of the understanding of music the ability to discover the beauty and importance of music, and through it, possibly even shifting one's perspective on life, it is the following and immersing in musical inner movement. For some this may come naturally, while for others it requires endless studying and patient pursuing. Yet, for all, in its conclusion, is it definitely impressive.

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Aesthetic versus Functional: Overcoming their Dichotomy in T. W. Adorno's Functionalism Today

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ABSTRACT. The considerations that this paper proposes aim to investigate Adorno's critique of functionalism, starting from his essay *Functionalism today*. More precisely, my intent is to show that Adorno's argumentation moves towards an overcoming of the dichotomy between the aesthetic and the functional, which is conversely one of the functionalist theory's key assumptions. More significantly, on the basis of his specific approach, I will take it a step further asserting that such position opens up some more general reflections on the possibilities of aesthetics and of the aesthetic in his philosophy. In particular, I regard *Functionalism today* as a fitting example of Adorno's attempt to concretely expand the boundaries of aesthetics beyond art. For this reason, I believe that the stereotypical image of Adorno as a mere apologist for the autonomous art needs to be revised.

1. Adorno in Front of the *Werkbund*

The considerations that this paper proposes aim to investigate Adorno's critique of functionalism, starting with his essay *Functionalism today*, of which I will offer a brief contextualization in the first section. While in the second one, my intent is to show that Adorno's argumentation moves towards an overcoming of the dichotomy between the aesthetic and the functional, which is conversely one of the functionalist theory's key assumptions. More significantly, on the basis of Adorno's specific approach, I will take it a step further in the third and final section, asserting that such position opens up some more general reflections on the

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possibilities of aesthetics and of the aesthetic in his philosophy. In particular, I regard *Functionalism today* as a fitting example of Adorno's attempt to concretely extend the boundaries of aesthetics beyond art. So, in light of this, I believe that the stereotypical image of Adorno as a mere apologist for the autonomous art needs to be revised.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that the text I am about to discuss was originally conceived as an intervention at the Berlin conference of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1965, written down as an essay the following year and finally included in the collection *Ohne Leitbild. Parva Asthetica*, which was published by Adorno himself in 1967. This essay offers thematizations on architecture and functionalism that are otherwise very sporadic in the whole of his *œuvre*, among which we count only a few short passages in *Aesthetic Theory* and some considerations on dwelling in *Minima Moralia*. Therefore, *Functionalism today* is a precious source of constant interest especially for architects and architectural theorists who want to engage with Adorno's thought.[386] Furthermore, to better understand the context of the conference, it is not of secondary importance to underline that Adorno was widely aware that his audience was constituted exclusively by experts, i.e., members of the Werkbund, founded in 1907 in open contrast with the exhausted aestheticism of the *Jugendstil*. Faced, therefore, with the extremely technical attitude of his audience, Adorno does not hesitate to admit *a priori* his complete lack of specialist knowledge in architectural matters. Thus, the nature of his contribution is, if anything, theoretical: he develops his main theses reacting to the position of Adolf Loos (Adorno, 1997, p. 5), namely by choosing as his topic one of the most controversial issues in twentieth century- design theory, namely the opposition between the allegedly "fine" and the so-called "applied" arts.

Consequently, my commentary as well will transcend a purely specialist- disciplinary discussion on the status of architecture, focusing instead on Adorno's configuration of a dialectical relationship between the functional and the aesthetic. The inclusion of the paragraph

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[386] See among many others: A. Benjamin, 'Allowing function complexity. Notes on Adorno's "Functionalism today"', in *AA Files*, 41, 2000, pp. 40-5; H. Heynen*, "Architecture between modernity and dwelling: reflections on Adorno's "Aesthetic Theory" "*, in *Assemblage*, 17, The MIT Press, 1992, pp.78-91; B. M. Katz, "Functionalism Yesterday, Functionalism Tomorrow: Thoughts Inspired by Adorno's Address to the Deutscher Werkbund, "Funktionalismus Heute," Delivered in Berlin on October 3, 1965 ", in A. Khandizaji (ed.), *Reading Adorno. The Endless Road*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 233- 245; N. Grabar, "Architecture and the Distribution of the Sensible", in *Filozofski vestnik* vol. 42 (2) (2021), pp. 259-80; Y. Hürol, "Can architecture be barbaric?", *Science and engineering ethics*, 15 (2009), pp. 233-258.

Dialectic of Functionalism (Adorno, 2002, pp. 60-1) in his *Aesthetic Theory* already points in this direction, making the functional becoming an integral part of the aesthetic reflection. As a matter of fact, the interest aroused by the above- mentioned paragraph is due to the very reference to a dialectic of functionalism that already hints at Adorno's conviction that one can and should grasp a dialectical movement even in the apparent purity of the functional. So much so, that if the mimetic moment of the latter, namely the "aesthetic mimesis of functionality" (Adorno, 2002, p. 61), were to be suppressed, decaying into a mere adaptation to purpose, then the critical resistance that even functionalism may hold would be entirely dissipated (Heyen, 1992, p. 84). This happens precisely when the architectural functionalism is understood as a blind adherence to the strictly practical and to the efficiency demands of the administered world. To prevent architecture and functionality to collapse into a confirmatory role towards the exiting, they have to acknowledge their mimetic implications, i.e., that necessity that arises from below, from the material stratum, always inscribed within social antagonisms (Adorno, 2002, p. 61). In such awareness dwells the truth content of functionalism.

These same opinions expressed in *Aesthetic Theory* manifest themselves with exasperated radicality in *Functionalism Today*, as paradigmatically outlined by its last lines:

> Beauty today can have no other measure except the depth to which a work [*Gebilde*] resolves contradictions. A work must cut through the contradictions and overcome them, not by covering them up, but by pursuing them. [...] Beauty is either the resultant of force vectors or it is nothing at all. A modified aesthetics would outline its own object with increasing clarity as it would begin to feel more intensely the need to investigate it. Unlike traditional aesthetics, it would not necessarily view the concept of art as its given correlate. Aesthetic thought today must surpass art by thinking art. It would thereby surpass the coagulated [*geronnen*] opposition of purposeful and purpose-free, under which the producer must suffer as much as the observer (Adorno, 1997, p.17).

In these few lines Adorno concentrates a dense concatenation of essential elements that constitute the core of his reasoning. Therefore, in order to fully understand the meaning and power of this final quotation, I will try to retrace the general argumentation of the text in a nutshell.

