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Does a Mechanistic Etiology Reduce Artistic Agency?

Claire Anscomb¹

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ABSTRACT. In this article, I reject the position maintained by the ‘orthodox theorists’ of photography that there is a sharp-divide between aesthetic and epistemic value based upon whether a work has a mechanistic or manugraphic etiology. Instead, I argue in support of the ‘new theorists’ of photography that aesthetic and epistemic values are contingent upon the purpose of an image, not whether an image has been created using labour-saving mechanistic processes or intentional manugraphic processes. Specifically, I propose that a mechanistic etiology does not necessarily reduce artistic agency - which I define as the realization of artistic intentions. I examine historical and contemporary image-making processes throughout the article and as a result of this investigation, I suggest that degrees of intentionality and mechanicity can vary depending upon the image-generating processes that are used in the fulfilment of realizing an artistic intention or creating a work for a specific epistemic purpose. Consequently, I propose that epistemic and aesthetic values are not determined by whether a work is typified as mechanical or manugraphic, but how mechanical or manugraphic processes are used, very often together, to achieve specific pictorial aims.

1. Introduction

Different approaches to picturing the world require different image-making processes. Some of these processes may be manugraphic or by hand (Friday 2002, p40) and others may be mechanical, or made with the assistance of labour-saving devices and processes.² According to the ‘orthodox theorists’ of photography, aesthetic value is associated with intentional manugraphic processes, whilst epistemic value is associated with naturally-dependent (Currie 1991, p24) mechanical recordings. Therefore, the orthodox theorists,

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² I will use the terms mechanical and mechanistic interchangeably.

particularly Scruton, have argued that as photography is a naturally-dependent mechanical medium it is not properly artistic. This sharp-divide between aesthetic and epistemic values based on whether a work has a mechanistic or manugraphic etiology is not however, in keeping with actual image-making practice.

In some cases, mechanical processes can aid the fulfilment of an artist's intention to artistically represent a naturally-dependent subject. Additionally, manugraphic processes that are subject to regulations can result in works of high epistemic value. Consequently, I propose that degrees of intentionality and mechanicity can vary depending upon the image-generating processes that are used in the fulfilment of realizing an artistic intention. I provide support for the position held by 'new theorists' of photography, who propose that aesthetic and epistemic values are contingent and that photographic processes often require the intentional input of the maker. Respectively, I demonstrate that a mechanistic etiology does not necessarily reduce artistic agency, specifically the fulfilment of artistic intentions and that we should not hold a sharp-divide between aesthetic and epistemic values based on whether a work has a mechanical or manugraphic etiology. As a result of this proposition, I also defend the view that photography can still be epistemically valuable amidst post-photographic concerns regarding a greater degree of intentionality in digital photographic processes.³

Firstly, I outline the orthodox view of a pre-conceived difference in values between mechanistic and manugraphic works. I contrast this with the new theorists' proposed principles of photography, highlighting how they accommodate intentional input. Sympathetic to this position, in the following section I examine how the representation of a naturally-dependent subject can still be artistic by examining historical modes of picturing, whilst I provide further evidence for the proposal that a mechanistic etiology does not determine epistemic and aesthetic values by examining the diverse historical use of the camera obscura. Following this, in the final section I argue that post-photographic concerns about the diminishment of epistemic

³ '...the digital worry is about too much agency. This paradox should motivate us to consider what kinds of agency we value, and for what.' (Maynard 2010, p33).

value in photography are unfounded. As per my argument, I propose that the potentially greater degree of intentionality in digital photographic processes does not preclude epistemic value.

2. The Sharp-Divide

For the orthodox theorists of photography, aesthetic value is associated with intentional forms of representation (Scruton 1981, p593). Conversely, epistemic value is associated with naturally-dependent mechanically produced representations (Currie 1999, p286). This has led to a sharp-divide between mechanical and manugraphic works as the orthodox theorists have maintained that the former image type has high epistemic value but at the cost of low aesthetic value. For the new theorists of photography however, these are not necessary values and rather than assigning such values based upon image types, they argue that we should assign aesthetic and epistemic values based upon the context or purpose of the image (Lopes 2016, p112). I will be providing support for the new theorists' view, but first I will say more about the orthodox position and the distinction between intentional and naturally-dependent mechanically produced representations.

The orthodox theorists include Walton, Scruton and Currie. Whilst each takes different approaches, they do all hold the view that photography is a form of naturally-dependent representation (Currie 1991, p25., Scruton 1981, p579., Walton 1984, p264). This means that what appears in the resultant image reflects what was actually before the camera rather than the intentional states of the maker.⁴ They also all express the view that photography has a high similarity relation to the subject and so in some sense the image functions as a surrogate form of seeing. Because the formation of the image is naturally-dependent and mechanical it therefore bypasses the maker's cognition and so photography it has been reasoned by these theorists, has high epistemic value. Due to this same reason it is

⁴ Second-generation orthodox theorist Abell argues that the photographer's intentional input can sever the natural-dependence on the subject, meaning that the result is not genuinely photographic (2010, p84).

argued, by Scruton in particular, that photographs cannot be artistic representations (1981, p589). Manugraphic art forms, like painting, have conventionally been held up as representational arts whereby we take an interest in the artist's intentional states and actions and importantly an intentional subject (Scruton 1981, p579). As a result, these works are said to have high aesthetic value, but as their formation is dependent upon the mentation of the maker they do not need to portray an existent subject and so are not reliable like naturally-dependent representations are in this respect. Hence, they are said to have lower epistemic value (Hopkins 2012, p74).

The new theorists, including Lopes, Costello, Wilson (née Phillips), Atencia-Linares and arguably Maynard, have however, argued that photographs can be intentional representations and that epistemic value is contingent depending upon the use of the work (Phillips 2009, p17). The strength of new theory is that it is sympathetic to actual photographic practice. By contrast, the orthodox theorists have discussed photography in terms of ideals, or the most automated version of photography possible (Wilson 2012, p55). What they neglect is that photography is a multi-stage process that requires choices to be made in order to materialize an image (Costello 2017, p79). The new theorists however, in various formulations of the position, conceive of photography as a multi-stage process, at the heart of which is the photographic event (Phillips 2009, p10). This event is the non-intentional, mechanical core of photography, which the new theorists have shrunk to the registering of light on photosensitive surfaces (Lopes 2016, 81).

By minimizing the non-intentional core of photography to the photographic event, the new theorists allow for varying degrees of intentional input into the subsequent processes that materialize the photographic event and lead to the creation of the photographic object (Costello 2016, p144). As such, photography could be almost fully mechanized as with Polaroid photography or it could be very much dependent on the choices and skilled use of the medium as is the case with gum bichromate processes. In order to assess which photographs are artistic, Wilson has proposed that all photographs are images, but that in addition

some are also pictures (Phillips 2009, p18). Photographic images are everyday banal snapshots, whilst photographic pictures tend to involve higher degrees of intentionality and articulate about the subject through photographic means.

It is photographic pictures that have aesthetic value and I will now explain what constitutes photographic means. Essentially, it is the manipulation of light, and this could be through double exposure as for example can be seen in the 1946 portrait of Max Ernst by Frederick Sommers (National Gallery U.S.A, 2017). Or the movement of the subject or latent image during the photographic event as for instance in the warped 1930 self-portrait of Bernice Abbott. There are a number of other methods that allow the photographer to control local, rather than global features of the photograph through the intentional manipulation of light (Atencia-Linares 2012, p22). The association with reality in these images serves to heighten the meaning and appreciation of such works (Atencia-Linares 2012, p23).

The aforementioned examples are instances of analogue photography. The processing of digital photographs does not however, take place in the darkroom but through the use of photo-editing software. This gives photographers the opportunity to control every detail of the image if they so wish, and to a degree that outstrips the control that is available in any manigraphic media, as one is able to manipulate the values of every pixel, isolate and create layers of the image and undo steps without leaving a trace of such alterations. Consequently, artists such as Jeff Wall have composed photographs, much in the same way as one composes a painting (Manchester 2003). Wall has digitally pasted together digital photographs to create fictional but visually plausible scenes of reality. Whilst digital photographic processes conflate the production and post-production stages of photography, it is still the case that Wall has made a photographic picture, as despite having greater control of the local features, his composite creation is still effectively the control of light.

We can now confidently assert that photographic processes are not always purely naturally-dependent or mechanical. There are often varying degrees of mechanicity and intentionality that enable makers to create

artistic works using the medium of photography. What we have yet to address is that the aforementioned works still represent naturally-dependent subjects. As such, in the next section I will show how artists historically worked from reality using mechanical processes to create artistic representations of reality.

3. Representing Reality

In this section, I will focus on one of the historical precursors to photography, the camera obscura which was considered to be a mechanical way to make images (Kemp 1990, p199). To use the camera obscura was to trace over a projected light image, which as with photographic light images, was from a naturally-dependent subject. This device was utilized by those making maps and scientific images in order to accurately record visual information, but was also used by image-makers who wanted to artistically interpret reality. I will show that artists working in a different mode of picturing have been able to artistically represent naturally-dependent subjects and that this mode of representation is analogous to a standard that many photographers work to. Moreover, I will provide further evidence that epistemic value is not necessarily generated in images with a mechanical etiology.

Whilst there was divided opinion during the Renaissance on whether the use of an optical device prevented artistic representation, there has since been a lot of support provided for the view that the camera obscura is especially useful for artists who work in a ‘descriptive’ mode of picturing.⁵ Within the Dutch culture of picturing, art was used as a visual description of the world (Alpers 1983, p24), rather than a visual narrative as was advocated in Renaissance Italy by Alberti. In contrast to ‘Albertian’ pictures, the interest in descriptive or ‘Keplerian’ pictures was in the way

⁵ For artists working in Renaissance Italy the dominant mode of picturing was the ‘Albertian’ mode. This placed heavy emphasis on the artist’s use of reason and technical skill to portray a narrative event like a historical or religious scene. Consequently, Renaissance Italian artists criticized artists in the north as being unimaginative and unskilled due to their descriptive portrayals of reality and use of devices like the camera. (Kemp 1990, p163)

that artists represented their visual experience of the naturally-dependent subject (Friday 2001, p355). The descriptive mode of representation is often subtler than works made in the Albertian mode but it functions well as a representation of ‘expressive perception’ (Friday 2001, p359). Vermeer for instance, is purported to have used a camera obscura to create his descriptive paintings and whilst the subjects of his works may be naturally-dependent, the way in which he has applied paint to represent his visual experience of them is undeniably artistic.⁶ Mechanical devices are particularly good at helping artists to achieve this effect, but it is not prescriptive that this is the only outcome.

During the 18th century, the use of the camera obscura was more widely documented and it was used for a variety of purposes. The camera obscura was most frequently used in Britain to represent scenery and buildings and to create sweeping panoramas that faithfully recorded the landscape, resulting in images that were intended to be of high epistemic value.⁷ Others however, used the camera to depict fictional scenes in a plausibly realistic manner. For instance, it is known that Canaletto used a camera obscura to sketch scenes of Venice directly from life (The National Gallery, London, 2017., Davies 1995). It is also known however, that he used these accurate visual descriptions to depict Venice’s building and bridges from impossible viewpoints, stitch scenes together and create fictional montages of famous buildings and unrealized architectural projects.⁸ In contrast to those who used the camera obscura to create accurate maps of high epistemic value, Canaletto used the device to realistically depict a view of 18th century Venice that took on artistic liberties. Therefore, the use of naturally-dependent mechanistic processes does not predetermine the epistemic or aesthetic value of a work.

Some image-makers capitalized on the naturally-dependent

⁶ It has been proposed by many theorists that the use of the camera obscura by artists is comparable to a composition machine (Steadman 2005, p.308, Sato 2010, p.106, Jelley 2013, p21).

⁷ Thomas and Paul Sandby are particularly noteworthy in this respect (Kemp 1990, p198).

⁸ ‘Canaletto ‘cut out’ images from the city (usually Venice) both real and unbuilt, and recombined them in static montages of urban spaces...’ (Stoppanni 2014, p518)

mechanical nature of the camera obscura to produce images with high fidelity to the subject matter. Sometimes this amounted to works created with a specific epistemic purpose, such as maps or to artistic representations that remained faithful to the relative size and shapes of the depicted objects, but dazzled with the bold intentional application of paint and use of colour as in Vermeer's work. On other occasions however, the mechanicity of the initial recording process was met with the intentional manipulation of the scene by the artist, such as Canaletto, in order to create an idealized representation of reality. Therefore, the use of mechanical processes to depict a naturally-dependent subject need not preclude artists from imaginatively reinterpreting reality if this fulfils their artistic intentions. Analogously, using photographic technology gives artists the tools to straightforwardly document reality, imaginatively portray their visual experience of reality, or create imaginative representations based on naturally-dependent subjects.

4. Intentionality and Epistemic Value

Not all theorists have accepted that such values are contingent. Some theorists have raised concerns that we are entering a post-photographic era because it has been proposed that greater degrees of intentionality in digital photography are diminishing the epistemic value of the medium. As mentioned earlier, photographers are now able to manipulate every pixel of a digital photograph if they so wish. Consequently, theorists such as Savedoff have argued that 'the notion of a special authority now seems chained to the photography of the past, as digital tools move contemporary photography closer to the subjectivity of drawing and painting.' (2008, p111). Batchen has argued that digital processes have returned photography to the 'creative human hand' (1994, p48) and that 'whereas photography claims a spurious objectivity, digital imaging remains an *overtly* fictional process' (1994, p48).⁹ In this section, I will address these concerns and as

⁹ Relatedly, Lefebvre has argued that 'once it becomes impossible to tell apart a photograph from a CGI the epistemic value we give photography may well change.' (2007, p15)

per my argument I will propose that increased intentionality does not necessarily lower epistemic value.

A lack of intentional input in the process of creating an image does not always result in the most epistemically valuable work. It is often the case in fact, that the intervention of an agent can enhance the epistemic value of a work, or at least our access to this epistemic value, depending upon the context of its dissemination and clear signposting of what processes have been used and to what effect (Frankel 2004). Without subjective intervention for instance, astronomical photographs that are usually made from RAW data files would be virtually unreadable. NASA among other space agencies rework their RAW images in order to research from them and also to educate the public with. They frequently make photographic compounds by combining images of the subject taken through different filters, to create a composite and comprehensible image. Contrast, and other values are adjusted in RAW images and often scientists will also assign colours to images that capture subjects beyond the visible light spectrum. This regulated manipulation enables us to see and understand phenomena that would otherwise be difficult or virtually impossible to read. This is a subjective decision that heightens not only the epistemic value, but also aesthetic value (Wilder 2009, p73, Chadwick 2016, p105).

The trust and value that we find in these images, is clearly highly dependent upon the context in which they are used. Within the sphere of science, we trust the truth and factual content of these images, and perhaps most significantly for our interests, scientists do not conceal the image processing techniques that they employ in order to create images. This is much the same in other professional image-making practices such as medical or archeological illustration, and illustrators within these spheres are subject to strict guidelines (Benovsky 2011, p388). As Lopes points out, there are plenty of other knowledge-oriented image-making domains that are not photographic (2016, p112), but that are subject to stringent rules and reliable channels that convey epistemic value for specific purposes (Abell 2010, p85).¹⁰ Such works may not conform to our common understanding of

¹⁰ 'Any image type used to perform an imaging task should be informative, where what counts as informativeness depends on the task at hand.' (Lopes 2009, p17).

visual information, but to experts can be richer than the visual information contained in photographs. For instance, architectural or archeological lithic drawings (Lopes 2009, p13) have much higher epistemic value than many other manographs (Lopes 2009, p22). This mode of selective and interpretative illustration has been described as “scientific realism” (Moser 2014, p62). It is not the case that illustrators are taking on imaginative liberties or presenting subjective viewpoints about the depicted subjects but using the drawings to make valuable inferences about the subjects (Mosser 2014, p75-6). Hence, intentionality does not preclude epistemic value.

Such examples show us that epistemic value is contingent and is not necessarily dependent upon whether a work possesses a mechanical or manographic etiology.¹¹ However, epistemic status appears to be fixed in the minds of average viewers.¹² For instance, whilst it is widely known that there are many photographic domains in which post-production is standard, such as advertising, viewers still take offence to images that appear to be taken from reality (Levin 2009, p331). This may be because there does not appear to be a standard of what constitutes acceptable manipulation within fields like advertising or fashion photography, whilst in photojournalism and wildlife photography, ‘the prohibition of manipulation and staging is well known.’ (Bátori 2016, p82) Whilst intentional control has increased in some respects, despite some theorists such as Savedoff (1997, p211) decreeing manipulation to be standard in digital photographic practice, it is not prescriptive that the digital photographer must carry out this practice.

There can be incredibly low levels of human intervention in the processing of an image due to the increased potential for mechanization that has accompanied technological advances. However, as with analogue photography, intentional control is variable in digital photography

¹¹ A view that has also been expressed by Lopes: ‘The proposal is that neither is inherently epistemic or aesthetic, both are made so by norms in social practices.’ (2016, p112)

¹² According to Cohen and Meskin (2004) viewers have a fixed idea of epistemic value in relation to mechanicity, and this may be contributing to the persistent belief that a mechanical etiology suppresses artistic agency. The rationale behind this is that mechanically formed images are objective, because they lack agential input in the mapping of the image (Walden 2005).

(Chadwick 2016, p111). Just as not all photographers working in the early experimental period of analogue photography would manipulate their negatives or retouch their positives, not all digital photographers will manipulate their images (Morris 2011, p45-46). The potential to manipulate photographs has almost always been possible, what has changed is the potential degree of intentional control that digitalization offers, but this does not signal the end of photography, nor the potential epistemic qualities of the medium.

5. Conclusion

There is no justification for the orthodox theorists to hold a sharp-divide between aesthetic and epistemic values based upon whether an image has a mechanical and manugraphic etiology. Aesthetic value is not fixed based upon whether a work is typified as mechanical or manugraphic, but how mechanical or manugraphic processes are used, very often together, to achieve specific pictorial aims. This conclusion is not intended to eradicate the important distinctions between the specific qualities of painting or photography but rather is intended to help us gain a greater understanding of how artists utilize image-generating processes in order to fulfil their artistic intentions. Therefore, a mechanistic etiology does not necessarily reduce artistic agency. Furthermore, epistemic value is contingent and compatible with intentional processes. Concerns arising as a result of the increased intentional control available to digital photographers are unfounded, as strict guidelines are still in place within knowledge domains that ensures the epistemic value of images.

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Aesthetic Opacity

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ABSTRACT. Are we really sure to correctly know what do we feel in front of an artwork and to correctly verbalize it? How do we know what we appreciate and why we appreciate it? This paper deals with the problem of introspective opacity in aesthetics (that is, the unreliability of self-knowledge) in the light of traditional philosophical issues, but also of recent psychological insights, according to which there are many instances of misleading intuition about one's own mental processes, affective states or preferences. Usually, it is assumed that aesthetic statements are intuitively clear and self-evident. However, a long tradition in psychological research has called the idea of introspective transparency and the infallibility of self-knowledge into question (Wilson 2002). This topic has only recently been recognized as an interesting problem in aesthetics (Melchionne 2011, Irvin 2014). In this paper I will discuss the main shortcomings in introspective self-knowledge, mostly referring to psychological findings. As a consequence, the development of a folk psychological account of aesthetic experience could be needed, investigating how people develop intuitive and naïve theories about their aesthetic reactions, taste, and feelings, distinct from a more objective and empirically grounded account of how judgment and preferences are actually formed in ourselves, even on a neurobiological level. However, it will also be argued that bypassing the individual judgment and his expressed choices in favor of allegedly more objective levels of description would not be an innocent step to take.

1. Introduction

When it comes to aesthetic judgment and questions of taste, we assume that we are free of perceptual flaws and that we are able to formulate a judgment that rests on our own aesthetic experience and attitudes. Now, both the assessment of our aesthetic experiences and the formulation of judgments require the ability to self-reflexively see in ourselves and to correctly communicate the content of our inner reactions and thinking. In particular, from their first theorizations in the 17th and 18th centuries, taste and aesthetic experience have been considered inherently subjective phenomena,

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requiring correct introspection and self-awareness. In our everyday expression of aesthetic evaluations, in fact, we are used to expressions like:

«I felt disturbed by this artist's performance»
«I like more Damien Hirst than Jeff Koons»
«I find her installations moving»
«I am fascinated by his work»

A more complex stage of self- assessment concerns the identification of the reasons for one's own aesthetic reactions and taste: «I like him more because...», «I find it unsettling, because...», «It doesn't appeal to my taste since...» etc. That is, explaining why something causes a specific aesthetic experience or reaction is a further and more complex step of aesthetic understanding that requires some kind of correct attribution of the reason of one's own responses.

In the next section, I will point out that, since the origin of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, the idea of introspective clarity in our aesthetic experience was called into question. Nevertheless, the viewpoint that our own internal states are transparent is still an implicit assumption both in the naïve and everyday uses of aesthetic judgment and concepts, and also in the critical language of experts. In other words, on one side we admit that there are unconscious factors behind our creativity, aesthetic feelings and evaluations; on the other side we mostly assume that anything we feel and think in front of an artwork is, on a careful inspection, clearly and unmistakably discernible.

Moreover, the actual problem of unreliability of introspective self-awareness in aesthetic matters has recently been acknowledged as scientific fact, but still hadn't had any consequences on the assumed reliability of our self-knowledge in aesthetic discourse. This has been only recently pointed out by scholars - in particular, Melchionne (2011) and Irvin (2014) -, who stressed the relevance for aesthetics of some important and interesting findings in psychological research, according to which there are many instances of misleading intuitions about one's own mental processes, affective states or preferences. This has been a central research topic in psychology since decades, but it has received little attention in aesthetics.

2. From the “Je Ne Sais Quoi” to the Psychological Unconscious

Already during aesthetics’ origins in modern times, philosophers have suggested that there are side of our sensorial and emotional life that cannot be grasped with rational clarity. The debates about the subtleties and the imponderable factors in the formation of our taste pointed to a “je ne se quoi” that does not allow for an explicit rationalization of our aesthetic sensibility, recalling Blaise Pascal’s “le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point” (*Pensées*, 1669).

While Descartes equated the *res cogitans* with the conscious and excluded vehemently the possibility of unconscious thoughts, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was on the contrary the first to acknowledge the existence of unconscious ideas and to ascribe to them a relevant role in his philosophical system: “C’est une grande source d’erreurs de croire qu’il n’y a aucune perception dans l’ame que celles dont elle s’apperçoit” (*Nouveaux Essais sur l’entendement humain*, 1765). With reference to Plato’s theory of *anamnesis*, Leibniz called “small perceptions” the existence of fleeting ideas, belonging to the realm of the *cognitio obscura*, which he compares to the experiences we usually have in aesthetic perception. Christian Wolff would later translate Leibniz’s intuition as “dunkle Vorstellungen” (dark representations) or “Empfindungen ohne Bewusstsein” (sensations without consciousness), and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten would call them the *fundus animae*, the ground of the soul composed of those obscure perceptions that, according to him, should become object of aesthetic investigation, defined as *gnoseologia inferior*.

Later, also Kant will stress the impossibility for the artistic genius to have conscious access to the sources of his own creative forces:

Hence, where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not himself know how the ideas for it have entered into his head, nor has he it in his power to invent the like at pleasure, or methodically, and communicate the same to others in such precepts as would enable them to produce similar products. (1790, *Critique of Judgment*, §46).

The unconscious as a vital creative force was, of course, a central topic for the Romantics, but it plays a crucial role also for a scientist like Gustav Theodor Fechner, who investigated aesthetic phenomena from the basic physiological processes. According to his “aesthetic association principle” (*Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 1876), the perceptual associations that determine our aesthetic responses are mostly unconscious. Similarly, Hermann von Helmholtz, in his essay about the physiological causes of musical harmonies (*Über die physiologischen Ursachen der musikalischen Harmonien*, 1857) had claimed that the laws of harmony determine our aesthetic appreciation in ways that escape our conscious comprehension.

The lack of awareness or the murkiness of our introspective life is either due to the fact that inner processes are too weak to be perceived (Leibniz’s “small perception”), or because they lie at the level of physiological mechanisms: we reasonably cannot have access to all the complexity and the intricacies of our internal life. Recognizing the difficulty or even the impossibility to gain a clear and rational vision of the inner workings of our mind should not be a concern. We could even suggest that from an evolutionary point of view an unbounded possibility of introspection would not be beneficial but a hindrance. We also accept the idea that our perception, conceptual schemas, and interpretations are also the product of a complex cultural and linguistic background we are not completely aware, and that there is always some undefinable element in our aesthetic experience that is based on pre-linguistic and unconscious foundations.

On the other side, there are more serious issues concerning self-knowledge, starting from Sigmund Freud’s investigation of the unconscious up to contemporary researches in experimental psychology about people’s ability in assessing aspects of their inner life that have been traditionally considered unproblematic and straightforward. The problem here is not the inaccessibility of deep unconscious foundations, but the systematic illusion of certainty where we expect immediate clarity.

Moreover, the theoretical acknowledgment of the imperfect character of our introspection is rarely followed by a similar awareness in

the everyday practice of lay people talking about aesthetic experiences and also in the words of critics and experts in aesthetic matter. Cartesian self-transparency still seems to be present in everyday contexts, where it is assumed that aesthetic statements are intuitively clear and self-evident. In other words, we usually assume that we always do know what we feel and in which aesthetic experience we are just involved, and that we are able to clearly assess our taste and recognize the reasons of our aesthetic responses. The real problem of opacity is the fact that our judgment may be unreliable even in cases in which we mistakenly feel sure of our judgment.

3. Varieties of Opacity

Even those who believe that introspection generates some truthful knowledge of our mental dispositions would acknowledge that not all mental states can be brought to light since we don't have access to all causal mechanisms governing our mental life. But, as said, more troubling is the question if the mental dispositions we believe to correctly introspect correspond with the real internal states we are trying to pin down. Leaving the psychoanalytical tradition aside, a quite consistent trail in psychological research has called the idea of introspective transparency and the infallibility of self-knowledge into question (Wilson 2002). Several well-known psychological studies (in particular Nisbett and Wilson 1977 is considered a seminal work in this domain) have shown that subjects are often mistaken about their own motivations and mental states and about the causes of their own preferences and decisions. The important point is here that the fallibility of introspective judgment is not the product of an incidental lack of focusing but a systematic feature of our self-reflection. The main shortcoming in introspective self-knowledge consists not only in our difficulty to clarify the reasons of our feelings, but also in the tendency to formulate wrong reasons for them, or even in not being completely accurate in the appraisal of the feelings themselves. Eric Schwitzgebel (2008) writes more radically:

We are prone to gross error, even in favorable circumstances of

extended reflection, about our own ongoing conscious experience, our current phenomenology. Even in this apparently privileged domain, our self-knowledge is faulty and untrustworthy. We are not simply fallible at the margins but broadly inept. (Schwitzgebel 2008, abstract)

In aesthetics, as we just saw, we have a long tradition in theorizing the “je ne sais quoi” and the impenetrability of the unconscious life, but beside this acknowledgment, investigations on topics such as aesthetic experience, judgment, taste and so on take Cartesian transparency and intuition for granted. But if we consider the numerous investigations on this subject, there is no reason for aesthetics not to be concerned with their results.

Melchionne (2011) speaks of “aesthetic unreliability”, as “the variety of ways in which it is difficult to grasp our aesthetic experience and the consequent confusion and unreliability of what we take as our taste”, adding that:

Often enough, we suppress or exaggerate our responses to the point of self-deception. We have difficulty in identifying what in an object causes our response to it. The instability of our feelings over time is such that we are unsure if our responses are caused by our mood, factors in our environment, or the object to which we are attending. (Melchionne 2011)

In short: what people believe to like, thus, could not always be what they actually like. Furthermore, what people believe to be their reason for appreciating something, could also not always be the real reason for their appreciation. And, more worryingly, even what we *believe to feel*, at the very moment we are feeling it, could be an illusory product of an undetectable deception.

Some relevant findings in the experimental research on the opacity of introspection that have direct relevance for questions concerning aesthetics have been investigated by few scholars such as Melchionne (2011) and Irvine (2014). I summarize six main problems that have been studied in the psychological literature and that can be directly applied to topics in aesthetics:

1) The first one is the *influence of contextual or irrelevant factors* on our judgment. Preferences and judgment variability is notoriously caused by irrelevant and contextual factors such as the way a question is formulated and *framed* (Shafir, Simonson, Tversky 2006). Preferences and decisions can be reversed according to how you look at a problem. For example, if people are faced with a choice between a luxury vacation to Bali or a vacation in a cheap local resort ("What do you prefer between the two?"), they would tend to prefer the exotic and fascinating destination. But if the question is reformulated as "Which one of the two would you discard?", then many people choosing Bali in the first formulation now would discard it, because of its expensiveness. Rationally, the two questions have the same meaning and answers should be consistent with each other, but often they aren't. Now, if a person's choice mutates according to how the question is framed, then we have a situation in which her preferences seem dependent on an irrelevant contextual factor.

Similar to these cases of verbal framing are aesthetic choices that depend on spatial arrangements of items that are evaluated by subjects. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) described a "position effect" in choices that are similar to aesthetic evaluations. In one study they asked people in a department store to choose the best quality item, that is, the one they preferred, among four actually identical pairs of stockings. It turned out that items located on the right and inspected last were chosen much more frequently: the position effect was very strong. When asked to motivate their choice, the subjects gave reasons that were mainly focused on the qualities of the chosen product, even though they were all the same. They never mentioned the item's position on the shelf as a relevant factor. Even when the possibility of the position effect was openly mentioned to them, they denied that it could have had an effect on their choice. Nisbett and Ross developed many experimental demonstrations of reconstructive and interpretative processes, where misattribution of reason (see below, 2. case) and confabulation (3. case) are caused by influencing factors that escape our conscious awareness.

Another contextual factor is *mere exposure*, namely the fact that repetition and frequent exposure to an object or a person increase our liking

for them. As Cutting (2003) showed in the case example of impressionist paintings, the more a painter's work was shown in pictures and books to people, the more they liked it later. Similarly, *contrast or assimilation effects* occur when items are implicitly compared, biasing our judgment of the single element: in Arielli (2012) visual artworks were more or less favorably judged according to similar works put next to them that were modified to look aesthetically less pleasing and disharmonic. Under some circumstances, a contrast effect was observed (the original painting was appreciated more by subjects), in other cases an assimilation effect occurred (the original painting was judged as less pleasing).

These phenomena show how aesthetic preferences and opinions may vary depending on circumstances and accidental influences. Moreover, personal prejudices, mood, environmental and "atmospheric" factors can cause changes in aesthetic evaluation without the person recognizing their influence. We rationally consider all these factors as irrelevant, but they do have often an influence that should be investigated, since they are usually not recognized as playing a role in our aesthetic judgment, no matter if trivial, like in consumer's choice, or culturally sophisticated.

2) *Misattribution of reasons*. The failure in the identification of hidden causes influencing our judgment leads consequently to biases in identifying the reasons of our aesthetic impressions. This happens for instance when we ignore the real cause of our emotional reactions. As in a classic psychological experiment (Dutton and Aron 1974) a female researcher interviewed some male passers-by in a park. A group of these men was stopped in the middle of a footbridge that was suspended several meters in the air and rocked by the wind, a very scenic but also anxiety-inducing site. A second group was interviewed on a common pedestrian walkway in the park. At the end of the interview, the woman handed out a card with her phone number and told the subjects that they might call her if they wanted to know more about the ongoing research. The goal was to count how many men would actually call back, using this score as a measure of their attraction toward the woman. It turned out that two-thirds of those subjects that were stopped on the hanging footbridge contacted her again,

while only one-third of the men from the other the experimental group did so. According to the researchers, this could be explained by the hypothesis that the burst of adrenaline and the anxiety caused by being suspended on the footbridge were wrongly mistaken by a considerable number of subjects as a feeling of excitement for the interaction with an attractive woman.

Another example of misattribution of preferences are all cases in which taste is developed due to social conformism or need of group distinction (as Pierre Bourdieu put it). In these cases, we tend to search for explanations (“I like this artwork because it’s innovative”) that appear to be socially respectable and use them to replace underlying socially opportunistic reasons we wouldn’t like to admit or we are not aware of (“I like it because liking it makes me look culturally sophisticated!”).

3) A similar case arises when we *confabulate* reasons. People often tend to make up reasonable explanations for their judgment or choice even if they don’t have any. For example, we are more drawn to easy explanations than to complex one. We could thus give the reasons for an aesthetic judgment making use of explanations that are quickly available to our mind. Similarly, we could be tempted to say that we appreciate a specific painting because of its symbolic meaning and stylistic features, but actually we could have been drawn to it because we were used to have a reproduction in our office, that is, we were subject to an exposure effect we are not aware of. In this case, we substitute a personal reason with an apparently more objective and cultivated explanation: we unintentionally offer a wrong reason for our appreciation getting rid of a bad, but maybe more truthful, one.

4) *Misattributions concerning past and future experiences.* Taste and aesthetic judgment involve elaboration and recollection of previous experiences. If memory could be sometimes misleading and distorted, as has extensively been investigated in psychology, then judgment based on past affective recollection could also be biased (Ariely 1998). Similarly, we fail to understand what we have enjoyed in the past and what has made us happy because we selectively suppress or amplify our memories according to their affective impact. One example of introspective illusion due to this kind of

recollection error is the *peak/end effect* (Fredrickson, Kahneman 1993), i.e. the tendency to overemphasize the extreme moments (the peaks) of pleasure and discomfort in a past experience and its conclusion (the end). Since taste inevitably involves reflection and recollection of a previous experience, the peak/end effect can potentially cause a distortion in the retrospective assessments of our engagement with artworks and aesthetic experiences.

Moreover, we could also wrongly predict what would make us happy or what we would (aesthetically) appreciate in the *future*, that is, our ability in “affective forecasting” could be also biased. For instance, we could mistakenly think we would prefer to visit a museum than going to the theater, but to find out later that we were wrong in assessing our preferences. Psychologist Daniel Gilbert (Gilbert, Wilson 2000) has shown in detail how much we are afflicted with “miswanting”, that is, all cases in which we make incorrect predictions about what we believe that will please us in the future, ending up wanting things now that we actually don’t want after we obtained them.

If there is a discrepancy between the pleasure we experience now, the recollection of past’s delights and the anticipated pleasure of the future, then aesthetics should also investigate the temporal orientation of our evaluations. For instance, a novel could be very entertaining while we are reading it, but it could leave no particular impression after we are finished. A different book, on the contrary, could challenge our patience while we are struggling with reading it, but leaves a positive impression when we think back about it at a later date. Judgments would then dramatically vary depending on the moment in time in which they are formulated. Similarly, we could hypothesize the existence of specific aesthetic experiences that are particularly pleasurable when they are only in the future, more than when they are presently experienced or remembered in the past.

5) *Verbal overshadowing*. We could assume that deeper self-reflection, crucial engagement with our and other's opinion, and verbal clarification of our own aesthetic reactions could contribute to lessen the impact of those biases. But does it really work like that? Does thinking and talking about our own aesthetic preferences and reaction allow for a clearer

image of our true preferences?

Biases could also emerge during the process of verbalization and linguistic categorization: researches show that too much conscious overthinking and verbalization could distort the assessment of our authentic aesthetic experience. The so-called phenomenon of *verbal overshadowing* (Schooler, Engstler-Schooler 1990) shows that the conceptual categories we use in our explanations could be too coarse and force our subjective experience in schemas that are oversimplifying or outright wrong. This is a bias that could threaten the expression of our aesthetic likings: thinking (and speaking) too much about our taste could lead us to choices that are more distant to our real preferences. For instance, in Wilson (et al. 1993, see also Wilson, Schooler 1991), students were exposed to a series of art posters and asked for their preferences. In one group, however, the subjects had also to provide explicit reasons for their preferences, while the other group had only to choose and take the poster home without saying anything. After the subjects selected and took home the poster, the researcher observed what they did with them. Surprisingly, the ones who were asked for explicit reasons for their preferences were later less likely to hang their poster on their dorm rooms' walls than those who were not asked to analyze their feelings. The findings suggest that, when asked for reasons, our preferences are likely to be put under rational scrutiny and eventually be forced into conceptual categories that lead to choices that are less authentic. In the effort to clarify what and why we like something, we try to build a plausible and coherent story and at the same time we also try to give a good social impression of ourselves, showing others how cultivated our judgment is and giving them acceptable explanations, but eventually falling prey to pre-established schemas and clichés.

6) *Affective ignorance*. In conclusion, even emotional self-knowledge is not straightforward (Jaeger 2009, Shoemaker 1994): there are situations in which we believe to feel x, but we are actually feeling y. We could confuse fear with excitement, sadness with melancholy. Or confuse good mood with aesthetic pleasure. This is a crucial point, because it runs counter the assumption that our immediate subjective impression could at

least not be wrong. I could be biased in assessing the causes of my feeling, I could be verbally superficial in expressing them, but then, we think, we cannot be wrong about the simple fact that we are feeling exactly what we are feeling. This, however, would only be correct in the assumption that we have some kind of non-mediated pre-conceptual grasp of our (inner) experiences.

The negation of this assumption constitutes a relevant anti-Cartesians conclusion, since we would debate the *intuitiveness* of our self-knowledge. If I feel pain, this sensation seems to be a non-mediated “quale” of my phenomenal experience. In a similar way, the certainty of self-consciousness is not debatable and thus escapes the skeptical challenge of the Cartesian doubt. An important criticism of this certainty was notoriously expressed by Charles Sanders Peirce (1868), according to which there is no such thing as a non-mediated intuition of mental phenomena. Instead, every knowledge and experience of internal or external events is the products of inferential processes: “We have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts.” (Peirce 1868, p.141). The inferential nature of what we assume to be an immediate intuition opens up the possibility of biased subjective experiences: in the example made above about the wrong interpretation of subjects’ feeling that were interviewed in a park, they believed to feel attraction or excitement, but were actually frightened by the heights under the footbridge. This shows that there is no a two-step process in which an unadulterated feeling gets misinterpreted during a subsequent appraisal’s stage. People’s feelings are appraised and interpreted from the very beginning by the particular situation in which they find themselves.

4. Opacity and the Coherent Self

What do these findings mean for aesthetic research? Are we really such poor judges of ourselves and should we give way to a skeptical conclusion? Certainly, it seems that findings that call into question the transparency of

introspection need to be integrated as a relevant topic in aesthetic investigation. The acknowledgment of aesthetic opacity could compel us to think about ways to avoid these biases, even though, from a psychological point of view, these phenomena could not be easily neutralized, since they are deep and basic features of our mental functioning. Melchionne (2015) suggests a common sense approach for avoiding the risks involved in a distorted assessment of one's own aesthetic taste and preferences, namely the exercise of "norms of cultivation" concerning, among other advices, the awareness of contextual factors, the self-regulation of exposure, and caution against quick satisfactions. Irvin (2104), on the other hand, pleads for the use of mindfulness as a way to mitigate biases in aesthetic evaluation.

From a different point of view, the issue of aesthetic opacity means also that we should distinguish between at least two levels of explanation, similarly to other domain of investigation in human psychology where we have a separation between an intuitive and "naïve" level of folk psychological understanding of a phenomenon and the scientific description of the same phenomenon. In the same way, we could envisage the development of a "naïve (or folk) aesthetics", concerned with the description of how we intuitively explain our aesthetic experiences, judgment and taste, as opposed to the investigation of how we really judge and experience aesthetically. This should happen through a more objective (and empirically grounded) account of how judgment and preferences are actually formed in ourselves.

But what does it exactly mean to objectively describe what our "real" judgment and preferences are? Most experimental findings we previously saw are based on the identification of discrepancies between verbal assertions and actual behavior, or, as the economists put it, between declared and revealed preferences. Verbal declarations confabulate reasons that are not real, they could reveal how subjects ignore some hidden reason that influences their decisions, or they express preferences in a particular time that are later not really desired, revealing thus a temporal inconsistency. Basically, the difference between what one says and what one does in aesthetic matters is the revealing sign of the underlying opaqueness of our mental life.

Now, the discrepancy between “said” and “done” is certainly revealing, but it shouldn’t be confused as sign of the difference between “wrong” and “right”, or between “biased” and “objective”. Doing so would not be an innocent step and should be critically pondered: in fact, deciding upon what is naïve and unreliable instead of true and objective is a sensitive matter, particularly, in a domain like aesthetic experience. In some extreme views, as in the recent developments of neuroaesthetics, even the validity of the preferences expressed by true choices and behavior could be questioned, since people could make aesthetic choices that do not correspond to their physiologically revealed “deep” preferences. If this were the case, then neuronal processes would be able to tell more about our aesthetic experiences than what we consciously would be able to tell, or even more than what our behavior would show, since actual choices (“revealed preferences”) could also be subject to biases, as in conformism and opportunistic behavior. But, as we clearly could see here, there is the risk of confusing different levels of description and explanation, dispossessing as a consequence the true subject of the aesthetic experience, that is: the person. If neither personal judgment, nor actual behavior, but neuronal and physiological reactions “decide” how we really aesthetically feel and evaluate, we would bypass the individual experience in favor of the alleged truth of his physiological reaction (see also Schwarzkopf, 2015) and this would be, in my opinion, a categorical mistake.

Instead of a discrepancy between “true” and “false” aesthetic judgment or experience, we maybe should speak of different levels of manifestation of the subject’s attitudes. Aesthetic evaluation through words needs not to be less meaningful than aesthetic evaluation through behavior. There is no guarantee that actual behavior and choice reveal deep preferences instead of verbally expressed preferences. I may verbally express more careful aesthetic evaluations than those expressed by choices and behaviors which could be influenced by habits, education or social conformism. Or to put it more simply: what I do is not truer or deeper in revealing my aesthetic attitudes than what I say. For the same reason, stability and coherence (across contexts, situations and time, as in affective forecasting) don’t automatically mean that we are facing “truer” or deeper

taste and attitudes than variable or context-dependent preferences. This is a complex issue that we can't delve into here, but the assumption of stability and temporal coherence of the subject's preferences and judgment should not be taken as an indisputable condition.

5. Conclusion

The findings in the psychology of taste, preference and decision making are on one side interesting for contemporary debates in aesthetics as they show the inconsistency between expressed preferences and choice, incoherence in aesthetic attitudes among past, present and future "selves", and the effects of verbalization and thinking in causing biases. On the other side, I would suggest that inconsistencies are not necessarily symptoms of misleading expression of true attitudes that need to be dug out, but rather they are an expression of different sides of our aesthetic identities. There is hardly a "deep core" of true attitudes, our mental life consists instead of features that are not always coherent. According to this view, introspective opacity (and in particular, aesthetic opacity) consists in the amount of inconsistency between the person's different sources in which he manifests himself. The notion of an authentic self (my *true* aesthetic attitudes, taste and emotional reaction showed by means of empirical – even neuroscientific - research) as opposed to "illusory" selves is problematic.

Aesthetic education and expertise could lead to a higher awareness of one's own evaluative processes, helping to avoid prejudices and mitigate some of the phenomena of aesthetic opacity we previously saw. But opacity is also an essential aspect of the confabulatory nature of our mind: we are not able to describe neither the causal physiological processes occurring in our brains, nor all the imponderable and irrelevant factors that influence our everyday experience and judgment. The attitudes we express and the reasons we give for our judgment are part of an imperfect self-construction of our identity and it would be superficial to consider it to be a mere illusion.

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The Ineffability of Musical Content: Is Verbalisation in Principle Impossible?

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ABSTRACT. In my paper I examine the question if there are any aspects of our musical experience that we cannot successfully verbalise. I compare musical content with linguistic, visual and other perceptual content, and I consider what aspects of these different types of contents might be ineffable. I suggest that only some aspects of musical content are adequately analogous to the former three, while other aspects must be explicated without any reference to other types of contents. After these preliminary considerations I turn to the investigation of the musical case and to a specific argument for the ineffability of musical content. In order to clarify the possible positions I discuss how our views about the ontological status of musical works affect our possible account of the ineffability of our musical experiences. Finally I distinguish two possible positions about the ineffability of musical content. First, one may argue that it is in principle impossible to express all aspects of musical content by linguistic means. Second, it is also possible to argue that such an attempt to verbalise is not impossible per se, but is not practical or necessary in most cases. I defend the latter position, arguing that although verbalisation would be highly impractical and useless in many contexts, nevertheless theoretically all musical content could be expressed in language.

1. Ineffability

It has long been observed that at least some aspects of our knowledge about the content of our perceptual experiences seem to be ineffable, due to the limitations of our linguistic skills in verbalising what we perceive with our senses. Our linguistic skills might be insufficient for the task because the nature of our perceptual experiences may be such that at least some aspects of them defy verbalisation. Candidates for ineffable perceptual content

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include elements of pictorial, musical and other perceptual (e.g. tactile) contents as well. Besides perceptual content some nuances in verbal (linguistic) communication may also be considered ineffable. Let us first discuss why verbalisation may be difficult in cases of these types of contents.

In natural languages nuances of semantic content might be the source of ineffability. Consider, for instance, the difference between the meanings of the words ‘giraffe’ and ‘tiger’ on the one hand, and ‘man’, ‘fellow’ and ‘guy’ on the other hand. In the first case the difference between the meanings of the two words may be simply accounted for by explaining that they refer to two different species. In the latter case, however, we will need to give examples for different contexts in which one or the other word might be more or less appropriate. Still, our list of contexts could not be exhaustive, and much of our knowledge about the different uses of these expressions will be left to the linguistic intuitions of a native (or highly proficient) speaker of the English language. In other words, while explaining the reference of words does not usually cause difficulties, the connotation of verbal expressions often seem to defy verbalisation.

Let us consider a pictorial example next. When looking at the photograph by André Kertész below, we may easily construct sentences that adequately describe some of the content of the photograph. If we simply state ‘There is a man behind the glass.’ Or ‘There are clouds in the sky.’, then we certainly do not risk any misunderstanding about the description of the picture. Neither the linguistic structure of the sentences nor the semantic content of the words used is ambiguous, so it seems that at least some aspects of the photograph are not difficult to verbalise. There are, however, many other aspects and components of the photo that do not give to verbalisation so easily. If we want to describe some nuances of the picture – precisely where the figure is positioned, what texture the glass has, what shapes the clouds take – we will likely feel that our words fail adequately to convey what we wish to communicate. We often have similar experiences when trying to describe with words the perceptible nuances of our visual environment in general and the perceptible nuances of pictures in particular.



André Kertész: *Martinique*, 1972

It might also be useful to consider here a modality that is often disregarded in philosophical arguments about perception. When reporting our tactile experiences we mostly rely on words that express the perceived surface properties of the objects we touch. For instance, we describe the surface of our desk as hard, flat and smooth, while we say that the surface of a tennis ball is soft, rough and springy. For our daily life we simply do not need more fine grained semantic distinctions. The lack of a larger and more precise vocabulary to name a greater number of properties of the various surfaces we touch might easily lead to difficulties when (for some reason) we would like to communicate with words nuances for which we do not have adequate terminology. This may in turn lead to the conclusion that the means of natural languages are not adequate to communicate all of our knowledge about human tactile experiences.

Before proceeding to the specific case of perceiving musical content, let us also briefly consider the wider theoretical context of the alleged ineffability of at least some of the contents of these various types of perceptual modalities. Given the subjective nature of qualia, some aspects of the content of our perceptual experiences have been assumed or explicitly argued to be ineffable in various discussions in the philosophy of mind and perception. For instance, arguments about our difficulties understanding (in terms of imagining what it is like) the qualitative character of the perceptual content of mental states of other species are based on observations about the subjective nature of mental states.² In a widely discussed thought experiment Frank Jackson argues that a person who knows everything there is to know conceptually about the science of colour perception, but who nevertheless has lived in a black and white environment, still learns something new when introduced to seeing colours.³ What she learns is argued to be not only nonphysical, but also something ineffable. However, the source of ineffability is not merely subjectivity but also the nonconceptual nature of the new information – learned from experiencing colours. In other words, some aspects of perceptual content might also be considered ineffable due to their nonconceptual character.

The function of these examples here is not to suggest any general position for or against the ineffability of perceptual experience, but to briefly introduce the wider theoretical context of the musical case. In what follows I will consider a specific argument for the ineffability of musical content, and I will argue that it does not show that there are musical properties that we can perceive but not express in language. It is beyond the scope of this paper to extend and generalise these arguments to other perceptual modalities, but at least some relevant analogies will be mentioned, and musical content will be compared to the content of other perceptual modalities as well.

² See Nagel 1974, for instance.

³ Jackson 1986.

2. Musical Content

Let us first consider some of the possible understandings of musical content in order to clarify precisely what aspects of our musical experience might be called ineffable. The first step is to examine if the potentially ineffable knowledge about musical content is analogous to our knowledge about linguistic, pictorial or tactile content.

Linguistic meaning consists of atomic semantic units (morphemes) that are the building blocks of more complex meanings (compound words, sentences, stories, etc.). The combination of single atomic meaning units into complex meanings is achieved by using linguistic syntax. Musical structures might be considered analogous to linguistic structures in terms of their syntactical structure, but without analogous semantic content.⁴ Even though we might occasionally associate specific semantic content or feelings with some selected musical works (or tunes or movements), there is no representational musical vocabulary on par with the vocabulary of natural languages.⁵ Furthermore, although music has a syntactic structure, the audible (musical) perceptual content – similarly to pictorial and tactile content – has nonconceptual components as well.⁶ If some aspects of our knowledge about our musical experience are ineffable, then the source of ineffability is not akin to the source of the possible ineffability of linguistic semantic content.

One important difference between linguistic and musical structures on the one hand and pictorial compositions on the other is that the complex content of pictorial representations is not organized in syntactic structures. That is, complex pictorial meaning is not similar to linguistic meaning in terms of the nature of its compositionality. Difficulties of verbalisation in the case of pictorial content, however, might be considered similar in some respects to difficulties of verbalisation of musical content, because some

⁴ See Raffman 1993, pp. 15-30.

⁵ See Kivy 1991 for detailed arguments against the representational theories of musical meaning.

⁶ See DeBellis 1995 and Raffmann, *ibid.*, on the nonconceptual character of musical experience.

aspects of the perceptual content are nonconceptual in both cases. We may also add tactile experiences to this list, at least with respect to nonconceptual content as a possible cause of ineffability. Although musical content is nonrepresentational, while pictures (with the exception of abstract pictures) have representational content, nevertheless difficulties with verbalisation in both cases seem to be connected to the lack of linguistic types of atomic semantic building blocks.

The lack of linguistic types of atomic meaning units is also coupled with the phenomenon that in the case of our visual, tactile, and auditory perception conceptual schematization (having schemas for remembering and reporting our perceptual experiences in our long-term memory) is usually considerably less fine-grained than our conscious perceptual discriminatory ability. On the basis of this phenomenon Diana Raffman⁷ argues that perceiving nuances below the threshold of the most fine-grained level of conceptual schematization constitutes experiences and knowledge that cannot be verbalised. She first distinguishes two levels of mental representations of our musical experience. The first one is structural; it is the mental recovery of the musical structure. In other words, this is the level of the mental representation of the score. The second level, however, is nonstructural, and it consists of the mental representations of the fine-grained details, the nuances of the performance, such as vibrato, shades of pitch colouration, out-of tune pitches, and the like. On the basis of these observations Raffman concludes that “we actually *hear* many more than twelve different pitches in a typical performance. Let us call these many fine-grained determinate pitches 'nuance pitches', or 'N-pitches' for short.”⁸

After arguing for the existence of nuances as sensory-perceptual representations Raffman proceeds to suggest that although we can hear these nuances and could even name them, nevertheless we cannot remember them for long term communication purposes. The reason for this is that our discriminatory abilities are more fine-grained than our ability to remember

⁷ Raffman *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

the distinct contents of the perceptual experiences we can discriminate.⁹ Since they are below the threshold of conceptual schematization we cannot report these sensory-perceptual representations in natural languages. We can show these nuances by ostension only, and we cannot retain the knowledge of these sensory-perceptual nuances in order to verbalise our musical experiences. We only know nuances *qua* individual nuances, not *qua* nuance-types in a schema. To summarise: according to Raffman we need conceptual schematization for verbalisation, but we only have that at the level of the music scores (mental scores), not at the level of nuances that we only hear during musical performances.¹⁰

3. The Ontological Status of Musical Works and the Verbalisation of Our Musical Experiences

Before examining the nuance argument for the ineffability of at least some components of musical content, let us briefly diverge and consider if our views about the ontological status of musical works would influence our position about the ineffability of musical content. The relevance of this question arises from the fact that the arguments discussed in this paper are not about the larger issue of the possible ineffability of aspects of our auditory experiences, but specifically about our musical experiences. Although the two questions certainly interrelate (listening to music being just one part of our overall auditory experience), as we saw above, Raffman's argument was specifically about music, on the basis of differentiating between the structural and nonstructural levels of mental representations of our musical experience.

On the one hand, one may have a Platonist position about the ontological status of musical works.¹¹ In its simplest form musical Platonism is the view that musical works are abstract entities, characterized

⁹ Raffman proposes a re-identification condition for reporting our musical experiences. This is based on the idea that re-identification is a necessary condition for concept possession. See Kelly 2001, for instance for a detailed discussion of the re-identification condition on demonstrative concepts.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-97.

¹¹ See Kivy 1983a and 1983b, for instance.

entirely by the formal (mathematical) properties and relations of the sounds. Musical works, therefore, may be described entirely conceptually by a key and the syntactic relations of notes (relative and temporal properties). Those intentions of the composer that are not noted in the score are not relevant; the score contains all the aesthetically and artistically relevant musical properties of the work.

According to musical Platonism performances of musical works are sound-events of an abstract sound-structure. The musical work itself is a type, while its performances are tokens of the type.¹² The tokens are not identical (as opposed to celluloid film or digital copies of a moving image); they are *interpretations* of the musical work as a type. This kind of type-token relation may be observed in case of other art forms as well. For instance, theatrical performances of dramas are also interpretive token performances of the drama as a type. A consequence of this position is that aesthetic and artistic properties attributed to the work itself are the very properties that are attributed to the type. Given that the tokens of musical works are interpretative performances (not identical copies) they also have aesthetic and artistic properties *qua performances* for their interpretive merits. According to musical Platonism however, these properties do not pertain to the properties of the work as a type. Indeed, we may say that a particular performance of a masterpiece was rather poor, while mediocre musical compositions may have good or even excellent performances. Before turning to the consequences of the Platonist position for the question of musical ineffability, let us also consider an alternative ontological position.

While the musical Platonist holds that musical works are abstract entities, musical historicists argue that musical works are sound-events and they exist in their performances. According to Levinson¹³ some of the most important reasons for this position are the following. First, musical works come to existence by the compositional activity of the composer. Musical Platonism, however, entails that they are eternal entities, existing even

¹² See Carroll 1996, pp. 66-70 for a detailed discussion on the different type-token relations in various art forms.

¹³ See Levinson 1980, for instance.

before they were “composed”. Second, it is possible that two composers produce identical scores in different musico-historical contexts. According to musical Platonism they must be identical works. However, identical sound-structures composed in different musico-historical context may have distinct aesthetically and artistically relevant properties. For instance, one may be exciting and original in its context, while the other is boring and unoriginal, and it is not clear how musical Platonism may account for these different properties. Third, historicists hold that the specific means of performance sound production are integral to the musical works, because music is to be heard, not merely entertained conceptually as an abstract sound-structure.

According to the historicist position, therefore, the actual and full tonal characteristics of the sound sequences are an intrinsic part of the works. Musical works are not only sound-structures but also performance and sound-production means structures, whose aesthetically and artistically relevant properties are determined in a specific musico-historical context. The most authentic performance is the one that is most appropriate to the historical context of the work. This includes, for instance, using historically authentic instruments, since the specific sonic properties of the instruments of the historical era are also aesthetically and artistically relevant properties of the work. The intentions of the composer (even intentions not noted in the score) are relevant in this case because, according to the historicist, the score does not contain all the aesthetically and artistically relevant musical properties of the work.

Let us turn now to the question of what these positions entail in terms of the alleged ineffability of some musical content. On the one hand, the musical Platonist may argue that there is nothing ineffable about the content of the musical work itself, since its formal syntactical properties may be fully described with words. Only the audible properties of the performance of the work may be the source of ineffable experience and knowledge. On the other hand, musical historicists are committed to maintain that if our experiences of performances have ineffable aspects, then (since musical works exist in their performances) our knowledge about musical works themselves has ineffable elements. In other words, although a Platonist and

a historicist may agree that our experiences of the audible sound events (musical performances) may have components that we cannot verbalise, their position about the ineffability of the aesthetically and artistically relevant properties of musical works will be different. While the musical works may not have any ineffable aspects for the Platonist, the historicist will be committed to hold that if some aspects of the audible sound-events are ineffable, then it means that our musical experience itself has aspects that defy verbalisation. Although the status of musical performances is different in these accounts, what we need to see now is whether or not our experiences of performances have any ineffable aspects.

4. The Ineffability of Musical Experiences

In order to understand precisely what is meant by the claim that some aspects of our knowledge of our musical experiences cannot be verbally communicated, we need to distinguish two possible positions about the ineffability of musical content. First, one may argue that it is impossible to express all aspects of our experiences and knowledge of musical content by linguistic means. Second, it is also possible to argue that such attempts at verbalisation are not impossible per se, rather they are not practically feasible in numerous cases. In other words the question is if, as a matter of fact, a) we do not have adequate linguistic means to express all of our experiences and knowledge of the perceived musical contents or b) sometimes it is merely not practical or necessary to do so. It is not always explicitly stated if arguments about the alleged ineffability of musical content aim at establishing the former, stronger; or the latter, weaker position, but Raffman¹⁴ clearly holds the stronger one. In what follows, I will argue that her arguments do not support this position.

As we saw, according to Raffman, verbalising our musical experiences and knowledge depends on schematization, because only schematization ensures that we can develop a terminology that is sufficient to name our experiences and re-identify them over time. She argues that re-identification

¹⁴ Raffman *ibid.*

is possible at the level of musical syntactical structure only; at the level of the mental score we come to have as a result of our musical experience. Musical nuances, however, are below the threshold of conceptual schematization, and therefore we cannot report these sensory-perceptual representations in natural languages. We can show them by ostension only, but since we lack sufficient terminology (in a scheme) we cannot retain knowledge of the sensory-perceptual nuances in order to verbalise our musical experiences.

While I agree with Raffman that we do not often conceptualise and report our experiences of musical nuances, I do not think that she has successfully established that it would be *impossible* to extend our terminology to name sensory-perceptual nuances. Although the differences between the processing of linguistic and perceptual contents and structures might make it difficult to form practically useful linguistic descriptions for all musical properties that we are able to perceive, this does not mean that we are in principle unable to do so. I propose that if it is necessary or useful for some purposes, we might as well devise conceptual schemas for other aspects of our musical experiences besides the level of the syntactical structure.

Ear training in music education is aimed at the syntactic level, but (as Raffman also admits) our discriminatory ability is considerably more fine-grained than is used in ear training. Music students spend many years sharpening their skills because what they learn is useful for playing and / or composing music. What they learn is the ability to reliably recognise and re-identify their musical experiences and to report them according to the music theoretical schema(s) to which they are simultaneously introduced. People who have never had ear training and education in music theory do not have this knowledge (these schemas) and this ability (recognising and re-identifying musical structures, such as chords, etc.). The fact that we can learn new schemas and / or more fine-grained schemas than we had previously possessed indicates that we need a convincing argument if we are to doubt that, for specific experiences, we are unable to devise new and / or more fine-grained schemas.

I propose that if we do not have more types of and more fine-grained schemas, then this is merely because it is not useful or practical for our purposes, not because we are incapable of forming such schemas. Besides the structural level, important nuances, for example bowing instructions for string instruments, are also often noted in music scores. These bowing instructions predictably determine the character of the musical sounds produced well beyond the structural description of the syntactical structure of the musical work, and it depends on the composer how much interpretive freedom she wishes to give the musicians. That is, it is the choice of the composer to provide or not provide bowing instructions. This is only one example that pertains to nuances that are determined by bowing, but there are many other examples for such possible notations pertaining to the level of nuances in our musical experiences. In the absence of a relevant schema nuances are indeed merely known *qua* nuances, nevertheless they could be known *qua* nuance-types as well, should it be useful and practical to develop a schema that would incorporate them. It might even be argued that we do in fact have a simple schema for bowing, and trained musicians (playing the same or a similar string instrument) may reproduce much of the bowing of another musician only by listening to her performance.¹⁵

I propose that we could construct more types of and more fine-grained schemas for systematically accounting for the musical nuance experiences we have. Relying on these possible schemes we could also name, re-identify and report the musical properties we perceive up to the limits of our perceptual discriminating abilities. When we do not use such schemes, it is not because we cannot have them. It is because the effort that would go into constructing them and to perform the ear training that would ensure their practical application is well beyond any useful purposes that these schemas and re-identifying abilities would serve. Furthermore, we may (and in fact we often do) use our technology to detect, describe, and name properties

¹⁵ As María José Alcaraz León pointed out to me (personal communication) we might also devise ways of communicating our perceptual experiences with gestures and with behaving in certain ways. This could be an improved version of the system of nonverbal communication that we already have, coupled with a higher level of awareness of the utilisation of the system.

well beyond our perceptual discriminating abilities. Providing the properties of the pixels of a high-resolution image is one example of providing descriptions of visual properties beyond our perceptual discriminating ability. Detecting and describing the properties of ultrasound is an example of schematizing sonic properties – even beyond our perceptual discriminating (in this case even perceptual detecting) ability. There is no in principle constraint on schematization and on extending our terminology up to the limits of our perceptual discriminating abilities, and we may also use our technology to detect, describe and name properties well beyond that. For a long time we could only speculatively theorise about the properties of matter beyond the limits of our perceptual abilities, but today we have sophisticated schemas and terminology for molecular and even subatomic structures and properties.

To summarise, my position is that theoretically all of our knowledge of our musical experiences might be expressed in language; there are no in principle ineffable musical experiences. I have argued that the limits of schematization and verbalisation (up to the limits of our discriminating and detecting abilities) are practical: it is our purpose and interest that determine how fine-grained we need the schemas and terminology to be. However, there are no obstacles that would in principle prevent us from forming practically useful schemas and linguistic descriptions for all musical properties that we are able to perceive, whether that perception is with our ears or with technological devices extending the scope of our perceptual discriminating and detecting abilities.¹⁶

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¹⁶ Although in this paper I considered some visual and tactile examples as well, here I make no specific claims about how these arguments may or may not be extended to other perceptual modalities. I will consider these issues in another paper.

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Expressive Experience and Imagination

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims at questioning theories of expressive experience that rely on imagination. I will namely address Jerrold Levinson's Persona theory and Paul Noordhof's theory of sensuous imagining arguing that their problematic aspects are grounded in a misleading assumption about expressiveness. As an alternative, I will sketch an approach according to which expressive experience primarily consists in the perceptual experience of patterns of dynamic features.

1. Introduction

Pieces of music, especially of so-called “pure music”, paintings, landscapes – natural as well as depicted ones – and even more common inanimate objects are often described by means of psychological attributions. Music can be sad, cheerful, gay, impetuous; countryside may be described as serene or happy; a depicted landscape may look melancholy; an interior might be lugubrious, whereas certain shades of colours lively. More specifically, inanimate objects are said to *express* those psychological, affective, emotional states that we attribute to them. There exist a wide, although quite unsystematic, philosophical debate that is concerned with the question: how can inanimate objects, which are by definition devoid of psychological states, be nonetheless expressive of (at least some of) such states?

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2. Expression and Expressiveness

Within the analytic aesthetic debate of the Thirties and Forties, the focus of the discussion was the possibility that artworks express the affective (or, more broadly, the intentional) states of their creators by, so to say, embodying them. Among others, John Dewey, Robin Collingwood and Curt Ducasse addressed the problem of how emotions may result in artworks through creative processes – being creative processes themselves a form of expression. So called *Expression theory* that they, in various ways, supported, has been critically summarized by Alan Tormey (1971)²:

(E-T) [Expression Theory] If art object *O* has expressive quality *Q*, then there was a prior activity *C* of the artist *A* such that in doing *C*, *A* expressed his *F* for *X* by imparting *Q* to *O* (where *F* is a feeling state and *Q* is the qualitative analogue of *F*). (Tormey 1971:103)

In short, expressive qualities of objects are necessarily the result of the corresponding (intentional, since it is directed to an *X*) affective state felt and manifested by the artist in creating that object. Tormey overtly contended against this view that attributions of expressive qualities to artworks concern the works themselves, rather than their creators' intentional states, and that this is confirmed by the fact that such attributions cannot be denied or supported by references to the emotional state or biographical vicissitudes of the artist:

If it turned out that Mahler had experienced no state of mind remotely resembling despair or resignation during the period of composition of *Das Lied von der Erde*, the expression theorist would be obliged to conclude that we were mistaken in saying that the final movement (*Der Abschied*) of that work was expressive of despair or resignation; and this seems hardly plausible. (Tormey 1971:104-105).

² Jenefer Robinson pointed out that Tormey's analysis misinterprets Expression Theory (Robinson 2005:244 ff.), but for the purpose of this paper I will just assume E-T as a generic target of Tormey's criticism that helps understand the problem at stake, regardless of his interpretation of the tradition being correct or not.

Against Expression theory, Tormey insisted that the phenomenal aspect of objects is what our judgements are about and that any theory of expressive qualities of artworks is committed to account for its role in the first place:

Even those who argue that ‘music is sad’ can be translated ‘the music makes me feel sad’ or ‘...has a disposition to make me, or others, feel sad’ will agree that their accounts are only plausible on the assumption that the object has some properties which are at least causally relevant to the induced feeling. (Tormey 1971:104)

The most important consequence of accepting this point is that judgements about expressive features of artworks can be endorsed or falsified only on the basis of the features of the objects themselves. In order to convince someone that the piece of music we are attending to is *sad*, we will probably refer to the particular way it sounds, rather than to the mood in which the composer or executor allegedly were when creating or performing it.

In order to cast light on the conceptual confusion at the basis of Expression theory, Tormey introduces the distinction between *expression* and *expressiveness*. He argues that Expression theorists wrongly maintain that ‘express’ and ‘being expressive of’ an emotion are always synonyms. If this were the case, indeed, we would be forced to conclude that any expressive face is always expressing some felt emotional state, whereas this equivalence is not guaranteed at all (Tormey 1971:107). He claims that we use the term “expressive” in relation to facial patterns in at least three different fashions: first, we can use it *intransitively*, say, in such a way that would not legitimate the question “expressive of what?”. In this case, “expressive” only means the particular disposition of a face to display a wide range of facial expressions. We may for instance notice that an actor’s face is not as expressive as required by the play. Second, “expressive” can be followed by the specific emotion that a face may seem to express, such as “expressive of rage”, “expressive of joy”, in which case it can refer to the way the face looks, without necessarily implying that the expressed emotion is actually felt by the person. Third, the term may be used as a synonym of

“to express”, so that the statement “her gesture was expressive of anguish” could be translated as “she was expressing her anguish through that gesture”.

Far from being merely speculative considerations about common linguistic uses, these remarks pick up an important aspect of the problem, namely that expressive qualities of artworks do not bear any necessary relation to actual expressions of felt emotions. And this both because, especially in the case of artworks, being “expressive” does not automatically amount to express some specific emotion (a musician can be instructed to play a piece *espressivo* without expressing any particular emotion), and because being expressive of an emotion does not necessarily imply to feel that emotion.³

Most contemporary authors have taken on Tormey’s point (see for instance Kivy 1980, Davies 2005, Robinson 2005). According to Jenefer Robinson we must conceptually distinguish between *expression* and *expressiveness*, to the extent that: “expression is neither necessary nor sufficient for expressiveness” (Robinson 2007:36). Indeed, there can be expressions of emotions that are completely inexpressive, so that:

[...] although they can go together with marvelous effect, [expression and expressiveness] are related but conceptually distinct phenomena (Robinson 2007:39).

In her view, the term ‘expression’ refers to the external manifestation of some internal state. Therefore, both a face and a painting can be ‘expressions’ as far as they are means to manifest felt emotions. On this count, artworks *can* be expressions of emotions and there exist cases in which it is correct to interpret them in this way (Robinson refers in particular to Romantic painters and composers who explicitly conceived of their works as emotional expressions. See Robinson 2005:258 ff.).

³ The same distinction has been importantly taken on by Peter Kivy (1980), who famously phrased it in terms of “express” and “being expressive of”. According to Kivy, the former label applies to actual expressions caused by affective states, whereas the latter can be predicated both of animated and inanimate objects which display certain perceivable features – namely, expressive features.

‘Expressiveness’, instead, refers to the capacity of behaviours and works of art to convey some affective character to the audience, regardless of their being the outputs of felt emotions.

This being said, expression and the expressiveness of artistic objects cannot be discarded as notions disconnected from one another. As Stephen Davies pointed out, musical expressiveness would be completely uninteresting if it did not bear any relation to human emotions:

If the expression of emotion in music is seen as one of music’s most important features, then it can be only because we *recognize* a connection between the emotions expressed in music and in life, because musical expressiveness reflects and reflects on the world of emotions (Davies 2005:135).

The challenge of any theory of expressiveness is therefore to account for the specific relation between expression and expressiveness, provided that the conceptual distinction between the two notions is preserved. Dealing with this challenge consists in asking (and possibly replying to the question of) what the experience of expressive features amounts to. In turn, this means to account for the specific phenomenal character of expressive experience⁴ and in explaining what sort of features are actually experienced when we undergo such experience.

3. Expressive Experience as Imagination

According to most theories, we experience expressive features of objects, such as music’s sadness or landscape’s cheerfulness, as if they were perceptual features of those objects, namely, as if they did not depend neither on us, nor on the artist’s intentions. Nonetheless, this perceptual

⁴ I borrow this phrase from Noordhof 2008 as an abbreviation for “experience of expressive objects and features”. The label is clearly patterned after that of, say, “perceptual experience”, which means an experience with some more or less specific content and modality.

character of expressive experience is usually considered *sui generis* and explained as distinct from standard perceptual experience.

In his article *Expressive Perception as Projective Imagining*, Paul Noordhof (2008) elaborates on the expressive experience we can have of artworks and other inanimate objects. He is interested in paintings as well as in sculptures and music, but he suggests that his account could also apply to natural landscapes. His view stems from the idea that, although we seem to perceive expressive features,

[...] it makes little sense to suppose that something may be experienced as expressive quite independently of how we respond to it; that our experience of expressiveness can be simply an experience of features of the world (Noordhof 2008, p.342).

His intuition is that the sadness that we might hear in a piece of music cannot not belong to the piece in the same way in which its rhythm, notes and pitches do. In other words, notes and chords are perceptual components of music independently of the subjects' responses, whereas sadness seems to be more dependent on the way subjects respond or are disposed to respond to it. Such intuition is consistent with the idea that, since inanimate objects do not possess any affective state that they can literally express, then these affective states must be found somewhere else. If one follows Tormey in excluding that they belong to the creator of the work, then the experiencing subject must be responsible for the specific affective character of the experience. The question becomes explaining *how* the sentient subject is responsible for that certain objects (especially artistic ones) are experienced as expressive of affective states. The appeal to imagination is one of the most interesting strategy to answer the question.

3.1. The Persona Theory

One of the most influential theories of musical expressiveness is the so-called *Persona theory*, which explicitly appeals to imagination. According to Jerrold Levinson, who first put forward this theory:

[...] a passage of music P is expressive of an emotion E if and only if P, in context, is readily heard, by a listener experienced in the genre in question, as an expression of E. (Levinson, 2006:93)

That is:

[...] music expresses an emotion only to the extent that we are disposed to hear it as the expression of an emotion, although in a non-standard manner, by a person or person-like entity (Levinson 2006: 93)

Levinson shares the view that expressive experience is perceptual in character and that it has to be accounted for by explaining the relation between expressiveness and expression – and therefore to emotions. But being expressive experience admittedly a *sui generis* perceptual experience, Persona theory tries to fill in the gap between perceivable musical expressiveness and human expression of emotions resorting to our capacity to *perceive* (hear, in the case at stake) something *as* something else. Accordingly, what an experienced listener does when she hears a sad piece of music is hearing it *as* a behavioural expression of the emotion of sadness on behalf of some fictive person.

Experiences of perceiving-as are notoriously difficult to define, so that Levinson suggests:

[...] to locate hearing-as and hearing-in among perceptual acts that partake freely of, or that substantially enlist, the *imagination* [...] To hear music as such and such is, perhaps, to imagine *that* the music is such and such, and more specifically, to imagine *of* the music, *as* you are hearing it, that it is such and such. (Levinson 2006:95)

Imagination is therefore responsible for the fact that certain perceptual properties of music are experienced as expressive. More specifically, imagination vehicles what Levinson calls the “modifier” of the experience, that is, an allegedly cognitive content that modifies the perceptual content of

expressive experience (Levinson 2006:95). Thus, on the one hand, Persona theory claims that propositional imaginings *that someone is expressing her felt emotions through music* is responsible for expressive experience; on the other hand, Levinson insists that “immediacy is a proper desideratum for an account of musical expressiveness” (Levinson 2006:101), meaning that, since expressive features are “readily” recognised by listeners, expressive experience is perceptual in character.

It has been remarked that there is a tension between these two claims.⁵ Persona theory appeals to propositional imagination, whose distinctive content and phenomenology we should in principle be able to consciously experience. On the contrary most of our experiences of expressive music do not bear witness to such content and phenomenology: most of the time we do not imagine any persona – for how minimally characterised and maximally vague it may be – expressing herself through music. Despite it can be true that certain pieces or kinds of music *can* or even *should* be attended as if they were the emotional expression of a persona,⁶ the imaginative engagement with a fictive persona that does not apply to all kinds of pure music. Moreover, it is not clear how the immediacy of expressive experience could be preserved, given the appeal to propositional imagination. If we admit that sometimes we grasp the expressiveness of music thanks to an imaginative engagement with a fictional persona then, at least in those cases, the experience of expressive features is far from being as immediate as standard perceptual experiences.

In particular, Paul Noordhof pointed out that this difficulty to reconcile these two aspects of expressive experience depends on that Levinson does not clearly distinguish between two levels of the explanation. On the one hand, Levinson acknowledges that expressive experience is phenomenally perceptual, whereas on the other hand, he tries to account for the specificity of the experience by reflecting in its content an element (the imagined persona) that is required by the explanation, but that the

⁵ See for example Davies (1997); Walton (1999); Robinson (2007); Noordhof (2008).

⁶ Robinson defends the idea that this holds for most romantic music (Robinson 2007:27).

phenomenal content of expressive experience rarely attests. (Noordhof 2008:332).

3.2 Expressive Experience as Sensuous Imagination

Although he criticises Levinson, Noordhof is still persuaded that imagination is required to explain expressive experience. The methodological distinction he pursues between what he calls the phenomenal content and its explanation is meant to avoid the difficulties faced by the Persona theory. As to the former, Noordhof claims that it should be described differently: it is not *as if* the music were expressing emotions (or were the expression of an emotion on behalf of a fictive persona), but rather certain perceptual properties of music are experienced *as potentially expressive*. The phenomenal content of expressive experience instantiates properties that are perceived as belonging to artworks, as well as standard perceptual properties. Nonetheless, it is *sui generis* as long as it consists in the perceivable *expressive potential* of certain perceptual features.

[...] it is in virtue of this potential, that the properties in question are part of the realisation of expressive properties. [...] we simply experience the fact that they could be used to express something in much the same way that the potential uses of many things in our environment signal themselves to us (Noordhof 2008:332).

As already said, however, Noordhof is sceptic about the possibility to explain the experience of expressiveness in terms of mere perception. Thus, in order preserve the intuition that expressive properties are better characterised as response dependent properties, avoiding at the same time the difficulties encountered by the Persona theory, Noordhof accounts for expressiveness relying on a different sort of imagining, namely *sensuous imagination*.⁷ Three features of sensuous imagination make it particularly

⁷ Sensuous imagination is also called *sensory imagination* and the best and most discussed example is *visualization*. It roughly consists in forming the mental image of

suitable to explain the *sui generis* nature of expressive experience. By definition:

- (i) its content is phenomenally similar to the one of perceptual experience, namely sensuous imagination *recreates* in imagination a perceptual experience;
- (ii) its content is experienced less immediately than the one of perceptual experience;
- (iii) its content is relatively under our control.

As to (i), Noordhof observes that expressive experience seems to present the very same features of the corresponding perceptual experience, say, the perceptual features of the work. When we see a melancholy landscape, we indeed experience the colours, shadows and slopes that constitute the landscape. Furthermore, (ii) may account for the fact that – according to Noordhof – expressive properties of works of art are not experienced with the same immediacy of merely perceptual ones. Finally, (iii) would explain the fact that sometimes we can, to some extent, *decide* whether to perceive the same artwork as expressive or inexpressive. Suppose, for example, that we focus on the correctness of the execution of a piece of music, rather than on its expressive value: it seems that we can control the content of our experience and this might be adequately accounted by sensuous imagination being relatively dependent on our will.

On such basis, Noordhof has to explain how sensuous imagination transforms merely perceptual experience into expressive experience. He claims that, when we experience a work of art as expressive of some affective state, we *sensuously imagine the emotion-guided creative process* that is or might have been responsible for making expressive certain merely perceptual features of the work (Noordhof, 2008:330). Such imagining does not imply that we imagine *someone*, like a fictive persona, who creates the work of art in such a way that makes it expressive; nor we need to imagine that we ourselves are engaged in a creative process. All is needed is that we

something as instantiating the same perceptual features that would be present in the corresponding perceptual experience.

recognise the phenomenal skeleton of an emotion leading such process, say, its causal power to give rise to expressive, creative behaviours. Accordingly, it suffices that we are triggered by the work to imagine how certain of its features might be the result of a process of selection and arrangement of properties (be they colours, materials or sounds) that is lead by the causal power of an emotion – even if such a process never took place. On this view, when we *perceive* the expressive features of a painting, we are actually *sensuously imagining* those features as being the result of an intentional creative process put in place under the guidance of the emotional state we see expressed.

Now, the problem with the Persona theory was that the imagined persona was not attested by average expressive experiences to be part of their content, as the explanation in terms of propositional imagination would have implied. Analogously, one may argue that it is definitely not the case that, when perceiving an expressive work of art, we are aware of imagining a creative process that gives expressive properties as its result. Noordhof replies that we can in principle be wrong about the fact that we are sensuously imagining rather than perceiving something, but not about the content of such mental state, since the two kinds of experience instantiate the same features – by definition and unlike in the case of propositional imagination. Which means that we might be wrong about the fact that the mental state we are in is an imaginative rather than a perceptual one, but right about the music sounding sad. The fact that its content is the result of an imaginative process is something we need not be aware of and this is enough to save Noordhof's account from the criticism against the Persona Theory.

4. Some Critical Remarks

Despite it avoids problems that other theories cannot solve, this account of expressive experience presents further problematic aspects that I shall discuss hereafter. More specifically, I will claim that Noordhof's reasons to appeal to sensuous imagination are weak, regarding both their phenomenological ground and their theoretical assumptions.

My first remark concerns the claim that, although it represents standard perceptual features, expressive experience lacks the typical immediacy of perceptual experience. It is very common to introduce the difference between perceptual experience and sensuous imagination starting from the lack of immediacy and of vividness of the latter compared to the former. Fabian Dorsch writes:

That sensory imaginings (as well as sensory memories) lack the immediacy of perceptual experiences means, first of all, that they do not present their objects as being there before us in our actual environment. When we see a tree, it seems to be right there before our eyes. But when we visualise a tree, we do not have a similar impression of its presence in our actual environment. (Dorsch 2012:83)

On this interpretation, immediacy is understood as some sort of feeling of presence that accompanies every perception, whereas it is lacking, or at least is diminished, when we undergo imaginative experiences. But is this description always accurate when it comes to expressive experiences? We do not seem to experience the sadness of a chord less immediately than how we hear the chord itself, nor the liveliness of a landscape less immediately than how we see its colours and slopes. Sadness or liveliness are no less immediately presented in experience than colours or shapes, nor experienced in a later moment compared to the auditory structure of music. Significantly, it has been noticed that:

It takes as long to hear the music's expressive properties as it takes to hear the passages in which those properties are articulated. (Davies 2005:181)

That is, it does not take more to hear the “noble and restrained passion” expressed by the principal theme of the First Movement in Gabriel Fauré’s Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 15, than it takes to hear “the strings with syncopated interjections from the piano” that Levinson takes to underlie it

(Levinson 2009:422). Expressive qualities are rather apprehended as immediately as merely perceptual features of musical pieces.

If, as I believe, Noordhof's notion of immediacy has to do with the phenomenal character of experiences, there is a more charitable way to interpret his claim. Indeed, one may take it to be that expressive experiences are not as *vivid* and as *stable* for a subject as perceptual experiences. On this view, the sadness that is expressed by a sonata would be experienced as being phenomenally fainter than the sounds and rhythm that constitute it. Even on this interpretation, however one may argue that vividness is merely a matter of degrees:

[...] it is not clear whether there could not be, on the one hand, perceptions [...] which are faint and, on the other hand, sensory imaginings which are vivid. (Dorsch 2012:82).

In his characterization of sensuous imagination, Dorsch points out that, even if we can agree on that vivacity (or vividness) characterizes the phenomenology of experiences, nothing guarantees that it is enough to distinguish perceptual episodes from imaginative episodes. Vividness comes in degrees, so that it is at best a typical qualification of the phenomenology rather than a criterion for classification (Dorsch 2012:82). Hence, I contest that immediacy (understood as vividness) offers good reasons to appeal to imagination when describing the phenomenology of expressive experience.

My second objection regards Noordhof's claim that the fact that expressive experience is relatively under our control makes sensuous imagination the best way to account for it. I will try to insist that being partially under control is not a prerogative of imaginative experience.

According to a general and widely accepted characterization, the main distinction between perceptual states and imaginings is that, whereas the latter are subject to will, the former are independent of the subject's will or agency.⁸ Along this line, Noordhof points at that there are occasions in

⁸ See for example Dorsch 2012 for an exhaustive account of imagination characterized as motivated action. He ascribes what he calls the Agency Account to Richard Wollheim, Jerrold Levinson, Amy Kind and Colin McGinn.

which we can deliberately decide whether to experience the same piece of music as being expressive or affectively neutral. It must be noticed that the claim is not that we are totally free to imagine the same piece of music as expressive of whatever affective state, which would imply to deny any constraint of the perceptual, non-expressive structure of the piece on its expressive features. Rather, the idea is that we can control our experience and obliterate, so to say, its expressive component in favour of a neutral and merely perceptual experience. This remark captures an important phenomenal quality of expressive experience, namely its resulting more dependent on the subject than other perceptual experiences. It is indeed true that, while we cannot decide whether to experience Malevič's *Black square* as being or not "black", we have some control on our experience when it comes to seeing it as being or not "disquieting". And even if we ourselves can't help experiencing it as disquieting, it is not difficult to imagine that the art historian who is studying the painting and focusing on its shape and on the contrast between the black of the square and the white of the frame, will be able to neglect its expressive character in favour of an affectively neutral experience.

Accepting that the expressive character of things is phenomenally not as independent of our will as colours are, however, is not yet enough to rule out perception in favour of imagination. A fruitful strategy to support my objection is to consider perceptual experiences in which we exercise some control but that usually are not explained in terms of imagination. Let us take for example the shifts of perceptual attention from certain to other perceptual saliences. More specifically, let us consider the case of bi-stable (or multistable) figures perception. As it is well-known, we can experience figures such as the Jastrow's duck-rabbit either *as representing x* or *as representing y*, depending on the perceptual saliences on which we focus our attention. They are perceptual patterns that lend themselves to be perceived in different ways. Notoriously, seeing-as experiences are explained in terms of "seeing" or "noticing an aspect", following Wittgenstein famous remark:

I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect" (Wittgenstein 1986: II, xi, 193)

Such noticing, as well as the recognition of the duck in the duck-rabbit figure, or of Voltaire's portrait in Dalí's *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire* (1940), is usually maintained to be perceptual in character (see for instance Gombrich 1960; Wollheim 2003; Jagnow, (2011) Voltolini 2015). Yet, it is also relatively under our control.

True, we may be able to stop seeing a picture as a picture (e.g. by attending to it in a certain way); and we may have some control over whether we see the duck-rabbit drawing as a depiction of a duck or as a depiction of a rabbit. (Dorsch, 2016:234)

Such characterization of seeing-as experiences suffices to point out that a phenomenology which mobilizes will and voluntary control is not peculiar of imagination, say, it does not indicate *per se* that imagination is involved.

My third remark has to do with the way in which Noordhof accounts for the role of emotions in expressive experience. As said at the beginning, this is an overt challenge for any theory of expressiveness. Indeed, the link between expressiveness and actual expression of felt emotions is precisely what a theory of expressiveness is expected to spell out. Noordhof takes the phenomenal skeleton of emotions to determine the content of the experience. How?

First and foremost, he does not want to claim that we consciously sensuously imagine the creative process guided by the phenomenal skeleton, but just that such process is responsible for our visualising expressive properties. Indeed, considering our capacity to *recognise* a highly complex thing like an emotion-guided creative processes as a necessary condition to experience expressive properties, would be a very demanding requirement. Moreover, it would be patently in conflict with evidences that not only artistically lay people tend to perceive certain artworks as expressive of emotions, but also that young children and children with autistic disorders

perform quite well in attributing expressive qualities to music (Heaton 1999).

In order to avoid such limitation Noordhof endorses simulation theory as the theory of mind-reading that best matches his philosophical perspective. I will not take side here on the general plausibility of the simulation theory among theories of mind-reading, but limit myself to show the outcome of its application to the imaginative theory of expressive experience.

Simulation theory is normally used to explain our capacity to understand others' mental states by means of sub-personal simulations of others' intentional behaviours. In particular, when we attribute affective states to others, there are affective states going on "off-line" in us, by means of which we automatically simulate their emotions. This view is particularly consistent with evidences about young children seizing others' emotions by means of non-cognitive simulations of their behaviours and expressions (Goldman 2006; Gordon, 1995; Gopnik and Meltzoff, 1996).

Applied to the case of expressive experience of works of art, simulation theory would explain our recognition of the phenomenal skeleton guiding a creative process in terms of automatic, off-line simulation, say, as "a relatively automatic response to features of the world" (Noordhof 2003:346). Moreover, the appeal to simulation theory allows justifying the fact that the emotion-guided creative processes that we simulate off-line "find certain [perceptual] features natural for expression and others not" (Noordhof 2003:347): it is no more than "a brute fact" and "There may be no explanation in nature apart from this for why pieces of music and human behaviour share expressive properties." (Noordhof 2003:345).

If the simulation processes that take place off-line, when triggered by certain perceptual features, cannot but be explained as brute, natural facts, then the account at stake is not committed to a highly demanding, intellectualist explanation: in order to experience a work of art as expressive we just need to be naturally equipped with working mechanisms of off-line simulation. No particular expertise nor background knowledge about emotions and creativity is required.

I see two problems here. The first is that, whereas the simulation mechanism might account for our capacity to recognise certain features as something like the natural outcome of expressive gestures, it is more difficult to apply the same explanation to a creative process. Indeed, unlike the causal skeleton of emotions, emotion-driven creative processes seem hard to simulate off-line without having previously acquired any background knowledge about creativity and artistic performances; or at least about the possible shapes that certain materials (visual as well as auditory) can take in creative hands. The appeal to a creative process is precisely meant to account for expressiveness in those cases in which the capacity to recognise and attribute expressions cannot do the job, namely with inanimate objects. It is expected to bridge actual expressions performed by animate beings and mere expressive features displayed by artworks. But if on the one hand explaining it as a sub-personal automatic mechanism does not account for the difference between experiencing an expressive objects and experiencing human expressions, on the other hand the appeal to a sensuously imagined creative process does not account for the fact that expressive experience of objects does not seem to require any specific knowledge.

The second reason for doubting about Noordhof's way of linking expressiveness and actual expression of emotions is his "brute fact" claim. On his view, there can be no reasons why certain perceptual patterns are experienced as cheerful whereas others are experienced as sad, it is just a causal mechanism that cannot be explained but as a matter of fact. If this is true, then the expressive potential of certain perceptual features does not have to do with the way they look like, but only with their causal power to elicit simulation.

I argue that this perspective is susceptible to the objection of the so-called *heresy of the separable experience*. Malcolm Budd coined this expression to indicate the attempt to account for aesthetic values of artworks by reference to experiences "which can be fully characterized without reference to the nature of the work itself." (Budd 1985:123). When we account for aesthetic values (broadly understood), he claims, we should not allow for explanations according to which the experience of such values

may in principle be caused by other means. That is, aesthetic features must be considered as what our experience is about, instead of tools that may cause such experience. On Noordhof's view, all we can account for depends on the way we naturally respond to certain causal stimuli, whereas we cannot say much about what such stimuli (that is, perceptual features of artworks) should look like in order for our experience to be of happy or of melancholy expressive qualities. This perspective locates the Sensuous Imagination account in the vicinity of Richard Wollheim's Projectivism (it is worth reminding that Noordhof names his account "projective imagining"), as attested by what Wollheim writes:

If what is wanted is information about how exactly [something] has to look in particular cases if it is to be apt for the projection of this rather than that feeling, then this demand must surely go unsatisfied. (Wollheim 1993:154)

But if so things stand, then Sensuous Imagination theory of expressive experience cannot provide any link between the perceptual aspect of things and their expressive look, for "To ascribe dispositional predicates to a thing is not to attribute to it any expressive qualities" (Ridley 1995:52)

5. Expression and Expressiveness Again

I believe that the above discussed problems of imaginative accounts depend on some aprioristic rejection of a perceptual account. Their appeal to an imaginative experience for the purpose of doing justice to the perceptual phenomenal character they ascribe to expressive experience overlooks a more careful consideration of an account based on perception. Indeed, despite they acknowledge the perceptual character of expressive experience, the two theories appeal to imagination in order to compensate for the absence of a real expresser, that is, to account for the link to actual expression. Lacking an expresser, they resort to fictional or simulated expressions that would allow us undergoing expressive experiences. Such scepticism about a perceptual explanation, thus, goes hand in hand with a

conception of *expressiveness* which is still parasitic on that of *expression*. The more or less explicit assumption of these theories is that, since emotions are a human prerogative, then their expression is a human prerogative too. Accordingly, whatever experience of non-human things as being related to emotions must be explained in terms of psychological mechanisms of projection than necessarily make use of imagination. The experience of expressiveness must therefore be the experience of something that can be imagined as deriving from and depending on actual expressions of emotions.

But this assumption seems to have lost trace of the independence requirement made explicit by Robinson: expression is neither necessary nor sufficient for expressiveness and any theory of expressiveness should be able to account for the latter as independent from the former.

If this connection between the rejection of a perceptual account and the parasitic notion of expressiveness is sound, then it is reasonable to think that a perceptual account may do justice to the independence requirement. In this spirit, Stephen Davies has provided a theory that is as close as possible to a genuinely perceptual account.⁹ He repeatedly argued that expressive experience consists in the perceptual recognition of expressive features instantiated by artworks, especially musical works. He calls these features “emotion characteristics in appearance” (Davies 2005) and claims that both in the case of animated and of inanimate beings, our recognition of emotion characteristics in appearance is distinct in principle from our attribution of affective states. Which means, in turn, that our recognition of emotion characteristics in appearance is distinct in principle from our attribution of expressions. In short and in compliance with the independence requirement, for something to be recognised as sad or as cheerful, does not necessarily imply for it to be recognised as the expression of some internal state. Accordingly, there is no need to mobilize an imaginative engagement that fills the void left by the absent affective state.

⁹ Along with Peter Kivy, Stephen Davies supports Contour theory. Various versions of this basically perceptual account can be found in: Kivy 1980; 1989, 2002 and in Davies 1994; 2005; 2010.

In order to argue that this recognitional experience is perceptual instead of imaginative in the first place, a perceptual view must be able to replace the imaginative mechanisms with a convincing perceptual explanation. How do we perceive expressive patterns? That is – once more – how can certain perceptual patterns be experienced as expressive? Davies replies appealing to our capacity to recognise resemblances: we experience things as expressive of affective states as far as we can perceive their perceptual features as being *similar* to other things, namely, typical expressive behaviours and gestures. What would be required in such case, is neither the capacity to imagine an expresser, nor to engage in a simulation process triggering the imaginings of some creative procedure. The sole requirement would be the capacity to map perceptual patterns onto typical (mostly human) emotion characteristics in appearance. When musical contours are perceived in the light of the resemblances between them and typically expressive patterns of human behaviours, expressive experience is likely to be a case of *perceiving-as*: we hear a happy music as far as it resembles the speech of a happy person, or we see a weeping willow as sad insofar as it resembles the typical posture of a sad person. Unlike Levinson, Davies believes that perceiving-as experiences are cases of aspect perception that do not require imaginative engagements:

Because of the possibility that the same material object of perception may be seen under more than one aspect, aspect perception differs from ‘ordinary’ seeing despite remaining a perceptually based experience. (Davies 2005:139).

No doubts, this might often be the case and we can consider the experience of seeing-as as a genuinely perceptual experience. Nevertheless, I suspect that it is only part of the whole story. Expressive patterns such as the liveliness of a painting or the sadness of a melody, are not always recognised (nor in principle recognisable) as similar to expressive behaviours.¹⁰ In point of fact, in order to convince someone that a certain

¹⁰ This objection to Contour theory and to resemblance theories in general has been explicitly raised by Trivedi 2001 and Noordhof 2008.

painting is lively, we do not need to point at the similarities it displays with lively people. We can – and we often do – limit ourselves to point at those lower level perceptual properties like its colours and shapes. And the same holds for music: tempo, rhythm, texture, scoring – as well as colours, shades, slopes, shapes, contours of visual works – play the role of determinants of expressive features, marking the difference between a happy and a mournful perceptual content.

Would it be possible to argue that the brisk tempo, driving rhythm, open texture, bright scoring, etc. in the overture to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* provide evidence that the overture is expressive of sadness? [...] Even if our hearing of the musical features of slowness, etc. in a musical work does not entail that we will also hear sadness in that work, these features may be relevant to our experience of the music's sadness. They could not be used to support the mistaken claim that the music expresses happiness in the way they may be used to support the claim that the music expresses sadness. (Davies 2005:143)

The subsequent question to be answered by a perceptual theory of expressiveness should therefore be to what extent such lower level determinants can be experienced as expressive *per se*?

As to this, much work can be done to both empirically and theoretically to establish the weight of contextual variables in the experience of very low level expressive features like colours, chords, simple shapes (see Parovel, 2012 for a rich overview of experimental results about expressive qualities). Along this path, correlations have been observed between the attribution of intensity to (stereotyped) facial expressions and the co-instantiation of very low-level perceptual features such as inclination, simple geometric figures and speed (Kamachi *et al.* 2001; Pavlova *et al.* 2005). Moreover, theories such as Spelke's *Core Knowledge* (Spelke 1995; 2000; 2007) may offer support to a perceptual stance on expressiveness: roughly, we may be equipped since a very early age to perceptually discriminate object boundaries, cohesion of shapes, intentional or self-propelled movements, say, to discriminate perceptual dynamic features all around our environment. Such dynamic features constitute expressive

patterns, whether they are instantiated by human behaviours or by inanimate objects (more on this has been discussed in Benenti & Meini 2017).

Clearly, talking about dynamic features is not yet talking about expressive patterns in a way that does justice to the complexity of certain expressive experiences of artworks. Especially for what concerns artworks, imaginative – both propositional and sensuous – and conceptual engagement are fundamental components of aesthetic experiences. Noordhof is certainly right in thinking that, when we experience expressive works of art, we are most of the times imaginatively engaged (see also Nanay, forthcoming, on this). Perceptual features of artworks lend themselves to imaginative projects for a bunch of reasons, from the creative process that have produced them, to the cultural and historical conditions of their realisation and fruition. So, it is more than likely that the best, richest and most adequate experience of a work of art and of its expressive character depend on the imaginative engagement we are able and disposed to entertain when attending it.¹¹

My minimal claim is that expressive experience, say, the experience of features, objects and artworks as being expressive of affective states, does not in principle *require* any imaginative engagement to take place. Moreover, the capacity to recognise resemblances between perceptual patterns and expressive behaviours may not be a requirement either. Instead, the capacity to recognise minimally expressive features might be acquired along with other minimal discriminatory capacities that keep together both perceptual and affective learning. Far from offering a solution, this approach may be a fruitful pathway for both philosophy and psychology.¹²

¹¹ Incidentally, this also allows accounting for the relevance of *expertise* in aesthetic experience: it is not by chance that most theories of musical expressiveness (such as Levinson 1996; 2006 and Robinson 2007) require an experienced, specialist, suitable, appropriate audience as one of their conditions.

¹² In her *Ordinary Expression and Musical Expressiveness* (2013), María José Alcaraz León put forward an account of musical expressiveness towards which I am very sympathetic. Regarding the issue of learning to recognise expressive features, she writes: “Especially in early childhood expressive forms are taken from both adult expressive behaviour (usually displayed in an exaggerated manner) and songs – lullabies, songs through which we learn animal and natural sounds; songs that facilitate language learning, etc. – pictures or toys, which represent expressive faces, dances where certain

6. Concluding Remarks

I have discussed two approaches to expressive experience that rely in imagination. First, I have presented and questioned Jerrold Levinson's view on musical expressiveness as implying an imaginative engagement with some fictive persona. I have referred to already existing criticisms against his view, highlighting the tension between propositional imaginings and the perceptual phenomenal character of expressive experience that Levinson wants to preserve.

Then, I have introduced and discussed in details Paul Noordhof's view based on sensuous imagination, showing how it does a better job than the Persona theory. However, I have argued that his rejection of a perceptual account is too quick and underestimates some relevant aspects of expressiveness. Namely, I tried to show that imagination is not required to account for expressive experience, by criticizing both the phenomenal characterization Noordhof offers of expressive experience, and his implicit assumption of dependence between expressiveness and actual expression of emotions. I insisted that the unnecessary appeal to imagination depends on the misleading conception of expressiveness as being parasitic on expression.

Instead, I suggested that a perceptual approach to expressive experience is preferable since it preserves the independence of expressiveness from expression. Perceptual accounts of expressive experience are already on offer. I especially referred to Stephen Davies' account of expressiveness in terms of *perceiving-as* experience, but I also suggested that the one he tells is not the whole story. Works of art can be experienced as expressive even in the absence of any recognisable similarity

bodily movements become associated with both emotional states and certain musical patterns. [...] our expressive repertoire grows not only as we acquire a particular behavioural repertoire within a community but also through our artistic expressive works and practices" (pp. 275-276)

to human expressions, say, they are expressive *per se*. I did not deny that such perceptual experiences of artworks can be enhanced and made more articulated by the intervention of concepts and imaginings connected to emotions, their causal power to trigger typical behaviours, our background knowledge about creative processes and of their wider context of creation. Rather, I suggested that these interventions can only take place on the ground of a perceptual experience of low-level features that are *per se* minimally expressive.

To conclude, expressive experience should be accounted for as a perceptual experience, for this meets both the phenomenological requirement for the perceptual character of the experience and the need to explain expressiveness as independent of actual expression of emotions. I moreover suspect that the link between expressiveness and our emotional life may fruitfully be explained in terms of our acquisition of discriminatory capacities for our own and others' emotions: it might well be the case that, as long as we learn to ascribe and self-ascribe emotions by means of expression, we also learn to ascribe affective values and meanings to perceptual low level features.

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Towards an Aesthetics of Misalignment. Notes on Husserl's Structural Model of Aesthetic Consciousness

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to offer some introductory considerations regarding the convergence between perception and image in Husserl's structural model of aesthetic consciousness as argued in *Phantasy and Image Consciousness*. Insofar as this model operates from the perception of the materiality of the work of art to its immanent apprehension, it begs the question of how both strata link together if, in principle, as Husserl argues in his main text (*Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900/01; *Ideen I*, 1913), it is not possible to attribute characteristics of image to the perception of the physical because that which is given is the object in person. Given this conflict, the doctrine of figurative modification introduced in *Ideen I* allows us to understand how the presentation and re-presentation of the same object can take place through the idea that all original doxa, determined by the belief in the perceived, are modified in a way which, in the case of aesthetic contemplation, is characterised by both indecision and by being the opposed to all doing. Finally, the analysis and elucidation of the relation between perception and image within the conceptual interweaving of *Ideen I* opens up problems and aporias in Husserl's thought regarding the structure of intentionality as seen through the noesis-noema correlation.

1.

At the beginning of the 20th century the historical avant-gardes questioned the idea of the perpetuity and immutability of the artistic object (Foster, 1996) insofar as the work of the artist was not revealed in the creation but in the work of the beholder. In effect, by working with fragments and perspective, Cubism problematized the reception of the visual image through the structuring operations that the work of art aroused. An

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exemplary case would be Picasso's paintings, where works of art such as *Ma Jolie* (1911-12) and *L'aficionado* (1912) are presented from the possibility that the gaze has of endowing the image with continuity, assembling and reordering each of its parts. Likewise, in the 1980s, David Hockney used fragmentation to destabilise the narrative linearity and thus, paradoxically, to recover the continuity of the event. For instance, *Nathan Swimming* (1982) is a single image of a swimmer gliding through a swimming pool which has been made out of 200 photographic shots. Thanks to the adjacent arrangement of the takes, which overlap each other as if they were pieces of a jigsaw, the author fractured the space of representation by joining dissimilar spaces together.

If one thinks about the recompositive work carried out by the beholder, reordering Picasso's assemblies or giving continuity to Hockney photographs, some questions emerge regarding both the way we relate to the space of representation and the way we constitute its meaning. Contemporary aesthetic theory and the analyses developed by Roman Ingarden, Jean Paul Sartre and Mikel Dufrenne, among others, have dealt with these questions by reflecting on the genesis of the aesthetic image and its immanent experience, taking Edmund Husserl as their primary point of reference. For instance, in the 1930s, Ingarden, disciple of Husserl in Gotinga, published *The Literary Work of Art* (1979), where he developed an experiential interpretation of the literary work of art, whose places of indeterminacy predefine the way it is understood, through the concepts of concretion and reconstruction. Likewise, in the 1950s, Dufrenne, influenced by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and inspired by Husserl's phenomenological method, published *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (1973), where he carries out an analysis of the relation of consciousness in a contemplative attitude with its objects. Given Husserl's influence on contemporary aesthetic theory, Sartre went as far as to say that Husserl's notion of intentionality renewed the notion of image in the 20th century (Sartre 2012), to the extent of having acquired relevance, we should add, within, for instance, the iconic turn diagnosed by Gottfried Boehm and W. J. T. Mitchell in the 1990s, which undoubtedly takes Husserl as a point of reference of contemporary aesthetics (García Varas 2011).

Somehow, all phenomenological aesthetics are founded on the doctrine of intentionality, by means of which Husserl explains the relationship between consciousness and its objects, as opposed to a psychologistic interpretation, which takes for granted the existence of consciousness on the one hand and the existence of its contents on the other. Husserl's reflections on aesthetic experience map out to the study of image consciousness, which is the key for the possibility of the aesthetic feeling, since, as Husserl puts it: "Without an image, there is no fine art" (Husserl 2005, p. 41). Husserl understands image consciousness neither as an internal object nor as a psychological entity. We must not forget his own words in the appendix to the Fifth Logical Investigation, where he refuses the traditional theory that takes the image as being "in" consciousness as a representation of what lies outside of consciousness (Husserl 2001, p. 125). As he argues in the second book of the Logical Investigations, the intentional object is not in consciousness as an image of a transcendent object because "[...] all relation to an object is part and parcel of the phenomenological essence of consciousness [...]" (Husserl, 2001, p. 126).

In his lectures from 1905, in order to deepen his reflection on the phenomenology of perception, Husserl deals with the internal images of phantasy and image consciousness.² In order to carry out an analysis for the phenomenological elucidation of knowledge (Husserl 2001, p. 181), he already established in *Logical investigations* that it is at the highest level where we find the conceptual and categorial acts of understanding, which are founded in intuitive acts and their modifications. The latter correspond to intuitive presentations, which include perceptual presentations, physical-figurative presentations and phantasy presentations (memory and expectation), and are characterized by the fact that an object appears by

² After the publication of *Logical Investigations* (1900/01), Husserl taught a course during the winter semester of 1905, at the University of Göttingen, titled "Fundamental elements of phenomenology and theory of knowledge", the aim of which was to examine those aspects of knowledge which had not been understood in the investigations carried out in 1901. The course was, therefore, divided into four parts dedicated to perception (*Wahrnehmung*), attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*), phantasy (*Phantasie*), image-consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) and time (*Zeit*), thus contributing –as John Brough puts it in the preface to *Husserliana XXIII*– to an understanding of the essential structure of experience (Husserl 2005, p. xxx).

itself or by means of an image and are the basis of the signifying acts (Bernet 1993, p. 141).

Within the scope of intuitive presentations, and unlike perceptual presentations whereby that which appears is “a sign *for itself*” (Husserl 1983, p. 121), in phantasy and image consciousness a thing is represented by means of a mental image (Husserl 2005, p. 22). Specifically, what characterizes image presentations is that they are defined and stable, whilst phantasy presentations are discontinuous, faint (ghostly) and variable (Husserl 2005, p. 63). Following Marc Richir (2010), this distinction suggests that phantasy presentations cannot be figurative because, in being elusive and unsteady, they lack the stability that is distinctive of the external image. Image presentations, on the other hand, would be figurative because, in being defined and stable, they “require the mediation of something that appears perceptually in the present”, as Rudolf Bernet has put it (Bernet 1993, p. 144).

According to this distinction, and as Husserl claims in his writings of 1905, the experience we have when we look at a picture or sculpture, is performed by aesthetic consciousness. Insofar as it is related to a physical object, it is called a physical figurative representation, and it takes place when the image carries a relationship to something represented through moments in which the thing, the object represented, matches the image (Husserl 2005, p. 19). This relationship emerges from its very own structure, which is made out of three strata; firstly, the physical thing (*physisches Ding*) or physical image (*physische Bild*), namely, the specific materiality of the work of art, like for instance the canvas or the photographic paper with the layout of colours and lines; secondly, the theme of representation (*Bildsujet*); and, thirdly, that which is represented (*Bildobjekt*) (Husserl 2005, p. 20).

In summary, image consciousness, which in the case of aesthetic experience is called physical figurative representation because it maintains a relationship with a physical object, is a complex unit which generates tensions and conflicts (Husserl 2005, p. 33). One of these conflicts is the one between the physical thing and that which is represented (*Bildobjekt*). In this case, Husserl indicates that the conflict arises because the materiality of

the work of art, along with its formal layout, differs from the aesthetic image. For example, the image in motion and the 360° rotational fluidity of the head of Mussolini in *Continuous Profile of Mussolini* (1933), by Italian futurist Giuseppe Bertelli, does not match its bracket; a solid and static wooden figure which, due to the continuity of some of the features of the carved face, generates the feeling of movement. In this sense, the image object (Bildobjekt) differs from the physical thing and the theme which is being represented, and it is this form of independence that brings it closer to the image of phantasy, characterised by indeterminacy and the absence of referents. It should be noted that, in his writings of 1905, Husserl mentioned a second conflict between that which is represented (Bildobjekt) and the theme of representation (Bildsujet). However, and unlike the opposition between the physical thing and that which is represented, this second conflict is resolved through the concept of pictorialisation (Verbildlichung) (Husserl 2005, p. 18), by means of which he explains that the theme of representation resides somehow in the image, sharing the contents of apprehension (Husserl 2005, p. 28). By contrast, to go from the perception of the materiality of the work of art to its immanent apprehension makes the union between both strata rather problematic, thus begging the question of how both parts are articulated together in the whole model of the physical figurative representation if, theoretically, as Husserl often argues, it is not possible for the characteristics of the image to be attributed to the perception of the physical thing (Husserl 1983, p. 219) because the object is given in person (Husserl 1983, p. 83).

It is worth considering that, unlike in figurative representation, where the object appears independently from all claims to existence or inexistence (Levinas 1995, p. 58), transcendent or external perception is conceived as an originary and primary act or, what is the same, as an exemplary one. This means that perception, by being empty of mention and intuition, constitutes its unity out of the multiple apparitions of the object. In effect, the object is apprehended partially, that is, through its diverse aspects. Nonetheless, and despite its fragmentariness, we constitute a donation that unfolds without “interruption of the continuous course of actional perception” (Husserl 1983, p. 87). It is for this very reason that

Husserl says that, as well as the appearances of the object, “necessarily a *core of ‘what is actually presented’* is apprehended as being surrounded by a horizon of ‘*co-givenness*’, which is not *givenness proper*, and of more or less vague *indeterminateness*” (Husserl 1983, p. 94). In this way, that which is exemplary in the perception of things lies in the unity of sense that prevails and which is previous to the partialities of its appearances. As Husserl puts it, “the indeterminateness necessarily signifies a *determinableness which has a rigorously prescribed style*” (Husserl 1983, p. 94), being a sort of a priori that “*points ahead* to possible perceptual multiplicities” (Husserl 1983, p. 94) projecting forward new appearances or retaining the previous ones within the horizon outlined by the thing itself.

In contrast to perception, in the case of imaginative contemplation, although the object exists as an objective fact, consciousness only has the image, and reference to its physical support does not explain the essence of the act of imagination (Husserl 2001, p. 528). Already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl thinks about the split implied in image consciousness, when he says that: “Only a presenting ego’s power to use a similar as an image-representative of a similar –the first similar had intuitively, while the second similar is nonetheless *meant* in its place– makes the image *be* an image” (Husserl 2001, p. 125). In *Phantasy and Image Consciousness* Husserl emphasises the distinction between image and thing (Husserl 2005, p. 19) by referring to the fact that an image appears when we contemplate an object aesthetically, and it is by means of such an image that a person, a landscape, etc. is meant, the latter being different from the object originally perceived.³ In effect, if we pay attention to the assembled and square layout of each of the photographs of the swimmer taken by Hockney, these do not correspond to the unitary object meant, namely the movement of the swimmer in a homogeneous space. Consequently, and taking note of the immanent image of aesthetic

³ Husserl exemplifies this difference: “The Madonna by Raphael that I contemplate in a photograph is obviously not the little image that appears photographically. Hence I do not bring about a mere perception; the perceptual appearance depicts a nonperceived object. (...) the image is immediately felt to be an image” (Husserl 2005, p. 27).

contemplation, Husserl concludes that, unlike perception, which is characterised by presence, the image is held in an internal representation, namely, it appears only “as if it was there, but only as if” (Husserl 2005, p. 34). This means that, although the image has concrete referents a physical thing with a materiality and a specific theme, it differs from these insofar as it re-presents and simulates something different from it.⁴ In this sense, Husserl takes a radical standpoint when he affirms that the image does not exist: “which not only means that it has no existence outside my consciousness, but that neither does it exist inside my consciousness; it has no existence at all” (Husserl 2005, p. 23).

If we pay attention to Husserl’s writings of 1905, *Phantasy and Image Consciousness*, as well as to the Appendix of the Fifth Investigation, “Critique of the ‘image-theory’ and of the doctrine of the ‘immanent’ objects of acts”, given the non-presentness of the aesthetic image on the one hand, and the real here and now that is distinctive of the perception of the work of art on the other (Bernet 1993, p. 149), which is not suppressed by the apparition of the image –for if it were, as Husserl says, there would not be a figurative representation but rather an illusion or a dream (Husserl 2005, p. 5)– the following questions emerge: How do perception and figurative representation converge in this stratified model of aesthetic consciousness? What form does this relationship have?

2.

Following Husserl’s analyses in *Ideas I*, a process called figurative modification (*verbildlichende* Modifikation) enables us to understand the presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) and representation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of the same object; for example, in the case of the contemplation of a painting, the perception of the craquelure of the oil painting in accordance with that

⁴ Husserl says: “Living in the image consciousness, we actually feel ourselves to be in a corresponding perception. Looked at more closely, however, this use of the phrase “we actually feel ourselves to be” is surely analogous or indicates a quite momentary deception. What is there is always only re-presentation and not being present” (Husserl 2005, p. 33).

which the image exhibits or, as is the case in the previous example, the density of the carved wood that makes up the head of Mussolini in Bertelli's piece and the movement that his face suggests. In the following I shall argue that the concept of figurative modification is central to eidetic phenomenology. The analysis and elucidation of this concept within the conceptual interweaving of *Ideas I* leads us to the problems and aporias of Husserl's thought regarding the structure of intentionality seen from the noesis-noema correlation.

In the introduction to *Ideas I*, Husserl says that his aim is to search for a pure phenomenology the peculiarity of which is to be far removed from the thinking and experience characterized by the natural attitude, that is, "from the world as it confronts us, from consciousness as it offers itself in psychological experience" (Husserl 1983, xix). Conceived as such, phenomenology is a science of essences, rather than of facts, and deals, as Husserl puts it, "with consciousness, with all sorts of mental processes, acts and act-correlates" (Husserl 1983, p. xix), in order to achieve the understanding of transcendently purified phenomena, the main theme of which is intentional life-experience, whose main characteristic is to be conscious of something (*Bewusstsein von Etwas*); this is, Husserl says again, "is what characterizes *consciousness* in the pregnant sense" (Husserl 1983, p. 199). This consideration includes the temporal flux of intertwined and overlapping life-experiences under the domain of a priori eidetic laws which determine its movement. Therefore, Husserl's task is to establish the way in which the intentionality of consciousness is constituted and the manner in which intentionalities are transformed and intertwined with each other, all this through laws that predefine such an understanding (Husserl 1983, p. 209). In this sense, Husserl analyzes the constitution of new objects by means of the modifications of intentional life-experiences. This analysis starts with the consideration that to all original doxa, determined by the certainty of that which is perceived, belongs a modification. Figurative modification is inherent to aesthetic contemplation and, as such, from the perception of that which is figuratively exhibited, it is characterized by indecision and by being opposed to all doing (Husserl 1993, p. 258). It is important to note that this modification is a special mode of neutrality

deriving from the doctrine of qualitative modification explained in the second part of *Logical Investigations*.⁵ In *Ideas I*, Husserl says that the modification of memory, otherwise called phantasy, also belongs with the modification of neutrality (Husserl 1993, p. 260); however, unlike figurative modification, and insofar as it is reproductive, phantasy is a type of primary belief belonging to immanent experience.

It is noteworthy that as modification of the belief in the perceived, the immanent image (Bildobjekt), that which merely appears (Husserl 1993, p. 261), is that which is more distinctive of the experience of the work of art –assertion that matches the argument from 1905 when Husserl says that “Without an image, there is no fine art” (Husserl 2005, p. 41). Husserl says that when we behave aesthetically, consciousness has a “‘mere picture’, without imparting to it the stamp of being or non-being, of being possible or being deemed likely, or the like” (Husserl 1983, p. 262), the function of which is to exhibit, represent, depict in order to turn a particular theme into something intuitable (Husserl 2005, p. 31). Thus, when we marginalize and remove all voluntary elements from this modification, that which is figuratively modified emerges as something undecided, something that is there before us but without being “‘actually’ intended to as standing there” (Husserl 1983, p. 258), because the interest of the spectator, as a spectator in the aesthetic attitude, centres only on that which is exhibited through the image, this image being “consciously there, although not in the manner of something ‘actually’ thought of but instead as something ‘merely thought of,’ as ‘mere thought’” (Husserl 1983, p. 258). For example, if we pay attention to the portrait of Pope Innocent X by Francis Bacon, the most characteristic feature for the spectator is the image object (Bildobjekt), which manifests realities such as the horror and the monstrosity of the anamorphosis of the saint, rather than its referent (Bildsujet), i.e. the 17th century Pope Innocent X, successor to Urban VIII, also portrayed by Velázquez and sculpted by Bernini, or its physical thing (physisches Ding); namely, the strokes of the thick paint over a canvas hanging from a wall –

⁵ *Logical Investigations*, vol. II, Fifth Investigation, chapter v.

although, obviously, both the referent and the material and its usage could be objects of interest to the historian or the artist, although in this case the relationship would be one of study rather than of contemplation.

As modification of an intentional life-experience the understanding of the relationship between perception and image implies difficulties because the intentional life-experience is conceived from the noetic-noematic correlation.⁶ Taking this into consideration, the noetic side of the intentional life-experience implies contents of sensation (hyletic data), which in the *Logical Investigations* were referred to as the “quality of the act”, upon which the noesis operates as a layer that “animates” or “bestows sense” (Husserl 1983, p. 203), thus participating in the constitution of the objectivities of consciousness (Husserl 1983, p. 207).⁷ Nevertheless, even though animated by the noesis, the contents of sensation do not determine the identity of such objectivities because they are a sort of fragmentary information that it is exhibited or nuanced in each life-experience. This being the case, if we can say that in aesthetic contemplation the contents of sensation of the work of art perceived and the image (Bildobjekt) maintain a correspondence, because the physical thing or the material image -as is the case with the engraving by de Dürer “Knight, Death and the Devil” (Husserl 1983, p. 261), with its black lines laid out over the paper, as Husserl emphasizes- continues to be an undisputed material referent of that which the image exhibits, how, then, can we distinguish between image and perception? What is the nature of the intention of the image regarding the intention of perception?

⁶ In fact, in *Ideas I*, the phenomenological domain is extended with the noetic-noematic correlation, which, as Husserl puts it, is of the greatest importance for phenomenology and decisive for its legitimate grounding (Husserl 1983, p. 233).

⁷ It must be said that although the term noesis had already been employed in *Logical Investigations*, when the term is used as part of the correlation noesis-noema it refers exclusively to the transcendental domain, as Morant has noted: “the noesis-noema correlation cannot be simply taken as equivalent to the act-object or psychic-physical distinction inherited from Brentano’s analysis of intentionality. We are now approaching *Erlebnisse* under the *epoché* and from the transcendental point of view” (Morant 2015, p. 20).

3.

In order to answer these questions, we must first consider what Husserl says in *Ideas I* regarding the noesis-noema correlation, which, as Dermot Moran argues, is a new and clear way of thinking the composition of the *Erlebnisse* and delving into its structure (Moran 2015, p. 16). In *Ideas I*, the phenomenological domain is extended with the consideration of the intentional correlate, for the sphere of life-experiences is not only reduced to the real immanent, to the noesis, but also to “the objects like them which are intentional in these acts, as they are adequately given”, as Bernet has explained (Bernet 1993, p. 90).

As mentioned above, the noesis operates on the contents of sensation animating or bestowing sense. Nevertheless, insofar as it is a kind of fragmentary information that is exhibited or nuanced in each life-experience, it does not determine the identity of the objectivities of consciousness. This being the case, it is the noema which grants an objective sense to the hyletic data. In effect, in the case of perception, the noema corresponds to “the perceived as perceived” (Husserl 1983, p. 214), that is to say, to that of which one is conscious, whilst its correlate, the noesis, corresponds to the mode of turning such sense into being conscious of. As Husserl puts it in paragraph 89 of *Ideas I*: “The tree simpliciter can burn up, be resolved into its chemical elements, etc. But the sense –the sense of *this* perception, something belonging necessarily to its essence –cannot burn up; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties” (Husserl 1983, p. 216).