2. Aesthetic and Functional: a Dialogue Attempt

Indeed, Adorno opens his contribution by emphasizing the *Werkbund*'s constant mistrust of aesthetics as an abstract discipline far detached from the object and its materials (Adorno, 1997, p. 5). And yet, as we shall see, Adorno develops throughout the essay his belief that "[t]he time is over when we can isolate ourselves in our respective tasks" (Adorno, 1997, p. 16). That is to say that, as the paragraph quoted above puts it, Adorno strongly affirms the need for an intrinsically philosophical aesthetic reflection for architecture as well. Nevertheless, the former should be conceived differently from the traditional and academic positions, for, following Adorno, they have proven to be somewhat antiquated, taking refuge either in a trivial and abstract universality or in arbitrary judgments (Adorno, 2002, p. 333).

Nonetheless, in the present situation even every craftsman's creation demands him to go beyond his craftsmanship, in order to be entirely fulfilled. Thus, the twofold path Adorno envisages for the former is, firstly, to take into account the inherent link between architecture and social reality and, secondly, to commit to a constant aesthetic reflection. Those indications are perceived by Adorno as coercive urges and, what is more, perceived with an increased intensity today. This precise temporal reference plays a crucial role in Adorno's argumentation, since it keeps appearing all over the text, not to mention the occurrences in the title and in the passage cited above. The meaning of the term "today" goes beyond the narrowness of the day identified by the single date, embracing rather the intricate historical and social dimension of the present. In this sense, Adorno's essay takes its starting point from the immediate preoccupation with the process of denazification after the Second World War and the annexed reconstruction of Germany (Benjamin, 2000, p.40), which has found its tangible realization in the monotony and squalor of the architectural manifestations of the 1960s. Thereby, it becomes tighter and tighter the intersection between architecture and ideology in the mark of a constant alienation process (Kurir, 2018, p. 38). Nevertheless, the contingency of that concrete state of affairs offers itself as an impulse for Adorno's philosophical considerations, which thereby open up to broader socio-historical observations, acquiring an ineradicable critical-theoretical aspect. The depth of such an interweaving nourishes Adorno's dialectical approach that takes the moves from the concreteness of a particular occasion to then proceed speculatively beyond it, gaining a critical penetration of reality.

In this case, as already mentioned, the reconstructions of the post-WWII Germany and the Werkbund's profound suspicion towards aesthetics serve as constitutive background for

Adorno's reasoning. In particular, he discusses the present matter by addressing the theory of Adolf Loos, one of the most famous architects and cultural critics in the functionalist context. Loos owes his fame above all to his well-known essay *Ornament and crime* (1908), where he fiercely criticizes the ornament in favour of function, since the former is guilty of masking the authenticity and integrity of materials (Bell, 2011, p. 113). Accordingly, Adorno explores Loos' argumentation by illustrating pairs of contrasting moments, which in the latter's theorization are thought of in a logic of inescapable and reciprocal exclusivity: handicraft or imagination; functional or aesthetically autonomous; purposeful or purpose-free; function or ornament. Conversely, the core of Adorno's proposal lies in grasping them in their intrinsically historical dynamic, without remaining unilaterally fixed on one of the two poles. Hence, even between what is purpose-free and what is affected by it there can be no surgical separation: both moments dwell within the creation itself, whose formal law historically shifts from one extreme to the other. Analogously, the struggle against the ornament pertains thus to the applied arts as well as to the fine ones. As Adorno remarks, the critique of the ornament does not represent the aversion towards something ornamental *per se*, but rather towards what has become historically superfluous, namely what "has lost its functional and symbolic signification" (Adorno, 1997, p. 7).

At the root of such unwillingness to absolutizing one single pole, there is always Adorno's crucial theorem, namely philosophy's radical rejection of reducing thought to an absolute first principle. This prohibition also extends to aesthetics: within an aesthetic object, it is perceivable an interconnection of interdependent moments, where none of them plays the founding role of a *primum*, of an original phenomenon. For this reason, it is not a coincidence that the relational instance is precisely what Adorno attributes to the aesthetic itself. In order to explain this key point, he skilfully elaborates the issue through a comparison between architecture and music (Grabar, 2021, p. 292). As a matter of fact, music is a perfect example to give an account of the relational principle that shapes an aesthetic object. Accordingly, Adorno points out that in the musical phenomenon a single tone is never given as an atomic element, so much so that the latter cannot acquire meaning in itself but only in the manifold connection of functions and components within a creation, to the extent that "superstition alone can hope to extract from it [primary element] a latent aesthetic structure" (Adorno, 1997, p. 13, mod. transl.). The same interactional instance informs architecture too, articulating its moments

of purpose, space and material, so much so that "[n]one of these facets makes up any one Ur-phenomenon to which all the others can be reduced" (Adorno, 1997, pp. 12-3).

Furthermore, to prove that there is indeed a certain tendency in Adorno's reasoning to expand the category of the aesthetic beyond the artistic domain, it is important to remark that on several textual occasions he does not use the term "*Kunstwerk(e)*", but rather the more generic "*Gebilde*". This last expression undoubtedly encompasses the work of art, but also something else equally created, for example objects of use [*Dinge des Gebrauchs*]. Following Adorno, they too, if properly experienced, might be able to manifest a stratum that exceeds the crude utility. To such an extent that,

> Childhood perception of technical things promises such a state; they appear as images of a near and helpful spirit, cleansed of profit motivation. Such a conception was not unfamiliar to the theorists of social utopias. It provides a pleasant refuge from true development, and allows a vision of useful things which have lost their coldness (Adorno, 1997, p. 15).

Hence, although Loos does not recognize it, through a determinate experiential modality, it is possible to detect a dialectical tension that operates even in the objects of use between their constructive-objective moment and their mimetic- expressive one. Loos' strategy of relegating the latter to art in order to distance it from the objects of use is, according to Adorno, an abstract operation, successful only in appearance: with their efforts to deny the mimetic-expressive pole, they pay tribute to it all the same. The allergy against the latter is directly proportional to the harshness of the battle waged against ornament. As a synonym for the accessory and the superfluous, Loos attributes it primarily to autonomous art, leading to an abstract conception of aesthetics, which becomes inadequate to understand the functional and, therefore, mistrusted.