In the case of aesthetic contemplation, under the perspective of the noesis-noema correlation, if we consider that we are before the same object and that the way of approaching it varies, in the case of perception the belief, and in the case of aesthetic contemplation indecision and abstention, we can then go on to say that in these types of life-experiences the variation in the way we approach the object, understood in *Ideas I* as figurative modification, implies that the noema, that which is intended as such, is the nexus between perception and image. This thesis is grounded in the constant relation between perception and image, insofar as the correspondence

between the strata of the structural model of aesthetic consciousness, as Husserl explained in 1905, is not exhausted either in the perception or in the apprehension of the image, due to the fact that both are in mutual and constant determination. In this way, thanks to figurative modification, as phenomenological reflexion (Husserl 1983, p. 178), we can be conscious of the noema, that is to say, of the sense of that which is meant by the act, in the mode of not acting or of indecision. We should not forget that Husserl's phenomenological proposal in *Ideas I* consists in elucidating the access to the objectivities of consciousness, distinguishing between the different types of reflections, and analysing them in full and systematically (Husserl 1983, p. 178), due to the flowing nature of living experiences and their capacity to be reproduced.⁸ Consequently, in the aesthetic attitude, one can access that which maintains its identity, regardless of the changing approaches of the spectator, whether these be perceptive or referential, a sort of contained gaze that presents visibility itself, as Waldenfelds reminds us (Waldenfelds 2011, p. 159). Under this perspective, we can also understand that in this attitude we see that which is represented in a relationship or a representation of similarity (Ähnlichkeitsrepräsentation) (Husserl 2005, p. 27; Bernet 1993, p. 151), whether this is towards the object or towards the theme of representation. Having said this, if our aesthetic opening culminates with the noematic consideration of the object, then a question emerges regarding whether aesthetic consciousness corresponds exclusively to the immanent image, and, if that is the case, we must then pose the question as to whether Husserl's aesthetic considerations place us or not in a dualism between reality and image.

In order to answer this question, we shall consider some interpretations regarding Husserl's notion of the noema. According to Sartre (2012) and Bernet (1993), the concept presented in *Ideas I* was formulated in an incomplete manner insofar as the different forms of noematic givenness were not rigorously differentiated. More specifically, Bernet

⁸ Husserl defines life-experience as: "continuous flow of retentions and protentions mediated by a flowing phase of originarity itself in which there is consciousness of the living now of the mental process in contradistinction to its 'before' and 'after'" (Husserl 1983, p. 170).

argues that Husserl's explanation contains ambiguities insofar as, on the one hand, the noema is considered to be "inseparable from consciousness" (Husserl 1983, p. 307) and "an object, but utterly *non-selfsufficient*" (Husserl 1983, p. 241), whereas, on the other hand, it "allows for being considered by itself" (Husserl 1983, p. 241). According to Bernet, these ambiguities show that the concept as introduced here is not clear enough and needs further elucidation in other manuscripts (Bernet 1993, p. 96).

Likewise, we can highlight two interpretations within the more contemporary debate regarding this concept. A first interpretation takes the noema as a self-sufficient mental entity which, thanks to epoché and phenomenological reduction, can be analysed independently both from the act and the object and, therefore, is an ideal of meaning by means of which consciousness is directed to its objects (Føllesdal 1974, p. 96). According to Dan Zahavi (2004), this interpretation rests on two assumptions: (1) the argument that takes phenomenological reduction to be a sort of purification of the items transcendent to consciousness that provides us with abstract mental experiences; and (2) the reading offered by Dagfinn Føllesdal, for whom Husserl's noema plays the role of interpreting mental representations and the directionality of mental activity (Zahavi 2004, p. 45).⁹

In opposition to this interpretation, authors such as Sokolowski (1987), Drummond (1990) y Zahavi (2004), have argued that epoché and phenomenological reduction do not replace the objects of the world with mental entities. We must not forget that phenomenological reflection is a change of attitude rather than a change of objects; namely, an attitude by means of which we gain access to the way in which we intend objects. This means that it is through phenomenological reflection that we access the object itself rather than its mental representation (Sokolowski 1987, p. 527; Zahavi 2004, p. 48); as Drummond argues, we intend the object 'through' its meaning, but not 'through' in the sense of going beyond it, but rather

⁹ Nonetheless, Zahavi asks: "But does the epoché imply that we parenthesize the transcendent spatiotemporal world in order to account for internal mental representations, or does the epoché rather imply that we continue to explore and describe the transcendent spatiotemporal world, but now in a new and different manner? Is the noema, the object-as-it-is-intended, to be identified with an internal mental representation, with an abstract and ideal sense, or rather with the givenness of the intended object itself?" (Zahavi 2004, p. 47).

‘through’ in the sense of penetrating it (Drummond 1990, p. 136; Zahavi 2004, p. 48).

However, if we now return to Husserl’s exposition in *Ideas I*, where he argues that in the phenomenological attitude, to say that we hold cogitative theses within brackets does not mean to say that we stop living in them or that we stop performing them; rather, on the contrary, it implies that we perform acts of reflection directed at them (Husserl 1993, p. 114).¹⁰ It is important to take into account that Husserl understands phenomenological reflection as a kind of modification that operates on a non-reflected living experience which functions as substrate (Husserl 1983, p. 178). Both phenomenological reflection and modification are second level acts, by means of which we access that which is given, that is the “infinite” and “absolute” field of living experiences through which reality is gained. For Husserl, singular things and the world in general are not an absolute that can be considered independently from or as intertwined with consciousness (Husserl 1993, p. 113), insofar as they are only meaningful when we access their intentional essence, namely, when we become aware of them as given. At this point, we must take into account that Husserl’s theory of intentionality begins with our relationship with the world and, therefore, it also includes the reality whereby we unfold our existence. As Zahavi explains, the noema is in the world, and not the other way round –or, what is the same, the noema is not a piece of the world that offers us a collection of isolated meanings (Zahavi 2004, p. 50). And he goes on to add that: “As intentional beings we are centers of disclosure, permitting worldly objects to appear with the meanings that are their own” (Zahavi 2004, p. 50).

Finally, if we now return to the stratified model of aesthetic consciousness under the idea that perception and image share the sense of that which is meant by the act, we can then conclude that under this model we are not seeing a discrimination between the materiality of the work of art

¹⁰ As Julia Jansen has argued regarding the well-known paragraph 89 of *Ideas I* regarding the perception of the tree: “The tree, as we experience it (the noema), is the same tree that we experience (the physical thing). As Sartre reminds us, Husserl does not think that this experience is ‘in consciousness’, but that we experience the tree ‘just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the dust’” (Sartre 2012, p. 382; Jansen 2014, p. 86).

and the immanent image, but rather a self-differentiation (Waldenfelds 2011, p. 158), for aesthetic representation emerges from that which is meant by the act and it is constituted through the misalignments or the lags that take place between the appearing of the image in relation to the physical thing and the theme it represents. This gap does not imply a dualism, for the image is anchored, so to speak, to the physical object and to the theme it represents. In effect, when we mean mention the portrait of Innocent X that we had contemplated months ago in the Des Moines Art Center, and we want to remember what it is really like, we need to renew its sense by means of either direct contemplation or memory (Husserl 2005, p. 27). This also implies that the image, in aesthetic representation, does not give itself to us as a completely finished object because it is subjected to a permanent adjustment between the apparition of strata, thus disclosing the active aspect that constitutes that which is properly aesthetic and that allows the spectator to remain in a constant constitutive activity. In order to conclude these considerations, I would like to go back to Hockney's *Nathan Swimming*, where the fragmented layout of a unique scene makes absence visible, allowing us to understand the possibilities that are at stake when we configure our knowledge, and leaving the following question open: what is the place of aesthetic images in relation to the present in which we forge our belief in reality?

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Photographic Indexicality and Referentiality in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT. This article attempts to understand the fate of conventional notions of photographic indexicality and referentiality in the digital era where digital images have replaced analog images almost completely. Following a critical overview of relevant literature on digital photography, the author makes a conceptual distinction between referentiality and indexicality with respect to their implications for the notion of photographic realism. With a particular focus on the concept of indexicality, defined herein as an element that radically determines the definition of photography, the author argues that the image becomes a “thing” in digital images in the absence of indexicality by using Jean-Paul Sartre’s notion of “illusion of immanence”, a claim that would strongly challenge the view that digital images can still be regarded as photographs that themselves presuppose a particular relationship between an image and its object.

1. Introduction

Despite having been defined in nearly countless ways, photography has long secured its place among other forms of imagery by representing objects in a reliable, consistent manner. Such supremacy may be considered a culturally or socially constructed outcome born of an entrenched affinity between seeing and knowing. Alternatively, photography might appear to be a product of its social functions (i.e., proving and verifying). No matter the rationale, photography’s superiority in object representation remains essentially indisputable. Yet a solid corpus of literature has emerged along with the rise of the so-called “digital revolution” or “digital age” examining the issue of whether or not digitality has transformed the ties between reality and photography or, put more precisely, the ways in which reality is

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represented through photography. Even before digitality rose to prominence, many critical accounts in literature challenged the notion that the so-called direct and “natural” link between the external world and the photographic image is imperative to the indexical character of photography. Instead, some scholars contended that photographs are more akin to a factitious construction of reality than to the actual world. The ubiquity of digitality has since called into question more than ever photography’s power of proof, to the point that some claim it has been undermined completely (Punt, 1995, p. 3). The effects of digitality on photography have rendered seemingly simple questions controversial, including the extent to which the traditional definition of an image applies to digital images and whether or not proper photography still exists at all.

A trademark discussion of photography nearly always includes remarks about the ‘realism’ that distinguishes photography from other image forms. More specifically, photography involves a somewhat complex relationship between an image and its referent in that the object being photographed is effectively etched on the photographic surface (i.e., *indexicality*, wherein the photographic surface is an index of the actual object being photographed). To this point, Sontag argues that a photograph is “not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask” (1975, pp. 154-55). Bazin suggests that “the photographic image is the object itself” (1967, p. 14), insinuating that a photograph is an extension of the object pictured but not, as many scholars have argued, a “mirror of reality.” These depictions of photography as a trace, which emphasize indexicality, are common in the field’s scholarship. Arnheim explains photography thusly: “the physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light” (1974, p. 155). Krauss (1986, p. 203) echoes this sentiment, noting that photographs “look like footprints in sand, or marks that have been left in dust.” Armstrong (1998, p. 2) further defines photography as “first and foremost an indexical sign, [...] an image that is chemically and optically caused by the things in the world to which it refers.” Thus, the photograph is “predicated on its relation to nature before it is mediated by a code of

legibility.”

Digital imaging techniques began to gain popularity in the early 1990s and have since come to constitute a new cultural practice. As such, an accompanying body of literature regarding photography’s now-fluid definition further complicates the already problematic notion of its truthfulness. I will attempt to offer a critical overview of prominent discussions in this vein to clarify the implications of the “digital revolution” on the changing meaning of what is disputatiously referred to as photography with a particular focus on the issues of indexicality and referentiality. These discussions, I believe, share a few commonalities with respect to their theoretical frameworks. Initial approaches were more concerned with the representation of “new” images; that is, they examined whether or not the ways in which conventional photography reflects reality were significantly undermined or changed, thereby challenging the assumed *vraisemblance* of photography given the rise of digital imaging. This consideration was closely related to another concern, namely photography’s long-standing (but loosely established) status of certificate of evidence associated with photography’s entrenched notion of causality. This raises the question of whether or not the conventional notion of representation can still be used to describe adequately the relationship between photography and reality; or, alternatively, should we use the notion of simulation to depict this association following the so-called digital revolution? Perhaps not surprisingly, such theoretical accounts deal primarily with documentary or press photography to offer a somewhat pessimistic view of the future of these genres. They also suggest, rather provocatively, an overall dissolution of the link between the photographic surface and its referent. Complementing this second view is another line of thought which claims that the nature of photography has fundamentally transformed due to digital photography, wherein the notion of indexicality has ceased to be a defining characteristic. This theory is largely concerned not with how photographs appear to us, but instead with the type of medium photography has become; i.e., the ontological definition of what is now considered photography, for better or for worse.

Lister’s (2009, p. 314) distinction between analog and digital may

shed light on this issue.² Images are conventionally analog in nature; they are formed by physical signs and marks on particular surfaces, which are not separable from the very surface that carries them. However, the digital medium does not transmit physical properties; it involves instead the transformation of information, a symbolization of physical properties via arbitrary numerical codes. In that case, analog images can be regarded as being based on continuity, comprised of materials and techniques specific to that particular medium. Digital images, in contrast, are unitized (i.e., separate, quantifiable, and perfectly reproducible mechanically), constituted by materials and techniques that are not limited to the digital medium. These nearly irrefutable differences between digital and analog images gain more convincing meaning in the context of discussions regarding digital photography. For example, the duality between continuity and unitization calls to mind a discussion of whether analog and digital photography are irreconcilably different in terms of technical qualities such as dynamic range and tonal richness.³ On the other hand, the contrast between the irreversible and inconvertible characteristics of analog images, which rely on transmission, and the reversible and convertible characteristics of digital

² I use the term “analog photography” with reservation in the remainder of the text. As Jäger (1996, pp. 107-8) asserts, it is quite problematic to define all conventional photographs as analog. Although it is a general tendency in the digital era, this applies the label of ‘analog’ to even the most abstract photographs simply because they are based on film, which is obviously not true. Moreover, Jäger contends that the process of transmission of light onto the digital sensor is itself an analog process. Thus, he chooses the term “technical picture” for photographs that are considered either analog or digital. I make the conceptual distinction between analog and digital photography by focusing on the act of processing, not the moment of photographing. I will further legitimize this point in the context of the absence of indexicality and referentiality in digital photography.

³ I would like to make a brief note on this point. These “technical” discussions offer both phenomenological and ontological insights. However, it is not uncommon for these discussions to be couched at times in belief rather than fact. For example, there is a general belief that digital photographs still fall considerably behind analog photographs with respect to generating tonal richness and depth of black-and-white photographs. Yet, as a person with extensive experience in darkrooms who has studied exclusively on the tonal characteristics of black-and-white photography, I am almost unsuccessful in discerning “analog” photographs from their film-simulated counterparts generated by various software in blind tests when looking at tonal richness and forms of expression. Thus, the discussions based primarily on phenomenological grounds have become essentially meaningless considering the unprecedented pace at which digital imaging technologies have developed.

images, which rely on transformation, summons the issue of indexicality. More specifically, there is a question of whether or not digital photographs are considered indexical in nature.

2. Early Approaches: The End of Photography?

As has been touched upon briefly, nascent approaches that emerged in the early 1990s tended to interpret the rise and gradual prevalence of digital imaging systems as a serious challenge to the definition of photography as a realist medium and a certificate of evidence (and presence).⁴ Undoubtedly, these approaches were perhaps over-reactive in their assessment of digital imagery because the phenomenon was new and undeveloped compared to the digital imaging techniques available today. Initial approaches tended to focus more on the state of photography's power to reflect reality and, by extension, whether or not photography had lost its status as a certificate of evidence. In his book, which exemplifies perfectly these early approaches, Ritchin (1990, p. 3) offers an image of a science fiction dystopia in a passage in which he muses about photographic advertisements adorning the New York City subway:

I tried to imagine how it would feel if, despite the evidence of the photographs, everything depicted in them had never been. It was difficult to do because the images seemed so life-like ... If so, the photograph referred to nobody ... I looked at the people sitting across from me in the subway car underneath the advertisements for reassurance, but they too began to seem unreal, as if they also were figments of someone's imagination. It became difficult to choose who

⁴ Flusser's argument emerges as an exception among early approaches. Flusser (1986, p. 331) asserts that in the digital era, photographs are emigrating from their "material support into the electromagnetic field" to be seen on screens rather than on paper. For him, this technical revolution is indeed a cultural revolution, which would be an answer to the problem of oblivion. Humans have long been in pursuit of the preservation of information (and immortality) with a tendency to avoid entropy. Thus, immaterial photographs are the best means by which to preserve memory and overcome entropy. Flusser suggests that new photography has the potential to transcend the long-standing duality between science and art.

or what was “real,” and why people could exist but people looking just like them in photographs never did.

Fast-forwarding a quarter-century, now that raw data can be processed to generate “genuine” images via computer, Ritchin’s reaction might seem rather archaic. However, his statements also convey the conventional belief that photography is a certificate of evidence. Ritchin points out new ethical problems in the realm of photojournalism in light of the emergence of digital post-production manipulation. For him, manipulation was common in conventional photography as well, but it was moderate and did not harm the integrity of the image. Ritchin’s critique is not confined to a particular realm of photographic practice but rather implies a general transformation of photography itself. In another work belonging to the same period, he argues that photography has gradually lost its immanent realism and declares the end of photography as we have known it (Ritchin, 1991).⁵ Put simply, Ritchin was anxious—especially with respect to the future of photojournalism—because he feared that manipulated photographs that have very little to do with reality would become indiscernible from unmanipulated, “straight” photographs, a situation which would undermine the credibility of photographs altogether.⁶

Probably the most influential and oft-referenced work in these early discussions was Mitchell’s *The Reconfigured Eye*, published in 1992. In it, Mitchell declares the year 1989 (the 150th anniversary of photography) the end of photography, then prudently revises his observation by claiming that photography is being displaced radically and permanently by digitality much like painting was displaced by photography 150 years prior (1992, p. 20). Yet Mitchell’s assertion does not necessarily mean that he naively

⁵ Such pessimistic approaches declaring the end of photography, or claiming the disappearance of the distinctive characteristics of photography given the rise of the digital era, were especially common in early approaches. For other prominent examples, see Willis (1990), Mitchell (1992), and Robins (1995).

⁶ Another influential critique with respect to photojournalism comes from Bossen as early as 1985. Bossen (1985, p. 27) claims that as photography moves toward its optical-electronic-computer future from its optical-chemical past, its sources of credibility and philosophical notions of truth will become obsolete.

believes in the claims of truth and realism that pervade conventional photography:

An interlude of false innocence has passed. Today, as we enter the post-photographic era, we must face once again the ineradicable fragility of our ontological distinctions between the imaginary and the real, and the tragic elusiveness of the Cartesian dream. We have indeed learnt to fix the shadows, but not to secure their meanings or to stabilize their truth values; they still flicker on the walls of Plato's cave (p. 225).

Although Mitchell's argument offers a critical and even groundbreaking perspective, it is still plagued by certain weaknesses endemic to the early approaches. For example, Mitchell (1992, 6) compares the amount of information generated by analog and digital images and then concludes that analog or film-based images offer an infinite amount of information whereas digital images have limited tonal and spatial resolution. This claim becomes essentially meaningless given the astonishing technical capabilities now offered by digital imaging systems.⁷ Manovich (2006, p. 244) criticizes Mitchell's discussion by raising the simple point that as early as the mid 1990s, digital technologies were capable of producing high-resolution images with few major pixelization issues. Manovich (2006, p. 245) goes on to challenge Mitchell's perspective by contending that "normal" or "straight" photography has never existed.

⁷ When comparing digital and analog photographs on the basis of data gathered through scientific experiments, Archambault (2016) concludes that digital photography outdistanced analog photography some time ago with respect to grain and noise levels and dynamic range. Although it is problematic to compare analog and digital images on the basis of quantifiable characteristics, this observation renders claims similar to Mitchell's effectively meaningless. For example, as early as 2005, the highest-quality digital cameras reached 13 stops of dynamic range, which the highest-quality film cameras were able to capture. Another example is the amount of grain, sometimes regarded as an aesthetic tool for artistic expression, which is technically nothing but chemical particles that have not received sufficient light. A similar element in digital images is noise, which is unwanted signals generated by a camera's digital circuitry. Like the former observation, digital photography long ago surpassed analog photography with respect to the elimination of these technically "unwanted" elements.

Although not directly related to the impact of digital imaging technologies on analog photography, Crary's (1992) perspective is quite impressive in its comprehensiveness. He investigates this issue in light of the overall transformation within what he calls the "modern scopic regimes." Specifically, Crary (1992, p. 1) argues that sweeping progress in computer graphic techniques is a part of "reconfiguration of relations between an observing subject and modes of representation" and "transformation in the nature of visibility." For him, this transformation is "probably more profound than the break that separates medieval imagery from Renaissance perspective." He adds that digital images operate not through the mimetic capacities of analog mediums, but instead relocate vision from the level of the human eye to someplace else where there is no reference to the position of the observer in a "real", optically perceived world. Crary's position regarding the absence of referentiality in digital images, along with his prophetic vision during digitality's nascent period, has become a cornerstone of subsequent literature:⁸

Most of the historically important functions of the human eye are being supplanted by practices in which visual images no longer have any reference to the position of an observer in a "real," optically perceived world. If these images can be said to refer to anything, it is to millions of bits of electronic mathematical data. Increasingly, visibility will be situated on a cybernetic and electromagnetic terrain where abstract visual and linguistic elements coincide and are consumed, circulated, and exchanged globally (p. 2).

Apart from these exceptional approaches, a common thread in early theories was the establishment of a duality between digital and analog photographs with respect to their capacity to reflect reality. There are a number of potential explanations for scholars' initial reactions: widespread anxiety

⁸ Another early figure who emphasized the absence of referentiality in digital images was Jacques Derrida. For him, recording an image digitally is inseparable from image production. Thus, digital images do not refer to any external and unique referent (Derrida, 2010, p. 5), and photography becomes instead a performative act which further complicates the issues of truth and reference.

evoked by the common practice of manipulation in digital images, the assumed absence of the direct link between image and photographic object in digital images, and the relatively underdeveloped technical capabilities of digital imaging systems at the time. Thus, it is not reasonable to assert that early literature regards photography as a “mirror of reality” or that scholars overlook the fact that photography’s immanent realism is indeed a cultural construction. Kember (1998, p. 17) raises a critical question that underlies this point:

Computer manipulated and simulated imagery appears to threaten the truth status of photography even though that has already been undermined by decades of semiotic analysis. How can this be? How can we panic about the loss of the real when we know (tacitly or otherwise) that the real is always already lost in the act of representation? Any representation, even a photographic one, only constructs an image-idea of the real; it does not capture it, even though it might seem to do so.

Thus, the anxiety that infiltrates early approaches is likely a result of threatening the subject’s position itself in the very act of beholding or, more generally, within the production of images themselves. As Martin Lister (2009, p. 321) notes, what is at stake is a “historical and psychic investment in photography’s ‘realism’.”

These somewhat impetuous approaches led to more moderate and cautious discussions beginning in the mid-1990s.⁹ In his critique of early pessimistic approaches, Manovich (2006, pp. 244-45) suggests that they were based on the comparison of manipulated digital photographs and unmanipulated documentary photography, a contrast which is hardly operational since, for him, the realist tradition and photography based

⁹ However, that does not mean that these emerging discussions can be classified as optimistic. I hardly agree with Lister (2007, p. 251), who asserts that early approaches have gradually reached a consensus on the fact that photography was not dying; on the contrary, digital technology has paved the way for new and alternative ways of producing photographs. As will be discussed shortly, subsequent literature has also been generally pessimistic, if not to the same extent as early approaches.

largely on manipulation had already existed as two separate realms in conventional photography. However, I will argue that Manovich's critique becomes ineffective because the anxiety surrounding manipulation, which infiltrated early approaches, was mostly tied to an entrenched belief in photographic transparency. It was often closely associated with the indexical character of photography and sometimes regarded as a discursive element that challenges the conventional notions of representation. Bolster and Grusin's (2010, p. 110) observation illuminates this point:

It is not any one digital photograph that is disturbing. We are disturbed because we must now acknowledge that *any* photograph might be digitally altered. Digital technology may succeed-where combination printing and other analog techniques have not succeeded in the past -in shaking our culture's faith in the transparency of the photograph ... If the viewer believes that a photograph offers immediate contact with reality he can be disappointed by a digitally altered photograph. The reason is that the logic of transparency does not accord the status of reality to the medium itself, but instead treats the medium as a mere channel for placing the viewer in contact with the objects represented [emphasis original].

Their observation insinuates that manipulation in the analog and digital eras are radically different and have distinct implications. Thus, Manovich's criticism fails to explicate adequately the anxiety provoked by digital-era manipulation.

With regard to Manovich's seminal criticism, it is important to examine his attempt to answer the question of how digital images operate within their own peculiar semiological dynamics. Manovich is against a clear-cut division between digital and analog images. For him, when we look at concrete digital images and their uses, there are few notable differences from analog images apart from abstract principles. In fact, he even goes so far as to allege that "digital photography simply does not exist" (Manovich, 2006, p. 242). A superficial reading of Manovich in this context would likely reveal that he analyzes photography on a phenomenological level. The minor structural details that cannot be discerned by the beholder

do not have significant implications; as such, digital images retain meanings and functions inherited from analog images. In fact, however, this is not the case. Manovich's claim can be interpreted as an expression of his core observation: the paradox of digital photography is its imitation of the cultural and aesthetic codes of analog photography. Moreover, the film look (i.e., "the soft, grainy, and somewhat blurry appearance of a photographic image") has become fetishized in digital images (p. 242). He prefers the term "photography after photography" rather than the *end of photography* or *post-photography*, both of which were commonly used in earlier accounts. In a more provocative theoretical maneuver, digital imagery, for him, "annihilates photography while solidifying, glorifying and immortalizing the photographic" (p. 241). One could argue that within what Manovich conceptualizes as the paradox of digital photography, the digital image is itself being annihilated. Roberts' (2009, p. 289) observation is particularly illuminating in this context:¹⁰ He regards a central element in digital photography, digital effects, as a space in which "the real is self-consciously 'put together', transforming naturalism's idea of the photograph as a neutral transcription of appearances into its very opposite: the figural (metaphoric) construction of the real, as in painting." Undoubtedly, Manovich's observation two decades ago has proven prophetic today. In the contemporary economy of images, the fetishization of the characteristics of analog mediums is so pervasive that competition among digital mediums and images is determined largely by their ability to imitate analog mediums.

To this point, Batchen (1997) presents the most radical view of the second generation of discussions with respect to the notion of manipulation in digital images. Specifically, he asserts that the photographic practice itself is an act of manipulation. For him, even documentary photographs, generally termed "normal" photographs, are comprised of various technical elements, such as cropping, flash use, exposure preferences, etc., that render

¹⁰ As an interesting observation, the first filter produced for Photoshop was the lens-flare filter. Although the first uses of this filter intended to reproduce images from raw data on computers with a photographic look, it was soon discovered that this filter created depth illusion. Lens-flare, a previously unwanted element in analog photography, has become a desired effect in digital photography as a way to imitate analog images and create depth illusion (Cubitt et al., 2015, pp. 7-8).

the emergent image an artifice. That is, the photographer manufactures an image by representing a three-dimensional object within a two-dimensional image (p. 212). Thus, digital photography upholds the very tradition of depicting an altered version of the world inherited from conventional photography, which suggests that the digital era is an evolution in photography itself rather than a revolution that breaks with photography's tradition. Although Batchen has put forth many insightful analyses in subsequent works, his efforts to define digital photography as a continuation of the tradition of analog photography are hardly convincing. While one could understand Batchen's rejection of earlier approaches' laser focus on the notion of manipulation, his perspective again places this notion into the very center of the analysis in reverse. In other words, the centrality of manipulation prevents us from discerning other elements of digital photography that render it ontologically different from analog photography.¹¹

3. Indexicality and Causality in Digital Photography

One could regard a digital image as having an ontological and causal relationship with the photographic object. However, the scenario is not so simple in the context of digital images. Digital cameras' circuitry and software process sensory information to transform such data into something recognizable, which is then perceived as an image by us. However, let us

¹¹ However, a distanced approach to the notion of manipulation should not be interpreted to mean there is no difference between the use of manipulation in digital and analog photography. The very structure of digital photographic practice that allows the photographer to change images effortlessly is radically different from analog photography technology. Seamless alterations are possible in digital photography because manipulation is composed of the addition or removal of image pixels. What is defined as "pixel revolution" in literature leads to "digital wizardry" (Geuens, 2002, p. 20) that allows for the manipulation of any part of an image without modifying its resolution or having any effect on the surrounding area. Thus, this is something of a perfectly immaterial process that leads to a proper "reproduction." The conception of digital photography as a never-ending and permanently becoming process generally emphasizes this feature. Yet such digital wizardry should be seen as the result of the ontological changes and features of digital photography, not the cause thereof. Its explanatory power is thus quite limited apart from ethical discussions common in photojournalism and documentary photography.

assume that this process generates images that are indistinguishable from analog images. In that case, is the only difference between these two image forms ontological, per se? Or, to put it another way, do ontological differences need to result in phenomenological differences? To parse out an answer to this question, we must first consider how causality and “iconic indexicality,” generally regarded as constitutive notions of photography, operate within the realm of digital images. Willemen’s (2002, p. 20) enlightening observation is a good starting point:

An image of a person in a room need no longer mean that the person was in that particular room, nor that such a room ever existed, nor indeed that such a person ever existed. Photochemical images will continue to be made, but the change in the regime of “believability” will eventually leech all resistance that reality offers to “manipulation” from even those images ... The digitally constructed death mask has lost any trace of the dialectic between the skull and the face, any trace of the dialectic between index and icon.

The causality problem in digital photography has noteworthy implications. The cultural and historical investment in photography’s realism and the notion of photography as evidence of presence has gradually become more problematic, not only in the realm of digital photography but also for analog photography. A digital image acts as a photograph not because it has an ontological and causal relation with a thing (i.e., the photographic object); it does so because, as Rubinstein and Sluis (2013, p. 28) aptly state, the recorded data on the digital sensor is designed algorithmically so as to be perceived as a photograph by humans. As Amelunxen (1996, p. 101) contends, although digital images are still perceived within their representational features, they are no longer regarded as a transfer of a temporal and spatial moment.¹² Another consequence of the problematic nature of causality and indexicality in digital images relates to the semiological meanings of the photograph. Indexicality can be seen as a

¹² Amelunxen prefers the term “analogo-numerical photography” in place of “digital image.”

distinctive feature of photography as long as it is tied to iconicity. As such, threats to causality also undermine the foundations of iconic indexicality.

Later discussions on the algorithmic character of digital images muddy the issue even more. Røssaak (2011, p. 193) makes a clear distinction between analog and algorithmic culture. There is a causal relationship between storage and display in the former; in the latter, however, “the relationship has become not simply arbitrary, but dependent on the new interstice of software.” Røssaak’s observation can be clarified with an example: any medium stored in your computer will be “read” in a considerably different way years later, as the tools and software through which you read them will be much different from those available today. Conceptualized accordingly, the digital medium is nothing but information born of a never-ending and amorphous process.¹³ The modernist notion of medium specificity loses much of its explanatory power in this context. Hayes’ (2008, p. 94) observation frames the very process within a digital sensor as a kind of (re)construction, rather than a process that can be understood within a conventional notion of representation:

Digital cameras already do more computing than you might think ... You might therefore suppose there’s a simple one-to-one mapping between the photosites and the pixels ... But that’s not the way it’s done ... a digital camera is not simply a passive recording device. It doesn’t take pictures; it makes them. The sensor array intercepts a pattern of illumination, just as film used to do, but that’s only the start of the process that creates the image. In existing digital cameras, all the algorithmic wizardry is directed toward making digital pictures look as much as possible like their wet-chemistry forebears.

Hayes’ argument has significant implications for the present discussion. Firstly, Manovich’s argument that digital images are coded on the basis of the “photographic” is confirmed by Hayes with respect to the technical aspects of digital image production. This point can be seen as a humble one;

¹³ The conception of the digital image as information, and its potential, can be understood through a simple Google image search. Reverse image searching has been added to this facility as well. Face recognition technologies operate within the same logic.

it is hardly unexpected that digital photographs follow the representational modes of conventional photography. However, this point has more radical consequences than might first be assumed. Digital images are increasingly coded to produce what I would prefer to call a sense of indexicality that would be a more proper term, for the purposes of the present discussion, than Manovich's "photographic look". The sense of indexicality can be attained through many forms. It can be a formal and aesthetic preference, such as emulating the grainy texture of analog images by processing noise accordingly; or the "memorization" or rendering realistic of smooth, plastic, and overly perfect computer images by adding textures believed to be particular to analog images. Secondly, the very nature of the primary level of photography, comprised of the first encounter of light with the surface of contact (i.e., film or negatives in analog photography and sensor in digital photography) would have significant consequences for the ontological definition of the emergent image. Analog photography depends heavily on the causal relationship between the storage (i.e., the surface of contact) and the image. That is, the relative autonomy of the image is limited as long as the medium specificity is retained, which is mostly true in the case of analog images. However, as Hayes puts very clearly, light beams falling on the digital sensor constitute only the outset or trigger of the image. Given the absence of medium specificity, there is no act of "taking" a photograph; there is no causal or indexical relationship within the process. Because "no permanent traces are left since messages pass in and out of the theatre of digits without presuming continued residence" (Binkley, 1993, p. 97), the digital medium can be seen primarily as a space of abstraction that excludes the materiality needed for the existence of indexicality.¹⁴

Thus, what is at stake at this point is whether or not the surface of contact (i.e., film or digital sensor) perpetuates the very trait of the

¹⁴ I want to warn the reader that the discursive use of *medium* in this context does not exactly intend to equate medium with materiality. The notion of materiality here only implies a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for indexicality. If we were to equate medium with materiality, we would fall into the trap of posing the absurd question, "Where is the exact physical location of the image?" The reader might refer to Doane's (2007) study for a sophisticated discussion on the relationship between indexicality and the concept of medium specificity.

photographic object at the moment of contact. To be precise, a photographic image has referentiality only so long as this perpetuation occurs. Moreover, because the notion of referentiality existentially depends on that of indexicality, this statement inherently involves indexicality. Røssaak's and Hayes' discussions and findings imply that the trait of the photographic object is lost at the moment of contact; instead, it is coded instantly in digital photography (or any image process via computer). In the early approaches to photography beginning with the invention of the medium, the notion of indexicality had been regarded as a distinctive feature of the photographic image in which an essential part of the image was impressed on the surface of contact to leave some trace of it there, much like residual mud on a boot. Photographic realism has been conceived apart from any analogical association to define photography as a "supremely realist medium" (Walton, 1984, p. 251) or "a kind of deposit of the real itself" (Krauss, 1984, p. 110) by virtue of indexicality. Barthes (1981, pp. 5-6) echoes a similar conception in his account of the adherence of the referent in which the photograph "always carries its referent with itself"; "they are glued together."¹⁵

Moreover, the loss of the photographic object at the moment of contact in digital photography brings into question many aesthetic forms of expression and particular artistic positions exalted in conventional photography. Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of a "decisive moment" or the creative imagination that Ansel Adams frequently pointed out as an essential artistry of the photographer is largely challenged within the aesthetic realm of digital photography where "seeing the moment" is no longer a trademark of the photographic act. As Palmer (2015, p. 153) suggests, in contrast to "creative visionary engaged in a poetic encounter with the world" in conventional photography, there is the "deferral of creative decision making" in digital photography that can generate many unexpected forms.

Whether or not digital images have lost any trace of reference has

¹⁵. Barthes makes a clear-cut distinction between the photographic referent and the referents of other systems of representation. For him, the photographic referent is the "optionally real thing to which an image or sign refers but the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens" (Barthes, 1981, p. 76).

been the subject of many discussions in the literature. In an earlier assessment, Robins (1996, p. 44) regards digital images as increasingly independent from meaning and referents in the real world; in this postmodern situation, identity is formed on the basis of the image rather than reality. Batchen (2000, pp. 139-40) insightfully relates the absence of the referent in digital photography to the notion of representation:

Where photography is inscribed by the things it represents, it is possible for digital images to have no origin other than their own computer program. These images may still be indexes of a sort, but their referents are now differential circuits and abstracted data banks of information (information that includes, in most cases, the *look* of the photographic). In other words, digital images are not so much signs of reality as they are signs of signs. They are representations of what is already perceived to be a series of representations.

Batchen contends that digital images cannot be understood within a conventional notion of representation; they have instead come to simulate signs of signs rather than signs of reality. Moreover, his observation parallels Manovich's claim that digital images imitate analog images. Batchen's observation appears even more radical upon his assertion that digital images are already representations of representations.¹⁶ While mimesis is a notion that operates within "real" or ideal realities, simulation is tied to representational realities. The distinction between simulation and mimesis is especially significant in the context of the present discussion. If digital images operate through simulation and the trait of the photographic object is lost at the moment of contact, then there would be no reason to define digital images as photographs. Rather, the distinctive characteristics of the photographic image would effectively vanish.

To sum up, as Rodowick (2001, p. 36) notes, while analog images transform the substance which is isomorphic with the original image, digital images (or virtual representations) depend entirely on numerical

¹⁶ Batchen's (1994, p. 48) statements in another context explicate his position further. For him, digital images undermine the discourse of and belief in the truth claims of analog photography "which have never been 'true' in the first place."

manipulation. Thus, in contrast to the constructive nature of the Euclidian geometry essential in analogical representations, the computational power of Cartesian geometry comes into play in digital images. This observation brings to light the impact of loss or radical change in the nature of materiality on the aesthetics of the image. The status of certificate of evidence of analog images and their causality is conditionally reliant on spatial and temporal isomorphism and associated materiality. The loss of isomorphism and associated materiality operates within virtuality, which thereby transforms the ontology of the image. Furthermore, because the image has neither closure nor an end point, it is exposed to a multitude of changes. The mutant versions of the image are therefore subject to displacement and decontextualization at any point. That is to say, the image becomes in and of itself those altered or mutant versions, such that the notion of originality disappears altogether.

4. Digital Image as a Simulacrum

The notion of simulation leads inevitably to a discussion including Jean Baudrillard. Being a photographer himself, Baudrillard (1996, p. 86) puts forth the following claim about analog photography: “The photo is not an image in real time. It retains the moment of the negative, the suspense of the negative, that slight time-lag which allows the image to exist before the world.” Then, he contrasts it with the computer-generated image in which, for him, “the real has already disappeared.” The conventional photograph “preserves the moment of disappearance” and “charm of the real, like that of a previous life.” The distinction between digital and analog images relates in fact to images of “reality” and images of self-sufficient hyperreality in which images appear to be “truer than true” or “realer than real” (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 27). Within this system, an image no longer has an “umbilical cord,” to borrow Barthes’ metaphor (1981, p. 81), which links the photographic object to the gaze; rather, it loses this connection with the photographic object within and through algorithmic codes. In this context, the digital image can thus be perceived as belonging to the third order of simulacra in Baudrillard’s (1994, p. 6) famous systematization wherein the

image “has no relation to any reality” and instead becomes “its own simulacrum.”

As Vasselau (2015, p. 174) argues, simulation models do not imitate the natural world; they undermine a naturalized metaphysical perspective and operate to produce a world-order comprised of quantifiable and manipulative results.¹⁷ I would contend that within this new system of reality, the digital image has two related realms of aesthetic expression: it can be seen either as a form of expression that imitates the analog and extols the photographic, to use Manovich’s formulation explained earlier, or as a form that operates essentially through manipulation which involves perfecting the real through its fabrication (Frosch, 2003, p. 177). Although these two processes are interrelated, the latter, I believe, seems to have significant implications for the future of digital images, in which they will no longer be regarded as merely analog image simulations but as generating new aesthetic modes of expression that can only be understood within terms particular to virtuality.

Returning to the issue of referentiality in digital images, there remains a central question of whether or not the sheer absence of referentiality leads to the disappearance of indexicality. Nöth (2007) rejects a categorical distinction between digital images and conventional photographic images on the basis of the absence of referentiality, in light of various cases in conventional photography in which it is almost impossible to detect any referent at all (2007, pp. 98-102).¹⁸ That is, the presence of the referent cannot be a necessary and sufficient condition of conventional photography. However, as a critical point, Nöth claims that although these images have no referent, they do retain the feature of indexicality in contrast to digital images with no indexicality. He then categorizes digital images

¹⁷ Vasselau’s discussion is indeed a novel attempt to explain alternative aesthetic modes of expression that digital images may generate in the future by using the notion of translucency. Because this concept is beyond the scope of the present article, I chose instead to refer to this aspect of his work here to direct readers who are interested in the issue.

¹⁸ Nöth enumerates various forms in conventional photography with no referent, which, for instance, include those in which the self is negated in a paradoxical self-portrait (he gives the example of Hippolyte Bayard’s famous work *Self-portrait of a Drowned Man* dated 1839).

and non-referential conventional photographs using Jäger's concepts thusly: Digital images are in the category of "Concrete Photography", which generates its own images without any abstraction, while non-referential conventional images fall under the category of "Abstract Photography", which abstracts from the referent (Jäger, 2003, p. 178, quoted in Nöth, 2007, p. 103). Thus, in the post-photographic era in which there is an undeniable predominance of digital images, the distinctive characteristics of these images cannot be defined by non-referentiality but rather by the radical change within their nature. In a decisive move, Nöth regards these images as iconic in the strictest sense of the word. Moreover, Nöth claims that these "genuine icons" do not operate in a conventional sense of mimesis; they refer to nothing "but its own simple visual qualities of form, luminosity, contrast, or texture" (p. 104).

5. Conclusion

The disappearance of referentiality seems to occur at the moment of contact, the first instance of the photographic act. This fact marks, I will argue, the end of the conventional difference between memory images and images to be seen. In contrast to conventional photographic images, digital images do not mask themselves as things in the past; they do not replace memory images. In other words, because they are devoid of materiality and referentiality, they refer to nothing but the images themselves. They thereby acquire the characteristics of intertextuality and conceptuality. To use Nöth's terminology, the things on the surface of digital images as genuine icons never cease to exist because they have never existed outside this surface at all. The essential characteristic of photography, making its own object more apparent than itself, dissolves in the absence of indexicality. As such, if we reverse Barthes' (1981, p. 6) famous definition,¹⁹ a digital image is perfectly visible; it is it that we see.

I will attempt to contribute to present discussions regarding truth claims in photography as well as photographic realism in early and recent

¹⁹ "A photograph is always invisible; it is not it that we see."

digital photography literature in light of Maynard's (1983, p. 156) two different representational modes or types of authenticity. Maynard distinguishes between visual descriptions and manifestations that imply two modes of authenticity, the former of which refers to hand-made pictures and the latter to photographs. Although the first type is related to information or content, the second depends on causality. He cites the Shroud of Turin to exemplify the notion of manifestation; the shroud has a causal relationship with the "object" of which it carries the marks. Thus, for him, photographs are at once visual descriptions of their subjects and manifestations of what they depict. He asserts that these two characteristics are inherently conflictual: a symptom of a disease is the manifestation of that disease, not the image of it. In this example, the idea of a picture that is both the manifestation and visual description of a disease is confusing and nigh impossible. Maynard is therefore echoing the conventional distinction between icon and index. Moreover, as Goosken (2011, pp. 116-17) contends, Maynard's distinction implies two types of photographic realism: epistemological and ontological. The early definitions of photography as a mirror or reflection of reality depend in part on epistemological realism, in which what Maynard conceptualizes as information or content is of utmost concern. However, ontological realism speaks to the causal relationship between a photograph and its subject, with the photograph being the causal consequence of this relation. Both epistemological and ontological realism regard photography as having a direct relationship to reality. However, while epistemological realism defines this relationship on the basis of the notion of reflection, ontological realism focuses on causality.

Digital photography does not operate through ontological realism; that is, what it promises to depict as real has nothing to do with the ontological. As a concrete photography, to use Jäger's concept, or a genuine icon, to borrow Nöth's term, digital photography refers to nothing other than its own visual qualities. Digital images are also paradoxical aesthetically due to being detached from the referent ontologically: although they operate primarily through the loss of the referent at the moment of contact, they also imitate a modern representational form that depends largely on referentiality and medium specificity. While digital images pursue a notion of a so-called

“perfect image” that beholds and shows everything, they also use aesthetic forms, such as textures and imperfections, that are traditionally unique to analog images. To examine this paradox from a broader perspective, digital images can be considered photographic images rather than photographs, a difference that is substantiated by self-reference and a sense of postmodern nostalgia for the modern. This sense of nostalgia does not mourn for the referent lost at the very beginning of the photographic act, but for the representation of the referent itself in conventional photography.

The conception of digital images regarded here as genuine icons calls into question the distinction between medium and image. Within the notion of indexicality, there are two possible views on the relationship between these ideas: medium can be thought of as a surface “carrying” the image itself or, alternatively, image can be conceived as a thing that replaces the medium; it becomes the medium itself. However, while the medium already exists within its materiality, the image gains the virtue of materiality only in conjunction with the medium. Sartre (2012, pp. 5-6) once noted that existence-as-imaged is a mode of being that is exceptionally hard to comprehend because we tend to think of all modes of existence in terms of physical existence, a deep-rooted habit that proves difficult to break. If we simplify the complexity of Sartre’s account and adapt it for our purposes, if we think of the notion of image without holding any preconceived notions about it, then we can begin to attribute the very features of the imaged thing to the image to bear in mind two different realms: one of the imaged thing and another of the image itself. This is where the image ceases to be an imaged thing but becomes an object that exists in the same way that the object does.²⁰ Sartre (2004, p. 43) calls this tendency to consider two realms the “illusion of immanence”, wherein we see a respective realm of things and images and then place images on level ground with things, both of which have the same mode of existence.

At this point, we can return to the distinction between medium and image in Sartre’s terms. Within the conceptual framework of indexicality, the image can disappear in the “transfer” of the photographic object only if

²⁰ Sartre (2012, p. 6) calls this way of thinking as “naïve metaphysics of the image.”

it is tied to a sort of materiality. However, if we assume impartibility of medium and image for a moment, then the indexicality of this medium-image is conceivable within materiality. Paradoxically, however, this notion of medium-image can only be possible within the absence of materiality, or as long as the image is regarded as a “thing.” Can we continue to talk about the notion of image in its conventional sense given this perspective? I think not. The digital image as a “genuine icon”, which shows nothing but itself (or, in other words, becomes a “thing” in itself), is clearly a perfect example of the situation in which what Sartre calls the “illusion of immanence” ideally occurs. This is especially true in the case of the absence of indexicality where there is no material ground (read as “medium”) for the image. When the digital image is conceived as a simulacra of a “modern” notion of the referent, it becomes its own reality; it is essentially a “thing” that refers to nothing but itself.

The lens and the camera are indispensable to and inextricable parts of the transfer process in analog photography. In digital images, although these tools seem to fulfill the same functions as in analog photography, the photographic process ends just after what I have identified in the present discussion as the moment of contact. The data transferred to the digital sensor has nothing in it that is particular to the medium at hand; rather, this data carries the same ontological definition no matter the outcome (i.e., sound, music, visual image, text, etc.). Thus, the trace of the referent is lost after the very brief moment of the actual photographic act. The notion of reality refers exclusively to the self-reference of the digitalized data and a theoretically infinite chain of references. However, the highlighted difference between analog and digital photography does not amount to the photographic act being an inherently realistic and neutral process safe from ideology in which the objects in front of the camera are truthfully brought to the photographic surface without any intermediaries. The distinction only means that the photograph is a certificate of presence of a thing and carries traces of it, rather than encapsulating a specific association between the photographic representation and truth or a claim that indexicality reflects or reversely distorts reality. Relatedly, the presence of referentiality does not lend itself to the fact that a sort of immediacy between the photograph and

its object made possible through the notion of indexicality entails any kind of inference about the nature of reality or truth appearing through the image. If we are supposed to decide whether or not digital images can be regarded as photographs (although it is quite problematic to pose the question in this way), we can content ourselves by claiming that digital images have lost some distinctive characteristics of photographic images, a statement which renders exceptionally challenging the task of determining if they are in fact photographs.

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On the Plurality of the Arts

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ABSTRACT. The paper discusses the significance of the fact that art exists in a plurality of art forms and genres. For art production as well as for the experience, the understanding and the evaluation of art works it is important to place them in the context of a specific art form and to have the peculiarities of its material, techniques and conventions in view. Art works cannot be appreciated appropriately if they are taken either only in their singularity or as manifestations of art in general – and this is still the case for contemporary art after the (post-)modern transgression of many artistic rules and borders. However, it is important to conceive of the art forms in the right way: Not in an essentialist manner, as something which can be defined once and for all and has determinable properties and fixed limits. Instead, art forms should rather be seen as traditions. They are multifaceted and dynamic practices of the actualization, negotiation and reconfiguration of inherited conventions, standards, problems and understandings.

1. Introduction

When we want to tell friends or colleagues about a special or valuable encounter we had with art, in order to recommend something, or to discuss it, we never just tell them ‘I recently came across this artwork, I have to tell you about...’ but we usually specify what kind of artwork it was. We either want to talk about a novel we read, or a movie we watched, about a performance or a piece of music. And this is because we are never confronted with art works as such, but always with art works that belong to an art form, a genre or a tradition. Art exists and appears in a plurality of forms, and I want to discuss in this paper for what reasons and in which respects it is important to take this plurality of the art forms into account, in order to reach an appropriate philosophical understanding of the functions, the value and the dynamics of art.

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In the first two sections of the paper I want to point out that we miss out on substantial aspects of art, when we do not have the level of the art forms in (theoretical) view (but either mainly the level of the concept of art in general, or that of the individual artworks); in the third section I want to underline the importance of conceiving of the art forms and their differences in the right way, since there have been some problematic accounts in the history of art theory on the different arts and their respective media.

2. Art Forms and Interpretation

The form or genre of an art work plays a major role in its reception and appreciation. We cannot theoretically understand the processes of the experience, the interpretation and the evaluation of art, if we do not take the level of the different arts into account. This is a lesson that results from the account of aesthetic contextualism as brought forward for example by Kendall Walton and Arthur Danto. The basic claim of contextualism is, that an art work is ontologically not just the sum of the empirical perceptible properties of an artefact, but that artworks consist also of relational properties that are determined by its historical, cultural and practical context. The proper experience of an artwork is therefore not a more or less unmediated sense-perception, but it is dependent on an interpretational approach. Which properties and features an artwork consists of must be determined in the course of an interpretation: It has to be decided, on the one hand, which of the empirical properties of the artifactual object (through which the artwork is realized) also belong to the work of art – since some of the properties of the artifact (as for example: the weight of a painting) are not part of the artwork. On the other hand, the artwork possesses properties that the mere perceptual object does not possess (for example, that it is a parody of an older work). A work cannot be properly experienced and evaluated outside of an interpretational approach because without it, it remains unclear, what the object of the experience is in the first place. It is only the interpretation that brings into view the constitutive elements of the artwork and that also means: it's artistic and aesthetic properties.

Kendall Walton in his influential 1970 article ‘Categories of Art’ pointed out, that the categories and concepts of the different art forms and genres are essential aspects of a work’s relevant context. It is of major importance for the (determination) of the identity, the features and the content of a work, to which art form it belongs. Even perceptually indiscernible objects can have different artistic and aesthetic properties and therefore different content and value, depending on which categories of art we apply in our interpretation of them. For only with reference to a category can we tell, which of the works’ properties are – according to Walton’s distinction – standard, which are variable, and which are non-standard. Standard features are the features which are basic or defining features of an art form – for example the flatness of a painting – variable are the features which constitute a specific art work of that art form – the specific shapes and colours of a painting – and contra-standard features do not typically belong to that art form at all – for example that the shapes of the picture are in motion.² So only in the course of the application of a category or for that matter of several categories – for example: painting, renaissance painting and still life – can we perceive what properties a work has, which artistic decisions have been made, how original it is and so on. Without seeing a work in relation to art forms and genres we cannot get to grips with a work, we do not know how to perceive and how to evaluate it.

This account is close to the perspective of Hermeneutics and to the German tradition of reader-response criticism, two traditions which also conceive of artworks as interpretable objects, that only come to life through the reactions and readings in the course of the reception process. Art works can be seen as moves in an ongoing game of art production and art reception. An art work stands in a historical cultural context in which it addresses an audience with specific expectations, patterns of interpretation and standards of evaluation. Art works can endorse or subvert the preexisting standards and thus stabilize or change the context for the production of future artworks. In this perspective the relevant artistic and aesthetic features of an artwork are also determined against the backdrop of

² Cf. Walton 1970, section II.

a context of historical and cultural conventions und norms. Whether a work is correctly seen as affirmative or subversive, as original or epigonic, as provocative or ironic depends on the respective expectations and preconceptions that are in place and on the way a specific work deals with them. And these expectations are not or at least not only expectations concerning art (as such) but expectations concerning specific art forms and genres. This is the case because the context of expectations and preconceptions is established and shaped by former encounters with works of the respective art forms and genres.

3. Art Forms and Evaluation

The reference to the different art forms and genres is not only important for the understanding of the processes of interpretation and appreciation but also for a philosophical reflection on the value of art. I think that an investigation into the aspects and sources of the value of the practices of art has been often passed over in the philosophy of art of the last half century. This was partly due to a predominant engagement with the project of giving a definition of the concept of art. The innovations of the avant-garde and postmodern art and the emergence of new art forms and styles like abstractionism, conceptual art, performance, installation art and appropriation art rendered some traditional definitions of art, that drew on aspects like beauty, sense perception, skill or representation obsolete. Because of the larger variety of artworks and their properties (and also: because of the lack of certain properties) it became more and more complicated to identify the properties, that all artworks share, which pushed theory in more abstract realms of higher order relational properties.

But in order to get the aspect of value into view, it seems to be necessary to turn (also) to some features of works and practices that might not be shared by all and every art. It might be the case that we find the relevant potentials and functions of art in relations and processes that apply not universally, but that are characteristic for certain art forms and art practices. Therefor it can be a fruitful endeavor to analyze the different art forms with respect to the question, how they specifically engage us, what

they do to and with us, and what kinds of experience they evoke. Different arts address different aspects of our cognitive, emotional and corporeal being, and they can therefore address and grapple with different dimensions that are of fundamental significance for our everyday being-in-the-world. To understand the value (or the values) of art one has to analyze the ways in which the practices of art are correlated with other non-artistic social and cultural practices. In this respect (of the dimensions of our being-in-the-world) the different arts seem to have various ‘centres of gravity’: Narrative arts or the structure of narrativity are for example suitable to address us as intentional agents who have to make decisions and to evaluate situations, alternative courses of action and the behaviour of others. It is easy for narrative art to thematize, represent or invent complex constellations of characters and situations of acting, intending and decision-making and thereby to make explicit or transform the usual beliefs, dispositions and normative orientations that belong to our everyday perspective as agents. And this is the case, because narratives already play a major role in our self-conceptions, our planning and our engagement with others. In the same way we can point out other ‘centres of gravity’ for the other art forms or media. Music seems to be more bound up with emotion, pictures with ways of perceiving the world, dance with our embodied being in the world, with space, movements and intersubjective (or intercorporeal) relationships and so on. Thus different arts and art works let us experience different things; and they also let us experience ourselves in different ways. We therefore find the facets and sources of the value of art, when we analyze in which dimension or aspect of our being we are addressed by different arts and works, and how the engagement with these works leads to insightful, constitutive, transformative or subversive experiences with regard to the respective dimension.

4. The Dynamics of Art Forms

However, the fact that the different arts and media are characteristically bound up with typical sorts of engagement and experience should not lead to a definitional or essentialistic account of the different arts and media as we

can find it for example in Lessing's 'Laokoon' or Clement Greenberg's plea for a 'Newer Laocoon' (with respect to modernist art). As I said above it is important to take a look at the differences of the arts with respect to what they can do with and for us, and that means to consider the characteristic structures, powers and potentials of different art forms. But this can be done only through a retrospective survey of the forms and achievements as we can find them in the variety of the existing works of an art form. We can only analyze what has been realized within an art form *so far* – but this does not supply us with sufficient evidence or reasons to determine once and for all the limits of an art form or medium, which explicitly is the task that Lessing sets himself. Lessing and in a similar way Greenberg want to point out the essential features of the media and materials of the arts and with this determine the limits of what can be done within an art form. In this perspective an art form or a medium is presented as an inventory of specific materials, forms and techniques which can be applied, and which determine what is possible and what is impossible to achieve in the medium. This goes along with a normative claim and an ideology of purity. Art works are according to Greenberg supposed to stick to the means and possibilities of their own medium to succeed. If they try to realize something, which is assigned to the realm of possibility of a different art form, they tend to fail and produce something of minor value. In this sense Greenberg wants to show in his art-historical analyses how problematic the mixture and confusion of the tasks, forms and contents of the different art forms have been throughout the centuries. He sees it as a basic problem of many art movements in history that they aspire to other art forms. In this case an art form hides its own medial basis, or, to put it differently, it just uses it to achieve a result that is typical for another art form. By 'pretending' to be something else, Greenberg suggests, an art form loses its substance and relevancy. This is why he praises the development of modernist art as a process of an increasing distinction and purification of the different art forms. According to Greenberg, in the collages of Picasso or in the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock the art form of painting got rid of all the distorting and distracting literary, sculptural or musical tendencies and influences that it had acquired in the past. Thus modernist art focused

(again) on what made it special – on the characteristics of its own medium.³ In its emphasis on flatness as its main characteristic, painting finally came to itself, it made explicit, what has to be seen as its essence.

Greenberg's notion of medium-specificity has often been criticized and rightly so, for his conceptions of art forms and media are too narrow and too static. There is no conclusive definition of the essence of an art form, and it is not the main task of an art form to self-reflectively deal with its medial condition, nor is this medial essence the main normative standard for the evaluation of single works. That does not mean that Greenberg does not correctly describe an important thread in modernist art: the reflexive investigation of medium and means has in fact been a dominant interest of modernism, and it was quite correct to evaluate the respective works with regard to their achievement in exploring their own condition. Greenberg's mistake was to take what is only one specific moment and tendency in the historical development of an art form among others as something that is defining and conclusive.

Instead of such an essentialist and static notion of the art forms we need a more open conception that is able to grasp on the one hand the complexity and the historical dynamics of an art form and on the other the relationships and exchanges with other art forms. Such more dynamic notions of art forms and media have been brought forward for example by Adorno and by Dewey and recently as well by Georg Bertram and Daniel Feige.⁴ Media and art forms are in that perspective not seen as determined inventories of forms, topics and techniques but they are historic and transformational processes. Their internal dynamic stems from a specific relationship between an art form as general category and the individual artworks as concrete realizations of that art form. Artworks are not just tokens of the type of their art form, and there is not a fixed and explicit set of criteria according to which an object can be subsumed under the class of an art form. The tradition of an art form builds the basis and the backdrop

³ Accordingly he states: “[P]urism is the terminus of a salutary reaction against the mistakes of painting and sculpture in the past several centuries which were due to a confusion.” (Greenberg 1986 [1940], p. 23.)

⁴ Cf. Adorno 1979 & 1997, Dewey 1980 [1934], Bertram 2014 and Feige 2015.

for the production of future artworks, but it does not determine what a new art work will look like and what it can do. A new work can always be original and surprising – it can always transform or modify the characteristics of an art form.⁵ Art forms and artworks stand in a dialectical relationship. Art works can only be produced and understood on the basis of the given materials, conventions and expectation that characterize a specific art form – but they are also forces that transform and reorganize this structure.