On the contrary, Adorno insists on emphasizing the problematic nature of the absolutization of the purpose in itself and of the ideal of the utility at all costs, released from its correlate. And that is because the celebration of functionality as ultimate goal, dominated by the "here and now" (Adorno, 1997, p. 14), fatally culminates in an apology for the existing. Nonetheless, even though function is surely linked to utility, Adorno does not give up the possibility of an interaction between function and alterity, which essentially reminds of human potential. Overcoming this caesura means attributing a more dialectic and nuanced position to functionality, whose field of action can thereby expand beyond and against that which is

demanded of it (Benjamin, 2000, p. 44). With this in mind, one might grasp a subtle, but still decisive difference in meaning between the occurrences of "today" and "here and now". Referring to the immediate needs of the existing, the latter occludes any chance for the otherness, which is embedded in the moment of dialectical relation, and for its critical potential. Consequently, Adorno admits the possibility of recognizing in the functional too an intrinsic complexity, articulated according to a logic different from profit (Benjamin, 2000, pp. 44-5), i.e., an aesthetic one, which allows to an ephemeral gap of critical resistance for the present and within the present to remain open.

A further and indisputable evidence of Adorno's account of the aesthetic and the functional, as not mutually exclusive instances, can be identify in some very explicit statements of his. Along his argumentation, he actually affirms that "there is no chemically pure purposefulness set up as the opposite of the purpose-free aesthetic", as well as the latter does not exist "in itself, but only as a field of tension" (Adorno, 1997, p. 7, mod. transl.) of the sublimation of purpose. This clearly means that there can never be technical objects that are purely functional nor art-objects that are irreducibly aesthetic, but rather objects constituted by an internal field of tension. Adorno's stance here is quite unambiguous and it implies then that the aesthetic, precisely as an operative principle within the forcefield that a work is, can perfectly dialogue with the functional. Accordingly, all those creations produced by architects, designers or engineers, that claim for themselves a status of pure utility, are actually exposed in their illusory character: under Adorno's gaze, even the most functional forms are informed by aesthetic experience (Katz, 2019, p. 235). To overcome the absolute hiatus between rigid purposefulness and autonomous freedom, Adorno identifies a mediational ground that innervates both the fine and the applied arts and redirects them towards the critical human potential: i.e., the aesthetic principle, conceived as a relational force.

In virtue of this conception of the aesthetic, I will address one last factor that lets the functional really become susceptible to aesthetic reflections: Adorno's account of the concept of beauty. More precisely, I refer to the determination of beauty that appears in *Functionalism today*, that defines it as the result of tensions, of the work's ability to pursue contradictions. In Adorno's terms, such formulation corresponds precisely to an aesthetic experience of beauty that can be attributed also to technical objects without contradicting their objective formal law. Conversely, this is rather the case of Loos, who teaches an

Incidental beauty [*Beiherspielende Schönheit*], measured in terms of opaque traditional categories such as formal harmony or even imposing grandeur, [that] impinges on the real functionality in which functional works like bridges or industrial plants seek their law of form (Adorno, 2022, p. 61).

Thus, in Adorno's view, extrinsically associating these creations with a category of beauty conceived according to traditional canons takes the form of nothing more than an apologetic consolation. Such beauty does not possess a stringency that is immanent to the logic of the functional. As already mentioned, this does not mean, however, that one cannot actually trace beauty in the functional. Articulated as a field of forces, beauty finds now its substance in a dialectical dynamic that for Adorno is also perfectly inherent to objects of use.

3. A Bidirectional Gaze

To conclude my analysis of Adorno's essay, it is worth pointing out once again how Adorno's critique of functionalism does not take on the guise of a one- sided denunciation of the cold technological rationality, as one might expect. On the contrary, it rather takes the form of a Kantian investigation of the very conditions of functionalism's possibility (Adorno, 2022, p. 236-237). Consequently, one could affirm that Adorno's approach rather aims at rescuing the theory and the praxis of functionalism from the state of paltriness into which it has sunk. This rehabilitation evidently passes through its reconsideration under the sign of the aesthetic, capable of bringing to manifestation the critical role of functionalism and architecture in the social reality. In order not to decay into a complete banality, architecture must be encountered beyond its mere use or exchange value as well as thought not just as an affirmation of the current culture and modes of production (Bourque, 2015, p. 171). To that end, Adorno invites the technocrats of the *Deutscher Werkbund* to reconsider the urge that aesthetic thought imposes on them: a thought that could indeed allow them to develop "insights which one day might even improve praxis in an unpredictable way" (Adorno, 1997, p. 16).

Briefly, in his contribution Adorno configures a radical and interesting movement that works bidirectionally: if architecture and the world of applied arts are to turn their gaze to aesthetics, the latter must move away from its aged academic path. In other words, the need for

an aesthetic thought that goes beyond an abstract disciplinary compartmentalization has become imperative. In order to be able to penetrate everything that manifests an aesthetic potential, namely even the functional, Adorno concludes that a renewed aesthetics should not close its eyes in front of what is not art, but – through art – must try to think that too. Therefore, with the aim of nourishing even those domains that, conversely, would like to escape it, aesthetics needs to reflect on the criticisms usually raised against it by giving account of its own processual logic that is no less binding than that of the material, on which the functionalism deeply relies (Adorno, 1997, p. 17). Thus, the reflective effort Adorno points to possesses an intrinsic stringency that does not find its articulation in the empty and abstract space of the concept but receives its force by its adherence to the material, which in its turn demands for a speculative moment.

In short, during his speech, Adorno makes every effort to ensure that his audience of technocrats understands the objective need to innervate their work through an aesthetic reflection that, in return, has to abandon its too antiquated patterns. To such extent, Adorno refers to the fact that a similar compel towards aesthetic thought could take by surprise especially those who now have to unexpectedly submit to its gravitational force, by echoing the experience of Monsieur Jourdain, the famous Molière's character, who indeed "discovers to his amazement in studying rhetoric that he has been speaking prose for his entire life" (Adorno, 1997, p. 17). And yet, it has to be admitted that in none of the passages examined above Adorno does hint at his aesthetic theory as a concretization of such a "modified aesthetics" (Adorno, 1997, p. 17). Nonetheless, it is easy to guess that at least he sides with it. Actually, in the light of the argumentative process here proposed, one could go even further, arguing that Adorno's philosophical intention strives towards that very conception of aesthetics that moves beyond art, without, however, getting rid of it. By just loosening the ties of a tradition that constrain the aesthetic to the theory of art, Adorno is free to shift from the thematic development of the work of art to a different and more complex understanding of the category of the aesthetic itself.