Because of this features we can say, that the arts have the form of traditions as conceptualized by Hans-Georg Gadamer or by Alasdair MacIntyre.⁶ Art forms receive their elements as a kind of heritage, which is then applied in new and different ways by the individual works. In this perspective every (or at least every strong) artwork can be seen as a specific contribution or statement in an ongoing process of negotiation regarding the always open questions, what it means to be a work of this peculiar art form, how this art form should be continued and what the essential features, tasks and standards of this art form are. In a living tradition we can expect no unity or consensus regarding such questions, there is always a variety of different suggestions, in which the inherited elements and potentials are selected, evaluated and actualized in a different manner.⁷

This perspective fits very well with Adorno's historic conception of material. The material of the arts is according to him not some neutral and unhistorical empirical stuff as for example colour for the art form of painting, sound for music, or stone, glass and steel for architecture. A material is always already shaped by the former realizations within an art form and it is therefore charged with history, it is a specific constellation of relations of colour or of sound. A material can be seen as the sediment of forms, relations and techniques as actualized in the former works of an art

⁵ Dewey states accordingly: "[T]he exact limits of the efficacy of any medium cannot be determined by any *a priori* rule, and [...] every great initiator in art breaks down some barrier that had previously supposed to be inherent." (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 235)

⁶ Cf. Gadamer 1990 [1960] and MacIntyre 1981, esp. chp. 15. Cf. for the conception of art forms as traditions also Feige 2014.

⁷ MacIntyre very convincingly stresses, more than Gadamer does, the importance of conflict and controversy within a tradition.

form and as such it confronts the artist with specific conventions, tensions, obstacles and tasks, which he has to take into account and to work on in his own production. Artistic production is then the process of reshaping and further determining an already determined and shaped material. This perspective can be also complemented with a conception of the historicity of the discourse on art and art forms. The historic transformation of the art forms is essentially accompanied by an interpretative and evaluating discourse that is also in a state of flux. Ensuing from the individual artworks the critical discourse explicitly considers how to understand and to assess them appropriately. In this many-voiced critical discourse is also negotiated, what the features and the standards of a specific art form are – and what the right concepts and theories to describe them.

Such a dynamic conception of art forms and media and the discourse on them is much more suitable for the description and the understanding of the various relationships between the different arts than Greenberg's static and essentialistic conception. The phenomena of overlap, mixture, exchange and influence among the different arts are not correctly described as mere distractions from the essential properties or as normatively dubious. It belongs to the condition of the art forms that they are part of a complex constellation of interplay between a multiplicity of arts. Firstly, art forms as traditions are for themselves not defined by one medial or structural feature: They are not either narrative or representational or musical. Pictures and music can be narrative, novels and poems have musical qualities; the phenomena of ekphrasis and concrete poetry show the pictorial potentials of literature and so on. As (re-)actualizations of traditional elements and forms, artworks can focus and stress some of these features and can put them into new constellations. Artworks can in this way investigate the different aspects and potentials of the complexity of an art form and explore at the same time the relationships, tensions, similarities or differences with the other arts. Furthermore, artworks of different art forms influence each other. There can be achievements in one art, that leads to new interests and tendencies in another. And there is also an inter-artistic complexity in our discourse on art: not only do we use a lot of (more or less) metaphoric terminology in which we transfer categories from one art form or one aspect

of experience to another but also the acquaintance with and the experience of some artworks can change our approach to both: new artworks of the same kind but works of other art forms and genres. We sometimes see or interpret artworks under the impression or in the light of artworks of another art, and thereby find aspects of form or significance that we otherwise would not have recognized. The relationships of and the exchanges between the artforms and their discourses are therefore central aspects for the understanding of the practices, the dynamics and the achievements of art.

And this is still true for the contemporary state of art, which has been called by Rosalind Krauss and others, the post-medium condition.⁸ Because in Modernism and Postmodernism nearly every border between the different arts and between art and life has been crossed, and every limit of a single medium and art form has been transgressed and left behind, we are according to this position in a state of ‘Nominalism’ in which the categories and conventions of the arts do not play a substantial role anymore. Artworks therefore should be seen really as just that, works of art in general, which cannot and should not be assigned to a specific form or tradition anymore.⁹ I think this diagnosis of a state of nominalism is at least partly a consequence of a too narrow – namely the Greenbergian – conception of art form and medium. A lot of contemporary works can certainly be interpreted as a movement away from the techniques and conventions of the established art forms, but only in the light of a narrow and static conception of art form are we inclined to interpret this movement as a complete overcoming and distancing from the art forms. A more complex and dynamic conception of art forms gives us more leeway to see these works as also being connected and in continuity with the traditions of the art forms.

Although it has to be admitted that the landscape of art has become increasingly diverse and complex, and although in some cases it is hardly possible to tell, to what kind of art an object belongs, and some works even evoke and thematize the problems and pitfalls of such a categorization, it is nevertheless necessary to draw on the traditions of the art forms to

⁸ Cf. Krauss 1999.

⁹ Cf. On this discussion Rebenich 2003 and 2015, esp. chp. 3, and also de Duve 1998.

determine, which ways of interpreting, experiencing and evaluating are possible and appropriate. Also in contemporary art, the different forms, moves and features of art obtain their significance from their relation with the historical development; and the process of reception and appreciation would be uprooted and without orientation without reference to traditional art forms and artworks.

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Aesthetics and Ethics: On the Power of Aesthetic Features

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ABSTRACT. The relation between ethical and aesthetic values is one of the most prominent debates within analytic aesthetics. Yet, the debate has so far focused mainly on the extent to which the ethical dispositions expressed by a given work can ultimately affect its aesthetic value, reception, and ensuing appraisal. In this paper, I am interested in the reverse question. My goal is to examine how aesthetic features and stylistic choices, broadly construed, can affect the reception, understanding, and even further investigation and assessment of the ethical content of a work. Informed by phenomenological research, my analysis will touch upon narrative and non-narrative works, while also reflecting on the contribution that can be derived from studies in everyday aesthetics. The way we see and perceive ethics is of crucial importance and it is likely to affect our understanding of ethics and our willingness to engage in the ethical, social, and political climate that characterizes our current global community.

1. Introduction

The relation between ethical and aesthetic values is one of the most prominent debates within analytic aesthetics. Most recently, the attention has turned to the way in which the ethical dispositions expressed by a work affect its aesthetic assessment. Positions such as ethicism, as defended by Berys Gaut,² moderate autonomism, as in the version advocated by James

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² Berys Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art," in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. Jerrold Levinson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182-203 and Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Anderson and Jeffrey Dean,³ moderate moralism, Noël Carroll's⁴ milder version of ethicism, and cognitive immoralism, Matthew Kieran's⁵ response to ethicism, all gauge the extent to which ethical values and the ethical dispositions expressed by a given work (what Gaut defines as the "merited response" and Carroll the "uptake" of a work) can ultimately affect its aesthetic value, reception, and ensuing appraisal.

While favoring, among these positions, a moderate moralist approach, I am here interested in a different issue, which, while being historically prior to the debate mentioned above, is hardly analyzed in connection to it. I am interested, to clarify, in examining the extent to which aesthetic representations and stylistic choices can affect the reception, understanding, and even further investigation and assessment of the ethical content of a work. To what extent are aesthetic properties to affect our moral compass?

There have been, needless to say, multiple answers to this question. In this paper, I will consider two of the most prominent. The first, which applies mostly to literary and filmic works, is to rely on narrative and on narrative's ability to express a given disposition and to secure the audience's response. The second proposes instead an argument for the aesthetic value of artworks based on their ability to trigger the imagination, an ability that further deepens our ethical understanding. These are both popular and promising strategies and I am sympathetic to both. However, as I aim to show, they are not sufficiently equipped to fully appreciate the importance of aesthetic features, and this especially when seen alongside the aforementioned debate on ethicism (in its stronger or more moderate varieties).

An different solution, which I will contemplate in this paper, is to research alternative modalities through which artworks can engage our

³ James Anderson and Jeffrey Dean, "Moderate Autonomism," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 38 No. 2, April 1998: 150-166.

⁴ Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July 1996: 223-238; Noël Carroll, "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," *Ethics*, Vol. 110, No. 2 (January 2000): 350-287.

⁵ Matthew Kieran, "Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Autumn, 1996): 337-351.

imagination, modalities that, while harder to pin down, are based on a more openly phenomenological and experience-based account of aesthetics. For, as I will argue, widening the range of aesthetic features that have the potential to affect moral evaluations is likely, in certain cases, to show how moral values may not only be elucidated by art, but that they can, more strongly, be seen as *dependent* on their aesthetic rendition. Differently put, it can be argued that, in some cases, the aesthetic rendition of a work can alter our moral spectrum by both introducing new perspectives, and, more contentiously, by fundamentally altering accepted moral standards.

I will begin by considering the emphasis given to narrative in relation to the merited response or uptake of a work and further compare such approach with the notion of imaginative understanding as the leading disclaimer for the artistic status of a work and as what ultimately prompts moral reflection. While these are valid and relevant ways of characterizing the realm of the aesthetic, they are also prone to objections. It is in light of these objections that I will further develop my argument for what I take to be the prominent role of aesthetics in the understanding, but also in the questioning, and shaping, of moral values.

2. Morality and Art

It is important, before introducing my argument, to consider some of the ways in which aesthetic features, broadly construed, have been singled out for their ability to interact and relate to the ethical content of a work. More narrowly, I would like to focus on two solutions: the first is the attention, rather frequent in studies of literature and moving pictures, given to narrative; the second is the importance given to the ability of art to trigger the imagination, a feature that is further connected to the belief in “aesthetic cognitivism” which defends the idea according to which some cognitive virtues of a work count as aesthetic virtues.

Narratives, and the way in which a narrative is structured, are essential to the aesthetic value of a work and to its assessment. For what matters about such a structure is, importantly, not only the way in which it connects together different events and episodes, a topic on which much has

been written, but how those connections generate a response in the audience. Narratives elicit expectations, and, by doing so, they command specific responses to the audience, responses that resonate emotionally, but that can also, as in the case of Carroll and Gaut's accounts, direct our moral dispositions and expectations.

While Carroll and Gaut do not claim, explicitly, that their conclusions apply exclusively to narrative works, it is undeniable that narrative works best fit their models. In Gaut's ethicism, which claims that "if a work manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically defective, and if a work manifests ethically commendable attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically meritorious"⁶ the crucial component is the emphasis not on ethically meritorious or commendable features *per se*, but on the attitudes that are being expressed. And this is, essentially, what ties his position to narrative works. For narratives, as I have mentioned, are an excellent way of prescribing attitudes: narratives are responsible for the ordering of events, for their relative prominence, but also for the way in which cognitive responses are orchestrated in the work. Empathic and sympathetic responses to characters in narrative fictions, for example, are largely shaped by the way in which they are introduced by the narrative and they are intimately connected to evaluative processes among which is the endorsement, or rejection, of moral attitudes.

Before assessing whether narrative is indeed the aesthetic feature of a work that more aptly relates to a work's ability to express moral message, it is worth to briefly introduce the second solution sketched above. For the role of aesthetics in the discussion on the relation between ethical and aesthetic values is also, frequently, framed within an overall tendency toward aesthetic cognitivism. Broadly, aesthetic cognitivism defends the ability of art to convey knowledge, a claim that, while controversial, has been endorsed by several of the main contributors to the debate on the relation between aesthetics and ethics. Yet, despite such consensus, there is no unanimous agreement on *how* artworks convey knowledge. Responses abound. Think, for example, of Martha Nussbaum's notorious argument for

⁶ Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art," 182.

the role of emotions and imagination in delivering ethical knowledge;⁷ of Noël Carroll's claim that literary works can trigger our imagination by acting as thought experiments,⁸ and, more recently of Matthew Kieran's defense of cognitive immoralism⁹ which is grounded in the ability of artworks to deepen our moral knowledge by promoting imaginative understanding.¹⁰

Are these two solutions, the ability of narrative to prompt moral evaluation and the belief in the capacity of art to trigger our imaginative responses, enough to describe the influence of aesthetic features in the debate on the relation between ethics and aesthetics? Not quite. In fact, while not incorrect, both are guilty, in different ways, of underestimating the power that such features can at times have on moral understanding.

A first set of objections comes from the limitations that are inherent to the rather frequent, if not almost exclusive, reliance on narrative works. For not only moral attitudes can be communicated by means other than narrative, but also because not all narratives, as Gaut himself has observed, feature the strong intentionalism that is behind both ethicism and Carroll's milder position, moderate moralism. In both accounts, narrative works mandate certain responses: they reflect an intention – the intention, expressed by the author, that the audience will respond to the work in a given way – an intention that is then understood and processed by the audience. But is intentionalism, and its connection to how we respond to narrative works, truly warranted? While I am not inclined to defend a

⁷ Martha Nussbaum, "Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Literature and the Moral Imagination," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 155.

⁸ Noël Carroll, "The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 60th Anniversary Issue (Winter, 2002), pp. 3-26.

⁹ Matthew Kieran, "Art, Morality, and Ethics: On the (Im)moral Character of Art-Works and the Inter-Relations to Artistic Value," *Philosophy Compass* 1/2 (2006), pp. 129-143.

¹⁰ Following this intuition, Kieran argues for a more ambitious thesis, namely that a work soliciting immoral attitudes may not necessarily be aesthetically flawed; on the contrary, it may allow us to explore a wider spectrum of moral responses and attitudes, thus providing the audience with a more nuanced and critical understanding of the relevance of ethical values.

complete abandonment of intentionality à la Roland Barthes,¹¹ it is not impossible to question its pivotal role. To begin with, authorial intentions are not always visible or clear and they need to be gauged in tandem with the historical and, broadly, cultural milieu to which they belong. It is also plausible that, at times, the author may decide to let the audience partly take over the interpretation of a work by, for instance, adopting an ambiguous ending or by relying on narrative structures that are particularly popular nowadays, such as puzzle narratives, or what Thomas Elsaesser¹² has defined as mind-game films. Therefore, while it is incorrect to radically depart from the original intention of a work, it would be equally incorrect to reify that intention.

Moreover, a strong reliance on intentionality may even end up “impoverishing” the nature of our ethical responses to artworks, responses that cannot always be reduced to a clear cut merited response mechanism. I will return on this point in the next section.

The second strategy introduced, namely to rely on the ability of a work to stimulate our imagination, defends a more rounded understanding of the role played by art in eliciting ethical reflection and allows for a more elastic understanding of the cognitive effects that can accompany the reception and assessment of an artwork. Yet, even in this case we can contemplate a couple of objections.

A first difficulty is that it is sometimes problematic to understand what is implied by imaginative understanding. A well-known response, advocated by Kendall Walton,¹³ relates imaginative understanding to

¹¹ Barthes, Roland. (1977). *Image – Music – Text*. New York: Noonday Press.

¹² Thomas Elsaesser, “The Mind-Game Film,” in *Puzzle Films. Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, ed. Warren Buckland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 14.

¹³ Kieran seems to rely, in his connotation of the imagination, on Kendall Walton’s mechanism of make-believe in relation to fictional works (Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundation of Representational Arts* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009); this being the case, it is then safe to assume that, when confronted with scenarios that are likely to entice ethical reflection, imaginative understanding amounts to make-believing, or at least entertaining, the ethical viewpoints expressed by a work. Yet, imagination, to this extent, is characterized exclusively as a make-believe activity and as the ability to contemplate different viewpoints.

the mechanism of make-believe that facilitates the audience's engagement with fictional works. However, this solution is too broad. For if imagination is characterized exclusively as a make-believe activity and as the ability to, in turn, contemplate different viewpoints, then it is hard to see it as a unique feature of art, for two intertwined reasons. On the one hand, the ability to contemplate different scenarios does not belong exclusively to the arts; imagining is, after all, a cognitive activity that belongs to our everyday life, one that, despite being in the service of learning, remains, when left uncharacterized, a bit bland.

On the other hand, and more importantly, Walton's account does not explain how we move from exercising our imagination to reaching an evaluation of the work – and, specifically, a moral evaluation. The problem, differently put, is that there seems to be a gap between our ability to imagine and our ability to form the kind of moral evaluations that will in turn affect the assessment of a work.

Alternative solutions to what is implied by imaginative understanding present different problems. Carroll's idea according to which the imagination is related to artworks being able to present us with situation analogous to thought experiments,¹⁴ for example, solves the problem of how to get from imaginative understanding to moral evaluation, for, after all, thought experiments are at least likely to lead to a certain moral assessment. But by restricting its analysis to thought experiments, Carroll's account is bound to focus too narrowly on the conceptual and narrative components of a work while leaving aside other aesthetic features that may be able to contribute to moral understanding. Additionally, as David Egan¹⁵ has pointed out, there are significant disanalogies between the kind of imaginative understanding that takes place in thought experiments and the one that characterizes our relationship with artworks.

Such objections are potentially met by the extensive work of Martha Nussbaum. Her emphasis on the sympathy we feel toward fictional

¹⁴ Carroll, "The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge," pp. 3-26.

¹⁵ David Egan, "Literature and Thought Experiments," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 74, Issue 2, Spring 2016: 139-150.

characters and on how it allows the audience to entertain their positions and thus “grow,” morally, with them, it appears to cover a broader spectrum of aesthetic features. Yet, while imaginative understanding is given a more complex treatment, Nussbaum’s account relates almost exclusively to literature, thus largely falling back into the objections I mentioned in relation to narrative works.

More accounts could be mentioned, and, while none of them is fundamentally mistaken, I believe it is important to consider an alternative response to what makes imagination so relevant in the case of artworks. I will outline it in the next section.

3. Aesthetic Power

The question I will consider in this section is a question that concerns less the nature of the attitudes inspired by artworks, such as blame or praise, than the *way* in which such attitudes are encouraged. Differently put, my focus is on the *processes* necessary to both engage our imagination and to assess the extent to which such an engagement can affect our dispositions toward the values expressed by artworks.

My interest in how artworks “move us” (a fairly vague, but hard to encapsulate expression) is an interest, primarily, in the experience of artworks and in what that experience can lead to. In this sense, my analysis stems from positions such as John Dewey’s application of Pierce and James’ pragmatism to the arts, an application that, in line with what is being discussed in this paper, was essential to the recognition of a bond between the aesthetic and the moral dimension.

From art historians such as Meyer Shapiro,¹⁶ who fervently attacked the elitism attached to formalist interpretations of art, to nowadays, where pragmatism is seen both as a way of reinterpreting the history of modern art – as in the work of Molly Nesbit¹⁷ – and as one of the standpoints for the

¹⁶ Meyer Shapiro, *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1978)

¹⁷ Molly Nesbit, *The Pragmatism in the History of Art* (Pittsburgh: Gutenberg Periscope, Ltd., 2013).

analysis of contemporary art, Dewey's account remains a prominent source.

Furthermore, in addition to its pioneering role in art history and criticism, Dewey's notion of art as experience finds followers in several positions within philosophical aesthetics. An example is what Michael Kelly¹⁸ has defined as the "Dewey effect," which is based on the highlighting, in the "Artworld," of moral and political demands, but Dewey's influence can also be seen in the emergence of studies in everyday aesthetics and in the development of more openly phenomenological analyses of the arts, as in the case of Arnold Berleant's social aesthetics¹⁹ and, with regards to moving pictures, in Robert Sinnerbrink's concept of "mood" in film²⁰ which grounds his critical reading of the works of directors such as Michael Haneke, Lars Von Trier, Asghar Farhadi, and others.

While different in their means and analysis, these positions share a certain sentiment against strong intentionalist claims and a fundamental belief in the complex and multifaceted nature of aesthetic experience; a complexity that is due to the wide range of contributions, from stylistic devices to perceptual stimuli, that artworks offer to us, but that are also the byproduct of our interaction with them.

It is precisely this characterization of aesthetic experience, more elusive and hardly reducible to a set of relatively rigid conditions, that, I believe, has been overlooked by most accounts dealing with the relation between ethics and aesthetics. But the complex nature of aesthetic experience is indeed essential to artistic appreciation and it is likely to affect the understanding of moral attitudes, thus further contributing to the ongoing debate on how such attitudes can affect the aesthetic value of a work.

One may observe, at this junction, that the concerns and aims of the debates I have been surveying are fundamentally separate. On the one hand, we have, as I have mentioned, the question of whether ethical dispositions

¹⁸ Micheal Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Facing the Demands of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991)

²⁰ Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011)

can affect the aesthetic assessment of a work. On the other hand, in reference to what I have briefly outlined as being the positions that followed Dewey's concept of art as experience, we instead have a reflection on the intertwined nature of the two and on how art cannot be thought of without its more engaged, morally, socially, and politically driven counterpart. In the former case, to summarize, the conundrum is on the "effects" of morality on art, in the latter case, it is simply a matter of stating their coexistence.

Yet, there is a problem with this objection: it is fundamentally reductive. For the coexistence of an aesthetic and moral dimension is all but passive: as an experience, art is transformative and it is able to display and comment on moral values in ways that go well beyond the simple endorsement or rejection of a given attitude. In this sense, accounts focusing on the experiential nature of art and on the processes through which aesthetic features affect our dispositions can only complement the discussion on the importance of ethical values that has been carried on during the past decade of analytic aesthetics. Allow me to consider a few examples.

As seen, one of the shortcomings with existing positions reflecting on the impact of mandated ethical attitudes on aesthetic assessment is that they rely, for the most part, on narrative works and on works that are able to express a given attitude largely thanks to the ways in which the narrative is fashioned.²¹

By no means do I deny the role played by narrative in making the audience attend to a given disposition, and yet, sometimes, such a role is exceedingly central. Exceedingly central, especially when considering the broad range of aesthetic features that characterize our experience of artworks and that are, for this reason, fundamental in their ability to engage

²¹ For example, in his refutation of A.W. Eaton's robust immoralism – the position according to which a moral defect can count as an aesthetic merit – Carroll notices how Eaton may be committing a "narrative fallacy" by not attending to "the place of the character in the overall narrative." Noël Carroll, "Rough Heroes: A Response to A.W. Eaton," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 71 No. 4, Fall 2013: 372. Carroll has also, more generally, emphatically pointed to the importance that narrative has in motion pictures and in how motion pictures exercise their "power." Noël Carroll, "The Power of Movies," *Daedalus* Vol. 114, No. 4, The Moving Image, Fall, 1985:79-103

our imagination.

While I cannot here do justice to the scope of these strategies – which would require a more detailed analysis of individual works – I can nonetheless point to two main directions of research that are likely to contribute and further shape the debate on how aesthetic features can affect ethical understanding and assessment.

The first, inspired by Robert Sinnerbrink's *Cinematic Ethics*,²² is a reflection on how non-narrative elements, in both narrative and non-narrative films, can lead to sophisticated forms of ethical reflection.²³ The second, which is based on architecture and, more broadly, urbanism, allows us to consider the more radical possibility of seeing moral values, their establishment and adoption, as a byproduct of aesthetic solutions.

In *Cinematic Ethics*, Robert Sinnerbrink argues for a connection between emotional responses toward film and moral assessment through what he labels "cinempathy." Cinempathy, which comprises both empathic and sympathetic responses, is defined as "a cinematic/kinetic expression of the synergy between affective attunement, emotional engagement and moral evaluation that captures more fully the ethical potential of the cinematic experience." To explain how cinempathy works, Sinnerbrink relies on phenomenologically informed close readings of a number of films such as *A Separation*, *Stella Dallas*, *Beautiful*, *La Promesse*, *The Act of Killing*, etc. that, more directly than others, engage the audience in ethical reflection while resisting the reduction to more standard, but often facile, ethical considerations. Sinnerbrink focuses on the mood of these films, on camerawork, and on several other ways in which film can affect our engagement through means that are often *other* than narrative.

Using Sinnerbrink's analysis as a standpoint allows us to consider a broader spectrum of aesthetic means that, together with narrative, but sometimes independently of it, can lead to ethical reflection, assessment,

²² Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

²³ Sinnerbrink points out how the ethical reflection elicited by film is at times likely to differ from the simple endorsement or rejection of a moral attitude and that it cannot always be confined to what a given ethical theory may command. Films are not always, in this latter sense, examples of Kantian or Aristotelian values, but an invitation to more nuanced analyses that can truly shape our moral landscape.

and perhaps even a certain sense of puzzlement.

An interesting example is the recently awarded *Elle* (Verhoeven, 2016). While narratively interesting, what contributes to the film's aesthetic success and what, in turn, renders the assessment of this film so compelling, is Isabelle Huppert's performance and the way it investigates the psychological dynamics of her character, Michèle. The film, which revolves around the brutal rape of Michèle, follows her search for the perpetrator, a search that allows the film to reflect on the terrifying moral complications behind rape by combining, in the character of Michèle, a woman hunted by a grotesque past, the aesthetic of video games, her relation to her neighbor – a man with good looks and a penchant for religious conservatism whom will turn out to be the culprit – and her role as the uncaring mistress of her best friend's husband. What makes the oddly prismatic, while nonetheless thoroughly believable and cohesive nature of Michèle's character so interesting is that all her *personae* are tied to a set of rather immediate moral evaluations (such as our belief in the horror of rape acts and our dislike for betrayal), that, however, in their intertwined dynamic in the performance of a single actress, are bound to surprise and even destabilize the audience's moral assessment of the film. For, once again, there is no pre-ordinate uptake: the spectrum of ethical responses is broadened as to involve perplexity, a certain lack of clarity, and, in turn, a sense of uneasiness. Such a response, the generation of an ethical puzzle as opposed to the direct moral condemnation or praise of the film's moral message are due to the aesthetic solutions chosen by the film which, in this case, is to provide a character with seemingly incompatible identities that, when combined, are bound to undermine and challenge our moral convictions.

Even more openly, it is easy to observe how ethical dispositions are expressed when a narrative is altogether forsaken. In Terrence Malick's *Knight of Cups*, which Richard Brody has described as the Hollywood movie that most faithfully follows the movement of memory, solutions other than narrative are responsible for the moral undertone of the film.²⁴ *Knight*

²⁴ Richard Brody, "Terrence Malick's *Knight of Cups* Challenges Hollywood to Do Better," *The New Yorker*, March 7, 2016. Accessed on August 12:

of Cups is a self-reflective film, a spectacle of cinematography, a film lit to the Los Angeles light that inspired Robert Irwin and that Joan Didion has so lovingly described, but it is not only that. The tremendous aesthetic power of Malick's work is also capable to not only initiate, but also shape an ethical response – of a special kind. Because in *Knight of Cups* ethical attitudes and dispositions are never clear cut;²⁵ their boundaries are fringes and not demarcating lines and they are powerful precisely because of this quality. For rather than pushing us toward a given moral assessment, these films have a way of including the audience by making it participate in the complexity, and difficulty, that often accompany moral evaluations.

The sheer beauty of a film like *Knight of Cups* is likely to steer the audience away for a more traditional disdain for the lust and unfaithfulness shown by the main character, Rick; Emmanuel Lubezki's cinematography engages the imagination allowing it to relate the events to a reflection on memory and identity, almost adorning morals with an air of metaphysical abstraction that is bound to say, or just whisper, something on how we evaluate our past and, ultimately, who we are. In this sense, the film is *adding* something to an ethical conception of agency: it is giving it an actual "look," a visual and perceptual counterpart that is essential to the ethical appreciation of the film.

There are, to summarize, two points that I am tentatively trying to make. The first is that narrative, most obviously in non-strictly narrative films, but also in narrative works, is not the only or necessarily the most relevant means through which ethical dispositions can be communicated. The second is that, more contentiously, more detailed insights into the broad spectrum of aesthetic means used by artworks can lead to a better understanding of the role of the imagination in affecting our moral judgment. For aesthetic means such as the quality of a performance, as in the case of Huppert, or the role played by cinematography, as in Malick's work, can lead to far more complex ethical dispositions. We do not simply

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/terrence-malicks-knight-of-cups-challenges-hollywood-to-do-better>

²⁵ Arguably, a but a similar case can be made for directors such as Haneke, Asghari, Assayas, Honoré, and others.

endorse or condemn the moral attitudes we observe, and we rarely take such a clear stance when those attitudes are expressed by artworks, for, if it were, they would be largely uninteresting. Works of art, in other words, do not simply suggest a moral evaluation, they do not just “command” an uptake; what they often do, as the example presented show, is to make us question and ponder over those attitudes, at times hinting at their prismatic nature and at the very difficulty of upholding a moral evaluation.

Yet, this is not, I believe, the only way in which aesthetic features can affect moral evaluation. As mentioned in my introduction, I believe that it is possible, in certain cases, to defend a much stronger thesis according to which aesthetic features may, more radically, shape the contours of morals and remodel and even introduce new strands to the ethical debate. The aesthetic sphere can, in this sense, be seen as responsible for the very nature and establishment of our ethical judgments.

This view is not entirely new in aesthetics and it has been entertained by advocates of everyday aesthetics. Yuriko Saito, in her famous article on the tenets of everyday aesthetics,²⁶ notes, for example, how aesthetic considerations and sensibility have enormous consequences on the moral dimension of our daily life and on the decisions we make: from our relation to the environment, to the products that we purchase, to how we fashion our appearance, etc.

An important development of these theses can, I believe, be seen in the interest on urbanism and on how architectural works can contribute to the establishment of what may amount to “morals of living:” to moral values that depend, for their existence, on the aesthetic choices initiated by architects and carried on through the experiential process of inhabiting a city. For, I aim to show, there are cases in which a given design can shape our sense of moral identity and community living, thus confirming the ability of certain aesthetic features to affect the creation and establishment of moral values.

One of the main reasons for choosing to discuss examples taken from architecture and urbanism is because of the central role played, in both

²⁶ Yuriko Saito, “Everyday Aesthetics,” *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 1. April 2001: 87-95.

cases, by direct experience, an experience that is likely to stretch over time (think, in this sense, of the experience of living in a city for a prolonged period of time) and that is thus constantly morphing. Urban planning is based on the acknowledgment of such continuous and changing experience: the aesthetic of urbanism is then to be seen both in the planning and in the ways in which a urban plan, once established, leads to the creation, and supports the evolution, of an environment, a city.

An early advocate of the dynamic evolution of urban environments (and of the importance of such dynamism for their flourishing), is, famously, Jane Jacobs. In her ground-breaking *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*,²⁷ Jacobs, a supremely talented observer, saw how simple aesthetic solutions such as short blocks, population density, and what she called the “sidewalk ballet” can be effective means to the establishment of a sense of community within cities that, as New York, are economically, culturally, and socially varied. Jacobs is most definitely not alone in her beliefs. A couple of decades after the publication of Jacobs’ book, a radically different movement, the New Urbanism, criticized as it often is, reached similar conclusions. The design and specific aesthetic of towns such as Celebration or Seaside affected those living and choosing to live there thus introducing a set of moral standards for sub-urban life that is still tremendously powerful and widespread in the United States.²⁸ The array of aesthetic solutions chosen by architects and urban planners actively transformed daily life instilling novel community values, values that are, in turn, closely tied to the moral sphere and even capable of altering its contours.

Furthermore, new directions of research in urbanism and architecture seem to support the line advocated in this paper, highlighting the role of aesthetic solutions in the shaping of morals. Less concerned with formalist standards or with the postmodern brilliance of architects such as Rem Koolhaas or the Metabolist movement, architecture, today, is consciously

²⁷ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961)

²⁸ Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show* (1998) had, as its main location, the town of Seaside in Florida.

moving closer to a reflection on some of the most pressing moral issues of contemporary society. Shigeru Ban's tents which were used as emergency shelters in Rwanda, Haiti, and Nepal are a clear example of this stance.²⁹ Built with light and inexpensive materials, most notably cardboard, the tents are harmonious, even beautiful, while also easy to build. Ban's aesthetic choices in design and materials contribute to the ethical mission behind his work by allowing us to reflect not only on the emergency conditions they address, but also on a basic human need for shelter and for the dignity that comes with it.

Aesthetic solutions such as the ones used by Ban directly relate to phenomena like global warming and immigration that are today among the most significant global concerns and areas of ethical debate. The aesthetic of these works is redefining notions such as belonging to a place or a community, property ownership, and the overall stability of urban centers. The creative and innovative nature of these projects is introducing us to values that did not belong to more traditional forms of dwelling and is making us discover something new about the moral landscape of living in our world under the pressure of our current global situation.

I am not claiming that all works of art are capable of moral reflection, nor am I claiming that moral reflection is necessarily dependent on aesthetic features and choices; yet, there are significant cases, such as in the examples suggested in this section, in which moral considerations are tied to such features in a strong sense: morals are not without an aesthetic nature and, at times, they fully depend on it.

4. Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, I proposed what can be seen as a merging of different debates within aesthetics in reference to the issue of how aesthetics and ethics interact. Specifically, I argued that a more rounded understanding of the way in which aesthetic features guide our moral responses to artworks can

²⁹ See, for example, Dana Goodyear "Paper Palaces: The Architect of the Dispossessed Meets the One Percent," *The New Yorker*, August 11-18 2014. Accessed on August 12: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/11/paper-palaces>

add considerable depth to the debate focused on assessing the weight of such responses in the aesthetic evaluation of a work.

Beginning with two of the most frequently described mechanism through which aesthetic features convey a moral message, narrative and imaginative understanding, I further attempted to show how both can be complemented by philosophical perspectives within aesthetics that focus on the importance of aesthetic experience. These solutions, while often requiring a case by case analysis, can not only affect the way in which moral values are perceived, they can also, in certain cases, challenge accepted conception of moral values and shape the contours of ethical reflection. It has been typical to see the realm of the aesthetics in a somewhat ancillary role where artworks can, at best, help the understanding of moral values. I am arguing here that they can do more and that: at times, moral values depend, for their establishment and confirmation, on their aesthetic representation.

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Beginning with Boredom: Jean-Baptiste Du Bos's Approach to the Arts

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ABSTRACT. This paper revisits the approach to the arts of Jean-Baptist Du Bos. It begins by noting that boredom (and its avoidance) lies at the heart of Du Bos's theory, and then draws out the two most central points that follow from this feature. Firstly, Du Bos argues that our fundamental desire to engage with the arts is grounded in a desire to be stimulated, activated and enlivened. Secondly, since avoiding boredom can only take place through experiences that elicit our interest, these interests cannot be excluded from our reflections on the arts. These two points are developed in turn and favorably contrasted with the tradition of 'philosophical aesthetics' that arose in the following century. Finally, the paper proposes three reasons why Du Bos's line of thought is valuable and relevant for contemporary issues. Firstly, it questions the plausibility of prioritizing the judgements of 'experts' over broader publics, and raises the question of just who 'the public' are. Secondly, Du Bos's conception of 'artificial emotion' can help us in approaching the distinction between genuine and artificial experience that is today rendered increasingly complex through the development of new media technologies. Finally, by emphasizing the arousal of the passions, Du Bos reminds us of the real and practical powers of artifice to influence our lives.

The issue of boredom and the role it plays in our lives rarely comes up in discussions of aesthetics. Given that 'aesthetics' as it is used in philosophical contexts primarily indicates inquiries into beauty and the fine arts, this might not be particularly surprising. Yet boredom is at the core of the theory of art developed by one of the earliest thinkers of the nascent discipline of 'modern philosophical aesthetics,' Jean-Baptiste Du Bos. Though tremendously influential in his day, his work has fallen into

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considerable neglect compared with others from the period². In what follows, I hope to show that such neglect is not warranted, and that by beginning with boredom, Du Bos provides some useful insights which can contribute to contemporary debate.

The central premise that opens and then underlies Du Bos's epic *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture* is that the human mind has an intense loathing of boredom, and will go to great lengths to avoid it³. This prioritization of the avoidance of boredom leads directly to two related ideas which contrast markedly from the tradition of aesthetics that came to develop later on. Firstly, emphasizing boredom means that our fundamental desire to engage with the arts is grounded in a desire to be stimulated, activated and enlivened. Secondly, since avoiding boredom can only take place through experiences that elicit our interest, these interests cannot be excluded from our reflections on the arts. I will take each of these points in turn.

Opening a work of criticism with a discussion of boredom was just as unorthodox in his time as it is for us today, and in order to understand his motivations we have to bear in mind the cultural and critical context in which he was writing. His treatise on the arts was first published in 1719, almost fifty years after Nicholas Boileau's famous codification of classicism in *L'art Poétique*. As R.G. Saisselin has described, the French literary scene in the middle of the 17th century was marked by the presence of both increasingly pedantic critics and shrill moralists, who together policed the realm of culture and served to stultify innovation (Saisselin 1965, 9). Moliere's *L'école de femmes*, for example, was attacked by both groups in spite of its popularity with the public: Critics claimed it violated the rules of the classical stage, and moralists that it promoted general indecency.

² Paul Guyer's recent sweeping history of aesthetics may begin to correct this, as he counts Du Bos (along with Addison and Shaftesbury) as one of the three central early figures in the tradition.

³ Du Bos writes 'The heaviness which quickly attends the inactivity of the mind is a situation so very disagreeable to man, that he frequently chooses to expose himself to the most painful exercises rather than be troubled with it' (Du Bos 1, §1. 5/29). References to Du Bos are all from his *Reflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture*. I provide volume and chapter numbers, followed by the page numbers from the English translation, then the French.

Saisselin describes the process whereby Moliere succeeded in wresting critical authority from these sources and establishing the legitimacy of a new audience of 'gentleman amateurs' for whom 'it was no longer permissible to be boring' (Saisselin 1965, 11) as the critics and moralists would have had it.

It is in this context that we must consider Du Bos' comments on boredom. Du Bos was a robust empiricist in the Lockean tradition, and instead of starting his enquiry with a-priori principles about the nature of the beautiful, he began by considering the practices of actual people. He observed that throughout the world, and throughout history, people were attracted to spectacles of an often dangerous, sometimes brutal variety, including such things as death-defying circus acts, bullfights, gladiatorial combat, and even executions. Rather than starting his project with the difficult question of our experience of beauty, he began with the even more difficult question of our experience of the horrible, the hair-raising, and the spectacular, a question that seems to fall under what we today call the 'paradox of negative affect'⁴. While such things might seem rather far removed from the theatre of Moliere, Du Bos saw both as stemming from the same ultimate motivation – the avoidance of boredom. Du Bos recognized that people didn't go to the theatre primarily to receive moral education, nor to find the truth presented in sensual form, nor to experience a rarified form of beauty. People went to the theatre to be activated and enlivened, to be rescued from the deadening quality of boredom. As Du Bos succinctly puts it: 'Poems are not read for instruction, but amusement; and when they have no charms capable of engaging us, they are generally laid aside' (Du Bos 1, §12, 63/62).

Initially this grounding of the arts on the avoidance of boredom might suggest that art has been accorded a rather lowly status, that it is somehow merely better than nothing. In this vein, Du Bos was criticized by Hume and others for developing a criterion of artistic merit based on

⁴ Paisley Livingston identifies Du Bos as the first to present this issue as a 'paradox'. See Livingston, 2013. I say "seems to fall" because it is not clear that there is a common 'negative affect' in all such cases.

popularity alone⁵. However, he in fact provides us with a richer theory than his critics have generally given him credit for. On Du Bos' account, the enlivenment the subject experiences through encounters with artifice occurs through the creation of what he calls *des passions artificielles*, a concept that adds considerable complexity and richness to his work. While there are obviously other potential distractions from boredom (Du Bos cites both manual labor and inner reflection (Du Bos 1, §1, 5-6/30)), those based on sensibility are demonstrably the most common, and of those a great many involve encounters with artifice (poetry, theatre, painting and the like). Furthermore, because they are based on artifice, the 'artificial emotions' they produce are unique. The purpose of engaging with artifice is thus not simply to alleviate boredom, but to do so through the creation of a unique form of emotional stimulation.

However, this idea needs to be handled with some care, for Du Bos does not mean that such passions are merely a form of make-believe, as Kendall Walton has more recently suggested⁶. On Du Bos' account, artificial passions are just as 'real' as those generated by non-artificial sources, but are distinct from them because the passions they generate are different in nature. When we (merely) view or read about a scene that would, if literally experienced, provoke a certain set of emotional responses, through artifice we experience a related but not identical set of responses which are typically less intense, and often shorter lived.

Du Bos gives the striking example of the story of the 'massacre of the innocents' depicted by Charles LeBrun around 1660 (Du Bos 1, §3, 24/40). If one were literally present at such a scene (in which knives protrude from infant bellies while dogs lap up the blood), one would obviously have a much more intense, and likely traumatizing experience compared with standing before LeBrun's painting. The painting doesn't cause us to experience the trauma of fearing for our lives, but instead can lead us to experience from a safe distance a range of cognitive and emotional responses, including horror, disgust, empathy, outrage, curiosity and so on. In looking at the painting we can linger on the scene, reflecting

⁵ See Hume's *Of Tragedy*.

⁶ See Walton 1978 and 1990.

on the different emotional states expressed by the figures and on our own reactions as well. The painting, as he puts it, 'touches only the surface of our hearts' (Du Bos 1, §3, 25/40-41), though the 'only' here is clearly not meant as a deficiency. Artifice is not merely a second-rate, watered-down version of reality, but a zone in which very real emotions and ideas are able to be more concretely explored because they are experienced in exceptional, concentrated circumstances. Rather than being overwhelmed, we are provided a place in which we can more deeply (and more safely) explore our passionate selves. Artifice thereby provides the opportunity to experience real emotions often unavailable in everyday life.

Because of his emphasis on the direct impact of the sensual and the stimulation of the passions, Du Bos is often described as a sentimentalist, and the label is certainly understandable. Yet it is important to note that cognition also plays a role in his theory, and it is misleading to present him as exclusively occupying one side of a 'debate' with 'rationalists' or 'cognitivists', in order to establish Kant's work as the inevitable solution⁷. While Du Bos thoroughly rejected the idea that we make judgements about art through reference to rules, and that education is a principal function of art, he also recognized that being enlivened by artifice often involved a form of intellectual stimulation as well. As he rightly observes, '...pleasures wherein the mind has no share are of very short duration' (Du Bos 1, §13, 74/68), suggesting that without giving us something to think about, or something to take an interest in, it is very likely that the work would simply bore us.

This brings us to the second central consequence of beginning with boredom: The importance of interests. While in England Shaftesbury had already been developing theories of beauty modeled on the form of disinterested judgement required for moral theorizing, Du Bos turns this idea upside down by pointing out that the enlivenment we derive from artifice is in direct proportion to the interest we take in it. While it could conceivably make sense to consider *beauty* as disconnected from our moral or practical interests, Du Bos saw that works of *art* could not be effectively

⁷ This approach can be found in both Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* and in Luc Ferry's *Homo Aestheticus. The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*.

understood in this way. Artifice was demonstrably concerned with much more than an abstracted, disinterested beauty, and leaving aside our personal interests when encountering art meant leaving aside the very things that motivated our experience in the first place.

Rather than rejecting them as irrelevant to the experience of art, in §12 of the first volume, Du Bos sketches a nascent theory of interests by describing how they can take both 'general' and 'individual' forms. Looking at a portrait, for example, might be of little 'general' interest to a wider public, but of considerable 'individual' interest to the loved ones of whoever is portrayed, and these forms of interest will naturally inform differing responses to the painting (Du Bos 1, §12, 62/62). For Du Bos it would serve little purpose to attempt to set these interests to one side in the name of obtaining a more objective or even universal form of judgement. What mattered for him were the unique and complex reactions of individuals in specific contexts. Furthermore, Du Bos argued that a balance of general and specific interests is required for a successful artwork: If too specific (say, a poem or painting narrowly detailing some personal issue), it might fail to move anyone not deeply acquainted with the topic, but if too general, it might simply fail to be of interest to anyone – it might, in other words, be boring. He then went on to extend this approach of contextual interests to much larger communities, including even entire nations. Ancient Romans clearly responded quite differently to Virgil than did his French peers because they obviously had a different set of broader cultural interests in approaching the work.

In fact, Du Bos went further than anybody else at the time in recognizing and taking seriously the diversity of artistic practices and evaluative criteria that have existed in different times and places. Several chapters of volume two are devoted to accounting for how and why such differences come about, and his answers include, but also go deeper than, the climatological explanations popular at the time⁸. In particular, he emphasized the political context, religious beliefs and relative wealth of particular societies, and in so doing initiated what would today be called

⁸ Chapters 12-20 in volume two all involve working out the different effects of 'moral causes' compared with 'physical causes' for impacting the development of the arts.

anthropological or sociological approaches to art⁹. As a result, Du Bos presents a scale of interests ranging from the individual to the universal, with all kinds of overlapping constituencies of competing interests in between. Both the production and reception of art must always be understood as being created in a context with quite specific interests in mind.

These two core ideas (the importance of enlivenment and the need to recognize contexts of interests) are clearly anathema to the traditional approaches to aesthetics that evolved afterwards, particularly in the wake of Kant's third critique. Indeed, it might seem as though Du Bos is promoting precisely those things many contemporary professional aestheticians typically labour strenuously to avoid. For starters, he seems to deliberately ignore what eventually came to be known as the 'aesthetic dimension' of art. This is the criticism leveled at him by Cassirer, who charges Du Bos with endorsing the claim that 'If [a work of art] satisfies the desire to see something, if it arouses the inner concern of the auditor and constantly entertains and intensifies his emotion, then it makes no difference with what means this effect is achieved' (Cassirer 1951, 325). Du Bos is thus charged with failing to distinguish between true aesthetic pleasure and the merely subjectively agreeable. For Cassirer, Du Bos seriously errs by allowing sports, eating, and bullfighting to be allowed into the same conversation as genuinely aesthetic domains like painting, music or literature. Such critics might recognize that the agreeableness generated by such things might be fruitfully studied, this is a topic for psychology, sociology, history and anthropology, and has little to do with 'philosophical aesthetics'.

Yet even though Du Bos does not explicitly defend himself from this form of attack, since the very idea of 'the aesthetic' was still several decades away,¹⁰ we can imagine Du Bos responding to such comments in much the same way as he responded to the rationalist critics of his own time. Without an account, he would reply, or even an acknowledgement of diverse human interests involved in art, devotees of disinterested aesthetics fail to provide a

⁹ In particular see volume two, §12.

¹⁰ Alexander Baumgarten was, after all, only four years old at when the *Reflections* were published.

very compelling account of the workings of artifice in actual societies. When turning to artifice, many (perhaps most) of us are not principally, nor even necessarily, seeking to have an experience of 'disinterested' beauty, but rather an experience of interesting enlivenment. There might so happen to be a form of disinterested (and thereby universal) aesthetic experience, but it begs the question to assume that this has been, is, or should be the primary concern of art. The experience of beauty can certainly provide us with a form of enlivenment, but so too do experiences of the ugly, the horrific, the mysterious, the death-defying, and so forth. Du Bos acknowledged that "aesthetic" qualities (like beautiful, cute, elegant, tacky, harmonious, cheesy, dainty or dumpy) inevitably influence the capacity of art to move and enliven us, but it is the movement and the enlivenment that is most interesting to him. Indeed, we must recognize that, just as in Moliere's day, many of the examples of artifice most celebrated from a purely and professionally 'aesthetic' perspective are often the very same that members of the general public find extraordinarily boring. Consider in this context John Baldessari's response to the work of his peers *I will not make any more boring art* all the way back in 1971.

Nevertheless, by emphasizing both subjective passions and constituencies of interest, Du Bos is clearly a relativist of some variety, and relativism is logically incompatible with a universalist approach to aesthetics. But here again the charge is somewhat misplaced, for Du Bos isn't trying to develop a universal theory of human responses to beauty, but an account of our necessarily context-dependent responses to artifice¹¹. In addition, his relativism is productively complex, and had important limits. While he recognized that Roman and French people had different evaluations of Virgil, he also recognized that Virgil's work had been capable of enlivening people for centuries, suggesting that it had value that resonated beyond the specific interests of its local community. Hence one test of a work's ultimate value was not simply the popularity of a particular

¹¹ Saisselin points out that 'Du Bos never bothered to define beauty and was not interested in constructing a doctrine of taste or of art, since the conclusion he had drawn from the recent history of the arts and the quarrels that accompanied them was that it was vain to do so.' (69)

performance, but the popularity it maintained throughout the course of history.

Furthermore, his relativism does not lead to the shoulder-shrugging, anything-goes subjectivism of '*des goûts et des couleurs, on ne discute pas.*' On the contrary, here the discussion of taste and style is at the heart of cultural life. Du Bos subscribes neither to the view that artistic judgement is merely a matter of personal subjective taste, nor the view that it involves making universalizable claims. For him the experience of art takes place neither at the level of the deracinated individual, alone and cut off from all cultural heritage and context, nor at the level of the universal law, as an abstract phenomenon of nature. It takes place within publics which breathe different kinds of air, speak different languages, share certain values, and innovate, change, and mutate intersubjectively. Du Bos was the first to really feel the weight of this issue and to attempt to face it head on. While Kant's critical philosophy would turn philosophical attention almost exclusively to questions about the experience of beauty divorced from social relations, Du Bos perceives the importance of artifice as a site in which those relations are prominently and importantly revealed. Such themes would later be developed by Kant's pupil and later rival J.G. Herder and eventually by Nietzsche, but they arrive on the scene in a very plausible format first and foremost in the work of Du Bos.

Still, it must be accepted that if 'aesthetics' is defined in some Kantian terms as the study of disinterested, universal and cognitive (if not 'determinate') judgements then Du Bos by definition seems to have little to offer. Yet one reason why Du Bos is valuable is because he reminds us that there is much more of interest in art than 'aesthetics' as so defined, and that even at the dawning of early modern exploration of these issues, alternative questions were being taken seriously. I want to conclude by suggesting a few reasons why Du Bos's perspective is still valuable to us today.

Firstly, by prioritizing interests and direct enlivenment, Du Bos reconfigures our understanding of expertise in the arts. As mentioned, he noticed the degree to which the professional critics of his day were largely out of step with the preferences of the general public. Yet instead of siding with elite professionals, he believed that the general public collectively were

for the most part reliable judges¹². In fact, he went so far as to develop the more radical view that the amateur public could often judge *better* than the professional critic, since the critic all too often had a vested interest in the success or failure of a given work. By contrast, the public relied directly on their own sentiments, undiluted by professional preconceptions and thereby free of bias. Rather than the tradition of dismissing public opinion as duped by false consciousness on the one hand or benighted by general philistinism on the other, Du Bos's work takes public opinion seriously.

There is, however, some disagreement about how Du Bos conceived of this public. Saisselin argues that Du Bos still viewed the legitimate public as an elite, aristocratic group who, while contemptuous of pedantic professional critics, were also contemptuous of those who were insufficiently cultivated to form correct judgements (Saisselin 1965, 70). This view, however, doesn't seem very faithful to the text itself. While Du Bos did explicitly exclude the crassest members of *les bas peuple*, he seems to intend this only as a matter of historical contingency. Du Bos saw no inevitable deficiency in the physiology or psychological construction of such folk, nor did he think that they simply but inexplicably lacked 'good taste'. What they lacked was only sufficient knowledge by which they could take a suitable interest in a particular work. An uneducated audience would naturally be baffled by, and thus unresponsive to, lines of Racine that made reference to Roman mythology of which they were ignorant. Yet even if some failed on these grounds to qualify as competent judges, Du Bos held that potentially anybody could quite easily achieve this status, and noted that the numbers of such judges in his time were constantly increasing owing to shifting social conditions. Du Bos thus calls on us, firstly, to take more seriously the views of various publics, and secondly, to consider the epistemic questions involved in public access to the arts. In fact, simply by raising the question of who counts as the 'general public', Du Bos presciently anticipates the sociological work of Pierre Bordieu, and the

¹² See volume 2, §22 in particular. The discussion of different communities of judgement continues in subsequent chapters.

radical contemporary work of Jacques Ranciere¹³.

Secondly, Du Bos's theorizing of artifice and artificial emotion provides a critical starting point for thinking through today's increasingly blurred distinctions between the artificial and the genuine. While a painting of a bullfight, a bullfight in an arena, and an encounter with an angry bull in the wild are all quite straightforwardly different experiences which elicit quite different responses, our contemporary giant-screened theatres, surround-sound speakers, ultra-hi-res cameras, VR helmets and so forth cause the artificial to be realized with ever-increasing precision. At the same time, we remain transfixed by narratives 'based on a true story' and have built an industry around the quasi-reality presented by 'reality television'. Today the news (the presentation of selected real events through artificial means) occupies the same artificial space as other forms of distraction, and as a result, like Lebrun's painting, it tends to scratch only the surface of our hearts. Meanwhile, our contemporary artists continue to explore the intersections between artifice and reality, as for example in the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija and many others working in 'social practice'. Furthermore, the ubiquity of video screens in public spaces and smart phones in private space document the centrality of boredom avoidance in our lives. Boredom, our continual efforts to avoid it, and the conditions under which our tolerance for it have decreased, are central issues of contemporary everyday life. By theorizing about artifice and the unique form of response it engenders, Du Bos expands our domain of inquiry and provides us a vocabulary for thinking through our simultaneous and paradoxical desires for artificial stimulation and authentic experience. This in turn offers a quite different, though potentially very profitable, way of approaching the issues presented in the emerging discourse of 'everyday aesthetics'.

Finally, because artifice for Du Bos operates directly and primarily on the passions, he noted that it can powerfully move us in a way reason cannot. In his work, the power of art lies not in the abstract mental processes

¹³ In particular Ranciere's radically egalitarian approach developed in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, but his general concerns with 'the distribution of the sensible', involving who can see or hear or speak links in with Du Bos.

it sets in motion (the famous 'free play of the imagination and understanding,' as Kant would later put it) but in its capacity to subvert rational processes and directly influence people's beliefs, values and desires. Paintings, he noted, may well be merely artificial imitations of reality, but have nevertheless lead to the conversion of kings, which in turn has shaped the course of nations (Du Bos 1 §4, 29/43)¹⁴. Artifice, *when it is interesting and enlivening*, can be a remarkably powerful rhetorical tool, as evidenced by the impact of contemporary advertising, news media, prime-time television and so on. The power of the stimulation of artificial emotion through engagement with artifice is of tremendous relevance in today's climate of 'fake news', social media echo chambers and political stagecraft, and, rather than struggling to defend the relevance of the arts, Du Bos's approach refreshingly reminds us of the very real, practical and even dangerous power of artifice to shape our lives.

In sum, by approaching the arts through the lens of boredom Du Bos invites a shift of perspective from the disinterested aesthetic reflection that would come to play so large a role in the history of aesthetic theory. Instead, we are directed to consider the passions and interests of publics inhabiting complex environments in which artifice plays a central role in both providing happiness and shaping belief. Even though this might necessitate an interdisciplinary approach drawing on disciplines outside of philosophy, the benefits for a comprehensive approach to the arts and the publics who engage with them are clear.

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¹⁴ See also Thomas Kaiser 1989.

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Embodied Meaning and Art as Sense-Making: A Critique of Beiser's Interpretation of the 'End of Art Thesis'¹

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is to challenge Fred Beiser's interpretation of Hegel's meta-aesthetical position on the future of art. According to Beiser, Hegel's comments about the 'pastness' of art commit Hegel to viewing postromantic art as merely a form of individual self-expression. I both defend and extend to other territory Robert Pippin's interpretation of Hegel as a proto-modernist, where such modernism involves (i) his rejection of both classicism and Kantian aesthetics, and (ii) his espousal of what one may call *reflective aesthetics*. By 'reflective aesthetics', I mean an aesthetic framework which sees art as a form of *enquiry*, one whose aim is to not merely excite the imagination but to principally focus attention on social and cultural norms. The meta-aesthetical consequences of reflective aesthetics and their Hegelian heritage have both an interpretive and philosophic value: under my account, Beiser's reading of Hegel is challenged, and my interpretation of how Hegel envisaged the future of art offers a new and engaging way of understanding one of the most notorious claims in the philosophy of art, namely that art has ended.

1. Beiser on the End of Art Thesis

Whenever 'Hegel' and 'aesthetics' are ever mentioned together in the same sentence, invariably one will refer to this so-called 'End of Art' thesis.³

¹ I would like to thank the editorial board of the *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* for kindly granting me permission to publish this paper here.

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³ The reason for this is not simply due to the eye-catching qualities of a thesis which allegedly claims art is dead or irrelevant. It is also because unlike philosophers such as Hume, Kant, and Schiller, Hegel does not appear to devote *as much* attention to arguably the central topic of modern aesthetics, namely the nature of aesthetic judgement and an account of aesthetic experience. As Robert Pippin writes, "[t]his divergence from much modern aesthetic theory is largely due to the complexity of the concept of art itself as Hegel

Hegel is taken to have espoused this thesis in the following passage from his *Lectures on Aesthetics*:

In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place. What is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgement also, since we subject to our intellectual consideration (i) the content of art, and (ii) the work of art's means of presentation, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of both to one another. 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. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 11)

To some, what Hegel had written effectively amounted to a Shelley-esque elegy⁴ for the death of art.⁵ The onset of market capitalism, and growing secularisation,⁶ which were symptomatic of the modern age, meant that art “ceased to have the central importance ... that it once had in the classical

invokes it. For Hegel's treatment is famously historical; the account of the nature of art is narrative rather than analytic”. (Pippin 2008, pp. 394-5)

⁴ I am referring to the following verse from Shelley's *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats*:

“I weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

⁵ See Croce (1978); Hofstadter (1974); and Rapp (2000).

⁶ Cf. the following from Hegel: “...the important thing is to get a sure footing in the prose of life, to make it absolutely valid in itself independently of religious associations, and to let it develop in unrestricted freedom”. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 598)

and medieval eras”.⁷ Modern man was a truly fallen creature and art had no place in this world full of alienation.⁸ To others, Hegel’s meta-aesthetical views are simply an embarrassment given how much post-Hegelian art has been produced.

However, it is far from clear how *either* a defender *or* critic of Hegel can legitimately take this passage to amount to an *End of Art* argument.⁹ To quote Fred Beiser on this subject, “Hegel himself does not use the phrase ‘the death of art’, which has so often been ascribed to him. Furthermore, he does not even talk about ‘the end of art’”.¹⁰ A similar view is held by Robert Wicks, who writes: “... it cannot be Hegel’s view that artistic production will totally cease at some point within the progressive development of human history. Nor can it be Hegel’s view that, as we presently stand, art will never again serve to express the deepest interests of humanity”.¹¹ So, the issue is *not* whether Hegel is right to think art is dead / art has come to an end, but rather the following: what does Hegel mean by claiming art “considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past” (*ein Vergangenes*)?

According to Beiser, we should understand Hegel as claiming “[w]hile art will indeed continue, it will do so in a greatly reduced role: it will be nothing more than a form of individual self-expression”.¹² In other words, Hegel is not committed at all to any kind of End of Art thesis, but he *is* committed to no longer regarding art as maintaining any kind of serious or especially valuable status. One way of understanding Beiser’s position is to claim that because modern consciousness expresses itself predominantly through ingenuity in the natural sciences, medical disciplines, and the rapid

⁷ Beiser 2005, p. 299.

⁸ This is one way of interpreting what Hegel writes here: “The beautiful days of Greek art, like the golden age of the later Middle Ages, are gone”. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 10)

⁹ The following philosophers argue that Hegel did certainly not mean that art was dead/obsolete, but rather that art was less well equipped to grasping the Absolute: Bosanquet (1919-20); Carter (1980); Danto (1984); Desmond (1986); D’ Hondt (1972); Etter (2000); and Müller (1946).

¹⁰ Beiser 2005, p. 299.

¹¹ Wicks 1993, p. 370.

¹² Beiser 2005, p. 300.

rise of developments in technology, art in the *modern* era is no longer representative of expressing human *Geistigkeit*. As Robert Pippin writes, “[w]e have invested our hopes in science, technology, medicine, market capitalism, and, to some lingering extent, in religion, but certainly not in art”.¹³ Given that the modern age and the corresponding normative standards of modern consciousness hardly seem conducive to find a place for art as a source of profound value for humanity, art must be relegated to the private sphere, wherein neither production nor appreciation of artwork has any substantive significance.

It is important to note that Beiser’s understanding of Hegel’s position does not simply rest on the claim that since modern culture is more secular, Hegel thought art had no future, “because its glory lay in the past, and its past was unrecoverable”.¹⁴ Rather, Beiser’s interpretation of Hegel’s meta-aesthetical views is motivated by how he reads the (in)famous passage from the *Lectures* I quoted earlier: for Beiser, it is not so much that modern culture is rationalistic that is the source for art’s ‘obsolescence’, “but the effect such rationalism has had on the artist”.¹⁵ The *Bildung* of the modern era is geared to *Reflexionskultur* as opposed to either worshipping the divine or, as Stephen Houlgate writes, exhibiting “magnificently the subtle beauties and delights of everyday modern life”;¹⁶ by consequence, art is now conceived in such a way that it predominantly appeals to our *judgement*. As Beiser himself extrapolates:

Since rationalism demands that the individual always think critically and independently, it alienates him or her from the community. Rather than identifying with its customs, laws and religion, the modern individual constantly questions them, accepting and rejecting them strictly according to whether they satisfy the demands of his or her own conscience and reason. The happy harmony between the

¹³ Pippin 2014, p. 36.

¹⁴ Beiser 2005, p. 303; cf.: “We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit”. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 103)

¹⁵ Beiser 2005, p. 304.

¹⁶ Houlgate, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics/>

individual and society, which was the pre-condition for art in the classical age, has been destroyed in modern society ... While the content of classical art was given to the artist by the culture and religion of his people, the modern artist must create his or her content, so that it has only an individual significance ... The result was that art had lost its subject matter - the fundamental values and beliefs of a culture – and so ceased to address its fundamental needs and aspirations. Art had now degenerated into little more than self-expression, and it assumed as many different forms as there are individuals to express themselves. If, however, art were only self-expression, then it had ceased to play a role in culture or history. To be sure, art was not dead, and it would continue as long as artists continued to express themselves. But the crucial question is whether art is still important, whether it had any significance beyond individual self-expression. And here Hegel's answer was a decisive 'No'.¹⁷

On this matter, Beiser can legitimately appeal to Hegel's reflections on the growing subjectivity in works of modern humour:

So with us Jean Paul [Richter] , e.g., is a favourite humourist, and yet he is astonishing, beyond everyone else, precisely in the baroque mustering of things objectively furthest removed from one another and in the most confused disorderly jumbling of topics related only in his own subjective imagination. The story, the subject-matter and course of events in his novels, is what is of the least interest. The main thing remains the hither and thither course of the humour which uses every topic only to emphasise the subjective wit of the author. In thus drawing together and concatenating material raked up from the four corners of the earth and every sphere of reality, humour turns back, as it were, to symbolism where meaning and shape likewise lie apart from one another, except that now it is the mere subjective activity of the poet which commands material and meaning alike and strings them together in an order alien to them. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 601)

¹⁷ Beiser 2005, pp. 304-5.

As I understand it, the substantive issue turns on whether Beiser is right to think modernism is incompatible with art having substantive cultural value. In what follows, I shall argue that Beiser is mistaken, and that while Hegel did in fact think *a particular conception of art* is incompatible with modern consciousness, it does not follow that art can only then be a form of individual self-expression. On the contrary, because Hegel appears to inaugurate a new aesthetic *framework*, art retains an important place in society and culture as a result of art having to fundamentally transform itself in the advent of modern *Geist*.

2. Hegel and the Modernist Aesthetic Framework

To begin, it would be helpful to consider the following passage from the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which articulates one of the fundamental differences between ancient and modern life:

Nowadays the task before us consists not so much in purifying the individual of the sensuously immediate and in making him into a thinking substance which has itself been subjected to thought; it consists to an even greater degree in doing the very opposite. It consists in actualising and spiritually animating the universal by means of the sublation of fixed and determinate thoughts. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*: §33, 29)

What Hegel means here is that the directive of modern consciousness is not to realise self-consciousness by means of escaping the empirical world and removing one's corporeal shackles in an effort to achieve autonomy. Rather, we achieve freedom by seeing how thought and the forms of intelligibility are realised in the world itself. On the metaphysical side of things, this is performed by consciousness grasping the identity of thought with being, by dialectically articulating the categories of universality, particularly, and individuality;¹⁸ on the epistemological side, this is done through recognising

¹⁸ See Stern (2007); and Giladi (2014).

the inseparability of concept and intuition in experience;¹⁹ on the socio-political front, freedom is actualised by how the state and social institutions are structured in a way that facilitate symmetrical recognitive relations;²⁰ and on the aesthetic front, forms of intelligibility are revealed in the *work* of art itself, what Arthur Danto calls “embodied meaning”.²¹ This position required of Hegel a rejection of rationalist, classicist, perfectionist, empiricist, Kantian, and Schillerian aesthetics. The reason for this seismic shift in aesthetics, where Hegel appears to debunk traditional aesthetic frameworks almost *in toto* in favour of seeing art as a fundamentally *intellectual* enterprise,²² is due to the challenges modern culture poses for art.²³ As Hegel himself puts it:

The spirit of our world today, or more particularly, of our religion and the development of our reason, appears as beyond the stage at which art is the supreme mode of our knowledge of the Absolute. The peculiar nature of artistic production and of works of art no longer fills our highest need. We have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them. The impression they make is of a more reflective kind, and what they arouse in us needs a higher touchstone and a different test. Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine arts. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 10)

To quote Allen Speight, “... the pervasive culture of modern reflexivity raises new questions about what the artist does”,²⁴ where it is precisely the new culture of criticism – what Hegel calls *Reflexionskultur* – that inaugurates a shift in both how the *artist themselves* understands the function of artwork, and how the *audience* of the artwork understand the function of artist and artwork. What aesthetic experience *now* consists of is

¹⁹ See Sedgwick (1997); and Stern (1999).

²⁰ See Neuhouser (2000).

²¹ See Danto (1994).

²² Another way of phrasing this is to conceive of Hegel as prescient of the modernist movement, cf. Clark (1999).

²³ See the following works: Bungay (2007); Houlgate (1997, 2013); Rush (1998); Harries (1974).

²⁴ Speight 2008, p. 388.

no longer pure sensuous enjoyment *or* free play of imagination under an indeterminate *telos*; rather, this form of experience is now fundamentally reflective and the artist conveys powerful *social* meaning through aesthetic content.²⁵ One could call this *Reflective Aesthetics*: Art – now as a species of enquiry – involves *thinking* about art, the practice of art, and its social relevance at the most basic level. Crucially, such thinking reveals that aesthetic norms are fundamentally fallible and reflexive, in that aesthetic value is not fixed and determined by any mind-independent stuff that is eternal and immutable. Rather, such value is determined socially through a complex process of constant re-assessment and re-evaluation of normative standards in art.²⁶ As Benjamin Rutter writes, “[t]he insight that it is of the nature of modern art to prompt in its audience the question not only of the work’s meaning but of its very possibility as art is one of Hegel’s most powerful and distinctive”.²⁷ In this way, one conception of art is ‘dead’ and a thing of the past, but another is very much alive in the present.

For Pippin, the artist who perhaps best exemplifies Hegel’s vision of art-as-a-species-of-criticism is Manet.²⁸ This is because Pippin takes Manet as an outstanding example of an artist who is directly appealing to our *judgement* in flouting certain aesthetic and social norms in his work, especially his *The Luncheon on the Grass* and *Olympia*.²⁹ Manet does not appear to be predominantly interested in overwhelming his audiences with opulent and luxurious *beauty* – let alone classical beauty;³⁰ rather he appears to be doing something radical and explicitly intellectual.³¹ As Pippin writes:

²⁵ In this way, art is conceived of having an intellectual function but the way it performs this intellectual function is crucially different to other forms of enquiry such as mathematics and philosophy.

²⁶ I wish to note here that the emphasis on intersubjective evaluation of aesthetic norms is not a commitment to any kind of institutionalism.

²⁷ Rutter 2010, p. 20.

²⁸ See Pippin (2014) for a detailed discussion of Hegel and Manet.

²⁹ Adorno notes that Manet’s work heralds the “emergence of radical modern art, [an] opposition to traditional rules of pictorial composition”. (Adorno 1984, p. 291)

³⁰ Of course, this is not to say that there is nothing beautiful at all about *The Luncheon on the Grass* and *Olympia*.

³¹ I should stress here that I am in no way a historian of art or an art critic. However, I do think – like many other philosophers – that there is substantive philosophical content in certain works of art.

Normal perceptual apprehension and representational understanding are not so much intensified ... as rather in some way interrupted and challenged, for reasons that were clear to almost no one at the time. The challenge is strikingly clear in the startling looks of the two women ... looks that all at once destroy the convention of pictorial illusionism [and] ... seem to address the beholder (of the painting, not the scene) with a confrontational challenge (as if to ask, “Just what is it you are looking for?”) ... suggesting questions about the psychology of meaningful beholding and the status of very social conventions assumed in understanding the point of easel paintings.³²

Focusing on *Olympia* specifically, one immediately notices that Olympia herself is directly looking at the audience. It is almost as if the traditional roles have been reversed: the subject of the painting is in fact the beholder and that *we* are treated by Olympia as the intentional object.³³ Olympia is looking at us unabashedly,³⁴ and that sense of being observed by her in a way which *almost appears to have disdain* for us is disconcerting.³⁵ It is disconcerting, because what Manet achieves in this painting is developing a disturbing sense of *intimacy* between us and Olympia, by flouting the traditional relation of subject-onlooker, to the point where aesthetic subject and onlooker ascribe to one another characteristics of subjectivity – we think ‘Why is she looking so dismissively at us?’ and it seems Olympia is thinking ‘And? What do you want?’. However, what adds further disconcerting thoughts to Manet’s audience is how his painting offers this

³² Pippin 2014, p. 29.

³³ See Pile (2004).

³⁴ Michael Fried calls this ‘facingness’, cf. Fried (1996). However, what makes Manet’s works so revolutionary and different from works such as *The Mona Lisa* is the specific way of understanding the painting’s address to the beholder and the dialectical relationship between aesthetic object and onlooker, cf. Fried 2010, p. 108ff.

³⁵ I take my interpretation of Olympia’s physiognomy to be slightly different to Pippin’s interpretation, for Pippin takes Olympia to have a “vacant or bemused look” (Pippin 2014, p. 48). As I see it, Olympia is not so much vacant but *indifferent* to the point of even appearing disdainful of her onlookers. Pippin, however, notes that unlike Titian’s Venus in *Venus d’ Urbino*, the look from Olympia is “something like cognitive or musical dissonance” (Pippin 2014, p. 48), and it is clear that such ‘dissonance’ adds to the disconcerting atmosphere.

form of intimacy with a *prostitute*: Olympia's phlegmatic and unloving look could be a gaze at a prospective *client*, and the scene we are witnessing is her preparation for us. But even if we are not prospective clients who have walked into her boudoir, our bourgeois sensibilities are taken aback at how we are "complicit with the practice"³⁶ of prostitution, whether we like it or not.³⁷ As T. J. Clark writes, "Olympia ... looks out at the viewer in a way which obliges him to imagine a whole fabric of sociality in which this look might make sense to him and include him – a fabric of offers, places, payments, particular powers, and status which is still open to negotiation".³⁸ In this way, the goal of romantic art – to realise intimacy (*Innigkeit*) – is achieved, but hardly in the same way paintings of Madonna and Child do so, for example. When mutual recognition is realised in the 'self-in-other' dynamic of love, *whom* we recognise and *who* we are to the people that recognise us is uplifting and fundamentally positive. But in the case of Manet's *Olympia*, Olympia and the audience recognise one another as agents of a seedy moral and economic model – what brings us close to Olympia is nothing uplifting, and that seems to go some way to explaining her almost disdainful look at the onlooker: we are all equally part of this culture of commodification and fetishism, and the aim of Manet's masterpiece is invite us to self-critically reflect on our social values and commitments.³⁹

The Clark-Fried-Pippin interpretation of Manet's work sits nicely with Hegel's position on the nature and function of artwork itself, as Hegel writes himself: "it [artwork] is essentially a question, an address to the responsive

³⁶ Pippin 2014, p. 75.

³⁷ The most compelling explanation for why exactly the bourgeois aficionados of the Salon were so appalled by *Olympia* is not that the work exhibits anti-classicism, but rather because what Manet had done was explicitly detail the hypocrisy of bourgeois culture. As such, it comes to no surprise why Baudelaire wrote to Manet: "Vous n'êtes que le premier dans la decrepitude de votre art" – letter to Manet, 11th May 1865, cf. Baudelaire (1973).

³⁸ Clark 1999, p. 133.

³⁹ Cf. "Prostitution is a sensitive subject for the bourgeois society because sexuality and money are mixed in it. There are obstacles in the way of representing either, and when the two intersect there is an uneasy feeling that something in the nature of capitalism is at stake, or at least not properly hidden". (Clark 1999, p. 102)

breast, a call to the mind and the spirit”. (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 1: 71) Because the function of art now is to principally arouse our *judgement*, the artist and the audience both appear to play the game of giving and asking for *reasons*, where each attempt at making normative claims and proposing new ways of thinking “can never be settled by any fact of the matter, can always remain open, and contentious”.⁴⁰ The recognition of fallibility also means that the artist does not see *the medium of art* now as dogmatic or didactic. Rather, it seems that works like *Olympia* are invitations for the audience of the artwork to be sensitive to reasons and how such intelligibility is realised in the artwork itself. Like Pippin, this is what I take Hegel’s point to be in this passage from his *Lectures*:

So, conversely, art makes every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus, whereby the inner soul and spirit is seen at every point. And it is not only the bodily form, the look of the eyes, the countenance and posture, but also actions and events, speech and tone of voice, and the series of their course through all conditions of appearance that art has everywhere to make into an eye, in which the free soul is revealed in its true infinity. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 154-55)

Here, Hegel seems to remarkably anticipate the Peircean notion of “the whole conception of the object”⁴¹ by emphasising just how *much* we must attend to in aesthetic experience.⁴² Everything about the artwork, ranging from the *Mise-en-scène* to the bodily actions of the person(s) depicted, has intentional significance for us, principally because of the *effects* aesthetic *content* and aesthetic *form* have on the audience. It is because one must attend to a plurality of things embodied by the artwork itself that aesthetic response is “an interpretive accomplishment of sorts, one that begins in some interrogative, not merely receptive or affective or even contemplative,

⁴⁰ Pippin 2014, p. 49.

⁴¹ See Peirce (1931-1958).

⁴² There is an interesting comparison to be made here between Hegel and Arendt on this subject. As Arendt writes: “[Artworks] are tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read” (1958, p. 168).

relation to the object”.⁴³ As a result, it hardly appears to be the case that art is now merely a form of individual self-expression: *contra* Beiser, it seems the artist here is *not* alienated from their community, for what Manet is *doing* by construing artwork as a form of intelligibility⁴⁴ is precisely aiming to connect individual artistry with the mores and values of the *Zeitgeist* and *Volkgeist*, by getting audiences to *think* about social and cultural concepts in a critical manner.

However, in response to my defence of the Clark-Fried-Pippin interpretation of Manet and Pippin’s proto-modernist reading of Hegel, Beiser can appeal to the following passages in Hegel’s *Lectures*, to support the idea that the onset of modern artistic practice is really nothing more than an exercise in individual self-expression, a celebration of personal liberty from certain norms:

Herewith we have arrived at the end of romantic art, at the standpoint of most recent times, the peculiarity of which we may find in the fact that the artist’s subjective skill surmounts his material and its production because he is no longer dominated by the given conditions of a range of content and form already inherently determined in advance, but retains entirely within his own power and choice both the subject-matter and the way of presenting it. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 602)

In our day, in the case of almost all peoples, criticism, the cultivation of reflection, and, in our German case, freedom of thought have mastered the artists too, and have made them, so to say, a *tabula rasa* in respect of the material and the form of their productions, after the necessary particular stages of the romantic art-form have been traversed. Bondage to a particular subject-matter and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone are for the artists today something past, and art therefore has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any material of whatever kind. The artist thus stands above specific consecrated forms and configurations and moves freely on his own

⁴³ Pippin 2014, p. 49.

⁴⁴ To use Arendt’s expression, artwork as “thought-things” (1978, p. 62).

account ... Therefore the artist's attitude to his topic is on the whole much the same as the dramatist's who brings on the scene and delineates different characters who are strange to him. (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 605)

For Hegel, the gradual development and eventual ascendancy of *Reflexionskultur* provides the conditions for the artist to be self-legislating, to the extent that the artist can freely choose their content and freely choose their way of depicting and expressing the relevant content. As Terry Pinkard writes:

If, however, absolutely any worldly matter can be the subject of art, if what is important in making it a work of art is that it convey some sense of the fully formed individual subjectivity at work it, then it might seem as if fully *modern art* can no longer even get close to the "Ideal." ... In focusing on his own skill and on what he sees at work, the artist portrays a conception of the normative order at work in modern life, namely, that we are all implicitly self-orienting, that we situate ourselves in terms no longer of a "substantially shared" social space, but of a social space that is inherently fragmented along the lines of modern individuality.⁴⁵

What is interesting, though, is how Beiser (and Pinkard) takes *this* feature of modern aesthetic practice to mean that, for Hegel, modern artwork has merely *individual* significance. But, for Hegel, does artistic autonomy result in aesthetic work being simply self-expression? And, for Hegel, does the rise of autonomy necessarily result in the *fragmentation* of individual and community? I contend that the answer to both these questions is 'No'. To see why, I would like to consider Duchamp's *Fountain*. I have chosen arguably Duchamp's most (in)famous readymade, given how it is a modern work which initially *looks* as having purely individual significance, but in fact has significant cultural import as a paradigm of art as sense-making,⁴⁶ to use a turn of phrase from Adrian Moore.

⁴⁵ Pinkard 2000, p. 601.

⁴⁶ Cf. Moore (2012).

Fountain is an example of a ‘readymade’, an ordinary manufactured object designated by the artist as a work of art. However, while the development of the readymade *prima facie* appears to lend weight to the idea that all the artist is now doing is merely indulging in their own individual self-expression, thereby denigrating the value of artwork to only individual significance, I think there is more compelling reason to view the development of the readymade in terms of inaugurating a *staunchly anti-institutionalist and more democratic intersubjective aesthetic framework*.⁴⁷ the artist and the audience both appear to play the game of giving and asking for *reasons*, to the extent that the artist and audience regard one another as *peers* in a conversation about *second-order enquiry*. What makes *Fountain* so provocative is *not* that the kind of aesthetic experience one has when viewing the urinal is potentially disconcerting or even particularly unpleasant, but rather is the way in which encountering the work thrusts us into the space of reasons so much so that the audience become *active participants* in debates concerning the norms of aesthetic practice rather than *merely voyeurs* taking in aesthetic content: one immediately starts to wonder what the work is trying to make us attentive to.⁴⁸ In other words, *Fountain* is an instance of Hegel’s notion that artwork now is ‘essentially a question’. This appears to *extend* Pippin’s argument that Hegel was remarkably prescient in referring to modern artwork as being a ‘thousand-eyed Argus’, where *all* features of the artwork are of cognitive significance

⁴⁷ Cf: “The creation and submission of *Fountain* can thus be seen as in part as an experiment by Duchamp to ... [test] the commitment of the new American Society to freedom of expression and its tolerance of new conceptions of art.” – <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573/text-summary>

⁴⁸ For example, one of the most enigmatic and curious aspects of *Fountain* is the signature ‘R. Mutt’. When asked whether ‘R. Mutt’ was a pun on *Armut*, Duchamp was quoted as explaining:

“Mutt comes from Mott Works, the name of a large sanitary equipment manufacturer. But Mott was too close so I altered it to Mutt, after the daily cartoon strip “Mutt and Jeff” which appeared at the time, and with which everyone was familiar. Thus, from the start, there was an interplay of Mutt: a fat little funny man, and Jeff: a tall thin man... I wanted any old name. And I added Richard [French slang for moneybags]. That’s not a bad name for a *pissotière*. Get it? The opposite of poverty. But not even that much, just R.MUTT.” (Camfield 1989, p. 23.)

to the audience, to other territory: artworks that are *not* depictions of nudes.

However, in response to my interpretation of Duchamp's *Fountain*, one might think such a readymade would fail to be genuine artwork on *Hegelian grounds*. There seems to be reason to suppose that Hegel would regard Duchamp as visual art's version of Jean Paul Richter, if we recall the passage from Hegel's *Lectures* in which he is caustically critical of modern satirical humour:

So with us Jean Paul, e.g., is a favourite humourist, and yet he is astonishing, beyond everyone else, precisely in the baroque mustering of things objectively furthest removed from one another and in the most confused disorderly jumbling of topics related only in his own subjective imagination. The story, the subject-matter and course of events in his novels, is what is of the least interest. The main thing remains the hither and thither course of the humour which uses every topic only to emphasise the subjective wit of the author. In thus drawing together and concatenating material raked up from the four corners of the earth and every sphere of reality, humour turns back, as it were, to symbolism where meaning and shape likewise lie apart from one another, except that now it is the mere subjective activity of the poet which commands material and meaning alike and strings them together in an order alien to them.

From a Hegelian perspective, the problem with Duchamp's readymade is that, as with Richter's works, it hardly appears to provide us with the resources to *feel at home in the world*.⁴⁹ As a work of irony and satirical critique, *Fountain* expresses Duchamp's fundamental *detachment* from the community and illustrates his eagerness to stand back and criticise. If anything, then, *Fountain* appears to *confirm* Beiser's interpretation of Hegel: for Hegel, modern aesthetic practice means that modern artwork has merely individual significance.

However, I think the appeal to Hegel here is misplaced: my

⁴⁹ To quote Hegel here: "art does not need any longer to represent only what is absolutely at home at one of its specific stages, but everything in which man as such is capable of being at home" (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 607).

objection to the claim that Duchamp's readymade hardly appears to provide us with the resources to feel at home in the world is that the way in which the critic of Duchamp articulates at-homeness is rather *un-Hegelian*. The *Hegelian* concept of at-homeness in the world consists in making a non-anthropocentric order rationally intelligible to human mindedness and our cognitive endeavours of critically understanding our world. The kind of rationality we exhibit when we develop our cultural agency is one which recognises the need to *cope* with the variety of unpleasant and harmful things in the world. Crucially, though, *pace* the critic of Duchamp, this does not mean that human mindedness adopts a jocund Panglossian attitude. On the contrary, it means that we are compelled to find genuinely meaningful reasons to conceive of the world as *rationally intelligible*, not because the intelligible structure of the world illustrates that we can know everything about the world if we exercise our conceptual capacities in the best possible way, but because our critical rationality enables us to think *and* feel that we can make sense of things by continuously playing the game of giving and asking for reasons. Such a practice, to use Richard Rorty's expression, widens the 'conversations' between enquirers thereby enabling ideas to improve by undergoing "further assessment, challenge, defence, and correction".⁵⁰

Crucially, by virtue of being a form of intelligibility in late modernity, art has become a *communally reflective practice*, where artwork functions to stimulate continuous dialogue as part of the effort of *Geist* to realise autonomy.⁵¹ *Fountain* is an instance of individual artistic creativity and ingenuity through its obvious rejection of various norms and has *cultural* significance partly *because* Duchamp creates his own content: crucially, and this is where I think Beiser makes a mistake, for Hegel, the

⁵⁰ Brandom 1994, p. 647.

⁵¹ This way of understanding art from a Hegelian perspective has similarities to what Gehlen construes as *Kommentarbedürftigkeit* and *Bildrationalität*. As Arnfinn Bø-Rygg writes: "Gehlen sees the history of painting as 'reflective art'. With modern painting of the early twentieth century ... 'readable' significance disappeared from the picture itself and was replaced with a necessary linked commentary ... The role of the commentary is to answer the audience's foremost question of the artwork: what does it mean? Modern self-reflective art seems to require the aesthetic discourse as an integral part of itself". (Bø-Rygg 2004, p. 39) Cf. Gehlen (1960).

impetus of the postromantic and modern aesthetic movement to break with tradition and create its own content does *not* mean that individual and community are thereby alienated from one another. Rather, on the Hegelian account, it means that individual and community must be conceived of in a *dialectical* relation: the interruption of dogmatic slumbers by means of fostering *discourse* on normative commitments is a necessary feature of the actualisation of reason in the world, helping us feel ‘at home in the world’. Such actualisation necessarily requires the *initial* hostility between individual and community and the *movement from hostility to reconciliation*.

However, in response, someone may claim that I have neglected aspects of Beiser’s interpretation of Hegel’s meta-aesthetical position which in fact appear to *give credence* to what I have been arguing Hegel is proposing:

Hegel calls it *Reflexionskultur*, where ‘reflection’ means our power of critical and abstract thinking. Such a culture is not conducive to art, he explains, because art addresses our sensibility, but we want to express truth in abstract form, in terms of laws, rules and maxims ... The whole of modern culture is more appropriate to aesthetics, to thinking about art rather than artistic production itself.⁵²

The problem, though, with this possible reply to my account is that (i) Beiser’s notion of *Reflexionskultur* seems to commit Hegel to regarding rational activity *exclusively* in terms of the specific kind of inferential patterns definitive of *analytical* thinking, namely the kind of thinking symptomatic of *Verstand*. However, central to Hegelianism is a committed opposition to treating the nomothetic qualities of the Laplacian model of rationality which *Verstand* instantiates most explicitly as exhaustive of critical thinking. This is because Hegel places significant emphasis on the *dialectical* function of *Vernunft*, which does *not* conceive of discursive thinking in abstract formal terms, as “a detached critical reason”.⁵³

⁵² Beiser 2005, p. 304.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

Distinguishing understanding and reason is not just necessary for the purposes of overcoming the debilitating dualisms brought by thinking *exclusively* from the perspective of the understanding, it is also necessary for seeing why aesthetic experience cannot be adequately made sense of if understood in a purely formal or algorithmical way. For Hegel, this is partly what is so significant about the intellectual aspect of postromantic art, how the cognitive dimensions of aesthetic representation are meant to appeal to sensibility *and* judgement. In this way, there is a significant difference between my account and Beiser's, because when Beiser writes "[w]hat the modern individual ultimately needed was an explanation, a reason, not an allegory, a novel or a play",⁵⁴ he appears to claim that works of art do not exhibit any kind of inferential or normative properties. However, in contrast to Beiser's interpretation of Hegel and modernity, I have argued that art is one of our practices which perform the function of rational criticism and reflection.

(ii) Beiser's notion of *Reflexionskultur* appears to claim that there is a strict distinction between *thinking about art* and *artistic production itself*, seemingly to the extent that to think about art is not part of artistic production. However, I do not think there is any compelling reason to think such a distinction is plausible, since the relationship between modernity and art on Hegel's picture is conceived in terms of explicating the ways in which forms of intelligibility are revealed in the *work* of art itself. In other words, according to Hegel, the modern era brings about second-order reflecting on the medium of art as being a necessary feature of artwork itself.

A potential critic may well concede that aspects of Beiser's interpretation do not give credence to my particular reading of Hegel's vision of postromantic art. However, the most trenchant objection to what I have argued may be expressed in the following way: art-as-beautiful told the subject of a possible reconciliation of subject and object. With the onset of modernity, one asks where this intimation goes now. According to Hegel's social philosophy, the answer is to be found in the mediation of social actors and play of recognition. But, what makes art distinctive *and different to*

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 306.

philosophy is its concern with beauty, where it is *exactly that* which has been lost by art, as art is *now* conceptual. As such, it is not much of an issue as to whether art now has a social role any more, *or* just an individual one. In other words, even if I am right to reject Beiser's claim that Hegel believes postromantic art is merely a vehicle for individual self-expression, the idea of *reflective aesthetics* really does seem to mean art is a thing of the past, since "[a]rt invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (*Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, 1: 11). So, while I may have successfully argued that art is about more than a vehicle for self-expression, whether that would satisfy aficionados of art as traditionally conceived is unclear.

Moreover, another question that could be addressed in such a manner concerns the conceptual work art does vis-à-vis the work of the Concept in philosophical reflection. What I have argued involves regarding art in modernity as providing some people who either lack the capacity for or appeal of *philosophical* treatments of the Concept with "sensible-affective",⁵⁵ *non-philosophical* ways of being sensitive to *normativity*. For example, there could very well be a multitude of people who can immediately cognitively relate to Duchamp's *Fountain* and its intellectual dimension but who cannot cognitively relate to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, if *this* is all that art does in the modern age, then how can one claim that art still has *geistig* relevance? Art as remedial philosophy would precisely constitute a reason for saying that art has reached an end or is *für uns ein Vergangenes*.

As I understand Hegel's meta-aesthetical position, art is the means through which the Concept is *expressed* visually and audibly. The Concept is expressed visually in the media of painting, architecture, sculpture, and subsequently photography and film; whilst the Concept is expressed audibly in music. In this way, art is a *living embodiment of concepts*. However, given the difference between art and philosophy in terms of how they respectively make sense of things, I think it would be incorrect to suppose that art and philosophy should be understood in terms of a *geistig* hierarchy.

⁵⁵ Pippin 2014, p. 3.

This is because the way in which art makes sense of things is so *different* to the way in which philosophy makes sense of things: conceived in this way, one ought not to regard art and philosophy as rival forms of intelligibility competing with one another to best satisfy our desire for understanding our world. On the contrary, they should be seen as complementary reflective practices, practices which are jointly indispensable for adequately and holistically engaging with our environment. Not only that, part of what makes art *sui generis* and axiologically significant is how art enables Spirit to understand itself: philosophical reflection on our discursivity illuminates the particular kind of epistemic architecture we have for experiencing the world from our human perspective. However, what art does is express the *freedom* that is constitutive of *Geistigkeit* in terms of the multiplicity of created *works*; and, for Hegel, such expression is definitive of *beauty*. In true dialectical fashion, the onset of modernity and *Reflexionskultur* is a moment of the *Aufhebung* of art, because we have transitioned from *one* form of beauty to another. While art no longer satisfies our highest needs, because it has emerged from the shadows of our religious life, as Houlgate writes, “art in modernity continues to perform the significant function of giving visible and audible expression to our distinctively human freedom and to our understanding of ourselves in all our finite humanity”.⁵⁶ Understood in this way, one should see Hegel as claiming: ‘Art is dead. Long live art’.

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⁵⁶ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics/>

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Conserving the Original: Authenticity in Art Restoration

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ABSTRACT. Over the past few decades debates in the field of conservation have called into question the suppositions underpinning contemporary restoration theory and practice. Restorers seem to base their choices in the light of implicit ideas about the authenticity, identity and value of works of art, ideas that need to undergo a more systematic theoretical evaluation. I begin by focusing on the question of whether authenticity is fully established in the process of the creation of an artwork: namely, at its initial point of existence. If the answer is affirmative (1), we commit to the idea that authenticity is determined by the work's creator; thus, it is considered a given, exempt from historical flux. If the answer is negative (2), we take authenticity to be a combination of initial creation and temporal change; in this sense the work is considered a 'historical being'. These two conceptions come from opposite ontological perspectives on the identity of artworks. In examining them we will gain insight into how different conservation narratives can be considered and configured in conceptual terms. One's interpretation of what makes an artwork authentic will greatly influence how to go about preserving or restoring it.

1. Introduction. Two Paradigms in the Theory of Restoration

In 1816 Antonio Canova famously refused to restore the fragmentary Pantheon Frieze Lord Elgin had recently brought to England. In an attempt to have the statues and bas-reliefs retouched, Lord Elgin went to Rome to consult with the renowned artist, but Canova flatly declined. After examining the samples and acquainting himself with the entire collection, Canova declared that however badly these statues had suffered from time

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and barbarism, no one, not even he, could improve on the style of the original artist. “It would be sacrilege in him or any man to presume to touch them with a chisel”, he claimed. Canova’s reaction went against the convention of fully restoring antique sculptures prevailing at the time. His refusal was based on two fundamental principles: on the one hand, the necessity to preserve the authentic work of art by maintaining the aura of the artist’s authorship, whose mastery, Canova claimed, “testified the perfection to which art had advanced under Phidias among the ancients”², on the other, the acceptance of damage incurred since the work’s conception, inasmuch as physical evidence of the work’s history conveys its authenticity.

In that same year, the Danish sculptor and collector Bertel Thorvaldsen completely restored the sculptures of the pediment of the *Temple of Aphaia* at Aegina (Greece), now belonging to the *Glyptothek* in Munich, including the addition of modern replacements of heads, drapery and armor, and completion of missing sections. As early as the late 19th century, these restorations were the subject of much controversy and were finally removed between 1963 and 1965, with a few critics arguing that the deletion of Thorvaldsen’s additions sacrificed a nineteenth-century complex *Gesamtkunstwerk* for the sake of an ancient past.

Canova and Thorvaldsen’s views exemplify opposing paradigms that have alternately informed restoration theory and practice since its 19th century inception: the absolute need to preserve the integrity of the original to assure the work’s authenticity and the belief that the authenticity of a work is not established once and for all at the point of its inception. These paradigmatic perspectives can be expressed (and I refer to Ami Harbin 2008, on this) as ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ view of authenticity, and invoke a familiar ontological dispute on whether an artwork is different from the physical object that it is.

In this paper, I argue that, upon examination, both paradigms prove to be defective in terms of restoration. They may, however, give us insights into how different restoration narratives and ethics can be re-thought and re-configured in conceptual terms.

² Quoted in: Griffiths 1811, 277.

2. Restoration and Authenticity

Works of art are (among many other things) pieces of material testimony. They are fragments of the puzzle that is art history, and actors as much as witnesses. To fight against artworks' inevitable material degradation, preservation science, through conservation and restoration, is in charge of their up-keep. Conservation aims to prevent damage to a piece, and to reinforce it for the future; it safeguards the object in its current state by stabilizing it and preserving its integrity. Restoration actually alters the physical state of a work by rebuilding, repairing, repainting, or generally re-perfecting it, the main ambition being to restore the piece to its ideal state³. Restoration is thus much more controversial than conservation. If the distinction between natural aging and damage isn't vague, it is absolutely unclear what the *ideal* state of an artwork can be. The complexity of the matter explains why a consensus on an all-embracing definition of restoration has not yet been reached. As conservators Richmond and Bracker claim, the past few decades have indeed witnessed increasing discomfort within the profession with what appears to be a lack of rigorous self-analysis: conservation today needs to re-evaluate itself and acknowledge its need to engage in greater intellectual dialogue outside of the profession (Richmond & Bracker 2009, p. 15).

Out of the many theoretical questions that arise after a more thorough consideration of restoration (questions of ethics and aesthetics, as well as more specific notions on the identity of works of art) I begin by addressing one particular philosophical issue par excellence. My question is simple but the answer isn't: How far can restorers retouch without affecting the authenticity of a work of art? Any attempt to answer this question requires a study of the limits of restoration. However, it first requires an understanding of the significance of 'authenticity', and what it means to restorers, artists, and society as a whole.

³ After the 15th Triennial Conference held in September 2008, the International Council of Museums Committee of Conservation (ICOM-CC) adopted a resolution on a terminology which defines the term 'restoration' as a part of conservation (see: <http://www.icom-cc.org/242/about/terminology-for-conservation>).

2.1 Authenticity: Static or Dynamic?

The issue of authenticity is of doubtless relevance to philosophy. We find reference to ‘authenticity’, ‘being authentic to oneself’, ‘living authentically’ in ethics and political philosophy throughout the entire history of thought: from ancient Greece, throughout the Enlightenment, to existentialists and contemporary social theorists. Although these views on authenticity vary, the common theme of authenticity is a constant as an ideal that affects social, moral and political thinking and does not allow for degrees. Despite the varied contexts in which the term ‘authentic’ is applied in philosophy, there seem to be two broad categories. Either it is used in the strong sense of being ‘of undisputed origin or authorship’, or in the weaker sense of being ‘faithful to an original’ or a ‘reliable, accurate representation’. In other words, to say that something is authentic is to say that it is what it professes to be, or what it is reputed to be, in origin or authorship.

This consideration is particularly relevant to the debate on authenticity in the philosophy of art. As Dennis Dutton (2003) notes, in the philosophical literature authenticity has been mainly compared to ‘falsity’ or ‘fakery’, thus with forgeries and plagiarism. Authenticity is a much broader issue, however, than that of simply recognizing fakery in the arts. Mark Sagoff (1978a) believes authenticity to be a *necessary condition* for the correct appreciation and evaluation of a piece of art: “I wish to suggest that authenticity is a necessary condition of aesthetic value. One cannot appreciate a work of art simply for the sake of its appearance or for the feelings it induces: the identity of the object is crucial to its value; one must appreciate the work itself.” (Sagoff 1978a, p. 453) Establishing the authenticity of a work of art, according to Sagoff, is to consider it unique, and this feature of uniqueness is essential to aesthetic judgment. Simply stated, the aesthetic value and significance of a work of art can only be assessed if its authenticity has been correctly determined.

But how do we determine authenticity? Of course, the first step is to study the history of the object and to identify its creator and provenance, what Dutton calls the object’s *nominal authenticity* (Dutton 2003, p. 326).

Identifying a work's 'nominal authenticity' involves making sense of it according to what he calls its original 'canon of criticism':

What did it mean to its creator? How was it related to the cultural context of its creation? To what established genre did it belong? What could its original audience have been expected to make of it? What would they have found engaging or important about it? These questions are often framed in terms of artists' intentions, which will in part determine and constitute the identity of a work; and intentions can arise and be understood only in a social context and at a historical time. External context and artistic intention are thus intrinsically related." (Dutton 2003, p. 327).

Nominal authenticity - what is usually referred to as provenance - may be impossible to determine in many cases, but where it is possible, Dutton claims, it is a clear empirical discovery, having to do with 'cut-and-dried fact' (Dutton 2003, p. 336).

However, the matter may be more contentious than that. One issue is whether nominal authenticity is fully established in the process of the act of creation, at the work's initial point of existence. Our answer to this question determines which theory of restoration we are apt to.

(1) If our answer is affirmative we commit to the idea that authenticity is totally determined by the work's creator. An artwork's development finishes when the creative act is completed. But given that – after this initial point of existence – its identity is constantly threatened over time, as it is subjected to wear or damage, our job is to do our best to preserve its original state in the midst of potentially dangerous external influences. In my view this kind of thinking is behind a subtler philosophical concept concerning the temporality of the artwork. The technical and contextual features of an artwork are authentic insofar as they remain *constant*, that is, insofar as they can ensure its unique nature. Authenticity is thus taken to be, so to say, a universal given, exempt from historical flux; after its creation the authenticity of an artwork remains *static*.

(2) If our answer is negative we commit to the view that authenticity

is something that ties initial creation *and* temporal changes together. The social and historical context in which an artwork is created is expanded, so to say, so as to include the entire duration of the artwork's existence. As long as the artwork exists, from this point of view, its authenticity is *dynamic* and subject to an ongoing process of development. In this sense, one considers damage and change as elements that *confirm* authenticity more than threaten it. They are evidence of the work's history, and can be thought of as significant parts of its 'life', crucial components of its historicity⁴.

3. A Question of Identity

Choosing between (1) and (2) is a question of metaphysics. In fact, our conception of authenticity depends directly on the ontological framework in which an art object is cataloged: should the ontological framework shift, then so too should our concept of authenticity (see: Laurenson 2006). The reasons are easily stateable. First we have something, a substance, that remains the same entity though its properties have changed, so we need a way of identifying that selfsame thing – that enduring entity which has changed; for otherwise speaking of change would be impossible. Secondly, we are confronted with an important ontological distinction between a material object and an artwork. Is the notion of 'artwork' to be disengaged from that of the physical object in which it is embodied, namely, from the characteristics of the material thing the work is (the specific properties, features and constituents of the material)? Determining this distinction is crucial if we are to understand the precise nature of an artwork's authenticity.

By considering an artwork's authenticity as ultimately defined at the point of creation, as in (1), we are reducing the notion of artwork to the *physical object* it is. Any material alteration to this object is thus considered

⁴ Modern approach and opinion on the subject would seem to promote the latter position. The Venice Charter, for example, establishes an approach to restoration that is concerned with the living history of the artwork. This living history is protected as witnessing the artwork's authenticity. However, the alternative view has not died out.

as an unwelcome and (hopefully) avoidable threat. Ontologically, this is because the *work-identity* is regarded as coextensive to the *object-identity*, and consequently all changes in the physical structure of the object as potential damage to the persistence of the work. Focus on the object implies special attention on the physical state of the work and its original material conformation. This position is consistent with what Wollheim famously called the ‘physical object hypothesis’:

This theory is to the effect that in those arts where the work of art is an individual, i.e. painting, carved sculpture, and possibly architecture [...] the work of art is really identical with, or is merely constitutively identical with or made of the same stuff as, some physical object (Wollheim 1980, p. 177).

Conversely, in taking the artwork’s authenticity as time-resistant, as in (2), we are leaning towards regarding artworks more as *historical beings* than material objects. Though we may acknowledge the relevance of an artwork’s origins, we also accept its extended, ongoing, temporality as essential to its identity. Indeed, if artworks are taken as ‘individuals’ distinguished in essence from the material they are composed of, they can be seen as experiencing change and alteration as part of their normal life. In considering artworks in this way, we consider history a significant part of their identity. Beginning with its creation and the elements that at that time went into establishing its authenticity (e.g., characteristic techniques of the era or the artist or the geographical sources of the materials used), the life of the artwork extends over time. As temporally situated objects, artworks are thus like *organisms*, which change as they mature. They are like ‘living beings’, whose identity – like that of human beings who experience mutation as part of our normal life – is distinguished in essence from the physical material they are composed of. The same plant is first just a small one, then grows to maturity, and then declines: yet, its identity is not jeopardized by these changes. Guy Rohrbaugh has famously proposed a sympathetic account, based on the recognition of three fundamental features that artworks share (modal flexibility; temporal flexibility; temporality). “To

put it crudely”, Rohrbaugh states, “instead of thinking of a work of art as identical to a certain form or structure, we should think of artworks as *objects in and persisting through history*, ones which merely have a certain form” since, “all of these things come into and go out of existence, change, interact with other historical individuals, and could have been otherwise had their histories gone differently” (Rohrbaugh 2003, p. 178-9, *emphasis added*).

These two perspectives can also be understood in terms of the difference between an ‘active’ and a ‘passive’ notion of artwork (Harbin 2008). The first sees the artwork as having a kind of ‘life of its own’, and therefore more likely to benefit from the passage of time, to exhibit relevant novelty, to have an extended period of social influence. A passive notion of artwork sees it more like an inanimate object which is created, observed, preserved, maintained or damaged by means of external forces. Therefore, it is less likely to flourish over time, and even less to *endure* over time.

The important point, however, is that opposing interpretations of an artwork’s identity impinge directly on conceptions of its authenticity; and the way in which an artwork is treated by the social and aesthetic community – including interventions of conservation and restoration – differs significantly according to how its authenticity is viewed.

If we defend (1) we opt for what I have referred to as ‘Thorvaldsen’s paradigm’. The authenticity of the work is seen in this view as ultimately defined at the point of creation, thus concerted effort is made to restore what is perceived to be the original and hence desirable nature of the material object. Since the artwork coincides with the object it is, the only way to preserve it is by reestablishing its original features, to bring it back to the way it was at the time of creation. This involves imagining artworks as they were at the time of completion, as if we could step into a time machine; philosophically, it draws on the idealistic idea that artworks are a-temporal entities, only contingently related to the material objects that constitute them, something outside of reality, like Platonic forms (see: Carrier 2009). Restorers take on the role of the artist, as Thorvaldsen himself did. However, while ideally trying to return a work to its original condition, they may create an historical falsification. In rebuilding parts of the *Aphaia*

Temple, Thorvaldsen merged the old and the new and created a mixture of unauthentic and authentic elements, producing an overall sensation of inauthenticity. This type of restoration can therefore diminish a work's authenticity rather than preserve it.

If we defend (2) we go along with Canova in favor of the conservation of the current *status quo* of the work. When authenticity is understood as including the whole 'life' of a work, then interventions are aimed at preserving what remains, limiting our actions to the avoidance of deterioration. We regard works as historical documents, whose value is considered to reside primarily in their age: the greater the age, the greater the value, the greater their authenticity. However, this concept is only viable in the case of archeological artifacts and ancient works of art such as the Pantheon Frieze. It can hardly apply to other works of art. Indeed, we cannot always view a work of art as if it were a document, an occurrence in history. More than simply vestiges from the past, artworks are also and primarily objects of aesthetic appreciation – and it is the aim of restoration to preserve this aesthetic characteristic⁵.

Does all this mean that we must inevitably choose between admiring an artwork for its historic value and completely restoring it so that its artistic value is intact? I don't think so. No available evidence shows that one of these procedures is correct.

We can gain relevant insight from the Italian art theorist and philosopher Cesare Brandi, author of one of the most influential works on heritage conservation theory worldwide. In his *Theory of Restoration*, Brandi argues that the work of art always offers itself in a twofold way. It has an impact on the viewer both as an artistic exemplar, with unique aesthetic features and properties, and as an historical document of human history. The aesthetic value of the artwork is what Brandi calls the *istanza estetica* (this term has been translated as 'aesthetic case' (Brandi 2005), but can also be read as 'aesthetic demand'). Brandi considers aesthetic value to be the most important criterion for conservation in most cases. When the signs of time on a given piece of art compromise its aesthetic value and

⁵ This was already foreseen by Alois Riegl (1903).

appreciation they must indeed be removed in the conservation process: “if the addition disturbs, perverts, conceals or hides the artwork to some extent, it is clear that this addition must be removed” (Brandi 2005, p. 73).

However, aesthetic demands need not always prevail. The *istanza storica* (i.e., roughly, the historical value of the artwork) may take precedence: it is the conservator, or the decision-maker, who needs to make a value judgement about the prevalence of one case over another (Brandi 2005, p. 74). Balancing aesthetic and historic demands is crucial to conservation: “The relationship between both cases represents the dialectics of conservation” (Brandi 2005, p. 50), thus the two-fold identity of artworks should never be overlooked.

4. Authenticity of the Object, Authenticity of the Image

Since arguments for preserving either the aesthetic value of an object or its age are inconclusive, a productive way to continue the discussion is to reflect on the deeper notions at play.

Brandi in this regard makes another useful distinction between the material and visible structure of an artwork and what he calls ‘*l’immagine*’, the image of the work. The artist, he states, creates a material structure with a certain visible appearance to convey her/his elected image. In the case of an altarpiece, the wood panel is the structure whose visible appearance – the picture – transmits (but does not coincide with⁶) the work’s *image*. The material object is but a “vehicle for an image’s epiphany” (Brandi 2005, p. 51). Unfortunately, the *Theory* offers little clarification as to the precise meaning of the term ‘image’: to understand it one should refer to the philosophical context in which the book was written – many of the terms used can be traced back to existentialist philosophy– and read other works by Brandi on aesthetics (see: Muñoz Viñas 2015). In a nutshell we can say that the term ‘image’ for Brandi epitomizes not only the figurative feature of a work of art, namely, its representational content, but also the phenomenological perception we have of it. The image is what really needs

⁶ The appearance can roughly be defined as the visible feature of the material.

to be preserved, as it constitutes the *essence* of the work.

The distinction between image and structure leaves us with the following question: is it the aim of restoration to preserve the *material* of an artwork, which changes over time, or should the restorer seek rather to preserve its *image*? Indeed, it seems that to preserve a work's image, we must preserve its *effect*, which is not the same thing as preserving the object itself.

This leads us to formulate yet a further difference between *authenticity of an object* as opposed to *authenticity of an image*. Perhaps in the end authenticity does not actually have much to do with the fact that a given physical object has been left untouched by *the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*. Indeed, authenticity may not simply lie within the physical realm.

One reason for this is that the way we perceive art objects depends on our experience of other art that the artist or her/his coevals could never know (see: Carrier 2009, p. 205). In order to view a 17th century painting unchanged, we would have to know how an educated audience of the time would have perceived it, learn much which they would have found obvious, and forget in the meanwhile what we know about later art history. Another related reason is that changes in context can change how we see a work. When an altarpiece is moved from a church to a museum and placed near modern secular art, it looks different. Its context has changed: people no longer pray before it. It has become a work of art. The material object has survived, but in a new context it now looks and is looked at in a different way. Its image has thus changed.

These arguments may lead to the following conclusion: even if an artifact is perfectly preserved, its authentic image will still be lost to us, because we bring to the work very different attitudes and expectations.

We can push this skepticism even further. Artworks are not just isolated physical objects, but things that were created to be in particular sites. Architectural works, for instance, have a special rapport with the environment in which they are set – they are “things with a habitat”, so to speak. Yet, if all artworks are to be considered site-specific, at least to a certain extent, it is impossible for them to be preserved without their

surroundings being preserved as well. Hence, isolating an artwork from its original context means falsifying it⁷. But if interaction with the surrounding context has such a strong impact on a work's identity, it follows that most attempts to safeguard authenticity (by 'musealizing' an object, for example) are condemned to failure *a priori*. Maintaining authenticity may turn out to be an impossible task. In the absence of a reliable claim for preserving authenticity, however, restoration becomes a matter of personal taste, subjective, and leads to conventional options. To avoid jumping to this relativist conclusion, we need to step back and consider the question of the ontological identity of artworks.

5. Artworks, Social Objects and Continuity

There is something appealing, I must admit, about the idea of works of art being like individual living beings, as suggested in (2). Like living beings, artworks are born, grow to maturity, and (sometimes) die. Indeed, it seems that we *are* more inclined to consider artworks living beings than other ordinary objects. This explains why one of our most common attitudes toward artworks is that we are unwilling to accept replacements for them. Like humans, we believe that works of art are valuable in a distinctive way, *per se*, and thus irreplaceable. If we lose a pencil, a replacement is precisely what we want, and inconvenience aside, we feel no regret since most pencils are of equal value to us, and thus perfectly interchangeable. But imagine if we were to lose one of our friends: we would never accept the idea of a replacement, since people are unique and irreplaceable for us. *Mutatis mutandis*, something similar goes for artworks like Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, van Gogh's *De Sterrennacht* or Picasso's *Guernica*.

However, though we actually tend to think about works of art as being infused with an essential humanness or spirit⁸, the analogy between

⁷An ancient temple now a few meters from a shopping center; a church next to a busy crossroads: we are on a slippery slope here. How far can we go?

⁸ Cf. with Newman, G.E., D.M. Bartels and R.K. Smith (2014). The authors of this recent empirical study argue that people's reasoning about art persistence over time is related to judgments about the persistence of individual persons, because art objects are

artworks and living organisms is not tenable metaphysically speaking. In the first place, artworks do not contain an intrinsic plan of development, do not grow and age according to a 'genetic' design, as natural organisms do. Aristotle has an effective way of stating this: the term 'nature' he claims, cannot be referred to artifacts, since 'nature' refers to the inner source of cause and change, while artifacts, apart from the nature of the matter that composes them, lack inner principles of change and rest (*Metaphysics* 192b13-23). Secondly, and more relevantly to our discussion, it is an empirical fact that while a person can continue to exist despite radical changes in her/his physical qualities, because a crucial element of identity is memory or permanence of consciousness, the same cannot be said of artworks (see: Carrier 2009). Artworks are not that sort of things.

Within the range of options conventionally considered by metaphysicians, a more promising one is to consider artworks as social entities rather than physical objects or living beings. The notion of *social object* notably comes from John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995), in which the term 'object' is used in the broadest possible sense to include all individual things, powers, and relations that depend for their very existence on human institutions and on a 'collective intentionality'. As opposed to physical objects, social entities in Searle's sense – like states, institutions, organizations – can survive change if there is sufficient continuity. Contemporary Italy is the same country it was under the rule of King Vittorio Emanuele II in 1861, though it is now a democracy and its borders have changed somewhat, whereas the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies ceased to exist when it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy and the last Bourbon king was deposed. We can say that only in the first case is there sufficient *continuity* for the object to have survived the radical changes it underwent. Assuming the analogy between artworks and social objects to be consistent, this leads yet to the question as to how we can measure continuity, and, more interestingly for the theory of restoration, how we can preserve it.

One possible answer is that gradual deterioration over time does not

seen as physical extensions of their creators. The mere categorization of an object as 'art' versus 'a tool' changes the way people think the temporal continuity of those objects.

threaten the continuity of an artwork's existence as long as the original aesthetic arrangement of lines and colors – what Brandi would refer to as 'the potential formal unity of the work of art' – is still *readable*. In this sense, the main aim of restoration would be to (strive to) preserve continuity by facilitating the *readability* of artworks. Readability indeed rests at the foundation of restoration policies worldwide. As clearly asserted by Jean-Pierre Mohen, Director of the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France: "Readability is becoming an extremely important notion. It guarantees the authenticity of the artwork, its state of conservation and its capacity to transmit its aesthetic and cultural message." (*Le Monde des Débats*, Sept. 2000, quoted in Beck 2001, p. 1)⁹

Though a somewhat vague goal for conservators, the notion of readability interestingly invokes one of Brandi's core ideas in the *Theory*, namely, that restoration is in its essence a "critical act" of understanding and interpretation of the work that is not verbal but expressed concretely in the actions carried out. As we have learned, according to Brandi's phenomenological account, a work's image exists not only as a visible entity, but as an element of our perception: thus, the importance of restoration as a critical and interpretative act consists primarily in the impact it has on the way the image is perceived, considered and remembered. Just as literary texts are translated and retranslated, and each new version succeeds as long as it reveals something new – and refrains from placing a claim on absolute authenticity – the same goes for the conservation and restoration of works of art.

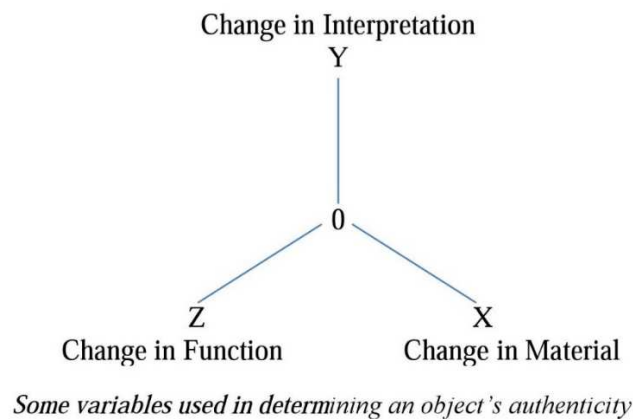
Safeguarding authenticity in conservation thus goes hand in hand with preserving a work's continuity through enhancing its structural and aesthetic legibility and meaning. Although restoration intervenes on the physical substance of an object, its ultimate goal is not to preserve the material aspect of the object but to retain or improve the meaning it has for viewers. This is why the contextual, functional and evaluative aspects of a work of art, that determine what makes it 'authentic', require careful

⁹ « La lisibilité devient donc une notion extrêmement importante. Elle est garante de la part de l'authenticité de l'œuvre, de son état de conservation et de sa capacité à transmettre son message esthétique et culturel ».

consideration.

6. Authenticity Revised

These considerations guide us to reframe our initial question on authenticity. A diagram proposed by art conservator Jonathan Kemp (2009) might be useful in this regard. Kemp's thesis is that every work of art can be hypothetically plotted at any given time between three temporal axes, where each axis describes variables stemming from an (ideal) 'ground zero' of an object's origin. The z-axis represents significant change in an object's function, the y-axis represents change in how the object is interpreted and the x-axis represents change in the original materials.



The point of this diagram is to show that sense about the authenticity of an artwork is always going to be: “a ride along a trajectory from which, at any one point, the object will have stronger or weaker genealogical links to its origins” (Kemp 2009, p. 65). Changes in multiple axes give each object a unique topology, with its boundaries closer or farther away from its ‘impossible-to-return-to’ ground zero. When art objects are plotted along the given axes, it becomes clear that they “don’t fit into the *either/or* categories

of being authentic or non-authentic” (Kemp 2009, p. 65).

In many cases it is doubtful whether one can identify any particular component as the *locus* of authenticity in the sense of ‘original object’. Kemp gives us the example of a panel of stained glass in a medieval cathedral. There is very little original glass and even less original lead, because “return to a design that is known has been a regular conservation process until at least the 1990s – yet can still be described as being authentic” (Kemp 2009, p. 64-65).

Once the notion of authenticity is ‘vectorized’ in Kemp’s sense, it becomes more evident that the choices conservators, curators and other stake-holders make modify the coordinates of a work at any given time. Artworks indeed cannot maintain the same coordinates throughout their lifetime, and neither can objects in a museum, since their topology invariably changes whenever they are maintained and redisplayed. Even works that remain in their original context – such as the painted glass in the cathedral – will change as they deteriorate or are re-used in some way in the future.

The suggestion here is that the concept of authenticity is far more complex than it seems to be for *any* kind of artwork (say, for artworks which remains in their original site as well as for those which enter in a museum collection etc.). This is essentially because, as Kemp’s diagram helps us understand, *all* autographic works have an allographic component from the point of view of conservation theory. When the same piece of art is considered from two different moments in its history, each moment can be viewed, to a certain extent, as an instance of the work plotted by a different topology in the diagram; this means that its qualities necessarily differ one from the other, yet each is to be considered ‘that work of art’. Authenticity thus becomes a function of the “accuracy with which the present cultural apparatus plots an object and provides a full commentary on how its particular interpretation relates to that of its predecessors” (Kemp 2009, p. 65). This switches the focus from the condition of the material of the original artwork to documentation, the use of which – just as in the case of allographic works of art – ensures multiple authentic instances of a work (see: Goodman, 1968). The fact that conservation’s methodological

efficiency must rely on documentation was one of Brandi's contentions, allowing for the possibility of the complete reversibility of any conservation intervention; and this represented a key ethical principle for him. Any material evidence of the changes made on a piece of art (removed, re-perfected or re-arranged material etc.) must be archived and should always be accompanied by written documentation, since "together they serve as a proof to the practice of art restoration and its principles" (see: Hoeniger 2009, p.101). But documentation not only provides a record of the decision-making process on the part of conservators so that future custodians can reverse the process, it also sketches the trajectory of the artwork toward one or the other vectors of the diagram, thus 'mapping' its authenticity.

Restoration can be redefined in this sense as a critical hypothesis that is, by definition, always modifiable, refuting an *either/or* polarization around the notion of authenticity/inauthenticity, material/artistic value and right/wrong interventions. If we treat authenticity as a win-or-lose affair, as some philosophers tend to do (see: Sagoff 1978a; 1978b), then we return to the diatribe between *istanza estetica* and *istanza storica*, with no clear argument for choosing one or the other. What makes restoration practices objective is not an aim to correspond to some controversial reconstruction of the original ground-zero of the work (just consider how complex the relation between function, interpretation, and material can be in different instances) but the fact that they attempt to preserve and transmit continuity, always keeping in mind the difficulty of understanding, defining and determining what constitutes authenticity in art.

7. Conclusions

These philosophical arguments may seem of marginal relevance to restorers, who must continue working while we philosophers go on talking. However, claiming that questions of restoration are merely conventional is unacceptable: the way conservation proceeds as a profession is determined by complex ideas about authenticity and identity of works of art. In fact, it is easy to understand why such philosophical debate will and should go on. It *will* go on because conservation work – when ambiguously planned – can

cause more damage than the natural process of deterioration. And it *should* go on because unless we believe these questions can find meaningful answers, conservation and restoration practices as we know them will not function.