This could be in fact the deeper sense of the essay's final quote that has inaugurated the present paper. That is to say that by suggesting the dialectical interweaving between the aesthetic and the functional, Adorno does not intend to completely eradicate the doctrine of the artwork from his aesthetics, in which the latter still continues to be the privileged object of

investigation. However, he opens up to the possibility of going beyond the theory of art, to make it actively effective: namely, not to disregard it, but to proceed beyond it, by reflecting on it. Hence, transcending the thematic discourse of the work of art signifies focusing on what actually takes place and acts in the artwork itself, or, in other words, to identify a performative trait of the aesthetic that operates in the phenomenon by bringing to manifestation its plural tensive structure. Therefore, the most evident and most interesting consequence of a similar reading of Adorno's thought is a revised consideration of his conception of aesthetics itself, which tends to find its pivotal point precisely in the relational instance. As a result, as Adorno himself puts it, "aesthetics is not an individual discipline but the scope of a correlation of concrete philosophical questions" (Adorno, 1992, p. 38, transl. by EV). Then, in light of all these elements, perhaps the time has finally come to seriously question the vulgate image of Adorno that condemns him to the perpetual stereotype of the strenuous and intransigent critic of the cultural industry and elitist apologist for the Great Art, in order to grasp the full and still unexpressed potential of his thought.

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Does a Plausible Construal of Aesthetic Value Give us Reason to Emphasize Some Aesthetic Practices Over Others?

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ABSTRACT. I propose a construal of aesthetic value that gives us reason to emphasize some aesthetic practices over others. This construal rests on the existence of a central aesthetic value, namely apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate domain. I address three objections: the objection that asks how an aesthetic value based on intricacy can account for the value of minimalism; the objection that asks about the difference between intricacy within a medium and intricacy between media; and the objection that asks about the danger of a regress. I then say that, although this central aesthetic value can in principle allow us to adjudicate between aesthetic practices, we have epistemic limits (about the potential of certain artistic domains to allow for apprehension-testing intricacy) that prevent adjudication in some cases. Even if there is a difference between the vastness of the potential-intricacy-fields somewhere down the line, it is too far for us to see.

1. Introduction

Kubala (2021) raises the question of whether there are '*specific* practice-external [aesthetic] requirements, which can ground rankings of particular aesthetic practices that all agents are required to participate in' (409). If there is a single or central source of aesthetic normativity, then we can see a way to 'rationalize aesthetic practice-choice' (409). So, is there a single or central source of aesthetic normativity? I will use the word 'central', rather than 'single', because 'central' conveys that there might be secondary aesthetic values, which can be explained in terms of the central one. My talk of centrality also leaves open the question of whether there are other aesthetic values that are not to be explained in terms of the central one.

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Some, the hedonists, think the central aesthetic value is pleasure. Others, the non-affectivists, disagree. Network theorists, for example, do not invoke a central aesthetic value but argue that the source of aesthetic normativity is achievement (Lopes, 2018, p. 127). Gorodeisky, 2021 points to a third way, the Value-Meriting-Pleasure (VMP) view: according to the VMP-theorist, there is some kind of aesthetic value that *merits* pleasure, but the aesthetic value itself does not derive from pleasure-giving capacity or from the hedonic attitude evoked in an experiencer of the aesthetic object (p. 261). For Gorodeisky, the aesthetic value that merits pleasure is '"basic value", where this refers to a value that need not be analyzed further '(pp. 277-8). My view is closest to Gorodeisky's, but with an important adaptation: I am going to provide a distinctive description of what I think the central value, approximately, is.

The term 'emphasize' will go largely unanalyzed here, in order to focus on the proposed central aesthetic value and some objections to it.[388] In brief, 'emphasis' on certain aesthetic practices over others would mean allocating our finite time and resources in such a way that the appreciation and creation of certain works would be prioritized over the appreciation and creation of certain other works. Another term, 'artistic practices', is here stipulated to refer to the three main areas of human artistic activity: the visual arts (including every artistic sub-practice for which the raw material is in the visual field: painting, sculpture, architecture, and the visual aspect of film), music, and the linguistic arts (including every artistic sub-practice for which the raw material is language and the things it expresses: everything from stand-up comedy to Greek tragedy).[389]

So, what is the central source of aesthetic normativity? What is a plausible candidate to be the central aesthetic value that gives us reasons to pursue actions and adopt attitudes?[390]

2. Apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium

The central aesthetic value I am going to put forward is a compound one: apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium. There are three aspects to this. First, intricacy: the number of aesthetically-significant relations between the elements of an artwork, a number that

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[388] Kubala (correspondence, 12.20.22) suggests 'the thin decision-theoretic language of "preference"' as an alternative to talk of 'emphasis'.

[389] Among the things that language expresses are concepts.

[390] I assume here that it is value that gives rise to reasons in this normative domain. Thanks to Kubala (correspondence, 12.20.22). See also Lopes, 2018, p. 7.

will be determined by the character and arrangement of those elements. The level of intricacy will be determined by the number of intricacy-relations evoked by the artwork (for an account of some kinds of intricacy-relation, see §2.3). Second, apprehension-testing: the intricacy should fall in a certain range in relation to our capacity for apprehending intricacy. (Specifically, the intricacy should fall in the range of what is on the periphery of our apprehensive capacities.) Third, sharing an appropriate medium: the parts related in intricate ways should share an appropriate medium, such as sound (for music) or language and the things it expresses (for the linguistic arts) or shape and colour (for the visual arts). (This sharing-an-appropriate-domain clause is an interesting one: it prevents me from having to say that total art, known in German as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, is most valuable. What is *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Some films, some operas, and other multimedia aesthetic projects.)[391] So that is what I mean by apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium. With this proposed central aesthetic value, I may be off-target in some ways. If so, I hope that what I have described at least approximates what the central aesthetic value is.

Some emphasis on intricacy as I have stipulated it, and probably limited as I have limited it, is commonsensical. What distinguishes the excellence of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* from the relative non-excellence of the melody of Toploader's 'Dancing in the Moonlight'? Some consideration about intricacy is likely to feature in the explanation. This is one reason to think I have presented a plausible construal of the central aesthetic value. I will discuss intricacy as a property of individual artworks and then, in order to answer the question of whether the proposed central aesthetic value can give us reasons to emphasize some aesthetic practices over others, I will discuss the intricacy-affordances or intricacy-possibilities of aesthetic practices.

2.1. Objection: Intricacy against minimalism?

I will now consider an objection to my view, one that focusses on the 'intricacy' aspect of the proposed central aesthetic value. The objection goes: how can an account with a central aesthetic value that, in some way, emphasizes intricacy make sense of the aesthetic value of

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[391] I will provide justification for the 'sharing-an-appropriate-domain' clause, and the correspondent relegation of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in §2.2.

minimalism? In response, I say that minimalism is a kind of intricacy. Consider the following argument (the minimalism-as-intricacy argument):

1. If intricacy can be taken to refer not only to what is included in an artwork but also what is left out, then intricacy can account for the aesthetic value of minimalism.

2. Intricacy can be taken to refer not only to what is included in an artwork but also what is left out.

3. Intricacy can account for the aesthetic value of minimalism.

In support of the second premise, there is evidence from ordinary speech in commonplace scenarios: as in, for example, 'I wish the film had included [insert putatively lacking aspect here].' Or testimony could be drawn from the commonplace experience of first learning to draw: one has to choose what to draw and what to omit; what to draw in detail and what to draw in less detail.

2.1.1. Challenge: What is left out of what is left out?

Premise 2 of the minimalism-as-intricacy argument is that intricacy can be taken to refer not only to what is included in an artwork but also what is left out. But what is left out of what is left out? Let us say that 'what is left out' or 'the left-out' refers to those unincluded elements that are relevant to the artwork's intricacy. Let us say that 'what is left out of what is left out' refers to those unincluded elements that are not relevant to the artwork's intricacy. So, the challenge is this: where does what is left out end and what is left out of what is left out begin?

The answer is that it is difficult to know where what is left out stops, but that it will almost certainly stop somewhere. Despite this difficulty, there are reasonable inferences that can be made about what will be included in the left-out. One likely determiner for what is included in the left-out is *expectedness*. If a note is expected to fall in a particular place, but is withheld, then that note can be said to be more clearly part of the aesthetic effect of a musical piece than some other note that was also left out but not expected.

There may well be other criteria determining the boundaries of what is left out, distinguishing it from what is left out of what is left out. Here, I simply offer the category of the 'expected but withheld' as proof of concept for such criteria.

2.2. Objection: Is there really a difference between intricacy within a medium and intricacy between media? If so, what accounts for it?

This objection focuses on the 'within an appropriate medium' clause. The theory I have presented suggests that there is a difference between intricacy within a medium and intricacy between media. The objection expresses skepticism about that view.

2.2.1. Lifeform-relative apprehension-capacity

The simple response to the objection is that there is a difference between intricacy within an independent medium (e.g., sound, the visual field, or language and what it expresses) and intricacy between those media because intricacy within such domains is more natural than intricacy between them. What do I mean by 'more natural'? I mean that we have evolved to have distinct senses or apprehension-capacities focused on these domains: respectively, for sound, the visual field, and language, we have hearing, sight, and linguistic processing. There are not normally leaps between these, unless the experiencer is systematically synesthete. Such cases are exceptions to the normal rule for human experiential capacities.

So, there is a difference between intricacy within a medium and intricacy between media. What accounts for it is what I will call 'lifeform-relative apprehension-capacity'. We have developed certain capacities for apprehension on account of being the kind of lifeforms that we are. We have apprehensive capacities suited to particular domains, such as the domains of the visual, the auditory, and the linguistic and what it expresses. These are naturally-occurring apprehension-capacities. An area of natural artistic activity can also be hybrid, combining multiple independent domains: the two media of song are language (and the things it expresses) and music. This is natural, growing out of language and fluctuating intonation during speech, but also second-order, in the sense that it unites two more basic domains (the domain of music and the domain of the linguistic arts).[392] We could perhaps create non-natural arts: e.g., auditory-gustatory-art. This would consist in hearing certain sounds while tasting certain flavors. This does not seem as natural for humans as linguistic art and song do, but it might well be more natural for other lifeforms, and it might come to be appreciated by some humans through practice, though probably not to the degree that the three independent and lifeform-

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[392] See Kant for discussion of 'the art of tone' (1790/2000, p. 205).

relative naturally-arising artistic practices are appreciable (the visual, auditory, and linguistic arts).

So, this is what I call lifeform-relative apprehension-capacity. I leave open the possibility of the existence of lifeforms for which auditory-gustatory, olfactory, echolocatory, magnetic-field-related, or any-medium art allows for as high a degree of aesthetic value as, say, musical art does for humans.[393] Lifeform-relative apprehension-capacity is important to my argument because it demarcates intricacy-within-a-medium from intricacy-between-media. It thereby supports the 'within an appropriate medium' clause.

2.2.2. More on the difference between intra-domain intricacy and inter-domain intricacy

I will call intricacy-within-a-domain 'intra-domain intricacy', and domains that allow for intricacy-within-a-domain 'independent domains'. I will call intricacy-between-domains 'inter-domain intricacy', and domains that can be situated to allow for intricacy-between-domains 'lateralisable domains'.

Consider the case of a filmmaker who makes a film that makes artistic use of visual effects, linguistic effects, and musical effects. This filmmaker, if she is to create a coherent artwork, must select and arrange her materials in such a way that there are lateralisations (intricacy-relations) between these independent domains, and perhaps also, at the more intricate levels of filmmaking, intricacy-relations between intricacy-relations themselves (see §2.3 for more on this).

Now consider the case of a writer or painter or musician. The focus for these figures is on intra-domain intricacy. A writer or painter or musician selects and arranges her materials in such a way that there are intricacy-relations within the medium. This is a task for which our capacities as the kind of lifeform we are are naturally suited. The mind, due to the typical self-containedness of the visual system, compares and contrasts colour and shape with colour and shape far more naturally than it compares and contrasts colour and shape with sound. What is the evidence for this? I have already mentioned the evidence of the independence of the senses. Perhaps more compellingly, there is the evidence of human specialization: there are

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[393] Nagel mentions' the quality-structure of some sense we do not have' (1986, p. 25).

accomplished linguistic artists, accomplished visual artists, and accomplished composers; but there are very few who reach a high level of accomplishment in more than one of these domains.