One could argue that this is ultimately an ideological debate, the solution of which largely depends on the beliefs informing the views of the parties involved. It is my contention that though we probably have to accept the impossibility of a singular and objective theory on the care and preservation of works of art, this issue should excite rather than discourage widespread discussion. *Ars longa, philosophia perennis.*

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The Aesthetic Dimension of Moral Faith
On the Connection between Aesthetic Experience and the
Moral Proof of God in Immanuel Kant's Third Critique

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ABSTRACT. One of the most challenging doctrines in Immanuel Kant's philosophy is what has come to be known as his "moral theology" (aka: ethicotheology). In particular, there is much controversy about how to interpret Kant's moral argument for the existence of God, which underpins this doctrine. The vast majority of scholarly work on this argument relies on Kant's discussion of the postulates of practical reason in his 'First' and 'Second' *Critiques*, where he argues that although it is theoretically impossible to know or prove God, the postulate of God's existence is a necessary presupposition for our practical adherence to the moral law. In this paper, I propose a reexamination of the moral proof of God from the *aesthetic* standpoint as it is presented in Kant's 'Third Critique'. In particular, I focus on the feeling of "moral faith" by demonstrating its affinity with the aesthetic experience of beauty in nature.²

1. Introduction

One of the best-known questions Kant poses towards the end of the 'First Critique', which concludes his whole critical project, is "What may I hope?"³ The answer should constitute the fundamental condition for man's ability to act in the world in light of the moral ideal. Put differently, Kant argues that one must hope, as a *moral demand*, that the moral ideal, the Highest Good, is indeed a practical possibility. The point, which in itself is

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³ *Critique of Pure Reason* (CR), A805/B833.

interesting, if problematic, is that Kant links that practical possibility to the presupposition of the existence of God.

The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between the essential presupposition of God's existence and the ability to act morally from the *aesthetic* standpoint as presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. This examination is very different from the common interpretations of that relationship, which mostly refer to Kant's discussion of the postulates of practical reason as presented in his 'First' and 'Second' *Critiques*. There Kant argues that although it is theoretically impossible to know God, His idea having no corresponding object in the world, the postulate of God's existence plays an essential regulative role in giving unity and organization to the world. One problem arising from Kant's discussion of the postulates is connected precisely to this claim, that is, it is a practical rather than theoretical proof, which means that the actualization of the moral ideal becomes a matter of *faith* rather than knowledge.⁴

By focusing on the 'Third Critique', I wish to illuminate Kant's moral proof of God through the aesthetic prism, demonstrating the affinity between moral faith and the aesthetic experience of beauty in nature. My intention is to demonstrate the necessity of the latter for the ability to give

⁴ One of the most popular and amusing critiques on the practical status of Kant's moral proof of God is that of Heinrich Heine (*Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie*, 1834). With reference to Kant's refutations of the theoretical proofs of God's existence, he writes:

"Up to this point Immanuel Kant has pursued the path of inexorable philosophy; he has stormed heaven and put the whole garrison to the edge of the sword (...); Deity itself, deprived of demonstration, has succumbed; there is now no All-mercifulness, no fatherly kindness; no otherworld reward for renunciation in this world, the immortality of the soul lies in its last agony (...); and old Lampe [Kant's servant] is standing by with his umbrella under his arm, an afflicted spectator of the scene, tears and sweat-drops of terror dropping from his countenance. Then Immanuel Kant relents and shows that he is not merely a great philosopher but also a good man; he reflects, and half good-naturedly, half ironically, he says: 'old Lampe must have a God, otherwise the poor fellow can never be happy. Now man ought to be happy in this world; practical reason says so; - well, I am quite willing that practical reason should also guarantee the existence of God.' As the result of this argument, Kant distinguishes between the *theoretical reason* and the *practical reason*, and by means of the latter, as with a magician's wand, he revivifies deism, which theoretical reason had killed." Heine (1959, 119).

meaning to moral faith and, thus, to show that there is a sense where God can be inferred from our experience of such faith.

2. What Is “Moral Faith”? A General Overview from the ‘First’ to the ‘Third Critique’

In the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes his famous sentence, “I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*”.⁵ This sentence expresses Kant’s critical task of limiting knowledge to objects of possible experience and relating metaphysical ideas (such as that of God) to matters of *faith*. Such faith, however, it is not dogmatic but rather what Kant terms “rational faith” or “moral faith”.⁶ The question is how one can rationally believe, and what is the structure of such faith? That is, what are its transcendental conditions, and how is it constituted?

Kant opens by claiming that we *are* engaging in metaphysical speculations. It is a *fact* that belongs to human experience. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he talks of three ideas of pure reason,⁷ contending that although they do not have a constitutive role – since they do not have any possible matching object in experience and, consequently, cannot structure knowledge – they do all the same have a regulative function, serving, as they do, a heuristic end of guiding our thought and action.⁸ Three such regulative ideas are the postulates that Kant attributes to practical reason, namely: “*God, freedom and immortality*”.⁹ In spite of the fact that none relates to an object of empirical knowledge, Kant asserts that it is rational on our part to *postulate* them as “matters of rational faith”. Such rational faith can be expressed, *inter alia*, in a form of faith in God.

But how can we accept this position philosophically, especially in the context of Kant’s vehement opposition to every theological doctrine in

⁵ CR, BXXX.

⁶ See also “practical faith”, in: *Critique of Practical Reason (CPR)*, 5:126.

⁷ These three ideas are: the soul, the cosmos, and God.

⁸ CR, A180/B222.

⁹ CR, A3/B7.

the tradition of philosophy that purported to establish any knowledge of God?¹⁰ For we must attribute *some* kind of significance to God in order for Him to become an object (matter) of faith.¹¹

To answer this question, one must refer to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where Kant establishes faith as a postulate of practical reason that can be rationally justified by the argument known as the ‘moral argument’. Formulated very generally, the latter is based on Kant’s argument that we have a moral duty to promote the realization of the Highest Good, which is the perfect correlation between happiness and morality. Since there can be no moral duty that it is impossible to realize (for, according to Kantian terminology, the very definition of duty indicates possibility), it transpires that the Highest Good (according to its definition as a moral duty) can be realized. Nevertheless, there is no *rational* reason to believe that we *can* realize the Highest Good in this life. Yet, Kant still argues that there must be a *supersensible*, sufficient condition whose characteristics go beyond our own, a condition identifiable with God for our purposes, with which we can cooperate in achieving the Highest Good.¹²

It emerges that Kant morally sets the idea of God¹³ as an *essential hypothesis* or, put differently, as a matter of “rational faith”. So, the ‘moral argument’ is not speculative, but has a *practical* direction: God functions in it as a regulative idea that can constitute ‘matter’ for moral faith.

Now, if in the ‘Second Critique’ it is *morality* that leads Kant to the idea of God and of moral faith in Him, in the ‘Third Critique’ it is the *teleological order of the world*. One might say that the ‘Third Critique’ is translating the practical postulates of the ‘Second Critique’ into

¹⁰ CR, A592-614/B620-642; A620-636/B648-664.

¹¹ The idea is that our moral commitment does not simply depend on our automatic affirmation of God (or of the other postulates, for that matter), but that we need an act of *free* faith in order to fully realize our commitment to it. In other words, faith for Kant, unlike knowledge, has a practical function through which we more completely bind ourselves to morality. Hence, the significance we attribute to God, in this sense, is not located in intellectual reflection but in our *practical* lives. More on the practical meaning of faith in part 4 of this paper.

¹² This achievement of the Highest Good refers not only to our present life but also to afterlife.

¹³ As well as the immortality of the soul.

presuppositions that are internal to the capacity of judgment itself.¹⁴ Specifically, I would like to point out that Kant's account of the postulates from the 'Second Critique' is translated into the sphere of reflective judgment in the 'Third'. In the *dialectic* of the 'Second Critique', Kant frames the problem of the postulates in terms of the relation between the ultimate good of morality and the Highest Good. The ultimate good *is* morality, but the complete and Highest Good is the harmony of nature (see: happiness) and morality, for which we require, as stated above, the postulate of God.

In the 'Third Critique', however, we arrive at the consideration of the Highest Good in a different yet parallel way: only this time from the side of nature. The idea is that if we think *correctly* about man as the crown of creation ("the titular lord of nature"), that is, as a creature belonging to nature, from a teleological perspective we are then guided through this natural aspect of man, to the harmony or unity that exists in the Highest Good.¹⁵ The question is: how can we presuppose *from* within our position in nature something that is inherently unrelated to the natural order, such as God? In order to answer this I would now like to present in more detail the moral proof of God as it appears in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the teleological context, and to point out that it requires completion by a dimension that I argue it lacks, namely, the aesthetic dimension.

3. The Moral Proof of the Existence of God in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: Insufficiency of the Teleological Perspective

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant presents an additional version of the 'moral argument' for the existence of God. However, this time God is no longer perceived as a metaphysical principle devoid of personal characteristics but, rather, as a God who is personal, a moral

¹⁴ This idea is articulated in Eli Friedlander's "On Common Sense, Communication and Community", where he argues that the postulates of practical reason from the 'First' and 'Second' *Critiques* are transformed into presuppositions in the 'Third Critique' through the landscape of the notion of "common sense".

¹⁵ *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CJ), 5:431.

legislator who rules the world.¹⁶ Nevertheless, again we are not talking of any pretension to establish theological *knowledge* (such a pretension would be a contradiction of Kant's own epistemology). Rather, we are talking of the human need for the existence of God as a regulative "matter" of moral faith.

After extensively discussing the role of teleological judgment in science, Kant begins to change direction.¹⁷ In Section 82, he points out that we usually talk about things in nature as having a purposiveness that he terms "external", namely "purposiveness (...) in which one thing in nature serves another as the means to an end".¹⁸ Kant stresses that this is indeed *our* way to understand certain processes in nature. However, it does not have any objective scientific basis, because we can always look at something that we previously perceived as an end as a means to something entirely different. It transpires that nature in itself does not contain or strive towards such ends (external). Even man, whom it is customary to refer to as the true ultimate end of nature, because "he is the only being on earth (...) who by means of his reason can make a system of ends", does not constitute such an end from the "point of view" of nature itself (if it can be put that way).¹⁹

The subject continues to ramify in Section 84, where Kant presents the idea of a "final end", defining it as an end "which needs no other [end] as the condition of its possibility".²⁰ In other words, we are no longer talking of an external end but, rather, of an internal one. However, it is still obvious that this internal final end cannot be found in nature, since all natural

¹⁶ *CJ*, 5:444.

¹⁷ Starting from section 78.

¹⁸ *CJ*, 5:425.

¹⁹ Kant has in mind, in this context, Carl Von Linné's *Systema Naturae* (1786), which he paraphrases: "One could also, with the Chevalier Linné, take the apparently opposite path and say that the plant-eating animals exist in order to moderate the excessive growth of the plant kingdom, by which many of its species would be choked; the carnivores exist in order to set bounds to the voraciousness of the plant-eaters; finally, humankind exists in order to establish a certain balance among the productive and destructive powers of nature by hunting and reducing the number of the latter. And thus the human being, however much he might be valued as an end in a certain relation, would in another relation in turn have only the rank of a means" (*CJ*, 5:427).

²⁰ *CJ*, 5:434.

products and events (including human beings as natural creatures) are conditional.²¹

Put differently, in his account of natural teleology Kant seeks to ask not only about an organized being, but also about the systematic order of nature itself: as long as nature is to be viewed as a systematic whole of ends, it is possible to ask about the ultimate end of nature. This end lies in a being that can make use of nature to set ends to itself, i.e. man. But when we raise the question of whether there is not only an ultimate but also a *final* end to nature, we actually raise the possibility of a standpoint from which one can ask why it is that nature exists at all? So, the question arises as to what kind of thing can meet the definition of a final end?²²

Kant responds:

The being of this sort is the *human* being, though considered as a noumenon: the only natural being in which we can nevertheless cognize, on the basis of its own constitution, a supersensible faculty (*freedom*).²³

Kant's argument is that man's ability to act freely constitutes, on the one hand, a cause that acts in relation to an end (the moral law) while, on the other, must be considered as independent of causal orders and of ends (at least according to the way *we* think of purposiveness or casualty in nature). From this, Kant concludes that "if things in the world (...) need a supreme cause acting in accordance with ends, then the human being is the final end of creation".²⁴ Or, put more dramatically, "without human beings the whole of creation would be a mere desert, existing in vain and without a final end".²⁵ The question that is required for our purposes is thus: Is there sufficient ground for us to presuppose that nature is purposeful with regard

²¹ *CJ*, 5:435.

²² Kant raises these questions in the "General Remark to Teleology", see: *CJ*, 5:477.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *CJ*, 5:442.

to *practical* reason?²⁶ Kant formulates his reply in Section 87, which is devoted to the moral proof of the existence of God.

Kant's point of departure is that the moral law necessarily requires that we take into consideration the final end of our moral action. However, in contrast to other ends that constitute a *drive* for action (where the representation of the end causes the action that leads to the realization of that end), the final end is *not* considered as a drive of morality but, rather, is connected to a higher faculty of the will that aims at the Highest Good. Since the Highest Good constitutes an end for man as a *natural* being, this means, as noted previously, the greatest possible happiness for all moral beings. In other words, Kant refers to the internal implications of the moral law and to the final end of moral action as premises of his argument. The question arises: Why does Kant continue to use teleological terminology in the moral context after his repeated emphasis that the moral action and principle are unconditional?

Kant's answer is that practical reason is a *human* faculty and, as such:

concerns us as beings *in* the world and thus as beings connected to other things in the world, upon which this very same law prescribes us to direct our judging, whether as ends or as objects in regard to which we ourselves are ends.²⁷

Put differently, although free will can determine itself unconditionally – through the form of the moral law, for that matter – it nevertheless remains a *human* faculty of desire (even if it is a higher faculty of desire) and, consequently, it preserves the essential connection between will and ends. It transpires that the *possibility* of the final end of the Highest Good is essential for the moral action because, without it, the moral action would

²⁶ Kant argues that the obvious question is “whether we have any sufficient ground for reason (whether speculative or practical) to attribute a *final end* to the supreme cause acting in accordance with ends” (*CJ*, 5:445). For the reasons specified previously, it is clear that it is impossible to provide a “sufficient ground” for speculative reason. Therefore, Kant's question should be reformulated and relate to practical reason alone.

²⁷ *CJ*, 5:447 (emphasis mine).

have no meaning *as* an action, as it would no longer be understood as an action of will. It follows that, in such a case, practical reason would lose its *practical* sense, because it would be unable *to act* at all. Put differently, part of the *meaning* of action in general (including, for that matter, pure moral action, which is not dependent on its end) is, inter alia, *presupposition of the possibility of the realization* of the end for the sake of which the action is done.

However, as noted previously, the possibility of the realization of the Highest Good is far from being something that can be imagined. On the contrary, reality usually demonstrates that the lives of moral people are more difficult than those who are immoral, or at least they are not happier. Kant himself writes that “given all of the capacities of our reason, it is impossible for us to represent these two requirements of the final end [happiness in proportion to morality] that is set for us by the moral law as both *connected* by merely natural causes”.²⁸ From this, Kant infers that natural causality is not the only causality, but that there must be “other causality (...) than that of nature”, a moral causality of a “moral author of the world” through whom the Highest Good can at least be turned into a practical *possibility*.²⁹ In other words, Kant asserts that without the presupposition of a “moral author of the world” (one for whom our free morality constitutes the final end), we cannot represent for ourselves moral action as possible. It follows that moral action, by its very definition as an *action* and as *moral*, already presupposes within itself the existence of God.

The main point that Kant (and I) would like to stress here is that this conclusion of the proof of the existence of God in fact voids the theoretical validity of that very proof. For the presupposition of the existence of God is *inherent* to the moral action. It emerges that, for Kant, the moral proof of the existence of God has no objective validity. Rather, it is a “matter of faith”, as he puts it.³⁰

“Faith” Kant writes:

²⁸ *CJ*, 5:450 (parentheses mine).

²⁹ *Ibid*; *CJ*, 5:453.

³⁰ *CJ*, 5:496.

is reason's moral *way of thinking* [*Denkungsart*] in the affirmation of that which is inaccessible for theoretical cognition. It is thus the constant fundamental principle of the mind *to assume as true* that which it is necessary to *presuppose* as a condition for the possibility of the highest moral final end, on account of the obligation to that [end], although we can have no insight into its possibility or into its impossibility.³¹

And Kant clarifies this in a footnote:

For a final end cannot be commanded by any law of reason without reason simultaneously promising its attainability, even if uncertainly.³²

Kant argues that even though we cannot *know* (with certainty) whether the end of the Highest Good is indeed practically possible, we must at least be capable of *believing* that the correlation between happiness and morality in the Highest Good can be realized.³³ But on what is this belief grounded? Or, put differently, how can the Highest Good be understood from the outset in terms of possibility (possibility in the sense of realizability) if, on the one hand, it is impossible to provide it with any 'ontological horizon', yet on the other it must still be a real rational possibility due to its very imposition as a moral *demand*?

One answer I would like to put forward (without developing it) is that it is our very *inability* to know the Highest Good with certainty that opens the space of possibility for its realization. This is to some extent to paraphrase Kant's assertion that knowledge must be limited in order to make room for faith, albeit with the emphasis that it is *precisely* this epistemological certainty that *limits* faith, in the sense that it restricts the potential for progress.³⁴

³¹ *CJ*, 5:471-472 (emphases mine).

³² *CJ*, 5:471' (emphases mine).

³³ Notice that Kant's distinction between reason and knowledge allows faith to take part in rational activity in a manner that is not only opposed to it but is also central to the notion of reason itself.

³⁴ A similar idea can be found in Eli Friedlander's "Logic, Ethics and Existence in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*", which takes certainty as something that cannot be questioned.

The second answer I would like to put forward leans on Kant's own wording in the above citation, relating to faith as a "way of thinking". In other words, what is important here is not the *thing* that we presuppose but, rather, the *way* in which we presuppose it. The main point is that when we adopt that same "reason's moral way of thinking" – that is, when we believe in the possibility of the Highest Good – we in fact adopt a *reflective* way of thinking, since it is a matter of the way that we decide how to think about *ourselves*.³⁵

It can be said that belief in the highest good in fact constitutes an expression of faith in our rational abilities as creatures that do not act solely on the basis of natural desires and inclinations but, rather, *also* on the basis of practical reason. However, for this faith to actually "work", that is, for the presupposition of the possibility of the Highest Good to convince us, it must be somehow connected to the way we think about ourselves *within* the natural world. For after all, although we can indeed decide to believe in the Highest Good, if we do not manage to *imagine* ourselves progressing towards it, this faith will not be able to turn into a rational possibility for us. This does not mean that we can create a representation of the Highest Good in our imagination, nor that the presupposition of God's existence should involve imagining a being that has the capacity to apportion happiness to the virtuous. Rather it should be viewed as pertaining to the very possibility of the practical dimension of the Highest Good. A pronounced place where such a way of reflective thinking finds expression is in our *aesthetic* experience of beauty in nature. I will now seek, in the last part of this paper, to show how the aesthetic experience of beauty in nature is required for the possibility of giving *meaning* to moral faith.

4. The Aesthetic Dimension of Moral Faith

In a footnote towards the end of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*,

Yet, according to Wittgenstein's account the unquestionable "shows itself; it is the mystical" (T, 6.522), while for Kant certainty is exactly what *can* have a conceptual determination.

³⁵ Here it is clear that Kant's characterizes faith as a rational activity.

Kant points at the intimacy between the feeling of veneration that we experience with regard to beauty in nature and religious feeling. He writes:

The admiration of the beauty as well as the emotion aroused by the so diverse ends of nature, which a reflective mind is able to feel even *prior* to any clear representation of a rational author of the world, have something similar to a *religious* feeling about them. Hence they seem to act on the mind, by means of a kind of judging that is *analogous* to the moral, primarily through the *moral feeling* (of *gratitude and veneration toward the cause that is unknown to us*).³⁶

Although Kant repeatedly stresses the rational character of faith, we must still bear in mind that we are talking of a feeling that belongs to theological space (see: “*religious* feeling”). Since this faith cannot be established theoretically, it transpires that the only way it can be understood is by *analogy*. Here, Kant argues that an analogy exists between our perception of nature as beautiful or purposeful and between our moral structure. This analogy is based on feelings that arise in us when we judge nature reflectively and *also* when we think about moral ideas (the Highest Good, and the idea of God for that matter).

The point is that, in fact, the analogy makes it possible for us to make a connection between *structures of thinking* that arise out of the feelings of the aesthetic judgment of beauty in nature and those that arise out of the moral feelings of reason, and this because the analogy between them is founded on the *emotional* (*gefühl*) basis that each of them has as an *activity* of the mind.³⁷ Moral faith, as a moral feeling, constitutes a principle

³⁶ *CJ*, 5:482’ (the emphases in italic only are mine).

³⁷ From a broader perspective, it can be argued that the very analogy between the aesthetic and moral dimensions, being articulated in terms of emotion, in fact stresses the aesthetic element upon which the two parts of the ‘Third Critique’ are based. For the emotion that constitutes the aesthetic judgment is analogous to the emotion that entertains the possibility of the ultimate end of practical reason. In addition, one can say that Kant’s very use of *analogy* as the mediating link between the two dimensions - moral and aesthetic - indicates that this link itself is based on the principle of reflective judgment since the basic meaning of analogy in general lies in the *same* rule of *reflection* being aimed at two different things. For more on the centrality of aesthetic elements to the ‘Third Critique’ as a whole, see: Gary Banham, 2000, 188-195.

of action for the possibility of the realization of the Highest Good by presupposing the existence of God as a supersensible being that can make the connection between the effects of nature and our freedom. At the same time, aesthetic feeling is part of the activity of reflective judgment of beauty in nature that demonstrates the free play between our faculties of cognition with regard to that same nature.³⁸ It emerges that the analogy makes it possible for us to give meaning – call it “practical meaning” – to something that cannot be recognized or known theoretically.

Yet, why precisely does our aesthetic experience of beauty in nature contribute to our moral faith in the Highest Good by giving it a practical meaning? And is an analogy the most we can hope for or can we truly conceive of the field of aesthetic experience of beauty as that wherein the prefiguration of such realized unity that we strive for in the Highest Good can be exhibited?³⁹

Beyond the pure formal stage of reflection that both experiences – the moral and the aesthetic – share, which constitutes the preliminary condition for the analogy between them, the point is that our aesthetic experience of beauty in nature *is* a preparation for moral faith, and reinforces it. Kant stresses in the above citation that we can have feelings of a religious nature (such as “admiration of the beauty [of nature]”) even “*prior* to any clear representation of a rational author of the world”. In other words, our aesthetic experience of nature is *prior* to our presupposition regarding the existence of God, and is also accompanied by something similar in structure to the feeling of faith.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that Kant is talking here about the feeling experienced by us with regard to the beauty of nature as well as

³⁸ One can recall, in this context, one of Kant’s famous sentences from Section 59, “On Beauty as a Symbol of Morality”, in which he describes the analogy between the aesthetic and moral dimension in terms of emotion: “we often designate beautiful objects of nature or of art with names that seem to be grounded in a moral judging. We call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent (...); even colors are called innocent, modest or tender, because they arouse sensations that contain something analogical to the consciousness of a mental state produced by moral judgments” (*CJ*, 5:354).

³⁹ These questions arise even more in relation to Section 59, in which Kant, by placing beauty as a “symbol of morality”, explicitly claims that there is an analogy between judgments of beauty in nature and between moral judgments (*CJ*, 5:351).

that aroused in us by the diverse ends of nature. He seems to be seeking to indicate two main characteristics of reflective judgment that make it possible both to find beauty in nature and to freely place ends in it as *constructive human activities*. The main point is that these reflective activities make it possible for us to be *responsive* to the natural world by way of the ability to *reorganize* the natural order of which we ourselves are part.⁴⁰

Reformulating this in theological terms, it may be said that our ability for reflection both about ourselves as well as about nature opens before us the possibility of constructing ourselves as moral human beings by way of our ability to *believe* in the potential of the Highest Good as an expression of our own rational abilities. This faith finds expression in the form of a feeling “of gratitude and veneration toward the cause that is unknown to us”. Kant does not specify here what that “cause” is. However, based on the interpretation I have offered, it can be attributed, firstly, to the idea of God, to that “moral author of the world” whose existence we are required to presuppose practically so that the highest end of morality can be realized despite, or more precisely, due to the fact that we can never know it. However, that same “cause that is unknown to us” can also be attributed to the *fact of reason itself* (here the reference is to practical reason), which constitutes our ability to free ourselves from being subjected to laws that restrict us in the natural world, and to act with regard to the moral end towards which we have a feeling of “gratitude and veneration”.

Support for this last conclusion can be found in the *dialectic* of the ‘Second Critique’, where, with reference to the moral end of the Highest Good, Kant argues:

the furthering of this good and therefore the presupposition of its possibility are objectively necessary (though only as a consequence of practical reason); but *the manner* as to how we want to think it as possible rests within our choice, in which however a *free interest* of

⁴⁰ This argument is best articulated through the idea of ‘Culture’ (CJ, 5:430-43), see my “The Final End of Imagination” (*Filosofia Unisinos: Unisinos Journal of Philosophy*; forthcoming).

pure practical reason decides for the assumption of a wise originator of the world. [Therefore] the principle which determines our judgment in this is (...) a *pure practical rational faith*.⁴¹

Since practical faith is *not* directed towards the Highest Good as an “object” but, rather, as an end of our moral needs and of our abilities – in other words, the main thing here is the *modality* of our faith, or the way in which it is constituted – it transpires that the *very demand* to presuppose the Highest Good as a real possibility is what is described as necessary. We have the choice “as to how we want to think it as possible”, part of this way of thinking being connected to the presupposition of the existence of God (“wise originator of the world”).

In other words, Kant’s claim is that our rational essence has to be realized in what we make of ourselves through what we do and how we live. We are in fact called to make ourselves compatible or worthy for our *own* essential rationality. Ultimately, we do this by preparing ourselves for moral ends, which is cultivating morality within ourselves.

Connecting all this to the matter at hand in the ‘Third Critique’, it can be said that we need a form of judgment – or a “way of thinking”, for that matter – in order to enhance our cognition of our limitations as creatures who *also* act according to natural desires and inclinations, in order to create the basis for faith in our rational abilities to act according to practical reason. This means, as said, the reflective way of thinking that is not directed to determining the object (in the present context, the Highest Good) but, rather, to the ability of the subject to presuppose it as a rational principle according to which it is possible to act.

“Therefore”, Kant concludes “this faith is not commanded; rather, as a voluntary determination of our judgment, conducive to the moral (commanded) aim (...), it has itself arisen from the *moral attitude*” (*der moralischen Gesinnung*, which also means “moral sentiment/disposition”).⁴² It is a self-directed attitude that is articulated in the form of the feeling of faith as a way of thinking, in which we must choose so it can be compatible

⁴¹ CPR, 5:145-146 (emphases mine).

⁴² Ibid.

to our moral ends. This is not to say that we may indulge in idle wishful thinking (as if I wish that today is Sunday even though its Thursday), but that we have to truly believe and to commit ourselves to this faith.

Stated differently, this faith is a construction of conditions of possibility that are being articulated in the structure of faith (or hope, for that matter). This means that we have to cultivate our moral abilities in order to realize them. This is not done by inclinations of some kind but rather we must commit ourselves, as stated above, through what we do and more importantly through *how* we do it.⁴³

To return, in light of this, to the analogy previously drawn between the aesthetic experience of nature and moral faith, we can now understand the aesthetic experience of nature as giving practical meaning to faith in terms of being propaedeutic to the *manner* in which we are obligated to choose (freely) to believe in the supreme moral end of the Highest Good *as* a real possibility.⁴⁴

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⁴³ Let us recall that morality, according to Kant, is fitness for morally obligatory ends. This assertion indicates the idea I wish to allude, i.e. that morality is integral to human nature and that it is reflected in the person’s character or attitudes.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kant’s observation in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (*Rel.*) that pure rational faith is a feeling that can be reached by the aid of historical faith, specifically in the form of rituals and symbols that satisfy human “natural need” by giving them “something that the senses can hold on to” (*Rel.*, 6:109).

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***Painting and Perception of Nature:
Merleau-Ponty's Aesthetical Contribution to the Contemporary
Debate on Nature***

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ABSTRACT. This paper is meant to investigate Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the relationship between artistic experience and nature in his works *Notes de cours 1959-1961*. This paper addresses two questions: What is the role of aesthetic experience within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology? Consequently, what is the ontological relevance of the connection between art and nature? The general aim of this paper hence is to delineate the relevance of art for a phenomenological investigation of nature. In the *Notes de Course 1959-1961* Merleau-Ponty starts with a consideration of our problematic understanding of nature and then develops an investigation of painting. This is because his idea of pre-categorical experience utilizes a deep understanding of nature as an element necessary for a genuine phenomenological understanding. The relationship between philosophy and art highlights also the necessity, delineated by Merleau-Ponty, to analyze phenomenologically the relationship between philosophy and what he labels 'non philosophy'. Starting from this strong bond between art and phenomenology I underline and propose how it becomes possible to conceive nature in non-human and non-anthropocentric terms. This becomes possible, according to Merleau-Ponty, if one assumes that we have not to ask philosophical questions of art but rather to be philosophically informed by art and artistic practice concerning the possible understanding of nature in its alterity. The suggestion being that only following this path would allow the formulation of a philosophy able to develop a proper conception of nature.

1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the relationship between artistic experience and nature in his work *Notes de cours 1959-*

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1961. As Adorno claims in his *Aesthetics Theory*, the concept of nature disappeared within the field of aesthetics after Hegel; except for the current debate within environmental aesthetics, it is possible to recognize a general lack of interest in nature, and in its aesthetic experience, which seems to nicely fit Adorno's statement. However, this paper intends to resist Adorno's claim by suggesting that the aesthetical turn in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology re-proposes an ontological and fundamental interest in the bond between art and nature. Against this background, this paper addresses two questions: What is the role of aesthetic experience within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology? Consequently, what is the ontological relevance of the connection between art and nature? The general aim of this paper is to delineate the relevance of art for a phenomenological investigation of nature. The issue of aesthetic experience arises in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, where such an experience is intended mainly as perceptual experience, but this topic remains at the core of Merleau-Ponty's later works. Starting from the relevance of the relationship between perception, body and perceptual field, Merleau-Ponty often connects an investigation of the perceptual dimension with the reflection of painting activity.

In the *Notes de Course 1959-1961* Merleau-Ponty starts with a consideration of our problematic understanding of nature and then develops an investigation of painting. This is because his idea of pre-categorical experience allows for a deeper understanding of nature. The relationship between philosophy and art also highlights the necessity to analyze phenomenologically the relationship between philosophy and what he labels as 'non philosophy'. The importance of this connection is fundamental for two reasons: first, this links philosophy directly with art. To do or make art is investigating the pre-categorical level that Merleau-Ponty is aiming to unveil with his phenomenology. Second, the so-called 'non philosophy' refers to the idea of otherness that characterizes nature, otherness that should be investigated phenomenologically in a proper manner. Accordingly, phenomenology should take art and nature into careful consideration. This perspective is fundamental for a possible formulation of an aesthetics of nature that considers our relationship with nature not only in terms of aesthetic appreciation but, more widely, in terms of experience. As a starting

point, it is necessary to stress that art and nature are linked together in Merleau-Ponty's works and are considered in comparison since the very beginning of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical path. However, I will focus on Merleau-Ponty's later notes in which the urgency of an aesthetical investigation is intimately tied to the question of nature and where these issues emerge from a wider consideration of experience.

2. Experience in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology

In the previous section, I posed two necessary questions: What is the role of aesthetic experience within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology? Consequently, what is the ontological relevance of the connection between art and nature? Starting with the first question, we might say that experience is, together with intentionality, the biggest theme of phenomenology. In Merleau-Ponty experience appears to be a fundamental element for the development of a philosophy of the body. Consequently, we might say that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a phenomenology of bodily experience. In Merleau-Ponty's view, bodily experience presents two main aspects: perception and movement. Perception directly links the subject with the external world. For Merleau-Ponty the world is "what I live" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. xxx)². If the relationship between subject and world is primarily correlative rather than intellectual, then it is necessary to clarify how we should interpret intentionality. In connecting the idea of perceptual access to the world with the issue of body, Merleau-Ponty introduces the concept of operative intentionality, a concept elaborated starting from the consideration of Husserl's analysis of body and the pre-categorical level of experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl differentiates between two forms of intentionality. The first form is the traditional view of intentionality intended as the property of mental states that makes them directed towards something. The second form, and most fundamental one, is the operative intentionality 'that establishes the natural and pre-predicative unity of the world and of our life, the intentionality that appears in our

² The preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception* is numbered with roman numbers.

desires, our evaluations, and our landscape more clearly than it does in objective knowledge' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. xxxii).

The idea of operative intentionality allows Merleau-Ponty to rethink the relationship between consciousness and world. Starting from this conception of intentionality, Merleau-Ponty criticizes the idea of body intended as a mere mechanical object. In order to provide his own conception of body, Merleau-Ponty considers philosophically the psychological data of double sensations. The idea is that if body is irreducible to a mere object, then it is possible to consider it as both a peculiar object and an object between objects. This for two reasons. Firstly, the body is a material thing that is in concrete contact with things and the environment. Bodily experience is a perceptual encounter with other bodies. In this sense, body is a thing. However, in this perceptual action 'the body catches itself from the outside in the process of exercising a knowledge function; it attempts to touch itself touching, it begins "a sort of reflection", and this would be enough to distinguish it from objects' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 95).

The body perceives and in performing this activity it starts to recognize itself also as a perceiving thing. In this regard, the example of the touch is illuminating. The hand is touching things, but insofar as one hand is also able to touch the other, it is able to recognize itself as a touching being. This elementary act initiates a first form of reflection. This primordial form of reflection defines the body as different from mere objects. However, in Merleau-Ponty this characteristic does not conduce to an absolutisation of subjectivity, but rather to the consideration of this fundamental double sensation as an element of correlation with otherness, broadly intended. Merleau-Ponty claims it very clearly when he states that 'the contour of my body is a border that ordinary spatial relations do not cross. This is because the body's parts relate to each other in a peculiar way: they are not laid out side by side, but rather envelop each other' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 100). This conception of the bodily schema leads to the issue of spatiality and echoes the conviction that the envelopment is not only between bodily parts but also between body, bodies and things. Our movement relates to the environment but not only for survival purposes. Rather, our body

inaugurates meanings that are open to other subjects and interpretations. This centrality of the body does not exclude a conception of consciousness in terms of signifying activity, but at the same time does not reduce this specific activity to consciousness. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: ‘the experience of the body leads us to recognize an imposition of sense that does not come from a universal constituting consciousness. [...] My body is this meaningful core that behaves as a general function and that nevertheless exists and that is susceptible to illness’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 148). The body is literally communicating with others and expressing subjectivity itself. This movement of expression is already known within aesthetic practices: ‘aesthetic expression confers an existence in itself upon what it expresses, installs it in nature as a perceived thing accessible to everyone, or inversely rips the signs themselves – the actor’s person, the painter’s colors and canvas – from their empirical existence and steals them away to another world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 188).

According to Merleau-Ponty, in artistic practices something comes to existence within nature, and it becomes clear why Merleau-Ponty continues his analysis in comparison with aesthetic considerations. The issue of body leads then to the consideration of nature and aesthetic praxis, especially in his later works (*Eye and Mind*, *Nature*). For him the goal is to provide an account that could explain how it becomes possible to project a cultural dimension within the natural one in virtue of our bodily experience. This movement of expression is not a mere making public of an interiority, but also the creation of meaning. Expression then is a movement that is maintained in a constant correlation of subjectivity and world. According to Merleau-Ponty, it is impossible to grasp this movement of expression without understanding the role played by the body, understood as the original place of this expression.

Bodily experience then is not only conceived in its role for human beings, but also investigated in its general function. This passage is central because it clarifies the importance that Merleau-Ponty gives to it within his phenomenological framework. The body’s symbolic function is expressive in the sense that it brings to existence something else, it makes concrete and in an intersubjective perspective (the cultural world) things that are not only

perceived under a first-person perceptual activity but also co-experienced. Expression is seen as a dynamic process that starts in connection with the other since the very beginning. This connection overcomes the conception of consciousness and language based on the centrality of signifying acts in favor of the centrality of expression. An artist is expressing something, is experiencing, is constituting something in facticity (a novel, a painting, and so on), but then the meaning-intention is instituted in an intersubjectivity and opens to a possible proliferation.

In conclusion, in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy aesthetic experience is intended as both perceptual experience (*aisthesis*) and artistic experience. In a conception in which the sensible level is prominent, the analysis of perceptual experience represents the pivotal element of investigation. Perception is related to sense organs and leads to the consideration of bodily experience *tout court*. Bodily experience appears in its expressive role regarding both the shared world of culture and nature. Consequently, aesthetic experience is what allows us to rethink the idea of nature. The fundamental role of aesthetical experience is tied to the idea that the body is expressive, this means to consider the specific practices in which bodily experience and expression appears interwoven (namely: painting). It now remains to clarify what the contribution of art is for this reinterpretation of the concept of nature.

3. Nature and Art

Considering the connection between nature and art means to analyze the richness of aesthetic experience broadly intended. Furthermore, the concept of nature has a prominent role within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. However, it is in his last works that nature is directly considered in its philosophical and phenomenological relevance. Firstly, I intend to summarize very briefly Merleau-Ponty's idea of nature, considering his course notes published under the title *Nature*. Then I would like to connect this perspective with the link between nature and art elucidated by Merleau-Ponty in his notes for the course 1959-1961.

His lectures' notes at the Collège de France of the years 1956-60 –

published under the title *Nature* – contain a detailed analysis of the idea of nature. These course notes are relevant because they directly connect Merleau-Ponty's investigation of body with the analysis of the concept of nature, also because they show the rethinking of his idea of phenomenology itself. At the very beginning of the first course, Merleau-Ponty asks himself if it is possible to study properly the notion of nature, and he replies to this question affirming that in order to get the proper philosophical meaning of nature the focus should be “primordial” nature. For Merleau-Ponty, investigating primordial nature means investigating the ‘nonlexical meaning always intended by people who speak of “nature”’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 3). In granting this nonlexical meaning of nature, Merleau-Ponty is focusing on the fundamental layer of experience that precedes our cognitive activities. This claim is in continuity with the idea of operative intentionality specified in the *Phenomenology of Perception* but leads to a reconsideration of the relationship between consciousness and objects. This is not the place to consider extensively these intense notes, for now it suffices to notice that the expression of a “nonlexical meaning of nature” implies the idea that ‘nature is what has a meaning, without this meaning being posited by thought: it is the autoproduction of a meaning. [...] Yet nature is different from man: it is not instituted by him and is opposed to custom, to discourse’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 3). The idea of autoproduction of meaning connects with the issue of expression, or better, is conducive to assuming that nature is expressivity. This conception of nature poses humans in continuity with nature but also leads us to conceive nature in its autonomy: ‘nature is the primordial. [...] Nature is an enigmatic object, an object that is not an object at all; it is not really set out in front of us. It is our soil [*soil*] – not what is in front of us, facing us, but rather, that which carries us’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 4). Starting from this view, in what follows I will focus on the very first part of the course notes 1959-61 in which Merleau-Ponty deals directly with the connection between nature and art. The relevance of nature emerges again at the very beginning of the *Notes de Cours 1959-61* and in its connection with what Merleau-Ponty calls “état de

non-philosophie” (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 39).³ This situation of “non-philosophy” that characterizes humanity in a specific period presents two specific elements. The first element of this situation of non-philosophy is connected with the capitalistic system. The social condition presents a crisis of rationality insofar as capitalism leads to a non-organic conception of human relationships (the specialization of each singular task for each worker within the same factory is a clear example of this).

The second element, instead, relates directly to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of nature: ‘crise de la rationalité dans nos rapports avec la Nature; Logique de l’évolution technique; La bombe – l’énergie atomique’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 42).⁴ The negative meaning of the state of non-philosophy connects with the inability to think nature in a proper manner. Considering that nature is a pivotal element for Merleau-Ponty, it appears that a wrong conception of nature implies a failure of philosophy. The implicit assumption is that nature has meaning only within human history, an assumption that is in opposition to Merleau-Ponty’s idea of nature as “primordial presence”. What Merleau-Ponty proposes is then the ‘redécouverte d’une Nature-pour-nous comme *sol* de toute notre culture, et où s’enracine en particulier notre activité créatrice qui n’est donc pas inconditionnée, qui a à maintenir [la] culture au contact de l’être brut, à la confronter avec lui’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 44).⁵ The idea of nature as “pour-nous” does not imply the reduction of nature to an artefact, but rather requires the idea of nature as a fundamental soil. However, this critical situation of non-philosophy – expressed socially in the development of the capitalistic system, scientifically in the emerging of positivism and philosophically in the forgetting of the idea of nature – is positively contrasted by culture and arts. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: ‘[les symptômes culturels et la possibilité de la philosophie.] Tout ce qui précède, [sont] les «résonateurs» émotionnels qui amplifient et font sentir à [un] immense public

³ ‘State of non-philosophy’. My translation.

⁴ ‘Crisis of rationality within our relationships with nature; logic of technical development; The bomb – the atomic energy’. My translation.

⁵ ‘Rediscovery of nature for-us intended as soil of our culture, a soil on which our creativity is based appearing then not unconditioned. This creativity has to maintain culture in contact and permanent confrontation with the brute being’. My translation.

[les] contrecoups du développement de la technique – Mise en question, par ses conséquences, de ce «monde technique» lui-même” (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 46).⁶

Merleau-Ponty individuates cultural elements that allow us to rethink philosophy and to criticize the “ultra-artificial” and technical conception of the world. These cultural symptoms are: poetry, music, painting and psychoanalysis. In the following lines, I’ll focus on his analysis of painting.⁷ Merleau-Ponty considers the idea that contemporary painting deals with the idea of genesis rather than conceiving itself as a form of representation. Instead of representing objects or reality in general, modern painting (especially in the figures of Cézanne⁸ and Klee), represents the movement of expression of reality itself. In order to highlight this idea, Merleau-Ponty is claiming that ‘la peinture est un mouvement, un mouvement qui germe dans l’apparence. [...] Parce qu’elle est nature naturante, [...] parce qu’elle donne ce que la nature veut dire et ne dit pas: le «principe générateur» qui fait être les choses et le monde’ (Merleau-Ponty 1996: 56).⁹

⁶ ‘The cultural symptoms and the possibility of philosophy. All that precedes are the emotional resonators that amplify and make audible to a huge public the aftershocks of the technical development – Make in question, for its own consequences, of this technical world’. My translation.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty’s started to consider painting since the very beginning and it remained central for his entire philosophical development. In his *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty provides a powerful comparison between philosophy and art when he claims: ‘Phenomenology is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry, or Cézanne – through the same kind of attention and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to grasp the sense of the world or of history in its nascent state. As such, phenomenology merges with the effort of modern thought’ (Merleau-Ponty 2012: xxxv). In the same year of the publication of his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty published also his influential essay *Cézanne’s doubt*, devoted entirely to the aesthetical consideration of the relevance of Cézanne’s painting. Painting does not occupies a prominent roles only in Merleau-Ponty’s early philosophy, but is relevant also in his last period. In the *Notes de cours 1959-1961*, Merleau-Ponty investigates the problem of nature in connection with the artistic elaboration of it made by Klee. In the same period, Merleau-Ponty published also *The Eye and Mind*, in which – again – art emerges as central for a philosophical re-thinking of our own experience.

⁸ Concerning Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of Cézanne, see for instance Merleau-Ponty (2007, a).

⁹ ‘Painting is a movement, a movement that germinates within appearance. This because it is *natura naturans*, this also because it says what nature wants to say but does not say: the “generative principle” that make being things and the world’. My translation.

This assumption is important because it considers art as a form of investigation of the pre-categorical encounter with the world. Instead of considering painting as code that transposes natural perception into an artefact, Merleau-Ponty proposes seeing painting as a genuine understanding of our experience of the perceptual world. Assuming this idea of a perceptual world that exceeds any representation implies that painting is not resemblance but rather an “écart” (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 52) that expresses something other. Merleau-Ponty makes this point clear: ‘décharger la tableau de la fonction de ressemblance pour lui permettre d’exercer la fonction d’expression, i.e. de présenter une essence alogique du monde qui, comme la ligne dont parlait Vinci, n’est pas empiriquement dans le monde et pourtant la ramène à son pur accente d’être, met en relief sa manière de *Welten*, d’être monde’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 53).¹⁰

Merleau-Ponty is proposing an idea of art that is very close to his idea of philosophy, instead of being a tool of description or construction of a specific object (specifically nature) both configure themselves as expressions of that fundamental element. Under this perspective, art in general – and painting specifically, in his notes Merleau-Ponty is considering Paul Klee¹¹ – is not a marginal element of interest but allows for a clarification the notion of “non-philosophical” that Merleau-Ponty describes as problematic for both his own philosophical context and phenomenology. What emerges is the idea that a non-philosophical practice (painting) deals with a fundamental element (nature) that appears to be central for rethinking philosophy. Painting brings to expression nature and makes this dynamic visible; Insofar as the activity of painting is a lived practice, it is movement.

Painting creates visible objects and so expresses the movement that connects perception with nature, nature with culture. This intimate

¹⁰ ‘Discharge painting from its function of resemblance in order to allow it to exercises its expressive function; i.e. to present the pre-logic (not-logic) of the world that, like the line Da Vinci spoke about, is not empirically within the world and yet brings it back to its own accent of being, that puts in evidence the “*Welten*”, the being of the world’. My translation.

¹¹ In his analysis of Klee, Merleau-Ponty is referring to Grohmann’s monography entitled *Paul Klee*.

connection passes through the artistic practice that configures itself as nature, a nature that becomes expressed. According to Merleau-Ponty's analysis in these course notes, contemporary philosophy is missing precisely this bond. Once we assume that painting is nature, it becomes possible to understand why Merleau-Ponty finds a philosophical relevance in it. Merleau-Ponty himself claims that painting is a form of philosophy: 'donc [la] peinture [est] une sorte de philosophie: saisie de la genèse philosophie toute en acte. [...] La peinture n'est pas «abstraite», disait Klee, mais «absolue» (i.e. radicale), i.e. retrouvant une position de l'être incompréhensible pour [la] science et [le] quotidien. Les apparences [sont] prises comme «parabole» de cet être. L'art donnant [les] symbols des apparences (i.e. leur généralisation, leur derivation à partir d'un possible plus vaste). C'est [une] philosophie non expresse. [...] Le symbole n'est pas la chose même. [...] Il ne dévoile qu'en voilant' (Merleau-Ponty 1996: 58).¹²

Merleau-Ponty considers painting not only as a sort of philosophy but also as a philosophy in action. In its practice, contemporary painting is not pretending to render complete an experience that is approximate and inaccurate, but rather is bringing to expression the dynamism of this experience itself. What comes up is the idea – expressed also by Klee – that painting unveils and expresses a dimension that is unconceivable to science and daily life attitude. Through its making something appear – in a painting for example – the painter creates a symbol that comes from his being entangled and perceiving nature. At the same time, this artwork does not resemble reality how it is but rather provides a frame, a possible different view of the same reality that is open to different fruitions and interpretations. However, it is clear that for Merleau-Ponty it is not merely question of hermeneutical considerations but rather a question of ontological relevance. What Cézanne and Klee are doing with their paintings is not only

¹² 'So, painting is a sort of philosophy: seizure of the genesis of philosophy in act. Painting is not abstract, says Klee, but absolute (radical), i.e it rediscovers a dimension of being incomprehensible for science and daily life experience. The appearances are taken as a parabola of this being. Art gives the symbols of appearances (their generalization, their derivation from a vast possible). This is a not-expressed philosophy. The symbols are not the things in themselves. It only reveals by veiling'. My translation.

creating symbols but rather a making literally visible an ontological dimension forgotten by philosophy itself. This relationship with the pre-categorical manifests the exigency to rethink philosophy itself and its understanding of reality. Merleau-Ponty clarifies that for him philosophy is not merely *theoria* but rather the thought of the connection between theory and the pre-theoretic level, in other words philosophy should become a thinking of 'leur tissu commun' (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 84).¹³ Art is aware that symbols are not things themselves (they express them) and creates a new world that expresses a primordial contact with nature. For Merleau-Ponty philosophy has lost this bond and should become aware of the same circularity.

Merleau-Ponty claims that philosophy must re-gain this primordial contact and elaborate on it, and he is also pointing out the idea of inherence between nature and us. Starting from this point, it becomes necessary to interpret philosophy in its being focused on this interconnection that in *The Visible and the Invisible* assumes the form of an intercorporeality. This idea of intercorporeality appears from the background of Merleau-Ponty's rethinking of phenomenology in connection with painting. Since his first essay on Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty was understanding the intimate bond the Cézanne felt between himself, his painting and nature. This shows the first effort to re-think nature starting not from the idea of consciousness but rather from the idea of correlation. Merleau-Ponty developed this idea of correlation between men and nature and arrived at the concept of intercorporeality. However, if for philosophy this idea of intercorporeality appears to be provocative and difficult, within the works of Cézanne and Klee it represents the fundamental assumption. The philosophical relevance of intercorporeality arises clearly later on in this course notes 1959-1961 when Merleau-Ponty uses clearly the term "chair du monde" (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 211), in this passage Merleau-Ponty expresses that intercorporeality is fundamentally not only between subjects but also between subjects and world. Merleau-Ponty explain that point as follows: 'la «chair du monde» ce n'est pas métaphore de notre corps au monde. On

¹³ 'Their common tissue'. My translation.

pourrait dire inversement: c'est aussi bien notre corps qui est fait de la même étoffe sensible que le monde – Ni, naturalism, ni anthropologie: les hommes et le temps, l'espace sont faits du même magma' (Merleau-Ponty, 1996, p. 211).¹⁴

This accent on the “flesh of the world” makes explicit the meaning of the idea of a non-philosophical element introduced by Merleau-Ponty. This idea of something non-philosophical ties together at least four elements: nature, the state of non-philosophy, art and intercorporeality. Nature poses to philosophy the question of how it is possible to think itself without falling into idealism or realism. Nature imposes itself as a non-philosophical element, in the sense that it could be an object of philosophical investigation but without being reduced by philosophy or science. Nature remains an excess, a sensible excess. As Toadvine highlights: ‘Insofar as philosophy is incapable of thematizing its own emergence, insofar as it remains conditioned by a nature that escapes its reflective recuperation, nature is disclosed indirectly as a silent resistance internal to philosophy’s own movement’ (Toadvine, 2013, p. 372). This assumption, according to Merleau-Ponty, implies that phenomenology assumes as an element of investigating nature exactly because it brings phenomenology to its own limits.

Nature is a relevant issue within Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. In order to develop a phenomenology of nature, Merleau-Ponty claims that it is necessary to consider modern art. In considering especially painting it emerges that this happens for two main reasons. Firstly, modern art (and especially painting) does not intend its own praxis in term of resemblance with the external world; secondly, modern painting investigates not only the pre-categorical level that precedes any theoretical activity, but also conceives nature under a new light because intends nature its expressive movement. This conviction implies the idea that painting conduces to a conception of nature that brings phenomenology to its own limits.

¹⁴ ‘The flesh of the world is not a metaphor of our body within the world. On the contrary, someone might say: it is our body that is made of the same sensible fabric of the world. Not naturalism, not anthropology: men, time and space are made of the same magma’. My translation.

4. Brief Conclusions

In the first paragraph, the centrality of experience intended as bodily experience has been highlighted. Merleau-Ponty presents a phenomenology of the lived body that considers bodily activity in its operative intentionality and expressivity. These two issues lead to the consideration of the correlation between body and nature but also between nature and culture. The bodily movement is considered in the continuity with the movement of production of nature, intended as autoproduction of meaning. What seems to emerge is a conception of continuity between nature and human beings (but also with others animals) and, consequently, between nature and culture. This idea of interconnection requires the consideration of art insofar as it is movement of expression proper of the human and cultural worlds. This implication between nature and culture leads to the philosophical necessity to consider the intercorporeality of experience, intercorporeality that appears to be a proper element of investigation for painters such as Cézanne and Klee. Consider intercorporeality as a fundamental element provides interesting stimuli to rethink our experience of nature in a non-dualistic perspective. This means that it becomes possible to think about nature starting directly from the dimension of intercorporeality (that is correlative and intersubjective) rather than starting from the point of view of subjectivity.

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A Call to Freedom: Schiller's Aesthetic Dimension and the Objectification of Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. This paper returns to historical aesthetic theory, particularly Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller's reading of Kant, in order to argue that the experience of the work of art opens an aesthetic dimension that incites ethical action. Through a close analysis of Schiller's *Kallias* letters and his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, the author will argue that one of Schiller's most important contributions to aesthetics is that he conceives of an aesthetic dimension that prioritizes the freedom of the object over that of the subject and locates the subject's recognition of her freedom in the encounter with the beautiful object. This makes the work of art crucial to our understanding of ethics and politics and rebukes claims that it may be "wicked and egoist and cowardly" to make or enjoy art in society.

1. Introduction

This paper is motivated originally by Emmanuel Levinas' critique of art that argues that "there is something wicked and egoist and cowardly in artistic enjoyment. There are times when one can be ashamed of it, as of feasting during a plague" (Levinas 1989, p. 142). In a world ravaged by poverty, famine, and genocide, when we enjoy art are we only feasting in the face of plagues we have created? The goal of this paper is to respond to that question with an emphatic "no." To accomplish this task, I will return to historical aesthetic theory, particularly Friedrich Schiller's reading of Immanuel Kant, in order to argue that the experience of the work of art actually opens an aesthetic dimension that incites ethical action and love,

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that art may be precisely what we need to address rampant inequity. This paper will provide a close analysis of Schiller's *Kallias* letters and his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* to argue that one of Schiller's most important contributions is that he conceives of an aesthetic dimension that prioritizes the freedom of the object over that of the subject and locates the subject's recognition of her freedom in the encounter with the beautiful object. This makes the work of art crucial to our understanding of ethics and politics and rebukes claims that it may be "wicked and egoist and cowardly" to make or enjoy art in society.

Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic project begins as a response to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. While highly impressed with Kant's work, Schiller argues that Kant's articulation of aesthetic judgment has only considered the beautiful object from the position of the subject, leaving the object itself largely untreated. Schiller's philosophical project across a number of texts, then, is an effort to treat the object itself and develop an "objective" side of aesthetics or produce the "objectification" of aesthetics. In this paper today, I'm interested in the way that that effort to address the object produces a new understanding of ethics at the heart of early German aesthetics that isn't attached to Kant's proposal of beauty as a symbol for morality.

While Schiller's treatments of the work of art do not necessarily present a coherent or consistent aesthetic theory, this paper will work to systematize Schiller's aesthetic writings in three primary steps: 1) Schiller's reconfiguration of Kant's articulation of reason; 2) Schiller's assertion that the work of art resists conceptualization; and 3) the intersubjective ethical demand that arises from this encounter in Schiller's explanation of it. We'll take these steps one at a time.

2. Schiller's Reconfiguration of Kant

The first step is Schiller's reconfiguration of Kant's articulation of reason. As Frederick Beiser argues, Schiller's conception of reason is much broader than Kant's and this allows Schiller to compare judgments in new ways.

Beiser explains, “Schiller takes reason in a very general sense as the power of combination or synthesis, a power which unites all kinds of representations among themselves, and even representations with other faculties, such as the will” (Beiser 2008, p. 58). Beiser continues, “whether strictly Kantian or not, Schiller’s general concept of reason is strategic and significant: it allows him to bring all forms of judgment within the general domain of reason” (Beiser 2008, p. 59). By subsuming all forms of judgment under the domain of reason, Schiller is able to compare logical, teleological, moral and aesthetic judgments as analogous applications of reason in alignment with the configuration of theoretical and practical reason as outlined above.

For Schiller, theoretical reason is the realm of logical and teleological judgments because in those judgments “reason thus adduces an end of its own devising for the object and decides whether the object is adequate to that end” (Schiller 2003, p. 150). In contrast, moral and aesthetic judgments are functions of practical reason. As opposed to theoretical reason which makes the object a means to its end, Schiller argues that “practical reason abstracts from all knowledge and has to do only with the determination of the will, with inner actions” (Schiller 2003, p. 150). Where theoretical reason relates representations to reason by way of intuitions or concepts, practical reason always relates the will directly to representations of reason. Schiller argues that this means that practical reason relates the will to reason “to the exclusion of every external principle of determination ... To adapt or imitate the form of practical reason thus merely means not to be determined from the outside but from within” (Schiller 2003, p. 150). Because Schiller understands aesthetic judgment as a function of practical reason, he can argue that beautiful objects appear to determine themselves freely and that aesthetic judgment is not only a feeling of pleasure but also a recognition of an object’s self-determination as a result of that object appearing to determine itself. It is not simply that the subject takes pleasure in the free play of her faculties and chooses to linger in the face of the beautiful object, but that the object refuses to be determined and forces the lingering; the object *resists*.

3. Schiller's Assertion of Resistance

This fact of the object resisting is the second step. Unlike Kant, who locates aesthetic judgement and pleasure purely in the subject, Schiller argues that the work of art itself *resists* conceptualization. Now we must trace Schiller's understanding of *how* the work of art resists conceptualization in its encounter with the subject. Schiller explains this encounter as the shift from the subject's exclamation "May it be what it will!" about the work of art (object) to the object (work of art) calling to the subject to "Be free like me!" (Schiller 2003, p. 150). In order to elucidate this shift, this paper will articulate three moments of the encounter with the work of art which will each be explained in turn: upon encountering the beautiful object, first reason lends the object a will; second, this lending must be concealed so as to appear natural; and third, the object appears to present its freedom and calls to us to respect it. We will consider these three moments in turn.

3.1. *The Lending of a Will*

First, in the letter where Schiller first defines beauty as freedom in appearance (the February 8, 1793 letter), he argues that "reason lends the object (regulative and not, as with moral judgements, constitutive) a power to determine itself, a will, and then examines the object under the form of *that* will (not *its* will, since this would yield a moral judgement)" (Schiller 2003, p. 151). Reason is able to recognize the appearance of freedom, because it has lent freedom to the object. As we saw above, Schiller does not develop a constitutive principle of beauty – proving that there *is* beauty in an object. Rather, he provides a regulative conception of beauty. Here this means that reason ought to lend certain objects a will with which to appear to determine themselves, thus appearing as beautiful. Because the freedom "is merely lent to the object by reason," the freedom is merely an appearance of freedom (Schiller 2003, p. 151).

But having articulated this idea of reason lending a will to the object, Schiller also develops an objective side of this moment in the following letter (dated February 18, 1793). There he argues that Kant's entire

philosophy can be understood in the simple dictum to “determine yourself from within yourself” (Schiller 2003, p. 153). Here, Schiller argues that “this great idea of self-determination resonates back at us from certain appearances of nature, and we call it *beauty*” (Schiller 2003, p. 153). The direction of beauty seems to have shifted from a subject lending an object a will to an object reflecting freedom back at the subject – and not even reflecting but resonating, an auditory rather than visual metaphor that suggests listening rather than seeing.

In the next paragraph, Schiller argues that “there is a view of nature, or of appearances, in which we demand nothing other than freedom from them and where our only concern is that they be what they are through themselves” (Schiller 2003, p. 154). Here Schiller seemingly opens an aesthetic dimension by way of practical reason. The aesthetic encounter is no longer only reliant on the beautiful object, but also on a responsibility of the subject and her attention to practical reason. The judgment of taste is no longer only a statement of “this *x* is beautiful;” it entails the call, “May it be what it will!” (Schiller 2003, p. 154).

Schiller still recognizes that the natural object does not have its own will. But here that recognition is a recognition of the object’s relationality. Schiller argues that each object “exists through another, each exists for another, none has autonomy” (Schiller 2003, p. 155). But rather than being a statement of how unfree the object is, there is a new, positive character to this statement. What is at stake is not the freedom of the object, but the ability of the subject to lend a will to the object and respect this appearance of freedom in relation to herself. In a strikingly phenomenological statement, Schiller argues that “everything changes if one leaves theoretical investigation aside and takes the objects only *as they appear*.” (Schiller 2003, p. 155). If one does so, then one must “regard every being in aesthetic judgment as an end in itself, [for] it disgusts us, for whom freedom is the highest thing, that something should be sacrificed for something else, and used as a means” (Schiller 2003, p. 159). The object cannot be a means to a concept; it must be lent a will with which to resist objectification or conceptualization.