The filmmaker may unite considerations about the visual, the auditory, and the linguistic, but the filmmaker's degree of specialization in these independent domains need not be deep or equally deep, and she may well have specialization in none of them. It seems likely that there has not been, and probably never will be, a filmmaker who simultaneously possesses the musical ability of an accomplished composer, the visual-artistic ability of an accomplished visual artist, and the linguistic-artistic ability of an accomplished linguistic artist. Even if such a person were to exist, these three aptitudes for intra-domain intricacy would by no means automatically translate to an aptitude for inter-domain intricacy (though they would almost certainly help). Instead, what is typically found is that films, as a predictable result of being multimedia creations (following in the footsteps of theatre and opera), are multi-artist creations. This raises a perhaps-surprising consideration about film: the director need not be an accomplished visual artist, accomplished musical artist, or accomplished linguistic artist. So, the task of being a film director is only contingently to be an artist of intra-domain intricacy. What an accomplished filmmaker must be, however, in order to be correctly described as an 'artist', is an artist of at least some kind of intricacy. Being only an artist of inter-domain intricacy would suffice. This is why the making of films often involves collaboration. As Orson Welles wrote, 'To practice his art, a poet needs a pen and a painter a brush. But a film-maker needs an army.'[394] These reflections can be generalized to cover other multimedia arts. Not due to its compositeness, combining multiple independent artistic domains, but due to the possibility that an accomplished practitioner might have expertise in none of the three independent artistic domains that it typically seeks to unite, multimedia-directing might well be described as an 'artistic meta-practice'.

2.3. Objection: Is there a danger of a regress of intricacy?

I will now consider a further objection about intricacy: is there a danger of a regress of intricacy? There is intricacy within a domain (call this intricacy$_x$). There is intricacy between

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[394] Quoted in Schlesinger, 2000, p. 154.

domains (call this intricacy$_y$). There is presumably also intricacy between intricacy$_x$ and intricacy$_y$ (call this intricacy$_z$). Is there intricacy between intricacy$_z$ and intricacy$_x$, and/or between intricacy$_z$ and intricacy$_y$? Is there intricacy between the intricate parts, local intricacy-cells, of particular domains and the intricate parts, local intricacy-cells, of other domains (a kind of intricacy$_y$), and/or the intricate parts, local intricacy-cells, of intricacy$_y$ and intricacy$_z$? The questions could go on. Let us adopt the term intricacy$_\xi$ for any intricacy between intricacies; intricacy$_{\xi+1}$ means intricacy that includes one instance of intricacy$_\xi$; intricacy$_{\xi+n}$ means intricacy that includes n instances of intricacy$_\xi$. Here is an argument (which I call the 'intricacy regress argument'):

    1. Intricacy$_n$ and intricacy$_m$ are possible.

    2. Intricacy between intricacies is possible.

    3. If intricacy$_n$ and intricacy$_m$ are possible, then intricacy between them is possible (intricacy$_\xi$). [1, 2]

    4. If intricacy$_\xi$ is possible, then intricacy$_{\xi+1}$ is possible. [1, 2, 3]

    5. If intricacy$_{\xi+n}$ is possible, then intricacy$_{\xi+n+1}$ is possible. [1, 2, 3, 4]

    6. There is a potential regress of intricacy. [5]

What is the way out of this regress? The simple answer is that there can be intricacy-relations between intricacy-relations, but only some of these intricacy-relations are going to be aesthetically valuable. Finding those aesthetically-valuable intricacy-relations is the work of the artist. If it sounds like difficult work at the higher levels of artistic achievement, then that is not a point of implausibility. On the contrary, it is a plausibility consideration in favour of a theory that somehow centralizes intricacy, because the higher levels of achievement in art are widely accepted to exact difficult work in order to be accessed.

3. Argument for emphasizing some aesthetic practices over others

So, does this give us a reason to emphasize some aesthetic practices over others? Consider the following argument:

1. If the central aesthetic value is apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium, then we have reason to emphasize those aesthetic practices that allow for the aforementioned value to be instantiated to a greater degree than those that allow for it to a lesser degree. (Motivation: we ought to pursue that which allows for the instantiation of our aesthetic values. More, there are degrees of aesthetic value and we ought to pursue the appreciation and creation of works that allow for the instantiation of the highest degree of aesthetic value possible.)

2. The central aesthetic value is apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium.

3. We have reason to emphasize those aesthetic practices that allow for the aforementioned value to be instantiated to a greater degree than those that allow for it to a lesser degree.

If this argument is accepted, the question follows: which artistic practices does it favour? This is a question that requires much longer treatment. On reflection, having considered the possibility that music or the linguistic arts might be particularly favoured, I am moved to conclude that distinction between the three main domains of artistic practice (the visual arts, music, and the linguistic arts) is stymied because it is difficult to marshal sufficient evidence for comparison about the intricacy-fields and the human apprehension-capacities for the different domains. Even if there is a difference between the vastness of the potential intricacy-fields somewhere down the line, it is too far for us to see. It might seem more promising to try to assess human apprehension-capacity for intricacy in these different domains. On reflection, however, it is very difficult to say where human apprehension-capacity for any of these domains might end. A competent critic can get to the point at which aesthetically-significant minutiae are appreciated over vast distances, not just within works but between them. Apprehension-capacity expands not only in the relatively-predictable way traced by the average course of human development from childhood to adulthood, but also in the course of adult specialization.

Intricacy allows for more strands to be brought into play. One might point to human linguistic capacity and the vast field of permutational possibility afforded by language to support the view that linguistic art allows for the greatest degree of intricacy. But one could say something similar about music or perhaps the visual arts. There is an epistemic block when it comes to deciding which of these artistic practices might, ultimately, allow for the highest degree of apprehension-testing intricacy. So it is not a plausibly surmountable task to try to hierarchize these artistic practices according to their potential to allow for the highest degree of intricacy.

Conclusion

I proposed that there is a plausible construal of aesthetic value that gives us reasons to emphasize some aesthetic practices over others. The construal points to a central aesthetic value. I did not propose that this is the only aesthetic value, but rather that it is the central one, the one in light of which all or most of the others are to be explained. As said, I think I have only approximated this central aesthetic value here.

The proposed value is apprehension-testing intricacy within an appropriate medium. I said that, even if we accept the argument for emphasizing some aesthetic practices over others, it is still difficult to see how the central aesthetic value might allow us to adjudicate between the possibilities afforded by the three main artistic practices under discussion (music, the visual arts, the linguistic arts).

The argument of this paper has rested on a number of defeasible assumptions for which I have sought to provide justification. Many of these would benefit from longer treatment. I hope that, in addressing them as I have done, I have given an overview of their importance in motivating a broad view of what the central aesthetic value is, and what implications that value might have for aesthetic practice-choice.

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The Truth of Art
A Reflection starting from Hegel and Adorno

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is to focus on how the dialectical opposition of *Wahrheit* and *Unwahrheit* can be studied, both in Hegel and in Adorno, within the specific field of aesthetics. This not only to shed light on the Hegelian premises of Adorno's aesthetics, but also to try to read Hegel's aesthetics through an unusual perspective, as the Adornian one, which at once accepts and reverses its paradigms. Core of the comparison is the question of truth, vital for both philosophers' dialectics, as it is articulated, in a deep and abiding connection with its dialectical opposite, the untruth, in the philosophical consideration of aesthetic phenomena. In the first part I deepen how truth and untruth of art are understood by the two authors; in the second part I consider art as a rational way of expressing truth and explore both authors' interpretation of the relation between the aesthetic and the conceptual (or between art and philosophy); finally, in the third part I discuss the bond between art and socio-historical dimension in order to take into account both authors' critical question on art's possibilities within the present world.

1. Introduction

The aim of my paper is to focus on how the dialectical opposition of truth (in German *Wahrheit*) and untruth (in German *Unwahrheit*) can be studied in parallel and in dialogue in two authors that made dialectics the core of their philosophy, Hegel and Adorno, within the specific field of aesthetics. I find this kind of study very interesting and fruitful not only to shed light on the Hegelian premises of Adorno's aesthetic thinking, but also to try to read Hegel's aesthetics through an unusual perspective, as the Adornian one is, which somehow accepts but at the same time reverses its paradigms.

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Core of the comparison is, then, the question of truth (vital for both philosophers as well as for the influence of the first on the second) as it is articulated, through a deep and abiding connection with the untruth, in the philosophical consideration of art and in general of aesthetic phenomena. Of course it would be impossible to exhaust this topic here, but I would like to trace some outlines dividing this paper in three main points: firstly, I will focus on how truth and untruth of art are understood by Hegel and Adorno; secondly, I will focus on art as a rational way of expressing truth and its relation with the concept; finally, I would like to take into account the bond between art and socio-historical dimension and, always following the two authors, I would like to say something about the critical question of art's possibilities in the present world.

2. The Truth Content of Art

When we approach the two philosophers' reflection on art, which is mainly developed by Hegel in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* and by Adorno in his posthumous work *Aesthetic Theory*, as a first step we need to understand what they intend by what they call the truth content of art. What does it mean that art has a truth content, or that its content is somehow true, or even that it is a particular way of expressing the truth?

In Hegel's perspective, namely within his mostly systematic philosophy, art is considered as a mode of expression of the Spirit. This means that, for Hegel, even though art has to do with the sensible aspect of reality and of our experience of it, it is nevertheless a rational form of knowledge of the truth. Hegel's lectures, in fact, make it very clear that art is far more than just bare appearance, that artistic productions are more than just material objects, that artistic phenomena and cultural practices are more than just irrational attitudes towards reality. Rather, art – both in general and in its particular manifestations – is a unique and rational way of expressing the truth, which is capable of reconcile a true spiritual content with an intuitive and sensible form.

Now, what seems to be problematic in Hegel's conception of art is a sort of more or less explicit primacy of the spiritual rational content over the sensible material form of art itself. In his treatment of art, in fact, seems to emerge the idea that only the spiritual content represents the truth content of art, while its material sensible form is just a transitory moment of the

unfolding of truth – which, as known, will be overcome by the representation of religion and finally by the concept of philosophy. Art is then a very particular way of expressing the truth, because, in it, this very truth content coexists with an element of untruth and, almost paradoxically, it is expressed precisely through this latter.

It is in this sense that we can say that the Hegelian perspective points out the intrinsically dialectical nature – as noted, almost paradoxical, but this is what makes it interesting – of art: art is always entangled in the dialectic between truth and untruth because what makes art art, so what makes art a true form of expression of the truth, is at the same time that "residue" of untruth which always remains present in it. Art, so to say, expresses the truth by means of the untruth.

This dialectical/paradoxical character of art becomes very interesting in the eyes of Adorno's aesthetic theory, which relies on his idea of negative dialectics. As already mentioned, Adorno's perspective is at once influenced by the Hegelian one and critical of it. For Adorno, in fact, the truth of art relies on a delicate balance between the two contrasting impulses of *ratio* and *mimesis*. The rational impulse strives for identity and tends to distort the natural, immediate, sensible aspect of things, and this is in some way inevitable even in the process of art, namely in the process through which things are transformed in artworks, in the rational operation through which reality is transposed into art in order to express its content of truth. The mimetic impulse, on the other hand, is an impulse that art draw from our primordial comportment in front of natural beauty (we cannot elaborate on this here, but let me just remind that the question of natural beauty is one of the main points of Adorno's critique of Hegel's aesthetics).

So, being based on the dialectical tension between *ratio* and *mimesis*, art is for Adorno a particular mode of expression, which is capable of expressing the truth always preserving the aesthetic element (in the original literal sense of the *aisthesis* as sensible, perceptual, material) of our experience of things. Adorno's perspective, in other words, relies on the idea that the truth of art consists in its being expression of what his negative dialectics defines as the nonidentical. The sensible material element of untruth, which in Hegel's account caused the art to be transitory, for Adorno represents by contrast the truth of art itself, enclosed exactly in what cannot be subsumed under the rational concept by the categories of identity. In this sense, for Adorno, thanks to its dialectical character, art could even be a better way of expression of

truth than philosophy – or, as Adorno would say to explain the very meaning of his aesthetic theory, even theory, even philosophy, needs to be aesthetic, needs to have a sort of artistic moment.

3. Art as a *Rational* Way of Expressing Truth

This leads us to the second point, that is art as a rational form of expressing the truth, in analogy or in contrast with the concept, which of course is the rational form of expressing truth *par excellence*. An important point of convergence between Hegel and Adorno is the fact that both understand art and philosophy as two different ways of expressing the same content of truth. However, while in Hegel there is a sort of hierarchy, according to which philosophy is, so to say, "truer" than art, because of that residue of untruth in art that we have considered above, for Adorno, instead, there is no hierarchy between the two, rather they are mutually complementary: as well as art is moved by a rational impulse along with the mimetic one, equally philosophy must always involve an aesthetic or artistic moment. What changes is rather the medium: the artistic material in one case, the abstract concept in the other.