3.2. The Concealment of Lending

But something happens between reason lending the object a will and regarding the object as an end in itself. This is the second step of the aesthetic encounter, where the lending, Schiller tells us, must be rendered invisible, because “we never want to see coercion,” Schiller argues, “even if it is reason itself which exercises it” (Schiller 2003, p. 159). Schiller parses this through his discussion of autonomy and heautonomy. Autonomy, for Schiller, is freedom. As Dieter Heinrich defines it, “Freedom here means to be completely self-determined, to develop according to inner necessity independent of external influences” (Heinrich 1982, 244). Heautonomy is self-determination that is also self-given. It is an intensification of autonomy in which the subject not only develops according to its inner necessity but also develops that inner necessity willingly. Autonomy is the realm of the moral, when an action is freely determined by the human actor. Heautonomy is the realm of the beautiful, because not only is the action freely determined by the actor, it also appears as an immediate product of nature. Thus, Schiller will argue that “a free action is a beautiful action, if the autonomy of the mind and autonomy of appearance coincide” (Schiller 2003, p. 159).

When the direction of beauty shifts, as mentioned previously, not only freedom but also beauty is reflected back on the subject, and the encounter itself must become beautiful. This means that aesthetic judgment must not only be free but also beautiful, presenting not only autonomy but heautonomy. It cannot simply be the case that reason has intentionally decided to respect the self-determination of the beautiful object by lending it a will. This would be a moral judgment. Rather it must appear that it is in reason’s nature to respect all beautiful objects. Thus, Schiller tells us that the aesthetic judgment is only beautiful if the subject has “forgot[ten] himself in his action” and “fulfilled his duty with the ease of someone acting out of mere instinct” (Schiller 2003, p. 159). As Schiller puts it, it must be that “duty has become its nature” (Schiller 2003, p. 159). Reason ought to lend objects a will with which to appear to determine themselves. Only when the subject conceals this lending can the object appear to be free. And only in

forgetting this lending, can aesthetic judgment itself become beautiful. This is what Schiller will call the “objective ground” of beauty: that the representation of the object “simply necessitates us to produce the idea of freedom from within ourselves, and to apply it to the object” (Schiller 2003, p. 160-1). Schiller’s *objective* ground is a necessary, *subjective* state, a state so necessary that we recognize it as our own nature.

3.3. The Call to Respect Autonomy

This leads us to the third moment of the aesthetic encounter: the object calling to us to respect its autonomy. Schiller foreshadowed this point in a section previously quoted from the February 8, 1793 letter where he argued that the “idea of self-determination resonates back at us from certain appearances of nature” (Schiller 2003, p. 153). Schiller expands on this notion of resonance in the February 23, 1793 letter. There he argues that “the thing itself, in its objective constitution, invites us, or rather requires us to notice its quality of not-being-determined-from-the-outside” (Schiller 2003, p. 161). The beautiful object *invites* or *requires* us to recognize its freedom and, therefore, its beauty. It demands that we lend it a will with which to determine itself and then conceal that lending so that the object can appear beautiful and even forget that its will is borrowed so as to make the aesthetic judgment beautiful. In this dual concealing-forgetting, we find that the beautiful object appears beautiful not as a result of our reason but as a product of its own nature. The object no longer *appears* to be free but presents its freedom. Thus the encounter appears to begin from the object’s exhortation to “be free like me” (Schiller 2003, p. 173). It is no longer only a matter of the object being what it will. In the exchange of will, freedom, and beauty in the aesthetic encounter, the object comes to call to and demand from the subject whose freedom is then intertwined with the freedom of the object. Therefore, Schiller tells us that “in this aesthetic world ... even the gown I wear on my body demands respect for its freedom from me ... In exchange, it promises to use its freedom in such a way that it will not curtail my own freedom; and if both keep their word, the world will say that I am well dressed” (Schiller 2003, p. 170). In the aesthetic

dimension, therefore, the subject works in conjunction with the object to ground both subject and object in freedom. To reiterate the moments just explored on these terms: First the subject's practical reason lends the object a will to resist the violence of theoretical reason. Then the subject conceals this lending so that the object can appear to be free (beauty as freedom in appearance). The subject then finds that the object comes in upon her presenting its freedom (beauty as the exhibition of freedom), and she forgets that she has lent the object a will, establishing her own freedom again in heeding the call of the object to "be free like me."

4. Schiller's Aesthetic-Ethical Dimension

The proceeding three moments take up the second step in my attempt to articulate Schiller's aesthetic theory (understanding how the object resists conceptualization), and they lead us to the third and final step of my argument: the way in which this encounter opens an aesthetic dimension that is inherently ethical. To explain this aesthetic-ethical dimension, In order to understand this question in the context of Schiller's thought we must turn to Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* written in 1795, two years after *Kallias*. Schiller opens that text with a colorful critique of a certain mode of thinking:

For alas! Intellect must first destroy the object of inner sense if it would make it *its own* ... In order to lay hold of the fleeting phenomenon, he must first bind it in the fetters of rule, tear its fair body to pieces by reducing it to concepts, and preserve its living spirit in a sorry skeleton of words. (Schiller 2001, p. 87-8)

Here we can see an echo of Schiller's division between theoretical and practical reason and emphasis on practical reason as refusing this sort of reduction to concepts. Throughout the following letters, Schiller sets up a conflict between reason and sense or the formal drive and the sensuous drive. Sense contemplates the natural world while reason lays hold of the fleeting phenomena. And Schiller tells us that "only through individual

powers in man becoming isolated, and arrogating to themselves exclusive authoring, do they come into conflict with the truth of things, and force the common sense ... to penetrate phenomena in depth” (Schiller 2001, p. 102). Schiller’s aesthetic dimension allows us to attempt to avoid the destruction of the object of sense by the intellect, to resist penetrating phenomena in depth and to begin thinking how we might relate to objects and others ethically.

Opening this aesthetic-ethical dimension is the function of the third fundamental drive that Schiller posits in the thirteenth letter: the play drive. The role of the play drive is “first, to preserve the life of sense against the encroachments of freedom; and second, to secure the personality against the forces of sensation” (Schiller 2001, p. 122). In the play drive, both reason and sense linger in free play, but this drive is awakened not simply by a mediation or balance of the two conflicting drives. Rather Schiller argues that

Should there, however, be cases in which he were to have this twofold experience *simultaneously*, in which he were to be at once conscious of his freedom and sensible of his existence, were, at one and the same time, to feel himself matter and come to know himself as mind, then he would in such cases, and in such cases only, have a complete intuition of his human nature, and the object that afforded him this vision would become for him a symbol of his *accomplished destiny*. (Schiller 2001, p. 126)

The play drive is the simultaneous experience of oneself as matter and mind. It is a result of the aesthetic encounter with the beautiful object that is an interruption and suspension of thinking that is either technical (knowledge via reason) or sensuous (feeling via sense) in favor of an encounter with the object in which the subject only knows the object through feeling. The play drive opens the possibility that the subject can feel sensuous matter and know it without determining it, that the subject can allow the object to be what it will while hearing the call to be free like it. As Schiller notes in a footnote in the thirteenth letter, aesthetic judgment resists the mistake of “thrusting ourselves *out upon [nature]*” rather than “letting her come *in upon*

us” (Schiller 2001, p. 123). In heeding the call to “Be free like me” the subject “ha[s] the active determination already within [her]” while being “at the one and the same time passively, and actively, determined” (Schiller 2001, p. 153). In the three moments of the aesthetic encounter, she lends, conceals and forgets; she is both free to determine herself and determined by the beautiful object. This is why beauty is our “second creatress,” according to Schiller (Schiller 2001, p. 148). And how beauty is both “an *object* for us,” and “a *state of the perceiving subject*” (Schiller 2001, p. 164). Beauty is both the object we find beautiful and a state in which we find objects beautiful. The play drive opens an aesthetic dimension that allows us to relate to objects otherwise by way of the beautiful.

5. Conclusion

Much has been written about Schiller as both a metaphysical and a political thinker, interpreting his aesthetic theory either as (1) too “deeply metaphysical” and failing to reach ethics or politics or (2) simply a stepping stone to a political and social theory which must be his larger philosophical contribution. Fewer writers, however, have paused to consider the ethical implications of Schiller’s consideration of the aesthetic object. One goal of this paper is to present Schiller as an importantly aesthetic-*ethical* thinker who provides resources to respond to critiques of art as inherently politically and ethically disengaged, such as the critique by Levinas cited here in my opening or other critiques like that of Simone de Beauvoir when she argues that art is “a position of withdrawal, a way of fleeing the truth of the present” (Beauvoir 2015, p. 81).

In his response to Kant and articulation of the encounter with the work of art in aesthetic judgment, Schiller rebukes these arguments that art withdraws from our responsibilities toward others by showing how our encounter with a beautiful work of art opens an aesthetic dimension that is inherently ethical and simultaneously grounds our freedom and the freedom of others. In the penultimate paragraph of the *Letters*, Schiller argues that “in the aesthetic state everything – even the tool that serves – is a free citizen, having equal rights with the noblest; and the mind, which would

force the patient mass beneath the yoke of its purposes, must here first obtain its assent” (Schiller 2001, p. 178). *Even the tool that serves* – Alongside the establishment of a social or political state, there is the beautiful object, and even, or especially, in the aesthetic state that object must be a free citizen. It is the encounter with the beautiful object that inaugurates the thinking otherwise that allows us to hear and to heed the call of the object to be free like me. The aesthetic encounter returns us to the ground of our freedom by way of the beautiful object, bringing the beautiful object back with us as we allow it to come in upon us. It establishes autonomy alongside relationality, and in that this relation demands respect for freedom, I would argue that the encounter with the beautiful object opens an aesthetic dimension that is inherently ethical. While Kant posited the beautiful as a *symbol* for morality, Schiller makes the aesthetic *inherently* ethical, embedding within it a notion of relationality that regulates our interaction with objects and, by analogy, people in the world.

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***The Dialectic of Consciousness and Unconsciousness
in Spontaneity of Genius:
A Comparison between Classical Chinese Aesthetics and
Kantian Ideas***

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores the elusive dialectic between concentration and forgetfulness, consciousness and unconsciousness in spontaneous artistic creation favoured by artists and advocated by critics in Chinese art history, by examining texts on painting and tracing back to ancient Daoist philosophical ideas, in a comparison with Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics. Although artistic spontaneity in classical Chinese aesthetics seems to share similarities with Kant's account of spontaneity in the art of genius, the emphasis on unconsciousness is valued by classical Chinese artists and critics inspired by the Daoist idea of 'Wu Wei' (acting without conscious intention or effort). As the Qing painter Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715) claimed when admitting his failure to copy the Yuan master Ni Zan (1301–1374), Ni Zan's success in natural and untrammelled expression lies 'in between having an intention and not having one'. A similar idea about the dialectic of consciousness and unconsciousness in artistic spontaneity was suggested by Heinrich von Kleist's *On the Marionette Theatre* (1880), which demonstrated that while self-consciousness might disturb and hinder the naturalness of artistic expression and thus encourage affectation, it does not mean that there is no role for consciousness. Although the views on unconsciousness in art and the co-play of consciousness and unconscious in artistic creation by Schelling, Schiller, Goethe, and even Nietzsche might get inspirations from Kant's hidden view of the unconscious, Kant's emphasis on the harmonious cooperation between imagination and understanding disguises his inexplicit idea of the unconscious. This paper will demonstrate that while in both Classical Chinese and European cultural contexts, artists, critics and philosophers talk about the same elusive relation, the philosophical explanations of the same phenomenon are essentially distinctive.

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1. Introduction

For classical Chinese artists and critics, the painting process is spontaneous, since the artist does not know how his mental faculties work, how aesthetic ideas come about in his mind, how the perfect idea-image suddenly and clearly shows itself in front of his mind's eye, and how the perfect image which is replete with 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) can be successfully released onto silk or paper.² As Kant (1790: 186) claimed, spontaneity is a key feature of genius in creating art. Genius (as innate mental talent) creates art without knowing or realizing any specific rule, and if there is a rule for genius creating art, only the mysterious power of nature appears to endow genius with it. In this paper, I attempt to illuminate Chinese aesthetic ideas of spontaneity in comparison with Kantian accounts of spontaneity. I will suggest that while the Daoist ideas of spontaneity which classical Chinese artists resort to can be understood along similar lines as Kant's ideas of spontaneity of genius in creating art, the similarity masks an important difference. In spontaneous creation, unconsciousness (which includes absence of self-consciousness and indifference to internal and external distractions) is emphasized by Chinese artists inspired by the Daoist idea of 'Wu Wei' (acting without conscious intention and effort). The term unconsciousness can have two meanings. The first concerns 'losing' consciousness when entering a coma or falling asleep. The other refers to a state of acting without self-awareness. My use of unconsciousness concerns this second meaning, of being without self-awareness, the loss of the sense of self, and being indifferent to distractions caused by any external things and internal cognitive faculties. Concerning the dialectic of consciousness and unconsciousness, I will examine the essays and poems written by influential classical Chinese artists and critics, in a comparison with Kantian aesthetics, before discussing three stories by German author Heinrich von Kleist in his *On the Marionette Theatre* (1880). We will see that although

² See Hu, 2016: 247–268. Regarding the notion of 'Qi Yun' in classical Chinese painting, where the process of creation by painters is concerned, 'Qi Yun' refers to the essential quality or internal reality of the object; once the painter releases the brush to complete a work, 'Qi Yun' becomes the expressive quality or content of the work.

Kant does not explicitly explain the role of the unconscious in the spontaneous creation of genius, genius as a chiasm of the conscious and unconscious seems to be hidden in Kantian aesthetics, and gives inspiration to Schelling's and Schiller's ideas of the unconscious in art.

2. Plausible Similarity: Spontaneity of Chinese Art from a Daoist Viewpoint and Comparison with Kantian Ideas of Spontaneity of Genius

Regarding artistic spontaneity, Kant (1970: 186) claimed that only nature appears to provide the rule for art through genius (as innate mental talent). In this section, I will explain the correspondence of spontaneity in classical Chinese artistic creation with the Kantian ideas of spontaneity of genius in creating art, in the process of examining the texts written by influential classical Chinese critics and tracing back to stories by Zhuangzi (late 4th – early 3rd century BC) that are frequently used by classical Chinese artists and critics to emphasize artistic spontaneity.

The significance of artistic spontaneity has been frequently stressed in the texts by classical Chinese critics who liked to use such expressions as 'partake of the divine', 'being endowed by nature', 'being aided by divinities', or 'in harmony with natural creation' to praise excellent artworks. For instance, the Song critic Shen Kuo (1031–1095, ECTOP: 100) praised a painting by the Tang artist Wang Wei (699? – 761?) in his collection: 'the principles of his creation partook of the divine and in a special way he obtained the ideas of nature'. The Song bamboo painter and critic Li Kan (1245–1320, ECTOP: 278) praised the bamboo painting master Wen Tong (1018–1079) as 'a genius endowed by Nature, as well as a sage with innate knowledge, moved his brush as if aided by divinities to achieve subtleties in harmony with natural creation'. For such painters and critics, spontaneity is greatly beneficial: even if appearing to keep within rules, Wen Tong seems to be able to '[roam] beyond the dusty world' and 'indulge in all the desires of his heart without transgressing the rules' (ECTOP: 278).

The creative process through which a painter transmits ‘Qi Yun’ into painting is a spontaneous achievement in the eyes of classical Chinese critics and painters. When unrolling a painting and observing ‘strange mountains and seas, verdant forests tossed by wind, white waters leaping and foaming’ on it, Wang Wei (415–443, ECTOP: 39) appears to sincerely doubt whether or how it ‘could have been accomplished easily’ by remarking that ‘it must have come about through divine inspiration’. Wang Wei (ECTOP: 38) claimed that when painters paint, ‘what is found in form is fused with soul’, and ‘what activates movement is the mind’. Thus, he seems to suggest that the mind of the artist who produces a great work appears to be inspired and controlled by the divine power of nature, while an ordinary mind certainly could not fulfil this task which appears unattainable by human efforts. Similarly, in an essay in praise of a painter, the Tang poet Bai Juyi (772–846, ECTOP: 71) commented that ‘learning... is achieved by mental art, and skill matching creation comes from natural harmony’, and the painter Zhang ‘merely received from his mind and transmitted to his hand’, and conducted his artistic process spontaneously without consciously knowing how this is being done. The spontaneity of artistic creation appears to be consistent with the Kantian claim about spontaneity that genius (mind) cannot make a specific plan for creation, and the artist does not himself know how the aesthetic idea comes into his mind and how the ideal image is realised by the artwork (Kant, 1790: 187).

According to Kant (1790: 187), genius ‘cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its product into being, but rather it gives the rule as nature (does)’. Thus, spontaneous creation cannot be designed beforehand, and no real plan including aesthetic ideas can be made beforehand in designing an artwork. Just as Bai Juyi who suggested that learning is ‘achieved by mental art’ and skill originates in ‘natural harmony’, the influential Song artist and critic Su Shi (1037–1101, ECTOP: 218) wrote a poem to suggest that artists achieve spontaneous creation naturally without learning from any external agent: ‘Why should a high-minded man study painting? /The use of the brush comes to him naturally. /It is like those good at swimming, /Each of whom can handle a boat.’

For classical Chinese artists, the rule which nature gives through genius

is called the Dao, and the Dao which applies in art is the same Dao which applies in life and originally discussed by Zhuangzi in his work. The Dao of spontaneity is illustrated in his story of cook Ding cutting oxen, who seems to be ‘going at it by spirit instead of looking with eyes’ (Zhuangzi, translated by Watson, 2013: 19–20). The Dao of spontaneity is shown in the story of woodworker Qing making a bell-stand who appears to be ‘matching up Heaven with Heaven’ (Zhuangzi, 2013: 152).³ Numerous artists and critics seek the same Dao of spontaneity through art by echoing the ideas of Zhuangzi. For instance, Huang Tingjian (1045–1105, ECTOP: 212) wrote a colophon on an ink bamboo painting, disclosing the common point behind those two stories: ‘The cook’s cutting up of oxen and the woodworker Qing’s carving of a bell-stand went with their having clarity in themselves and a concentration of vitality like divinities, so closely united that nothing could come between; only then could they achieve excellence’. In the examination of these two stories, we will see that the mind retains aesthetic freedom (in the Kantian sense) during spontaneous creation. Even though these stories in the original narrative by Zhuangzi was to illustrate how to follow nature to care for life, classical artists and critics found that the Dao of spontaneity which applies in life also applies to art.

The story of cook Ding cutting up oxen is in the third chapter *The Secret of Caring for Life* in *Zhuangzi*. Watching him cutting up an ox, Lord Wenhui feels surprised at his marvellous skill. Ding cuts the ox as if he is performing the classical dance Mulberry Groves and keeping time with the classical music piece Jingshou, since ‘at every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee’, every sound made during the cutting is ‘in perfect rhythm’ (Zhuangzi, 2013: 19–20).⁴ Lord Wenhui wonders how he has grasped this skill. Cook Ding replies that what he cares about is the Dao (Way) beyond skill. He explains

³ Heaven (Tian) has several meanings in classical Chinese philosophy. In a narrow and physical sense, Tian refers to sky, is opposite to Di (earth), and Tian Di refers to the universe. In a broad and naturalistic sense, Heaven (Tian) refers to nature; see *A History of Chinese Philosophy* by Fung Yu-lan (1952: 284–294).

⁴ The dance *Mulberry Groves* is a classical dance from the period of King Tang of the Shang Dynasty; the much *Jingshou* is a part of a classical composition from the time of King Yao before the Xia Dynasty.

how he has been practising the Dao beyond skill during the nineteen years of cutting up oxen as cook. At the beginning of his cutting, his eyes focus on the whole ox, then, after three years' practice, he no longer sees the whole ox, and he '[goes] at it by spirit' instead of looking at it with his eyes. When going at it by spirit instead of looking through his eyes, his 'perception and understanding have come to a stop, and spirit moves where it wants' (Zhuangzi, 2013: 19–20). In this state, he just complies with the ox's natural makeup, chops in the big hollows, '[guides] the knife through the big openings, and [follows] things as they are', so his knife 'never [touches] the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint' (Zhuangzi, 2013: 19–20). Thus, his knife which has been used in cutting up thousands of oxen for nineteen years is still brand-new as if just bought from the store. 'There are spaces between the joints [of oxen], and the blade of the knife has really no thickness', and 'if you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room—more than enough for the blade to play about in' (Zhuangzi, 2013: 19–20). This might be regarded as a metaphor or an analogy used by Zhuangzi for later students to imagine what the freedom of the mind is: in the mind where there is no sensuous or rational enslavement, the spirit can soar freely without any constraints. When going at it by spirit instead of looking with eyes, the faculties of perception and understanding appear to stop working, so the mind achieves freedom by getting rid of the slavery of sensuous complaints and rational compulsion, and spontaneity arises. This mental freedom appears to fit in with aesthetic freedom as Kant defined.

As Xu Fuguan (2001: 32) argued, the reason why the Dao of cook Ding cutting up oxen is advocated by Zhuangzi as the universal Dao lies in this: the contradiction and conflict between the cook and the ox has been destroyed and vanished by virtue of cook Ding no longer seeing the whole ox; the distance between the cook's hands handling the knife and his mind has been shortened to a minimum by virtue of his 'going at it by spirit' without the necessity of 'looking with eyes', that is, the boundary between technique and mind has also been erased. Due to the vanishing of those conflicts, cook Ding is able to perform his 'play' freely and spontaneously in cutting up oxen, and by which he seems to realise the 'free and easy

wandering' advocated by Zhuangzi (Xu Fuguan, 2001: 32). Thus, the Dao of cook Ding cutting up oxen which enlightened Lord Wenhui on the aspect of caring for life, applies in explaining the spontaneity of art, in the eyes of numerous later Chinese artists and critics. No matter what he has been practising, the artist achieves the Dao when reaching the spontaneity of 'going at it by spirit' instead of 'looking with eyes'.

The Dao of 'matching up Heaven with Heaven' is illustrated by Zhuangzi in the story of woodworker Qing carving a bell-stand to be found in the 19th chapter *Mastering Life* of *Zhuangzi*: woodworker Qing made a bell-stand by carving a piece of wood, and everyone who saw the completed bell-stand felt surprised by its striking beauty as if it had been made by gods or spirits rather than by human efforts. When the marquis of Lu saw it and asked Qing how to make it, Qing explained that until his mental state became still enough by fasting the mind for a certain period of time, he did not even go to the mountain forests to look at the nature of the trees in search of wood:

'If I find one of superlative form and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up "Heaven" with "Heaven". That's probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits.' (Zhuangzi, 2013: 152)

Here, matching up Heaven (nature) with Heaven (nature) appears to follow the rule suggested by Kant which nature gives in spontaneous creation. According to Kant (1790: 187), 'by means of genius nature does not prescribe the rule to science, but to art; and even to the latter only insofar as it is to be beautiful art'. Additionally, when Kant claims spontaneity as a key feature of genius, he does not explain how spontaneity could be achieved for genius, but rather emphasizes that genius experiences aesthetic freedom during spontaneous creation. Similarly, mysterious and elusive spontaneity of 'matching up nature with nature' appears to merely belong to the pure and free mind of gifted artists whose work makes audiences wonder if it were made by divine power. In making the bell-stand, Qing gradually got rid of the distractions of thinking of possible 'congratulations',

‘rewards’, ‘titles’, and ‘stipends’ (which he might achieve once he has completed the bell-stand), and of considering whether his skill for making a bell-stand is good enough. The final state of forgetting self and all external and internal distractions which Qing achieved appears to be the state of ‘[smashing] up [his] limbs and body, [driving] out perception and intellect, [casting] off or [doing] away with understanding, [making] [himself] identical with the Great Thoroughfare’, as mentioned in *The Great and Venerable Teacher*, the sixth chapter of *Zhuangzi* (Zhuangzi, 2013: 53). On the one hand, this state is essentially without the distraction of any purpose, or any sensuous interest, or any rational or differentiable concept, so it appears to constitute aesthetic freedom which Kant claimed is necessarily demanded by spontaneous creation of genius. On the other hand, it should be stressed that forgetfulness includes absence of self-consciousness and indifference to internal constraints and external distraction, which is advocated by Zhuangzi as the ideal state of attaining the Dao, but is not explicitly discussed by Kant.

3. Possible Marked Difference: the Dialectic of Consciousness and Unconsciousness in Spontaneity in Classical Chinese Aesthetics

Although I suggest that spontaneity in classical Chinese art inspired by Zhuangzi’s philosophy shares a similarity with the Kantian account of spontaneity (of genius in creating art), there is nothing about unconsciousness explicitly discussed in Kant’s accounts of spontaneity of genius in creating art. In spontaneous creation of art, the dialectic of concentration (with conscious intention and effort) and forgetfulness (in a trance-like state without conscious intention or effort) is valued by classic Chinese artists and critics, as Su Shi (1037–1101, ECTOP: 212) illustrated in a poem in praise of Wen Tong painting bamboo:

‘When Wen Tong painted bamboo,
He saw bamboo and not himself.
Not simply unconscious of himself,

Trance-like, he left his body behind.
His body was transferred into bamboo,
Creating inexhaustible freshness.
Zhuang Zhou is no longer in this world,
So who can understand such concentration?’⁵

The dialectic of concentration and forgetfulness in spontaneity was applied by several gifted artists, and was also stressed by several critics. When the mind concentrates on the object depicted and the spirit is completely absorbed, the artist seems to conduct himself with his conscious intention. When forgetting everything in a trance-like state of becoming one with the object, the artist appears to discard his conscious intention and act unconsciously. When the artist suddenly gets ready for painting, the spontaneous process of producing the final work seems to be conducted without the distraction of conscious intention and the constraints of conscious effort. However, it is also true that the artist’s conscious intention and effort plays a role during the process of formulating the perfect idea-image in the mind, controlling the hand to respond to the mind, and finally releasing the image through brush and ink onto silk or paper. Thus, on the one hand, conscious intention or intentional consciousness gets involved as if it was not engaged; on the other hand, acting unconsciously appears to dominate spontaneity as if any conscious intention and effort were discarded. For instance, as the Qing painter Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715, cited and translated by Nelson, 1983: 410) claimed when admitting his failure to copy the Yuan master Ni Zan (1301–1374), Ni Zan’s success of natural and untrammelled expression in paintings lies ‘in between having a (conscious) intention and not having one’.

On the one hand, it is commonly believed that artists must concentrate on the targeted object first. Being absorbed in the object of art, it might be suggested, leads to a state of fusing the subject and the object with conscious intention or efforts. For instance, according to the Tang critic Zhang Yanyuan (847, ECTOP: 61–62), commanding his own spirit, and focusing on the object depicted, the artist may produce a real painting rather

⁵ Zhuang Zhou refers to Zhuangzi.

than a 'dead painting'.⁶ As the Song artist Huang Tingjian (1045–1105, ECTOP: 219) observed, the calligrapher Zhang Su achieved artistic success by '[being] able to become absorbed spiritually'; 'if the mind is able not to be distracted by external things, then one's original nature will be preserved intact, and all things will emerge in profusion as if reflected in a mirror'.

Zhuangzi once illustrated the significance of smashing external distractions by using the simple example of betting for different prizes in an archery contest. When the prize is more valuable, the shooter's mind has more distraction, and it is more difficult for him to get the stake. When one bets for tiles, he shoots with skill; when he bets for fancy belt buckles, he 'worries about the aim'; when he bets for real gold, he becomes 'a nervous wreck'. Although in these three situations, the shooter's skill stays same, the value of the prize lets 'outside considerations weigh on his mind', so 'he who looks too hard at the outside gets clumsy on the inside' (Zhuangzi, 2013: 148). That is, if the mind is distracted by the external prize, that means the spirit does not become absorbed, there is intangible resistance between the shooter and the object (Xu Fuguan, 2001: 74–75). The same principle applies in art.

However, mere concentration does not appear to be enough for the artist. To get rid of all internal and external distractions, the artist needs to forget self and everything else. Forgetting self and everything else, refers to forgetting the self, the object depicted, the painting action, the work, the technique, anything else which might constitute internal or external distractions.⁷ Thus, on the other hand, forgetting everything appears necessary for classical Chinese artists when creating art, so as to avoid the image being 'stopped in the hand' or 'frozen in the mind' (Zhang Yanyuan, 847, ECTOP: 62). As Zhang Yanyuan (ECTOP: 62) suggested, 'The more one ... consciously [thinks] of oneself as painting, the less success one will have when painting', while 'if one revolves thought and wields brush

⁶ A real painting is not merely imitating formal likeness, rather a painting which is replete with 'Qi Yun'.

⁷ External distraction is from outside of the self, and it might include the object depicted, the brush, the ink, the painting place and time, the painting material (paper or silk), weather, and surroundings, etc. Internal distraction is caused by the play of internal cognitive faculties such as reason, intention, or consciousness.

without ideas fixed on the act of painting, one will have success'. Following Zhang Yanyuan's suggestion, the artist should paint without consciously thinking of painting, and the work appears more successful with less distraction produced by conscious intention and rational cognition.

Concentrating on the object (with conscious intention) in an absorbed state and forgetting everything in a trance-like state (as if acting unconsciously without any conscious intention) might appear paradoxical at first sight, but both work for artistic spontaneity, by serving the purpose of getting rid of all external and internal distractions to achieve the aesthetic freedom required by spontaneity. Intentional and conscious concentration seem to be the starting point, then forgetfulness in a trance-like state of acting unconsciously follows. Thus, spontaneity occurs when the artist gets rid of any distraction of intentional self-consciousness and external environment, and paints unconsciously as if the interference of any conscious intentions and efforts has been smashed, although the mind does not lose the consciousness of commanding the hands to control the brush to release the perfect image at the same time. This process is described in the story of Wen Tong painting bamboos in an essay by Su Shi's brother Su Zhe (1039–1112).

Wen Tong lives as if a recluse in a bamboo grove every day, 'looking and listening without awareness' as if nothing '[affects] (his) mind', regarding bamboos as his intimate friends and companions, drinking and eating, and lying down and resting among the bamboos; at first he concentrates his spirit on carefully observing the different shapes and numerous changes of bamboos in different days and moments, later he '[enjoys] them without consciousness of doing so', and then at an unpredictable moment when he feels ready as if he has already forgotten the brush in his hand and the paper, he paints bamboos instantly and spontaneously (ECTOP: 208). Wen Tong got absorbed in bamboos first, then forgot everything, entering a 'trance-like' state, and the 'inexhaustible freshness' of the bamboo in his works appears to be the spontaneous product of Wen Tong finally being 'trance-like' in becoming one with the bamboo. In this trance-like state when the artist appears to have forgotten everything but has achieved the unification between the self and the object, he appears

to lose his consciousness of knowing whether he becomes the depicted object or the depicted object becomes him.

When the state of being completely absorbed in painting and forgetting self and everything else is interrupted, the painter feels pressure from cognitive faculties or faces resistance from external influences, and thus might suddenly lose his ideal state to paint. This can be seen in the story of Fu Shan (1607–1684):

At the night of the Middle Autumn Festival, Fu Shan ‘asked his servants to take out a huge bowl of ground ink and put it on a tea table. He motioned to the people to leave and started painting alone. A friend stood in the distance and spied upon him. He was seen dancing and jumping as if he had gone crazy. The friend hurried back and took hold of him by the waist. He cried out and signed, “The guy has destroyed my refined mood, what a pity it is!” And so he threw down the brush, crumpled up the paper, and stopped.’ (Xu Ke, 1869–1928, translated and cited by Gao Jianping, 1996: 83)

As seen in the story of Wen Tong painting bamboo, both concentration (being conscious) and forgetfulness (acting unconsciously) work for unification of the subject and object. According to Xu Fuguan (2001: 74–75), the painter suffers from conflicts between the self and object unless he achieves a unification with the object. Unless completely absorbed in or united with the object depicted, the artist is unable to get rid of external and internal distractions, and spontaneous creation will not be achieved. The same Dao for cook Ding’s performing the cutting up of oxen and for Wen Tong’s spontaneously painting bamboo is ‘going at the object by spirit’ instead of ‘looking with eyes’, and the same reason lies in that the spirit can move freely where perception and understanding stop (disturbing). When the painter achieves the unification with the object, he gets rid of sensuous constraints and rational compulsion. Although by getting rid of enslavement to sensuous constraint and rational compulsion the artist appears to achieve aesthetic freedom in the Kantian sense, it should not be ignored that the emphasis on acting unconsciously in artistic spontaneity and the unification of the artist and object does not appear in Kant’s discussion of aesthetics.

4. Daoist Origin of Acting Unconsciously and Reaching Unification of Self and Object

Compared with concentration, forgetfulness in a trance-like state of unconsciousness that includes absence of self-consciousness and indifference to internal and external distractions, appears more mysterious. However, numerous classical artists and critics do emphasize the role of unconsciousness in artistic activity.

The Song critic Dong You (active early 12th century) emphasized the role of unconsciousness in a colophon on the paintings by Li Cheng (919-967). In Dong You's eyes, later imitators who try to follow Li Cheng's style by imitating the traces of his brushwork and exploring the composition of his painting do not realise that the art of Li Cheng owes much to 'forgetfulness' (ECTOP: 210). In another colophon, Dong You continues to emphasize (unconscious) forgetfulness: Though the painter might have become familiar enough with horses during everyday observation, it is only when he is able to 'forget' horses (be unconscious of horses), that he will avoid 'the hindrance of looking at horses' (ECTOP: 215). According to Dong You, at this stage, myriads of forms of horses appear to 'disappear abruptly as if extinguished and non-existent', while the perfect image will 'suddenly emerge' in front of his eyes (ECTOP: 215). Without consciously knowing how this occurs, 'the true horse' will be ready to be released onto silk or paper.

As the Yuan master Wu Zhen (1280–1354, ECTOP: 279) stressed in a poem, unconsciousness appears to dominate his artistic creation: 'When I begin to paint I am not conscious of myself, /And suddenly forget about the brush in my hand. //If the butcher or wheelwright were to return, /Would they not recognise this feeling again? ...' In another poem, Wu Zhen (ECTOP: 279) reiterated the significance of unconsciousness in artistic creation by commenting that Wen Tong 'did not see bamboo' when painting bamboo and Su Shi 'was not aware of poems' when writing poems.

In the Daoist terminology, acting without deliberate intention or conscious effort is called 'Wu Wei'. Wu Wei might be literally translated as doing nothing, but this does not get the true meaning across. In *The Classic*

of the Way and Virtue, Laozi's (ca. 571 BC–471 BC) idea appears to centre around 'Wu Wei'. Laozi (translated by Lynn, 1999: 54, my emphasis) tells us that 'the sage tends to matters *without conscious effort* (Wu Wei), and practises the teaching that is not expression in word'. Wang Bi's commentary on this is 'that which by nature is already sufficient unto itself will only end in defeat if one applies conscious effort [Wei] to it' (Laozi, 1999: 54). Later, Laozi (1999: 56/117, my emphasis) explains why Wu Wei is advocated by pointing out its benefit.

'Because [the sage] *acts without conscious effort* (Wu Wei), nothing remains ungoverned ... The Dao in its constancy engages in *no conscious action* ('Wu Wei'), yet nothing remains undone.'

Wang Bi's commentary on it reads thus:

'It complies with the Natural. In either getting its start or achieving its completion, every one of the myriad things, without exception, stems from what is done in this way.' (Laozi, 1999: 117–118)

Wang Bi seems to suggest that 'Wu Wei' (acting without conscious effort) overlaps with spontaneity.

Laozi (1999: 105/143/170, my emphasis) points out the defects brought about by 'Wei' (acting with specific intention and conscious effort):

'One who acts on [the numinous vessel] will destroy it; one who tries to grasp it will lose it... One who takes all under Heaven as his charge always tends to matters without deliberate action. But when it comes to one who does take conscious action, such a one is not worthy to take all under Heaven as his charge... One who takes *deliberate action* (Wei) will become ruined; one who consciously administers will become lost. This is why the sage *engages in no deliberate action* (Wu Wei) and so never becomes ruined, does not consciously administer and so never becomes lost.'⁸

⁸ Here, the numinous vessel is the metaphor of the Dao.

The advantages of ‘Wu Wei’ are repetitively emphasized by Laozi (1999: 142/137, my emphasis) who also indicates that Wu Wei is grasped by few people:

‘[The sage] brings about the completion of things *without taking (conscious) action* (Wu Wei) ... The softest things under Heaven gallop through the hardest things. That which has no physical existence can squeeze through where there is no space, so from this I know how advantageous it is to *act without conscious purpose* (Wu Wei). The teaching that is not expressed in words, the advantage that is had by *acting without conscious purpose* (Wu Wei), rare is it that anyone under Heaven ever reaches them’.

Laozi’s (1999: 159) emphasis on acting without conscious intention and effort appears to mainly apply to a king ruling his people. Compared with Laozi, Zhuangzi’s explanation of ‘Wu Wei’ appears more vivid and initially applies to caring for life since Zhuangzi likes telling stories or making up dialogues with a message for people. The stories of cook Ding cutting oxen, and woodworker Qing carving a bell-stand, which greatly enlightened artists as mentioned above, all appear to explain the Dao of ‘Wu Wei’. Without consciously doing anything for any intention or purpose, everything is achieved. This appears to be the Dao for everything in the universe. According to Zhuangzi (2013: 193), when someone attains the Dao of spontaneity, he appears like an innocent baby ‘[acting] without knowing what it is doing’ and ‘[moving] without knowing where it is going’. An innocent infant spontaneously practises ‘Wu Wei’ by following nature without conscious effort, so he ‘howls all day, yet its throat never gets hoarse’, ‘makes fists all day, yet its fingers never get cramped’, and ‘stares all day without blinking its eyes’ (Zhuangzi, 2013: 192). This idea by Zhuangzi echoes Laozi’s idea about behaving as an innocent infant.⁹

⁹ Laozi (1999: 65/84/103) suggests that one should ‘rely exclusively on your vital force, and become perfectly soft’ as an infant; he describes that the sage ‘alone [is] quiet and indifferent, in an entirely pre-manifest state, just like an infant who has not yet smile’,

In Zhuangzi's (2013: 193) eyes, the baby's 'body is like the limb of a withered tree', his 'mind like dead ashes'. On the one hand, the body as if dried wood and the mind as if dead ashes is a metaphor originally used by Zhuangzi to illustrate his idea of fasting the mind into emptiness and stillness by discarding sensuous desires of the physical body and by dismissing discriminative understanding and rational judgment, so the state of 'body as if the limb of a withered tree, and mind as if dead ashes' is the ideal state of aesthetic freedom for Chinese artists. On the other hand, the benefit of acting unconsciously which not only includes acting without awareness of the self and internal constraints, but also involves acting without awareness of external distraction and appearing indifferent to one's environment is noted and applied to art by classical Chinese artists. Appreciating this, we can find it easier to understand the reason why acting unconsciously is stressed in Chinese art when discussing the dialectic of concentration and forgetfulness.

In his book *Trying Not to Try: The Art of Effortlessness and the Power of Spontaneity*, Slingerland blended the classical Chinese Philosophy of spontaneity with contemporary psychological and cognitive sciences in order to shed light on guiding modern people to live a spontaneous way of life. According to contemporary cognitive science, human cognition is classified into two systems: hot cognition and cold cognition. The actions under hot cognition appear to be unselfconscious, fast, intuitive and improvisational. In contrast, due to the positive involvement of reason, the actions under cold cognition seem to be 'slow, deliberate, effortful, and conscious, corresponding roughly to our "mind", that is, our conscious, verbal selves' (2014: 28). Although Slingerland (2014) discussed the limitation of hot cognition and merely following hot cognition, and explained why humans need cold cognition, he suggested that the Daoist philosophy of spontaneity inspires people, especially artists, to explore the potential benefits of hot cognition, to maximize the positive power of the unconscious, to go with the flow, and let hot cognition and cold cognition cooperate. According to Slingerland (2014: 36), when a person reaches the

and the sage 'who is a river valley for all under Heaven, never separates himself from constant virtue and always reverts to the infant'.

spontaneous state, he appears to '[shut] down active conscious awareness and control' and maximally reduce or smash the rational distraction brought by reason occupying the mind 'while [maintain] background situational alertness'.

In order to maximize the positive power of the unconscious (or hot cognition) and arouse artistic spontaneity, some artists resort to alcohol which appears to stimulate or inspire them to get access into the trance-like state of forgetting self and any distractions. For instance, the Tang master Wu Daozi (ca. 680–759), regarded as the sage of painting, loved wine, and his intoxication triggered by wine 'stimulated his vital breath' (Zhang Yanyuan, 847, ECTOP: 62). The Tang painter Wang Mo ranked by the Tang critic Zhu Jingxuan (ca. 840) in the untrammelled class started to paint when being completely drunk, then he spattered ink onto silk or paper, stamping with feet and smearing with hands, laughing and singing at the same time (Nelson, 1983: 397).¹⁰ Similarly, Su Shi liked to improvise a painting when inspiration was triggered during drinking. The Yuan painter Wu Taisu (active 14th century, ECTOP: 186) preferred 'a state of exhilaration' when being slightly tipsy. However, this is not a common practice for all artists. Drinking alcohol is one of possible ways to help the artist enter the trance-like state of forgetting himself and everything else and painting without conscious effort, to reach the unification of oneself and the object.

As we have seen in Wen Tong's story, when reaching the unification of becoming one with the bamboo in the trance-like state of acting unconsciously, the painter does not know whether he becomes the object or the object becomes him. Similar to Wen Tong painting bamboo, Luo Dajing (active ca. 1224, ECTOP: 220) recorded that the insect painter Wu Yi admitted that at first he concentrated on observing insects, but when

¹⁰ Regarding the untrammelled class, The North Song critic Huang Xiufu (ca. 1060) placed the Untrammelled (Yi) class as the first class in the grading system of Chinese painting, and this has been accepted by later artists and critics. According to Huang Xiufu (ECTOP: 100–101), the work in the untrammelled class is thus: it appears 'clumsy in the regulated drawing of squares and circles, and disdains minute thoroughness in colouring', while 'its brushwork is abbreviated yet its forms are complete, and attain naturalness', and 'none can take it as a model for it goes beyond expectation'.

painting, '[he did] not know whether [he was] an insect, or whether the insect [was him]', so this spontaneity appeared to be 'the working of Creation as it produces things' and cannot be taught as 'a transmittable method'. In this trace-like state, when the artist has forgotten self and everything else but has achieved unification between the self and the object, he appears to lose his consciousness of knowing whether he becomes the depicted object, or the depicted object becomes him.

The trance-like state in the unification of the self and object favoured by artists and advocated by critics can find philosophical origin in a dream of Zhuangzi recorded at the end of the second chapter of *Zhuangzi: Discussion on Making All Things Equal*. Zhuangzi (2013: 18) once dreamt of a butterfly, and when he woke up he appeared to be in a trance-like state, wondering whether he was Zhuangzi or the butterfly:

'Once Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he woke up, and there he was, solid and unmistakeable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he were Zhuang Zhou who had dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou.'¹¹

This story illustrates what forgetfulness might be like and describes what the identification or unification of the self with other things is by suggesting that there is no difference between Zhuangzi dreaming he was a butterfly and a butterfly dreaming it was Zhuangzi. According to Zhuangzi, by releasing this identification of the self with other things in the universe and becoming one with the universe, human beings appear to achieve absolute happiness and freedom (Feng Youlan, 1948: 109). This story has an enchanting aesthetic charm in the mind of numerous Chinese throughout history, and more importantly, it enlightens artists to grasp spontaneity. Obviously, this unification of self and object advocated in spontaneity of Chinese art and inspired by Daoist philosophy is not discussed in Kantian aesthetics.

¹¹ Zhuang Zhou refers to Zhuangzi.

In general, although unconsciousness is stressed in spontaneity of Chinese art, the role of consciousness in conducting painting is not neglected. When spontaneity is ignited, the perfect image might suddenly show in front of the artist's mind's eye. At this moment, the painter needs to immediately and consciously rise to wield the brush to capture the perfect idea-image and release it onto paper or silk. As Su Shi (ECTOP: 207/277) described, 'it is like the hare's leaping up when the falcon swoops; if it hesitates in the slightest, all will be lost'.

Although the interplay of concentration (consciousness) and forgetfulness (unconsciousness) appears paradoxical and elusive, the power of the unconscious and the benefit brought by harmonious co-play of consciousness and unconsciousness are also favoured by Chan Buddhism. For instance, Eugen Herrigel (1985) tells his experience of learning the art of archery in Japan, where artistic spontaneity is interpreted by referring to Zen (Chan) Buddhism. In the foreword of Herrigel's (1985: 5) *Zen in Art of Archery*, D.T. Suzuki explicitly pointed out that 'the mind has first to be attuned to the unconscious' to capture the art of archery. As Suzuki (1934: 58/48) claimed in his work *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, real spiritual freedom cannot be achieved 'unless we break through the antithesis of yes and no', no conflict of such duality brings about 'spiritual emancipation', and due to real spiritual freedom, the mind is fully controlling itself instead of being 'divided against itself'. Breaking through the antithesis of yes and no appears to be to minimize of the compulsion and limitation brought by cold cognition as Slingerland defined it. By entering a world of 'no contradicting distinctions', one might finally reach 'a higher form of affirmation', and spontaneously apply the wisdom into the art of life (Suzuki, 1934: 58).

In *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Suzuki focuses on the power of the unconscious brought by Chan meditation.¹² At the beginning of the work, Suzuki (1974: 1) praised a poem by the Japanese Haiku poet Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694). It is interesting that Bashō's spontaneous creation appears to fit in with Daoist emphasis on the trance-like state of

¹² Classical Chinese artists either resort to the Daoist fasting of the mind or Chan Buddhist meditation to cultivate their mind as pure and free as possible.

unconsciousness, the loss of the self, and reaching a state of unity with nature. Considering Bashō was very familiar with Zhuangzi and the poems by classical Chinese poets in the Tang dynasty and the Song Dynasty, his ideas of artistic spontaneity for creating poetry might have been inspired by Zhuangzi and even Su Shi. One of Bashō's poems explicitly praises Zhuangzi and his dream of a butterfly. The echo of Zhuangzi's trance-like spontaneity can be found in the words by Hattori Tohō (or Dohō) (1657-1730, cited by Barnhill), one of Bashō's disciples:

'The Master said, "Learn of the pine from the pine, learn of the bamboo from the bamboo." In other words, one must become detached from the self." If one understands this idea of "learning" in one's own way, the result will be no learning at all. "To learn" means to enter into the object and to feel the subtlety that is revealed there.... For example, no matter how clearly one represents an object, if the poem lacks the feeling that arises naturally out of the object, the self and the object would form a duality and the feeling would not have attained genuineness. Instead, the poetic meaning would have come from the self.'

Tohō's summary of Bashō creating Haiku is very similar to Su Shi's praise of Wen Tong painting bamboo. As Barnhill commented, 'such a mind, free of the artificial self, merges with the object without obstruction.'

5. A Similar Emphasis on Unconsciousness in Three Stories by Kleist

One might note that the dialectic of consciousness and unconsciousness in spontaneous creation is not merely emphasized by classical Chinese aesthetics and Japanese aesthetic ideas of poetry. In *On the Marionette Theatre* (1880), over the course of three stories Kleist (1880: 18) suggests that self-consciousness might disturb and hinder the naturalness of artistic expression and thus cause affectation, so conscious intention is better forgotten; 'in the world of animate matter, as self-consciousness becomes

dimmer and weaker, to the same extent gracefulness manifests itself more and more radiantly and dominantly’.

The first story by Kleist is about a successful dancer telling the first-person narrator that he got enlightened from a puppeteer making puppets dance. The dancer once wonders if the puppet master must grasp a certain skill by placing himself (his soul of dancing) in the gravity centre when making the puppets dance, but dismisses this by saying that the puppet master’s job ‘can be done entirely without spirit’ (Kleist, 1880: 4). In the dancer’s eyes, the puppets without (their own or the puppeteer’s injected) soul or consciousness dance much more flexibly, naturally, and freely than human beings. Compared with puppets, human dancers are unable to get rid of the disturbance of consciousness. In order to avoid appearing conspicuous, human dancers inevitably apply their conscious efforts, and any trace of intentional efforts will affect the naturalness of movements, while mechanical and unconscious puppets are not affected by consciousness and appear much more natural and graceful.

The second story depicts how a young man loses his grace due to his narcissistic self-consciousness. Before consciously realising his grace, the young man appeared naturally graceful, until one day when he was bathing, he accidentally looked at himself in the mirror and was reminded of a statue he saw before. After that he consciously tries to copy the statue again but fails, and then he tries several times in vain. Self-consciousness appears as ‘an invisible and incomprehensible force’ to cause so unbelievable a disturbance in the boy (Kleist, 1880: 14).

The third story describes that the dancer failed when confronted with a chained fencing bear. Every time the dancer tried to deceive it with feints, the bear appeared to know exactly what the dancer’s mind was thinking, so it did not follow the trick. As the dancer felt, the bear ‘held my eyes, as if he could read my soul in them, always with his paw raised and ready for battle; and if my thrusts were not meant seriously, he did not move’ (Kleist, 1880: 16). Different from the former two stories which interpret the advantage of unconsciousness, and the constraints and disturbance of consciousness, the third story appears to praise the merit of infinite absolute consciousness which only god appears able to grasp. As Rushing (1988: 532) indicated,

‘the bear’s ability to read his opponent’s mind’ suggests that ‘he is metaphorically equivalent to God’ of having infinite consciousness.

Kleist (1880: 18) uses an analogy with the intersection of two lines: extreme consciousness appears on the one side of a point, and unconsciousness appears on the other side, while they intersect and complete a circle. According to Kleist (1880: 18), grace ‘is manifested most purely in that humanlike form which has either no consciousness at all or an infinite consciousness —which is to say, either in the puppet or in God’. Thus, he finally suggests: ‘[eating] again from the tree of knowledge in order to return to the state of innocence’ as ‘the last chapter in the history of the world’.

Kleist’s three stories have been interpreted along several different lines.¹³ According to Rushing (1988: 530), those three stories by Kleist ‘correspond to the three “chapters” of the history of the world’. The puppets dancing unconsciously in the first story represent the ‘original nonconscious state’, —‘the earthly paradise’ before Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden (1988: 530/529). The young man losing his gracefulness due to consciousness in the second story is read as the Fall, —‘a metaphor for becoming conscious’; the state of fallen men is the state when human beings live after being expelled from Eden and before being able to go back to Eden, and suffer from knowledge and reason (Rushing, 1988: 529–530). The bear defeating the dancer-fencer in the third story appears to ‘achieve a state of infinite consciousness’. Thus, in Rushing’s eyes, the three states of being unconscious, being self-conscious, and being infinitely conscious represented by the three stories respectively correspond to ‘the prelapsarian state of perfection, the present imperfection of fallen man, and the possible eschatological phase of re-achieved perfection’. Following Rushing’s analysis, the three states of being unconscious, being self-conscious, and being infinitely conscious appear to be separate and incompatible. This might not be the original meaning of Kleist, since he clearly made the analogy with the circle, which appears to suggest the compatibility of unconsciousness and infinite consciousness.

¹³ See Ray, 1979: 521–531.

In Rushing's (1988: 533) interpretation, Kleist seems to suggest human beings return to paradise by becoming infinite conscious rather than by regaining unconsciousness. Rushing (1988: 530) is pessimistic about realising infinite consciousness, since he mentions that Rousseau, Kant and Schelling all share the 'pessimistic interpretation of the fall (caused by consciousness, knowledge, and reason), in which there is no hope of climbing out of the fallen state through the use of reason'.

6. Kant's Hidden View and Post-Kantian Views on the Unconscious in Artistic Creation

In spite of the Western pessimistic view on infinite consciousness as Rushing claimed above, Nietzsche's accounts of two types of intoxication in art seems to suggest the potential to exploit unconsciousness in artistic creation and appreciation. Intoxication in art advocated by Nietzsche appears to share some similarity with the trance-like state which Chinese artists seek, in terms of identifying the role of unconsciousness in art and the significance of dismissing the distance between the artist and the object. According to Nietzsche, there are two types of intoxication: One is the Dionysian, which is a state of intoxicated ecstasy, while another is the Apollonian, which is an illusionary or dream-like state. Whether the intoxication is ecstatic Dionysian or dream-like Apollonian, it seems to be a kind of unconscious psychological state (which might occur in the process of creation or appreciation), giving artists or spectators a feeling of liberation and freedom. Apollonian intoxication obscures or offsets the distance between oneself and the illusionary world, while Dionysian intoxication releases inhibition between oneself and the outer world and suspends one's customary judgment and identification of the real world (Ridley, 2006: 13–19). Therefore, unconsciousness in either Apollonian illusionary intoxication or Dionysian ecstatic intoxication plays its role in not only enabling creators to endow art with life spontaneously and enthusiastically, but also hypnotizing appreciator to enjoy orgiastic transcendence beyond individual existence. Compared with the emphasis on unconsciousness in artistic spontaneity by classical Chinese aesthetics,

Nietzsche appears to enhance the role of unconsciousness in artistic intoxication as the antidote to pessimism about existence. On the one hand, Apollonian intoxication appears to offer a redemptive power by providing a glorified illusion required by human beings to live in an ‘orderly and beautiful’ world, since it appears to endow existence with a rational or orderly interpretation and provide the solution to an unsatisfactory reality (Young, 1992: 135/139; Ridley, 2006: 14). On the other hand, Dionysian intoxication seems to glorify existence by virtue of exciting or refreshing our passion for life, and also enables us to enter into the orderly and beautiful world of Apollo by joining the joyful ‘chorus’ to reach a reinvigorated effect of ‘nullifying the ordinary world of everyday experience’ (Ridley, 2006: 15). Thus, the Apollonian and Dionysian intoxications are complementary in constituting a new and beautified existence, while this new and beautified existence found in the artistic world is fundamentally illusionary. In this sense, unconsciousness in Nietzsche’s intoxication appears transcendental and idealistic.¹⁴

Kant’s hidden view on the unconscious in the fields of philosophy of mind, aesthetics, moral philosophy and anthropology was revealed by scholars.¹⁵ Gardner (1999: 387–390) suggests that the conception of the unconscious is hidden in Kant’s ‘transcendental synthesis’ and ‘representations outside self-consciousness’. The idea of ‘genius as a chiasm of the conscious and unconscious’ in Kant’s aesthetics was argued by Otabe (2012: 89–101). As Otabe (2012: 91) noted, for Kant, art is beautiful only when ‘art which is essentially grounded on a determinate purpose is not bound by the purpose, and presents itself as contingent’. Additionally, the difference between beautiful art and mechanical art defined by Kant (1790: 185–186) lies in the fact that ‘although [beautiful art] is certainly intentional, must nevertheless not seem intentional’. Following this notion of beautiful art, artists perhaps need to find balance between conscious intentionality and unintentional contingency, which sounds very similar to Wang Yuanqi’s comment on Ni Zan’s success of spontaneous artistic

¹⁴ Nietzsche’s concept of the unconscious appears transcendental in comparison with Freudian scientific naturalism (Gardner, 1999: 398–402).

¹⁵ See *Kant’s Philosophy of the Unconscious* (2012).

creation between having a conscious intention and not having one. In addition, according to Otabe (2012: 96), concerning the genius' ability of formulating the Kantian aesthetic idea as 'representation of the imagination' being 'free from "constraint of the understanding"', Kant (1790: 194) appears to imply that artistic spontaneity 'breaks free from [the artists'] consciousness'.

Although Kant's implication of the unconscious in his discussion of aesthetics is not explicit, Otabe indicated that Schelling's and Schiller's respective ideas of the unconscious in art might be regarded as reverberations of Kant's hidden view on the unconscious. Perhaps inspired by the Kantian view that intentional art should appear unintentional, Schelling (1858: 618; cited by Otabe, 2012: 97) classified art or artistic activity into two categories: conscious activity which is 'practiced with consciousness, deliberation, and reflection' and unconscious activity which is 'inborn by the free gift of nature'. The former named as 'art without poetry', can 'be taught and learned, received from others, and attained by one's own practice', while the latter called as 'poetry in art', 'cannot be [taught or] learned, [or] be attained by practice' (Schelling, 1858: 618; cited by Otabe, 2012: 97). Art without poetry defined by Schelling as the product of mere consciousness of the artist is not art in the proper sense of the word, but seems to be mechanical art defined and despised by Kant. In a genuine work of art, 'the artist seems to have presented...as if instinctively, apart from what he has put into it with obvious intent, an infinity [of intentions] which no finite understanding can fully develop', and this infinity is realised when the self or ego of the artist 'begins with consciousness and ends in the unconscious' (Schelling, 1858: 613; cited by Otabe, 2012: 97). Here, Schelling appears to emphasize the co-play of consciousness and unconsciousness. The poetic 'infinity' or 'inexhaustible depth' beyond finite intentions or understandings brought by involuntarily applying unconsciousness is also valued by classical Chinese aesthetics (Schelling, 1858: 619). One of differences lies in the fact that classical Chinese critics used the (Daoist) terms concentration and forgetfulness to describe the co-play of consciousness and unconsciousness.

As Otabe (2012: 99) indicated, in his letter to Körner on May 25, 1792, Schiller (1849: 173; 1890: 372) appears unhappy with Schelling's idea that artistic creation begins with consciousness and ends in the unconscious, and argues from his own experience of creating poems that while the 'musical' unconsciousness appears to engross his self at the very beginning of his creation, consciousness is also involved in artistic creation since the artist needs the play of consciousness to help realize the unconscious idea in the artwork. By claiming that 'unconsciousness combined with reflection constitutes the poet-artist', we can see that Schiller (1890: 372, cited by Otabe, 2012: 99) favours the cooperation of unconsciousness and consciousness in artistic creation. It seems that Schiller agrees with Schelling in terms of artistic creation as the co-play of the conscious and the unconscious, but disagree with Schelling where he puts consciousness at the beginning and unconsciousness at the end of the creative act. Classical Chinese artists would not agree with Schelling's idea of putting unconsciousness at the end, since both concentration and forgetfulness work during spontaneous creation. In his reply to Schiller, Goethe (1801, initially cited by Schiller, 1890: 374, cited by Otabe, 2012: 99) admits that he agrees with Schiller in terms of art as the cooperation of unconsciousness and consciousness, while he emphasizes the role of unconsciousness by claiming that 'I think that everything that is done by genius as genius, is done unconsciously'.

Although Otabe tried to argue that Kant's hidden view of the unconscious inspired Schelling and Schiller by making some plausible connection between their ideas, it seems obvious that the role of the unconscious in the process of artistic creation is not explicitly recognized by Kant. 'The mental powers ... whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes genius, are imagination and understanding' (Kant, 1790: 194). For Kant, imagination appears meaningless for artistic creation if not in harmony with understanding. The imagination seems to break away from constraints that actual nature gives and creates another nature above any rational concept (which might be the source of the imagination), although its freedom conforms to the lawfulness of the understanding, and the understanding builds a harmonious association with the imagination (Kant, 1790: 192–

197). The essence of ‘the imagination’s free conformity to law’ is a kind of ‘psychologically felt freedom from any form of constraint ... not just epistemological independence from concepts’ (Guyer, 1993: 286–287). The paradox between Kant’s inexplicit view on the role of the unconscious in genius creating art and his emphasis on the harmony between imagination and understanding cannot be ignored.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as we have seen, the same phenomenon of artistic spontaneity noted in distinct cultural contexts appears to inspire essentially distinct philosophical understandings in each case. Although artistic spontaneity in classical Chinese art inspired by Daoist philosophy might be illuminated by referring to Kant’s aesthetics of genius, the differences lie in the fact that in terms of exploring the positive power of unconsciousness in spontaneous creation, classical Chinese artists inspired by the Daoist ideas of spontaneity pursue a trance-like state of forgetting self and everything else and reaching unification of self and object. Kant does not explicitly discuss the significance of exploiting unconsciousness for genius creating art, while the dialectic of unconsciousness and consciousness in artistic spontaneity is valued in classical Chinese aesthetics. Kant’s explicit advocacy of the harmonious co-play of imagination and understanding in aesthetics disguises his inexplicit view of the role of the unconscious in the aesthetic field, while his hidden view on the role of unconsciousness in genius creating art seems to have inspired the discussions on the dialectic of unconsciousness and consciousness by later thinkers such as Schelling and Schiller. Although in both Chinese and European cultural contexts artists and critics noted the significance of unconsciousness in artistic creation and the dialectic of consciousness and unconsciousness, we have seen that the relevant philosophical explanations are essentially distinctive.