For Hegel, in fact, even though art is an essential moment in the process of the unfolding of truth, philosophy will always remain the best way to grasp and to express the truth content of the Spirit, because, as known, in Hegel's perspective its higher expression can only be the conceptual one. For Adorno, instead, philosophy does not represent an overcoming of art. Rather, precisely because the aesthetic language of art is an non-conceptual language, a para-linguistic form of expression that does not need to turn things into abstract concepts, that does not need to hypostatise experiences in identifying categories, art is for Adorno able to redeem as well as to communicate the nonidentical element of things and experiences that philosophy – and especially the Hegelian idealistic philosophy of identity – tries to liquidate and indeed to conceal through the affirmation of the concept, relegating it within the realm of untruth.

As we have seen at the beginning, both Hegel and Adorno take as starting point of their aesthetics the fact that art is not just an irrational manifestation or a response to a barely irrational impulse. On the contrary, art is the very first form in which the human being tries to express a truth content in a rational way, because thanks to art we try to elaborate things, to give them sense and to translate them into new forms (like artworks, but also like artistic or

more generically cultural practices) in order to make them understandable and communicable. In this sense art is rational.

At the same time, however, both Hegel and Adorno recognise as an essential premise of aesthetics the fact that art can never refrain from a natural non-conceptual moment, so that in art will always be present also a non-rational residue. And both Hegel and Adorno insist on the fact that this latter is, after all, what distinguishes art from other forms of knowledge and communication of the truth.

Nevertheless, even if Hegel and Adorno both conceive art as a rational way of expressing the truth, in the end they come up with two different and almost opposed conclusions. For Hegel the truth of art (art which, let us remind it, is nothing less than the first form of the Absolute Spirit) comes from a first and at least partial removal of the natural residue of untruth, being art a first rational move towards higher modalities of expressing the truth content of the Spirit. For Adorno, on the contrary, the truth of art lies in its capacity not of removing, but instead of preserving that natural residue and to express it in an aesthetic artistic form, thing that the conceptual philosophical language is instead unable to do.

4. The Truth of Art in the socio-historical Reality

In the light of what has been said so far, we see that the comparison between Hegel and Adorno, despite the fact that they lived more than a century apart, can be very fruitful for the topic of the relation between art and truth in the framework of dialectical thought. In fact, it tackles key concepts and can disclose problems that today as in the past – or maybe today even more than in the past – concern the ultimate meaning of art (or of what we can more generically call the aesthetic) in human's life and critically discuss its purpose in the present world. So, in the last part of my paper, I would like to consider the crucial role, acknowledged by both authors, that the socio-historical dimension of art plays in the philosophical reflection on it.

A point of analogy between Hegel and Adorno that I find remarkable is the fact that both feel the urgency to reflect on the possibilities of art within the historical reality of their time. For both, the aesthetics as philosophical reflection starts from the need of questioning art in a time that is perceived as an era of crisis. It then becomes important to understand which is or which could or should be the validity and the role of art in a social and cultural environment

that exhibits deep fractures, contradictions, divisions, difficult to resolve issues, and that therefore demands to rethink our paradigms of interpretation of reality and our modalities of expression of the truth.

Both Hegel and Adorno realise that the dissonances and disharmonies of the world are reflected in the dissonances and disharmonies of art, bringing to light, both at the social and at the aesthetic level, new problems and questions with which philosophy has to deal. For Hegel the break point occurs with the beginning of modernity, which, as known, opens up fractures that the ideal art, the art of beauty and harmony of the Greeks, is no longer able to thematise. For Adorno, to the wounds opened by modernity, and actually never healed, we must now even add the atrocities of the twentieth century. By both, in any case, the present is seen, so to say, as a "post-" era, namely as a time in which something broke forever and we need to understand how to cope with what comes after. The question is then what role can art play towards this break and especially within present society.

What emerges from Hegel's aesthetics is that in the modern era art assumes a whole range of characters which are no longer ideal. This, more or less directly, informs us on the fact that in the modern world the truth content is to be found in a new dimension, out of the realm of the aesthetic, because now it can only be expressed through other spiritual modalities, it can only find a fulfilling configuration in an-aesthetic forms. In this sense, art does not really end or die, rather, once again, the truth of art lies dialectically in its untruth. For Adorno it's somehow the contrary: the darker and absurd art of the present describes precisely the untruth (which for Adorno always means the lack of reconciliation) of the present reality, giving an exasperated image of its unsolved contradictions. In this way art let us see *ex negativo* the truth of a reconciled world, which for now has no effective reality and therefore no image.

In other words, for Hegel art is overcome by anaesthetic forms, which are necessary to design a reconciled world. In this post-ideal world art does not actually die, but rather keeps on existing as a sort of evidence of the difficulty of making this reconciled world effectively and concretely real. This, I think, is the validity (so to say, the truth) of art after its metaphorical end. For Adorno the only remaining way to hope for reconciliation is what he calls an aesthetic "comportment" (*Verhalten*), namely that kind of attitude towards things that finds its model in art. As said, the aesthetic comportment is the one that also philosophy should assume and this is precisely what makes theory an aesthetic theory.

The aesthetic comportment is then necessary to face reality today if we believe in the possibility of a future – and for now only utopian – reconciliation. In the present capitalistic world, those tensions, that already Hegel described as what makes the modern individual alienated and divided in itself, for Adorno does not find resolution neither in art, in which they rather reproduce, nor beyond art, as Hegel wished. But still, for Adorno, those tensions find in the aesthetic realm, if not reconciliation, at least an eye-opening expression.

5. Conclusion

Despite the contrasts, in both Hegel and Adorno the connection of art with historical reality is essential for its truth or untruth, on one hand because of the role that the present plays in determining forms and contents of art, and on the other because of the function that art assumes and puts into practice in the present, being this function not only a function of expression of the truth, but also a cultural, political, social, philosophical, critical function according to the context and the perspective that we take into account.

Moreover, we can say that both Hegel and Adorno detect, during their philosophical reflection on the truth of art, the fact that some turning points occur in history, in the wake of which some kind of changes of paradigm are needed. These changes do not necessarily imply an actual disappearing/death/end of art, but rather they point out that some kind of fundamental metamorphosis is for art unavoidable to maintain its validity within the present world. Also, for both Hegel and Adorno it is exactly in this context of challenge and questioning of art that becomes urgent a philosophical reflection on it, namely aesthetics or aesthetic theory in the sense that we have clarified.

To conclude, we can say that art never really finishes in a radical sense, but rather transforms itself, changes its meanings, reconsiders its functions and its purpose in the world. Neither for Hegel nor for Adorno art ends at some point integrally or definitively, and this, after all, is probably the best proof of its everlasting relevance in life for the humankind, which, after all, is in some sense nothing other than its truth.

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