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Abbreviation: ECTOP: *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (2012).

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Dancing Metaphors; Creative Thinking within Bodily Movements

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ABSTRACT. This paper fosters the term *Dancing Metaphors* in order to illuminate embodied cognitive processes within dancing. *Dancing Metaphors* suggests that processes of realizing new bodily movements in dance are metaphorically constructed. Thus, using the medium of bodily movements, dancers actually establish, create, and generate movements, which follow the rule of 'as if'. The argument here builds on the experience of dancing and the methodology and terminology follow from the cognitive account in metaphors studies, from enactive approaches in aesthetics and in philosophy of perception, and from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body-schema. Following from Merleau-Ponty, I demonstrate that dance movements do not have an already existing situated purpose. For that reason, I claim, dancing always embodies an imaginary score. Building on Lakoff and Johnson, I discuss movement capacities in dance as metaphorical interplays, which bring the score of the dance to life. Following from enactivism, as well as from the experience of dancing, I deal with the dancing metaphor as an act of embodied thinking. While dancing, dancers recall and invoke sensory-information and thereby bring the metaphor into current effect. This process, I finally claim, is enactive and involves a comprehensive engagement of body and mind.

1. Introduction

Float, imagine the floor is getting very hot, move as if the floor is burning, feel like you are kneading dough with your hands, have a thick moving ball in your floating flesh, imagine little explosions going off inside your body. These are only a few of the sensual instructions being used in Gaga classes, the dance training which developed by the choreographer Ohad Naharin and

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practiced by the dancers of the *Batsheva Dance Company* in Israel. These instructions are metaphors since they push the dancers from the concrete situation, here and now, into an imaginary realm of another setting that does not yet exist. Being requested to float in the studio, it is clear that the body is not upon water. Thus, dancers deploy the bodily situation and physically activate bodily sensations according to information that is not currently present.

The metaphoric instructions in Gaga have led me to consider the role of metaphors in dancing (Katan-Schmid, 2016, pp. 65-76). Accordingly, physical forces, that are related ‘as if,’ are physically embodied. In the instruction to float, for example, the dancers cannot activate a procedural movement of floating upon water. ‘As if’ is not ‘as is’. The body in the studio, or on stage, cannot act within similar movement patterns to the body upon water. For the purpose of “floating” in the studio, the lifting dynamics of the water have to be embodied within a new bodily procedure. The metaphor “float” influences a comprehensive perceptual activity; the instruction supports the dancers in generating innovative sensuality and a new pattern of physical movement. Now, although the metaphoric instructions in Gaga are being used within this specific movement research, I would like to extend here the term *dancing metaphors* by suggesting that it may designate the perceptual process within dancing movements in general. Thus, broadly speaking, using the medium of bodily movements, dancers actually establish, create, and generate movements, which follow the rule ‘as-if.’

In this paper, I employ the term *dancing metaphor* in order to explore and describe the embodied cognitive role of metaphorical interplays in bodily movements. My argument goes as follows:

1. *Dancing Metaphors* designate the process of establishing a movement in terms of an imaginary case.
2. Since dance movements do not have a situated reason within the world, all dance movements are established by means of make-believe.

3. The dancing metaphors are enactive procedures. The body doesn't follow a metaphorical instruction, but rather enacts and realizes its comprehensive possibilities within a full engagement of body and mind.
4. The metaphorical interplay of dancing brings about familiar movement patterns within a new assemblage.

The terminology I use here follows from cognitive semantics, as well as from Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of the Body*, and from the enactive approach in philosophies of embodied cognition. My understanding of metaphorical interplays in dance stands in line with the work of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999). Accordingly, metaphors are indispensable for generating any cognitive activity and thinking. Extending from Lakoff and Johnson, I argue that metaphorical interplays occur in the case of bodily thinking, as well as in the case of dancing. Following from Merleau-Ponty's account on the body schema, I deal with dancing as a case study for the virtuosic process of thinking while moving. In the process of the dancing metaphors, the body schema realizes the score of the dance and its images and regulates them as movements and as innovative bodily feeling. Positioning Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology with Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive semantics, while contemplating dance as my case study, I aim to demonstrate the perceptual process within dance as an activity, which is, altogether, thoughtful and sensitive, physical, imaginative, and intelligent. In this regard, my work on dancing shares main arguments and comprehensions with enactive accounts in philosophies of embodied cognition (Rosch, Thompson, and Varela, 1991, Noë, 2004, 2009, Gallagher, 2005).

2. Conceptual Metaphor

The concept of a metaphor derives its sense from linguistics and what I define as *dancing metaphor* does not refer to an interplay within words, but rather denotes an innovative physical behavior. *Dancing metaphor* asks to indicate the metaphorical interplay within the situation of the dance. Therefore, the modification of the linguistic term '*metaphor*' into a '*dancing*

metaphor' is a subject for methodological clarification.

David Hills defines metaphors as one of the most controversial figures of speech: "Metaphor is a poetically or rhetorically ambitious use of words, a figurative as opposed to literal use" (Hills, 2011; 2016, p. 1). In his account on *metaphor* in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, he categorizes the linguistic usage of metaphors as a semantic or a pragmatic twist, by linking one thing to another by means of words (Ibid). Nevertheless, although metaphors are mostly used in linguistics, the controversy regarding them paves a way to consider metaphorical interplays in other communicative and perceptual media. Trevor Whittock, Julie Van Camp, and Judith Lynne Hanna, for instance, shared similar perspectives on metaphors in dance as non-verbal acts (Whittock, 1992, Van Camp, 1996, Hanna, 1983). Whittock emphasizes that metaphorical interplay brings about a change of conception. For that reason, metaphors are not exclusive to the linguistic medium; "It is not simply a matter of words and their associations at issue here. The changes implicate our categories and how we form them" (Whittock, 1992, 242).

Embodied cognitive explanations in both metaphor studies and philosophy lead off the comprehension of metaphors as embodied interplays. Those accounts insist on the deep dependency of human cognition upon bodily comprehension. Beginning with their *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and continuing with their *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors cannot be studied merely in the domain of cognition. For Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are conceptual rather than linguistic, while the conceptual is based on the perceptual. Namely, transgressing from the common definition, as it is represented here by Hills' analytic account (2011), for Lakoff and Johnson metaphors are not restricted to using words. Instead, metaphors are abstract interplays with ideas. Their theory emphasizes metaphorical interplays as a perceptual change in conception and as something we cognitively and physically grasp and enact. Similar to philosophical approaches of embodied cognition (Rosch et al, 1991, Noë, 2004, Gallahghr, 2005), Lakoff and Johnson, advance a unity of perceiving and thinking. Following from Rudolf Arnheim, Lakoff and Johnson comprehend perception as gestalt. Perception

is enactive apprehension of patterns and structures. As a consequence, thinking is something we do within any available medium (Arnheim, 1974, Lakoff in Turner, 2006, 170).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson developed their groundbreaking theory of embodied meaning, using primary metaphors of embodied experience as the thoughtful units within any abstract reasoning. In *Philosophy in the Flesh* they argue that metaphors play an essential role in subjective experience and judgment since they add sensorimotor inferential structure (1999, 57). Practically, we are capable of understanding abstract concepts, because of a built-up on our own physical experience. The work of Lakoff and Johnson furthered enactive interpretations on metaphors as learning through full body engagements (Gallagher and Lindgren, 2015). All of those developments facilitate the argument here on *dancing metaphors* as an abstract game of corporeal memories and movement patterns, which generates new physical ideas and bodily imagination.

3. Moving As If

Within many dance classes, imageries are crucial for explaining how to embody and absorb new physical tasks into their comportment and movement capacity. One example for teaching dance is the tutorial videos in the YouTube channel of the American media artist, scholar, and dancer, Albert Hwang. In many tutoring videos Hwang teaches how to dance liquid. In liquid style, bodily parts are thought to be as-if they were made out of a thick silk ribbon (Hwang et al., 2006, 166). In one of the videos, Hwang explains how to embody a rail movement (Hwang, May 24, 2012). At a certain moment Hwang demonstrates how to incorporate a movement of French drop, by using a real pin for the drop, and then applying the same movement after laying the pin aside:

What I suggest, if you actually want to learn how to do the French drop, is to actually do it [a] couple of times. You actually grab the object and remember what it feels like, that muscle memory. The imagination of 'oh, there is an object here, I am thinking about it, my

hand thinks about it, sort of, and it moves across, and I am keeping my focus there and that is actually that.’ And if you can keep all these pieces together: your attention, the physical action of your hand, and the intention of where your hand is, you can kind of (...) begin to fool yourself, right?! I mean, you obviously need to learn the mechanic of how to drop that pin properly. (...) The first step of fooling other people is fooling yourself. When you do this stuff (*demonstrates a rail movement*), the best way to be really convincing to other people that there is architecture here is to be clear about all the details of the architecture. (...) There are all these different details, and the more reach you can get these details to yourself the more you can feel what you got, like how this things work (*does the rail movement again*) (Hwang, May 24, 2012, minutes: 9:14- 11:30).

Hwang’s explanation reveals a typical process of how and why dancers use imagery while dancing. He demonstrates the need to acquire muscle memory and stresses the necessity to keep focus of attention both on the hands and on the imaginary details of the rail architecture. His explanation reveals a common foundation in dancing to concentrate on integration of imagery within the actual process of the movement. The task of dancing deals with directing attention to a current physical situation and being engaged with a precise image of an absent situation at the same time. Relying on muscle memory is not enough, but rather the procedural movement is guided by living through the situation as-if it happened here and now. The instructions of the dance, as he analyzes and decomposes them, bring about the concrete position of his hands and the imaginary guidance. In this process, the body reproduces a somatic feeling, which is similar to the imaginary case, as-if the image were for real.

The notion of ‘as-if’ is crucial in the dancing metaphor because it designates the mimetic aspect of movements in dance. Dance movements are always built upon former bodily knowledge, which is activated within the currently lived-through moment. Movements in dance intentionally refer to other experiences, while trying to imitate, or even recall, their feelings. The rail movement is established by means of ‘as if’ the hands ‘really’ perceive and ‘truly’ feel the material and the constructive edges of the

architecture. The example of dropping the pin clarifies the significance of comprehending a real feeling within a concrete physical engagement with an image. When Hwang trains his physical memory to drop a pin, he teaches the body what the movement feels like. The body has to recall its muscle memory and to reproduce sensory-motor reminiscences. The physical memories enable one to reproduce similar sensuality and to enact a genuine mode of moving, as-if the image of the movement were for real. For that reason, as Hwang tutors, a physical familiarity with how the referred movement feels helps the body to figure out how the movement performs. Moving from the example of the French drop to the example of the rail movement, Hwang's training implies that the movement of the dance must designate an actual feeling. The dance movement 'rail' displays sensual similarity to the touch of moving the hand upon a railway.

4. The Dancing Imagery

It might be easier to demonstrate how dance movements act metaphorically within dance styles like Gaga and liquid since their approaches instruct the dancers to configure movements in terms of other situations (Katan-Schmid, 2016, Hwang et al., 2013). However, in addition to dance styles that use 'as-if instructions' deliberately in their teachings, there are dance methods that do not involve intended metaphorical guidance in the vocabulary of their training. Nevertheless, the act of dancing integrates imagery and physical memories and therefore dancing is always metaphorically constructed. Dancers might not relate vocabularies like 'spiral,' 'plié,' 'grand jeté,' and so forth as metaphors. Yet, those dancing terms are, at least, metonymic concepts, which stand for the imagery of how the movements they designate should be designed.

Whether dance movements are improvised or choreographed, they always follow a score or an imaginary task. The score of the dance implies that dancers follow a visualization of the dance. Vocabularies of dance movements indicate that dancers direct their movements consciously, in relation to an imaginary vision of where and how to move. A well-known example, which reveals the vision of the dance, is William Forsythe's CD-

ROM publication *Improvisation Technologies; A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*. In Forsythe's method of improvisation technologies, the imaginary instructions for dancing are geometric patterns within his body and his kinesphere (Forsythe, 2012, May 24, 2008). In the CD-ROM publication his imagination is animated and takes a visible graphic shape. When Forsythe draws imaginary lines, his explanations are as accurate as the graphic lines of the animation (Forsythe, May 24, 2008). Forsythe's example helps to illustrate how dance movements are produced in relation to a made-up trigger for choice making, which is clear and immediately available for the dancer.

All dance movements act 'as-if' they had a clear motivating source. Dancers must integrate their imagination because dance movements do not have actual initiative reasons. Paul Valéry, for example, defines the activity of dancing as useless to our vital functioning:

We can perform a multitude of acts that have no chance of being utilized in the dispensable, or important, operations of life. We can trace a circle, give play to our facial muscles, walk in cadence; all these actions, which made it possible to create geometry, the drama, and the military art, are in themselves useless, useless to our vital functioning (Valéry, 1936; 1983, p. 55).

Dance movements have neither pragmatic nor existential purpose for their happening. For that reason, their existence is due to the process of designing them.

The existence for its own sake is an aesthetic feature, which define dance movements as perceptually complex. According to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body is situated within the world and our motility signifies our understanding and our interest within. Broadly, motility must have a motivating source of energy. However, unlike mechanical objects, the stimuli, which generate human motility, are complex psychophysical phenomena. Human motility expresses the unification of the body and the soul, and the meaning we give to our existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 2007, pp. 84-102). Merleau-Ponty defines the human motor-intentionality as a psychophysical expression of our

interest in taking hold:

We perform our movements in a space which is not “empty” or unrelated to them, but which on the contrary, bears a highly determinate relation to them: movement and background are, in fact, only artificially separated stages of a unique totality. In the action of hand which is raised towards an object is contained a reference to the object, not as an object represented, but as that highly specific thing towards which we project ourselves, near which we are, in anticipation, and which we hunt. Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. (...) In order that we may be able to move our body towards an object, the object must first exist for it, our body must not belong to the realm of the ‘in-itself’ (Merleau-Ponty, *ibid*, pp. 159-161).

According to Merleau-Ponty, we know where we are and how we can move according to sensing our spatiality and the world our body inhabits. In dance, spatiality is designed rather than given. For that reason, the act of dancing demands a conscious layer of physical engagement with an image, in which the body takes part in the world of make-believe. The act of projecting movements, “being-towards-the-thing,” as Merleau-Ponty writes, integrates imagery within the physical level of motor-intentionality.

5. Embodying an Invisible Vision

In many places in his writings, Merleau-Ponty integrates motor-intentionality and vision. In *Eye and Mind*, for example, he writes:

All my changes of place figure on principle in a corner of my landscape; they are carried over onto the map of the visible. Everything I see is on principle within my reach, at least within reach of my sight, and is marked upon the map of the “I can.” (...) The visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; 1993, p. 123).

The capacity to see enables one to project and foresee where to go and

realize spatial relations. Vision also directs the body on how to invest one's effort. The precision of handling physical forces is dynamically enveloped in the sensual comprehension of a given spatiality. In dance, however, the motivating vision is imaginary, rather than given. For that reason, the body, seemingly, lacks precise points of reference and a clear feedback loop. In Forsythe's *Improvisation Technologies*, for example, the imaginary vision might cause a perceptual challenge, unless the dancers deal metaphorically with the instruction. Dancers, who attempt to follow real points within the space while moving, could not preserve the image of the dance and move with as much precision and agile as Forsythe dances. The body schema must comprehend the spatial relations, rather than following an empty image in the void. The image has to be resonant with physical understanding of motility and spatiality.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of motility and spatiality neglects the dualistic image of the pilot and a ship (Descartes, 1641; 2008, p. 46). For Merleau-Ponty, the mind is not a controller, which moves the body. Rather, the human physicality is unified within the totality of our experiential and environmental existence. Thus, sensing the world and taking hold within the body replaces holding a conscious thought about 'how to move.' As he stresses it: "the fact that bodily space may be given to me in an intention to take hold without given in an intention to know" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 2007, p. 119). The experience of dancing makes it evident as well that the movement is not successive to the image of the dance, but rather the vision is enveloped and developed within motion. Since the dance designs its 'situatedness,' the challenge of the dancers is to be immersed within the score of the dance, rather than following it. Moving according to a score should feel as if the score were motivating the body, rather than as if the body was executing the score.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between what he methodologically designates as "concrete movement" and as "abstract movement," following a case of a patient who suffers from a mental blindness and cannot move in relation to an invisible task:

(...) for the normal person every movement is, indissolubly,

movement and consciousness of movement. This can be expressed by saying that for the normal person every movement has a *background*, and that the background are ‘moments of a unique totality’. The background to the movement is not a representation associated or linked externally with the movement itself, but is immanent in the movement inspiring and sustaining it at every moment. The plunge into action is, from the subject’s point of view, an original way of relating himself to the object, and is on the same footing as perception. Light is thus thrown upon the distinction between abstract and concrete movement: the background to concrete movement is the world as given, whereas the background to abstract movement is built up (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 2007, p. 127).

Merleau-Ponty’s analysis differs between movements that take hold (*greifen*) and mean to integrate within the world as given, to movements that enact the meaning for their existence within themselves (*zeigen*). The physical competence of generating an abstract movement is due to a process of realization that does not follow one category of action. As Merleau-Ponty defines this complexity, the stimuli for action cannot be deductive per se (Ibid, p. 125). While concrete movements are directed towards a task, like the act of grasping a glass, abstract movements are movements that articulate their motivating meaning both physically and psychologically. The capacity of the body schema to realize a psychological meaning demonstrates the complex psychophysical aspects of motility, in which “every movement is, indissolubly, movement and consciousness of movement.”

The two layers of movement and the consciousness of movement are characteristic for the dancing metaphors. The body-schema must handle a clear intention rather than empty space. For that reason, the dancers concentrate on producing the feeling of the dance and following their bodily feelings as they develop them. The projection-towards-the-thing becomes, therefore, self-referential and it involves the score of the dance as a metaphor, which involves a full body engagement in bringing the lines of the dance into life.

6. Embodied Interplays

The imageries of dancing metaphors are developed within a full body engagement. For that reason the notion of *dancing metaphors* stands in line with Gallagher and Lindgren definition of enactive metaphors:

The term enactive here signifies not a different kind of metaphor per se but a different kind of engagement with metaphor. Specifically, we can say that an enactive metaphor is one that we enact—that is, one that we put into action or one that we bring into existence through our action. The fact that we are enacting a metaphor (rather than, for example, a plan or a design or a solution) means that the action involved can be a kind of play-acting or pretense (the kind of acting one finds in a theater or in the pretend play of a child). To enact a metaphor means to act it out. As in acting, this is an embodied process. (Gallagher et al., 2015, p. 392)

Enactive metaphors are metaphors that perceivers bring into existence through action. Similarly, the dancing metaphor is first and foremost a mode of engagement, rather than executing an instruction.

In the coexistence of movement and consciousness for movement, the dancers refer, first and foremost, to their own bodily feelings. In order to move, the dancers foresee and induce the sensation of the movement. Thus, bodily feelings enact the score and rewrite it as a dance. This process continues as long as the movement proceeds. The sensations of the body are produced by the imagery and direct the imagery further at the same time. Rotations and lines are both felt and fashioned as sensations of pulling the bones out, squeezing the muscles and rotating the bones in the joints, and so forth. As a result, the dancers do not have to hold the imagery of the dance in their mind. They do not follow external images of lines or rotations, to which the body must conform. Rather, the dancers follow rotations and lines as the sensations of stretches, as other nuances of touch, which they produce. The movement is the medium where the dancing metaphor, as actuality and as the semblance of the imagery, is being negotiated and developed.

The intentionality of movement refers to the spatiality and the knowledge of the body, which are internal to the dancer. The image of the dancing metaphor is integrated with a feeling, rather than merely with how the dance should look like as an appearance. Following from Gallagher and Lindgern, 'seeing as' is, first and foremost, a physical affordance for innovative possibilities of movement. Gallagher and Lindgern stress that engaging with enactive metaphors does not have to involve "higher-order cognitive or recreative imaginings" (ibid, 397). Thus, seeing-as does not demand a conscious representation, but rather the exercise of a basic motoric skill (ibid). Within dancing metaphors, the consciousness of movement is not a consciousness about movement as an external outlook on what the dancer has done and then is imagining what can be done further. Rather, there is an immediacy of seeing the movement as possibilities of the body from within. Somatic feelings are interlocked with how and where those feelings can be developed. Thus, feelings are integral to the image of the dance. What appears to be a precise line follows a precise feeling of extending the muscles.

Like with other conceptual metaphors, the metaphorical interplays in dancing metaphors further extend self-knowledge. Dancing metaphors are self-referential because the movement projects towards itself. As a result, bodily feelings direct the movement's potential for growth and therefore bodily feelings compose and direct further possibilities of the dance. Lakoff and Johnson describe metaphors as imaginative rationality structured by natural dimensions of experience:

Metaphor permits an understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another, creating coherence by virtue of imposing gestalts that are structured by natural dimensions of experience. New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; 2003, p.235)

According to Lakoff and Johnson, any new understanding must follow an experiential familiarity. Lakoff and Johnson deal with metaphors as image schema. The image schema is a continuous systematizing activity of imagination that orders and unifies perceptions, motor programs, time

sequences and spatial orientation. The image schema is the imaginative extension of embodied experiences that enable us to comprehend abstract concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.1999).

Lakoff and Johnson's explanation corresponds with Merleau-Ponty's account on abstract movement as built up. Integrating these recognitions from Lakoff and Johnson and Merleau-Ponty, dancing is always a metaphorical interplay with bodily knowledge, and therefore the act of dancing deals with physical ideas. In the dancing metaphors, the body schema is within a playful mode of integrating dynamic connections between patterns of movements that are already clear to the body and regulating physical knowledge. While consulting the knowledge of the body, dancers start to explore the ranges of their movements. By means of that, they extend their own capacities. In this process, already familiar patterns of moving direct the flow of the body, while being constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. As a result, innovative physical expressions are designed and manifested.

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All About Janez Janša

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ABSTRACT. In 2007, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi and Žiga Kariž changed their names in Janez Janša. Janez Janša and Janez Janša. In 2009, Žiga Kariž changed his name again, from Janez Janša back to Žiga Kariž. When this change occurred, the most well-known and prominent of five previous Janez Janšas in Slovenian census was Janez Janša - the head of government from 2004 to 2008. At a time when they took (t)his name president Janez Janša figured as the political enemy of alternative culture and its activist engagement. But three new-born Janez Janšas announced that their change of names is an intimate decision and not a public statement or even an act of activism. The most interesting part of their collective projects is the use of names as ready-mades: *Name Readymade*, *Signature*, and *All about Us*. The first one (2008) turned their valid personal documents into works of art. The second one (2010) exhibited their signatures portrayed by another artist and authorized by all three Janšas, thus getting in touch with Derrida's deconstruction of identity and identification. The third, most recent one (2016) presented their identity cards constructed of their personalized credit and debit cards. All three projects deal with identity, with means of identification, and with exposed metaphysics and fetishism of personal documents as a special kind of »ordinary thing«, at the same time confirming and denying that »individuals are systems of representation«. (Danto, 1999, 12) In this presentation, I will concentrate on two of most interesting topics this project triggered: name and personal documents as ready-mades; and explanation of alternative culture's/activist artworld's anxiety, discomfort and aversion to this project.

1. Introduction

Janez Janša, right-wing politician and president of the Slovene Democratic Party, became Prime Minister of Slovenia in 2004, and immediately attracted attacks from liberal and leftist artistic community. Both Janša and

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artistic community had roots in post-socialist struggles of the 1980s, when Janša was arrested by Yugoslav People's Army to become a symbol of Slovene fight for independence, and when so-called alternative culture was one of the most important subversive actors of civil society. Their mutual aversion developed when, after independence of 1991, Janša became right wing politician, and alternative culture transformed itself into contemporary activist community².

2. Renaming

In 2007, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi and Žiga Kariž changed their names in Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša. In 2009, Žiga Kariž changed name again, from Janez Janša back to Žiga Kariž. They explained that the act of re-naming was an intimate decision, but added (in letter to the Prime Minister Janez Janša) that they are artists through and through, without any divide between their intimate and artistic existence.

Their decision became news. General public understood it mostly as artists' way to publicity; the activist subdivision of the artworld was repulsed by their intimate decision, unable to understand why formal and

² Activism (art + activism) is a collective label for contemporary approach to art which, conflating art and political rebellion joined anti-globalist movements as their artistic division, expressing itself in predominantly humorous, ironical and sarcastic tones. Now, it covers much broader field of civil society uprising against authoritarian regimes, austerity politics, pollution and destruction of environment and other targets. Activism belongs to this field but insists on the political potential of artistic act. In post-socialist countries like Slovenia activism developed directly from artistic strategies and tactics which were produced during post-socialist artistic activism of the 1980s, taking their experiences and aesthetic tactics as a starting point. However, this tie became less and less important until it changed considerably after outbreak of the global crisis which demanded invention of new approach. It is typical for activism that it involves, beside art and activism, a continuous engagement with theoretical issues which exceed routine transportation of radical concepts from science to art, to enter the realm of scientific research as such. Among these efforts we can now find numerous examples of critical aesthetic research aimed at those issues which concern critical capacities of art and aesthetic potential for activism. The case of Janša's is specific and interesting because three artists are activists with their own agendas, while their collective involvement with artistic projects starting from renaming on does not show direct activist engagement, but demonstrates how theoretical (political, economic, cultural...) issues are woven into the fabric of art.

real change of their names was necessary. They thought that to take the name of Prime Minister could be a good pretext for making fun of him, to imitate him in caricaturized representations, and to expose his politics as right wing populism seasoned with aversion to art and culture. But which imitator or caricaturist takes the name of his target for real?! Before changing names, three artists knew each other and worked together on a few occasions, but they had different individual careers. Emil Hrvatin was theatre director and actor, and director of the *Maska* (Mask) Institute for performing arts in Ljubljana. Davide Grassi was conceptual artist and performer, and an investigator of virtual reality together with its controlling and surveillance use, who founded Institute for Contemporary Art Aksioma in Ljubljana. Žiga Kariž was visual artist active on the crossroads of classic and new artistic media who became professor of painting at the Academy of Visual Arts and Design in Ljubljana. After renaming procedure, they continued to follow their individual careers under new names. At the same time, not too often but regularly they appeared with group projects which involved names with their ready-made and symbolic value.

3. Works, Performances, Events

In January 2008, at Transmediale in Berlin Janša trio performed two connected projects under the title “Signature Event Context” with obvious reference to Derrida’s text. The first one was to sign live all 1000 copies of Transmediale book *Conspire* (Kovatz and Munz, 2008) on blank pages usually provided for reproductions of artists’ works. A performance of signature turned the book itself, as they themselves explained, into performance as a place which can leave only traces of its own disappearance. Their signature was performed as means of authentication. Authentication of what? Of a blank page as an artwork made by one of three Janšas respectively, or, of signature itself as an artwork? If artwork appears in performance, signature as performance is an artwork; if artwork is artefact, blank page is this artefact, and its authentication is confirmed by authors’ signature. Performances are not collectible, artefacts are. Those who have Transmediale *Conspire* book signed by Janšas have been authenticated

document of performance which, alas, can leave only traces of its own disappearance, but they also have an artefact consisting of nothing else but authenticating signature. This duality depends on the point of view. They are as proverbial duck and rabbit, only that they are not an illusion – both views are true. The second and connected project was to enter as *flaneurs* into the Memorial of the Murdered Jews of Europe at 00:01 am, and walk through it each one constantly repeating “My name is Janez Janša!”, keeping GPS device on mobiles to trace their way, which inscribed the name Janez Janša on Google map. Allegedly Jewish community protested against such desecration (but it might be that other pressures were made from the German side to prevent such protest). Anyway, the curator banned the performance. Severe protests against such censorship followed, and finally it was allowed to show the documentation of the performance at the *Conspire* exhibition curated by Nataša Petrešin Bachelez, herself Slovenian art critic and curator from Slovenia leaving in Paris. Three Janez Janša performers realized their project during a night before the opening anyway, and anybody could follow it on his or her mobile. Performances cannot be repeated, being each time different even when repeating previous pattern. It seems that this one will remain even more unique because the Memorial is now secured and guarded, and midnight visitors are not allowed. The Memorial came into existence after years of political and cultural debates which in spite of its realization left unanswered question: are we still capable of materializing and at the same time symbolizing our collective memory into a memorial? Janšas provided positive answer authenticating the Memorial with their body-movement signature, through murmuring of their names and through virtual mapping which inscribed their names on Memorial’s GPS map. It was not an authenticated appropriation of the Memorial as their work of art. It was an adoption of memory in question (*shoah*, or Holocaust) and its authentication. From 2007 on, Janšas left their signatures on many locations and with different means on Slovenian mountains’ slopes and at the Hollywood Walk of Fame, at Copacabana beach and within Ars Electronica in Linz. On each occasion, it was purely conceptual act of performance leaving material or digital signature as a trace and document, involving all paradoxes mentioned by Derrida including

context which, in spite of conceptual purity functioned as a starting point of manifold conflicting political and cultural subcontexts. Nerlin example is undoubtedly the most successful project of this kind.

In October 2008 at the Steirischer Herbst in Graz, the exhibition “NAME – readymade” showed their old and new documents from identification cards and passports to credit cards. Under the same title Modern Gallery of Ljubljana published a book of texts of Slovenian and international specialists from the artworld (Lukan et al., 2008) to explain, comment, interpret and evaluate name as readymade artwork. In addition, there was an interview with three Janšas by Lev Kreft. This interview later appeared in Byproduct – a book on artworks which aside of their most visible and direct intention produce a number of other by-products. (Jahn, 2010, 123-131) Name here means, of course, the association of family name with given name. This association is like a definition consisting of *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. Family name as the nearest line of origin together with given name as special individual characteristics are not signs of something substantial like property of a person. As any other definition, they are classifying instruments, a construction. They signify something “the eye cannot descry”, (Danto, 1964, 580) therefore they are of the same general class as artworks. To use name as readymade, and to present by-products of this use as artworks intersects three other coordinates used to define shifts in the status of art: descent from art to life, transfiguration of ordinary thing into artwork, and commodity status of the artwork. To change three different names of three individual artists into one and the same name taken as a readymade is a move in direction contrary to the usual artistic longing to make your name a brand. In this case, a name already used by some other inhabitants of Slovenia including its Prime Minister (which made it a political brand) was chosen by three persons well known at least in Slovene artistic community (again, an existing artistic brand). By that, they put their already achieved branding away and endangered their artistic status through visible political over-identification, be it negative or positive. A change of name does not harm one’s identity at all, but it results with troubles of identification. That is nothing new. John Smith or Janez Novak (most common combination of personal and family

name in Slovenia) having the same name experience it all the time. It is nothing new to change the name officially if local legal system allows such move. For instance, liberal Slovenian legal attitude towards name changing allowed many non-Slovenian citizens or residents of other Yugoslav nations' origin to change their names after independence of 1990 into more Slovenian sounding names to avoid discrimination. What is new is to use this change and its by-products as a vehicle of artistic research of the concept and institution of art together with research of the concept and institution of name and personal document.

Avant-garde descent from art to life (Bürger, 1974) does not apply here, and neither does its reversal, i.e., a climb from life into art. Being valid personal documents, they remain part of life. Being art, their life materiality should not define what their artistic essence is from and about. But that is exactly what happens. They are art and life at the same time. As documents (presumed to be a kind of ordinary things) they were turned into art. Still, this did not happen through a choice made by the artist (as in Duchamp's case) but through procedure of authorities which issued these documents. Then, they became artworks, but not because they were exhibited in the artworld institution. They became artworks because the procedure of changing names is revealed to be an artistic performance process. Documents of this change are at the same time valid documents of life (an intimate decision of three artists) and valid artworks. But are their documents ordinary things? Not really. As proved by written statements of two governmental authorities, ministry of culture and ministry of interior, these documents are owned by the state and possessed by entitled persons, so that they cannot be alienated from them (as said the statement by the ministry of interior), and feature at the same time as artworks with their artworld status and art market value (as decided by the ministry of culture). This ambivalent and bifocal position of the executive conditions a messy outcome. The documents - artworks may be bought by a museum or private collector, but they can just be owned and not possessed. The owner who bought them can get them in possession only when documents' validity expires. Then, however, they are not artworks but just documents of a one-time performance. They do not behave like commodities do. They are

commodities only because or when they are artworks, and after expiration of documents when they still are documents of artistic performance. Artwork is a personal document authenticated with artist's signature and protected by law which becomes "atmospheric" (Danto, 1964, 580) commodity; personal document is a document of authentication – identification issued by authorities whose turning into commodity is forbidden by law. The relationship between authority issuing personal document and person using it for identification is similar to the relationship between author and his or her artwork. Author authenticates his or her artwork, but at the same time loses control over its understanding and interpretation. In case of the documents, persons are authenticated by their documents, but documents cannot control what happens with persons after they are authenticated. State as documents' owner can't even control transubstantiation of documents themselves into works of art, it can just play the game of duck and rabbit within its own premises.

4. Name Ready-Made and a Signature, Even

On the exhibition in 2010, there were twenty-seven paintings with four variations in names Davide Grassi, Emil Hrvatin, Janez Janša and Žiga Kariž. On paintings are their signatures and their autographic signatures put in a place where authorization is expected. The process of creation of these paintings consisted of few phases. First, three Janšas had to provide their signatures to Viktor Bernik, and (as the usual bourgeois clients) ordered their portraits, pardon, portraits of their signatures done in monumental dimensions (50 x 70cm). Second, Bernik provided these paintings as ordered, without any idiosyncratic addition of his own genius, and, in spite of being known as author of these paintings did not authorize them. Third, Janšas authorized these paintings *manu proprio* (with their own hand, in their own writing), using their previous and their new names in nine variations, each one authorizing painting of his own signature, each one authorizing painting of signature of the other, all three authorizing each painting of one of their three signatures together, and each one authorizing painting of his signature as Janez Janša with their previous names (Emil

Hrvatín, Davide Grassi) or re-obtained previous name (Žiga Kariž). Their signatures are grouped in threes providing nine triptychs. The first one is signed by Janez Janša the First, the second by Janez Janša the Second, and the third one by Janez Janša the Third who is not Janez Janša anymore but Žiga Kariž. The third one is therefore signed by pseudonym (if seen as authorization), or, it is a fake (if seen as authorization). The fourth triptych is signed by all three Janez Janšas. The fifth is signed by Emil Hrvatín, the sixth by Davide Grassi, and the seventh by Žiga Kariž. These are their previous names and in case of Žiga Kariž actual name as well; the situation complicates then fact that Davide Grassi remained Davide Grassi as Italian citizen because he was not granted to change his name in his native country. The eighth is signed by all three of them on each painting with their original names. The ninth finally has signatures which are acceptable as their identification in Slovenia at the moment of exhibition: Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Žiga Kariž.

These artworks are self-portraits: if Van Gogh's shoes are his self-portrait given as an ordinary thing which symbolizes his artistic career, here we have to deal with artists whose artistic career can be symbolized by their names and the process of their names transfiguration into ready-made artworks. These names play a game of their own sliding between artistic authorization and identification, between original and copy (or even fake and forgery), telling a story of their life through their signatures. Altogether, we watch a performance of nine triptychs as narration of their artistic biographies, as authentication of their portraits by Viktor Bernik as self-portraits, and of identification of each of them presented as a work in progress which can never find final safe haven.

In 2016, they presented their most recent project "All About You".³ Three persons exhibit a triptych consisting of reproductions of their identity cards composed as a puzzle – a construction of one hundred Visa, MasterCard and Maestro cards issued in accordance with the personalization project of NLB Bank, each one representing a piece of identity card. The

³ In accordance with their practice to combine exhibitions with printed and digitalized theoretical interpretation, the text of a lecture given at the opening appeared as a book. (Kreft, 2016)

construction contains some blank spaces where bank cards were not issued because the request did not fit the bank rules. To get one hundred bank cards they had to apply for each one separately, proposing design of it with another 1/100th piece of their identity cards, and when they got the next card previous one expired. The result was that image of their identity card contained one to three valid bank cards (Visa, Master and Maestro). The process of making the triptych was a long-duration performance full of expectations and suspense for them, and they enjoyed it.

Bank cards are today as ordinary as Coca Cola or Brillo boxes were sixty years ago. Duchamp's ready-mades turned into artworks served his intention to restrain art's inclination towards aesthetic pleasure and contemplation. Warhol's artworks represented what was extraordinary about ordinary things – their attractive image. This work is neither ready made in Duchamp's sense nor in Warhol's sense. It is not ready made artwork of Duchamp's kind because it does not appear as artwork after it ceased to be ordinary thing – it remains ordinary thing even as it becomes an artwork. It is not a case similar to Warhol because it is not a portrait of document's commodity appeal – documents do not possess such an appeal but represent political, economic and social relationship between bank and its client, or state and its citizen. If not similar to Duchamp's or Warhol's procedure, it is surprisingly parallel to Picasso's *Guernica*. If the president of board of New Ljubljana Bank visited the exhibition and asked "Who made this?" the true answer would necessarily be: "You did." The triptych encompasses several social relations objectified in bank- and identity-cards: money, personhood, identification and citizenship.

Bank-card is itself just a representation of money which is originally just another commodity, then gold and other special representations start to represent money; and after that representation develops into a written or printed document saying that bank is ready to pay put denominated amount in gold. Still later, the same document without golden promise appears, and following that we get at a bank-card, to get transfigured into a personalized bank-card, until it will be (and is already getting) replaced by completely digitalized and virtual presentation of person's active financial power. During this historical process, money has lost its empirical material reality

and became abstract power represented by its aesthetical attractiveness, travelling and transforming itself into what it really is: an abstraction from and of social relations which, once again, “the eye cannot descry”.

Personhood is originally a theatrical mask on human face. It is neither just a mask nor just an actor. It is an actor wearing a mask impersonating this or that part. Artist is one of possible parts in *dramatis personae*. The person of artist to appear as an artwork is the embodiment of the modernist idea of art. This is not what is going on here. Subject may be just a figure of speech, but person is a figure of live performance. Personalization is proceeding according to bank rules, and through such personalization identity cards appear as a result constructed from ideal grip on credit and debit changes which constitute person's social power. Personalization of credit and debit equals identification tool. This tool is at the same time an artwork which represents person in its citizenship part with some of identifying data. The triptych as artwork was decomposing itself constantly during its productive performance because while new valid cards arrived, all those already included in the artwork expired, and so will the last now still valid card expire in due course. Artwork will turn into a document of once existing artwork, and documents will be invalid, both sides dying at the same moment – but for the auto-portrait appearing as a document of identification. It represents a self-portrait of a person wearing a mask of a citizen with the Republic of Slovenia used as a mirror.

6. Artivism's Uncanny Response

The effect of their intimate decision to change names was temporary political attention. What remained after that was discomfort, even aversion to their metamorphosis and their collective projects from activist artworld where they nevertheless belonged before and after renaming. Aversion to their change of names could be caused by belief that they wanted an easy way to publicity, or, that they crossed the line between art and politics. On second thought, it has to be more than that because many similar projects were accepted and even applauded – but in those projects names were not changed »for real«. Why “real”, i.e. legal change of name declared to be just

an intimate decision disturbed the artivistic artworld so much?

The distinction between modernist *end* (*telos*) and activist *cause* belongs to divide between art and life which, in case of modernism, supports art's ability to enter life with the real power because it has autonomous power of its own, while in case of contemporary activism the power lies in choice of the »cause« which lies outside art. Artivism as a recent phenomenon combines art and activism in a social environment constructed after the fall of the wall, the fall of the twins and the fall of the Lehman Brothers. From ex-socialist point of view it is at least a decade older because of the function art had in deconstruction of socialist ideology and its societal fictions.

As Gauguin reports, van Gogh was painting shoes during their stay in Arles. Asked about it, he explained that he wore these shoes during his journey from Netherlands to Belgium after his decision that humanity cannot be saved through priests of religion but only through priests of art. He declared himself to be the Holy Spirit, i.e. the spiritual guide of humanity after Christ left for heavens. Shoes, in this case definitely his own pair of shoes, were not just still life with a personal object (Shapiro, 1989, 305-306; Shapiro, 1994, 143-144), neither were they an auto-portrait as a worn-out personal object. They were an image of the cross an artist has to carry to execute his mission.

Artivism, as contemporary phenomenon, comes after Adorno and after Danto. Adorno claimed that nothing concerning art, not even its right to exist, is self-evident. (Adorno, 1974, 9) Art cannot justify its doings from its own end in an autotelic manner. Danto claimed that with its end being lost, art arrived into a situation when it could finally define itself without any ideology or philosophy which disenfranchised it before. (Danto, 1998, 63-89 and 115-128) Using this freedom, Warhol, he says, could turn ordinary things into works of art because what defines an artwork is something extra-ordinary which an eye cannot descry. (Danto, 1964, 580) Transfiguration of the ordinary into art proceeds without need to apply modernist laws of progress. In addition, explaining art after the end of art (or after the end of art history, i.e. arts progressive ideology) Danto declared that art cannot make anything happen. (Danto, 1998, 63-64) But, he asked

himself, why then philosophy (at least that of Plato and his later followers) thinks that art is dangerous? (Danto, 1998, 77-80) Artivism is trying to make something happen by accepting one or the other cause as a surrogate (*Erzatz*) for the modernist autotelic end: art does not have an end in itself, and may consequently embrace any possible cause. Doing that, it keeps up appearances of its modernist redemptive mission. Using Ulrich Beck's proposal, the relationship between van Gogh's and activist relationship to art's mission is a relationship between the first and the second modernity. (Beck and Grande, 2010) Here, at this point, Janšas touch the nerve.

The name seems to be something ordinary at first, given to us by the others, usually parents. We grow into it. We may use it shortened, nicknamed; we can change it using aliases, pseudonyms, and so on; and so can the others, calling us other names. The name given at baptism and chosen by the baptized himself or herself has (and it definitely had with early Christians) another meaning. It is a gesture of baptizing oneself, leaving one communion that of the family, to get into another – in this case that of the artworld. The name ready-made serial artwork of Janez Janša, Janez Janša and Janez Janša or Žiga Kariž does repeat a move which transfigures ordinary thing into artwork, but it does also the reverse at the same time, turning artwork into an ordinary thing. It turns their life into artistic existence, but it also turns artistic existence into ordinary everyday existence. The result is a bit offending for the artworld. Duchamp transfigured *pissoir* into artwork. To turn it back into *pissoir* by installing it into the nearest museum water-closet would be an intervention of uncultivated moron (or perhaps of Russian scoartist). Warhol transfigured Brillo boxes from an ordinary box into a container of celebrities' metaphysical attractiveness. To take it from museum and put it to its original use of packing item for household soap would be sacrilegious. Janšas changed their names and transfigured them into ready-mades, but names remained what they were: ordinary given names together with documents. Being at the same times both artworks and ordinary thing is what invests them with something extra-ordinary, but it is not of the kind needed to safeguard the uniqueness of an artwork. Therefore, what Janšas do is not dangerous for philosophical reason, as poetry for Plato. It is

dangerous for the last straw of difference between ordinary thing and the artwork needed for an activist relationship with the world during second modernity.

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Empathy for the Depicted

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ABSTRACT. Recently, a number of philosophers and neuroscientists have begun to explore the idea we may experience empathy for pictures. In this paper I explore the variety of ways in which we respond empathetically towards pictures. Empathy in response to pictures can refer either to the idea that the viewer empathizes with the depicted character's emotional state, or that the viewer empathizes with depicted scenes, in the sense of responding towards a depicted scene's expressed emotions. Regarding the latter, I question the idea that we can have a full-blown empathetic response to a scene that does not involve attributing emotions to a person, either depicted or hypothetical. I then explore responses to depicted characters, starting from a distinction between low-level motoric responses to pictures that afford an understanding of the viewer's bodily involvement in attending pictures, and emotional or empathetic responses. It is argued that neural and embodied simulation processes prompt passive and immediate responses to depicted characters, that are not though empathetic. These responses may give rise to automatic, immediate and conscious responses that provide a minimal access to the depicted character's perspective. Lastly, two main accounts of imaginative reconstruction or perspective shifting that have been proposed are examined as possible types of engagement with a depicted character.

1. Introduction

It is a platitude that pictures often evoke powerful emotional reactions. Recently, a number of philosophers (Currie 2011; Lopes 2011; Carroll 2017; Matravers 2017; Robinson forth.) and neuroscientists (Freedberg & Gallese 2007) have begun to explore the idea that some of these emotional

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responses to pictures may further be empathetic. The question I explore in this paper is whether we respond empathetically to pictures and, if so, in what ways.

In everyday talk we refer to empathetic responses to pictures somewhat fast and loose. We may say that seeing Goya's *Third of May, 1808* evokes empathy, as the feeling of utmost injustice for the execution wells up on us; that the photo of the three-year-old Aylan's lifeless body washed ashore mobilized empathy; that through empathy we place ourselves in the depicted people's place and come to have an understanding of the depicted characters, of their thoughts, feelings, attitudes or character traits². This everyday concept of empathy takes in appropriate emotional responses to the depicted character's course of life, such as feeling sad for the man being executed in Goya's painting or feeling devastated in seeing Aylan's photo, and a sense of *caring for* or *siding with* the depicted characters.

2. From Sympathy to *Einfühlung* in Aesthetics

The ambiguity in the use of 'empathy' in relation to experiences of pictures is anticipated since it has proven notoriously difficult to reach a consensus

² The arguments here presented are supposed to apply as much to certain types of pictures that represent situations or people existing in time - such as photographs or historic paintings or portraits- as well as to pictures that represent fictional entities or situations. There are three interrelated issues that they have not been adequately addressed from current philosophical or psychological research about empathy: (i) whether and in what way the artistic nature of a picture affects the way spectators emotionally or empathetically respond. Research does not provide extensive and clear evidence; for example, Van Dongen et al (2016) suggest that there is implicit emotion regulation in art context, see also Mocaiber et al (2010); however, Gerger et al (2014) argue that the artistic nature of a picture has little influence on negative emotional reactions such as anger, fear, disgust, shame etc. Another closely related issue is (ii) whether and in what way the category of the objects represented (individuals that exist; fictional characters that could have existed in the actual world, such as Anna Karenina, a woman coming to suicide because of her failed affair; or characters that do not exist and could not have existed in the actual world, such as the Satyr Marsyas) affects the empathic response towards them. In a recent study Sperduti et al (2016) provide evidence that fiction-generated emotions are physically robust, as indicated by physiological arousal comparable to responses to real material, but the subjective intensity and valence rating of emotional responses to fiction-material are rather weaker, except in the cases where stimuli elicit personal memories (for analogous results, see Goldstein 2009).

on the notion of empathy, a concept employed in almost so many ways as the philosophers dealing with it³. One issue is whether empathy involves a *feeling towards* another person's misfortune or joy; in other words, if the *process* of empathizing with another person involves or entails sympathizing with that person by *feeling sad or happy for her state* because one believes that something bad or good respectively has happened to her⁴. Perhaps we begin to impose some order in this turmoil if empathy is distinguished from sympathy and the tendency to run them together is avoided (Goldie 2000, 176-177)⁵.

Historically, 'empathy' was introduced in the early 20th century as the translation of the German concept *Einfühlung* (literally, feeling into)⁶; it is in some way surprising to the modern reader that it firstly appeared in works in aesthetics and psychology to explain the experience of aesthetic (inanimate) objects (Vischer 1873)⁷. Theodor Lipps (1903; 1906) took the concept *Einfühlung* to describe the aesthetic perception of an object by means of projection of the self into it; subsequently Lipps expanded the concept to include the experiencing of other people's mental states as well⁸. Up to that time, the term "sympathy" was used extensively to denote the act

³ Daniel Batson (2009) differentiates eight uses of the term empathy; see also Wispe (1986); Coplan & Goldie (2011) and Stueber (2013); also Zahavi (2010), for a similar comment see Carroll (2011).

⁴ For this account of sympathy see Goldie (2000), 180; also Maibom (2012).

⁵ Despite the efforts made to differentiate between empathy and sympathy there is not yet widespread consensus on that. On the differences between these concepts see Batson (2009), Wispe (1986); on the history of the concepts see Jahoda (2005), Debes (2015), Matravers (2017).

⁶ The term *Einfühlung* was translated as 'empathy' by E. B. Titchener in his *A Text Book of Psychology*.

⁷ Harry Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou trace the more technical introduction of 'Einfühlung' in Aesthetics by Robert Vischer in his dissertation "On the Optical Sense of Form: A contribution to Aesthetics" (1873). As Mallgrave and Ikononou (1994, 23) explain, according to Vischer's hypothesis of projection, in responding aesthetically to an object there is an 'empathetic feeling or empathy with the form of the object...[and] in this mode of viewing things, our mental-sensory ego [...] is projected inside the object'.

⁸ As many commentators notice, the concept of *Einfühlung* in Lipps and other Empathists of the early 20th century is obscure and unclear (Matravers 2017; Currie 2011). Vernon Lee (1856-1935) and Wilhem Worringer (1881-1965) developed their own accounts of *Einfühlung*, which are differentiated from Lipps' in important ways, even though they are closely related to it, see Rader (1979).

of perceiving, understanding or imagining the other's perspective, with references to the work of the Scottish Enlightenment theorists David Hume and Adam Smith⁹. In the move from exploring *Einfühlung* as the aesthetic perception of an object to exploring it as applying to interpersonal relations, Lipps missed to differentiate between *Einfühlung* and sympathy; consequently, Edward Titchener translated *Einfühlung* as empathy, believing that he had to coin a completely distinct concept (Jahoda 2005).

In contemporary literature, most theorists distinguish between sympathy and empathy, though not always consistently. In general, the idea is that one's own perspective and emotional state may match the other's perspective or emotional state without necessarily one's own emotion been directed at the other's welfare (Goldie 2002; Maibom 2014; also Prinz 2011); for example, Noel Carroll often discusses the possibility of the "sadistic empath" or torturer who uses her perception of the victim's pain to torture the victim effectively, a point also made by Max Scheler (Carroll 2011; 2017)¹⁰. And reversely, one can feel sad or happy for another without one's sympathetic concern to co-occur or result from one's feeling the suffering or joy of the other person¹¹.

So, for example, we feel sad for the seriously ill woman in seeing Hodler's *Valentine Godé-Darel in Her Bed With Folded Hands* (1914); our emotional response is sympathetic since we understand that she is suffering or how disease has affected her life, we attend to her feelings but we do not necessarily feel what she feels; the feelings are our own (see Debes 2015). Or in seeing the 19th century painting *The Princes in the Tower* we may feel fear as the little princes unknowingly await for their execution while of course the princes themselves do not feel fear or an emotion of 'recognizably the same type' (Matravers 2017) as the one we feel; thus I

⁹ Especially Smith's account of sympathy in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is important for the contemporary discussions on empathy. See for example Smith (1759/1976, 1-2). For both Hume's and Smith's concept of sympathy and their relation to the contemporary concept of empathy, see Coplan & Goldie (2011a, x-xi).

¹⁰ See Scheler (1970, 8-9, 14).

¹¹ Although I think this is more contested, in that it could be argued that responding appropriately to the other's emotional experience does, even to some degree, involve experiencing the other's emotional state.

think our response should be described as being emotionally appropriate or sympathetic to the depicted other's perspective rather than empathetic¹².

3. Empathy for Pictures

The transition from sympathy to *Einfühlung* and then to empathy is associated with the multiple ways in which the empathetic aspects of pictures have been explored. On the one hand, Lipps' formulation of *Einfühlung* as the rather awkward idea that the viewer is absorbed in the contemplation of a work of art by being "inwardly released from [one's own] ego" and transported through "a spatial extension of the ego" into the work of art (Lipps)¹³, can nevertheless be useful in understanding a viewer's *bodily involvement* in attending pictures aesthetically. Currie (2011) follows the Empathists' path and explores motoric responses to many artworks; that is, he discusses the involvement of simulative processes in our engagement with both the aesthetic properties of artworks and ordinary objects as well as in our recognition of the other people's emotional state.

On the other hand, the concept of empathy is important in understanding a viewer's *emotional involvement* in attending pictures. This latter way of discussing about empathic responses towards fiction and representational art is the most common. Things muddle because we seem to think of empathic responses as involving something more than an understanding of the other's thoughts, feelings and perspective. Thus, many differentiate between cognitive empathy or mindreading and affective empathy. Martin Hoffman (2000) defines cognitive empathy as the awareness of another's feelings, and affective empathy as feeling what

¹² The paradigm is mentioned in Coplan and Goldie (2011, xliii), however they seem to accept that 'sometimes we empathize with a target where that target does not himself feel the emotion'. I think that this statement is problematic in that it obscures what Coplan and Goldie themselves tried to clarify, namely the distinction between sympathy and empathy. Responding appropriately to the other's emotional state is not equivalent to attaining the same type of emotions with the other person as a result of perceiving or imaginatively engaging with the other's experience (Goldie 2000; Matravers 2011; Prinz 2011).

¹³ On the relation of Lipps' ideas to contemporary research see Zahavi (2010).

another feels. Heidi Maibom refers to cognitive empathy as ‘the ability to ascribe mental states to others, such as beliefs, intentions, or emotions’ and to affective empathy as essentially involving affect on the part of the empathizer (Maibom 2017, 1; see also Spaulding 2017).

For some, empathy proper is only affective empathy that requires a degree of identification or affective matching between the empathizer and the subject (Coplan 2004; Gaut 1999; Goldie 2000). Given that emotions ‘vary [...] in a number of dimensions - transparency, intensity, behavioural expression, object-directedness, and susceptibility to rational assessment’ (de Sousa 2014, 6), the degree of identification or affective matching required depends on what having the same type of emotion is taken to mean. Others allow for a wider concept of empathy that includes convergent emotional states between the empathizer and the subject (Carroll 2012) or for a concept of empathy that is not restricted to affective experiences and includes all mental phenomena (Zahavi 2014, Gallagher 2012).

What would then mean to say that we respond empathetically to a picture? An intriguing idea is that by seeing a picture I not only understand and come to know that the depicted character feels thus and so, but I somehow have a kind of “lively bodily experience” of the depicted character’s emotions that gives me a form of knowledge of (being) that character¹⁴. This rough conception of empathy as the ability to gain a kind of emotionally or affectively enhanced access to the depicted other’s experience will do as a starting point from which we can explore different types and processes by which pictures engage the viewer in empathetic manners.

Up to now, the talk about empathetic responses to pictures mainly refers to the idea that the viewer empathizes with the depicted character’s emotional state; to put it in a more cautious way, the viewer empathizes with “what the characters can be imagined to feel” (Carroll 2017, 287), or empathizes with the emotional state the depicted characters are represented

¹⁴ This idea of lively bodily experiences is found in Adam Smith’s discussion of compassion. According to Smith, “Of this kind is compassion or pity, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.” (Smith 1759/1976, 9).

as having. Empathizing, in this case, may mean that the viewer grasps what the depicted characters are thinking or feeling or that the viewer simply understands what they experience from their own perspective. It may also mean that in seeing the picture the viewer perceives what it is like for the depicted character to be in a certain emotional state and thus the viewer comes to share it.

It is also argued that we empathize with depicted scenes, in the sense that we empathetically respond towards a depicted scene's expressed emotions¹⁵. Dominic Lopes (2011) has recently tried to account for what he calls the distinctively pictorial manner in which pictures contribute to empathic skill. According to Lopes, one way in which our empathetic responses to pictures differ from our empathetic responses to subjects physically present is that seeing pictures may involve seeing the scene as expressing an emotion that is nevertheless not attributable to the depicted figures.

I think that we often attribute emotional qualities to scenes¹⁶; for example, Salman Rushdie's Harun lives in "a sad city [...] a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name. It stood by a mournful sea full of glumfish" (Rushdie 2014). It may then be the case that sometimes, in Stephen Davies words, we "catch the emotional ambience of our environment" (Davies 2011, 137). We describe a depicted pastoral landscape as expressing melancholy or sadness or we may see a scene as expressing pain or trauma. In cases as these, the viewer does not have a full-blown emotional response; rather, one "picks-up" or mirrors an indeterminate feeling or mood that is not necessarily directed towards the scene; also, one may not be consciously aware that one's own response is related *in a specific way* to the depicted scene. Psychological research may offer a lot in explaining this kind of low-level resonating responses, such as

¹⁵ For a brief discussion of the matter and rejection of the idea that we may respond empathetically either towards scenes or towards a painting as such see Carroll 2017.

¹⁶ In my view we do ascribe emotional properties both to real scenes and to scenes depicted or fictive. Thus, I disagree with Lopes's claim that the fact that pictures 'guide' us to the emotion by scene expression 'has no parallel in non-pictorial experience, which does not represent bits of inanimate nature as expressing emotions.' (Lopes 2011, 130).

for example studies on the association of colors and mood¹⁷. My suggestion is, thus, that one type of response towards depictions of scenes, landscapes, or non-sentient objects may appear as “picking-up” or contagion.

Another plausible idea is to consider the scene as expressing the emotions of the artist; however, the fact that we also attribute emotions to physical scenes probably shows that this is not necessarily the case (see Carroll 1999, 84-85). For example, we have no reason to believe that while Béla Bartók composed *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* - a piece expressing fear and uneasiness- he must have experienced fear himself. Even if we learn that Bartók was in a state of constant joy, we would still take the piece to express fear (see for a similar point Carroll 1999; Goldman 1995, Davies 2009). We should however allow that in some cases responding empathically towards depictions of scenes, landscapes, or non-sentient objects is the result of imagining feeling, cognizing or perceiving what the artist felt during the creation of the artwork. For example, knowing that Van Gogh suffered from mental illness can make the viewer experience sadness and sorrow that is directed towards the mentally ill Van Gogh, while observing one of the works that Van Gogh painted during his hospitalization (see also Goldman 1995).

It can also be the case that the viewer responds with empathy towards an unrepresented hypothetical persona in the depiction (see Levinson 1996; Robinson 1994). In other words, sometimes the viewer empathizes with the emotions that the scene would arouse to a fictional character or to the viewer, if she/he were at this scene.

To sum up, I find it difficult to espouse the idea that I can have a full-blown empathetic response to a scene that would not involve attributing emotions to a person, either depicted or imagined. For from a phenomenological point of view, how could free-floating emotions, that are not attributed to a person or a hypothetical persona produce our response? As Zahavi rightly points out “one cannot empathize with unowned

¹⁷ For example in M. Hemphill’s experimental study (1996) the subjects associated bright colors with the elicitation of positive emotional associations, and dark colors with mainly negative emotional associations.

experiences. The empathized experiences are given as belonging to another; they are given as lived through first-personally by that other” (2015, p.151).

4. Empathy for the Depicted

Even if in ordinary language we use the concept of empathy in relation to paintings, photographs, drawings, prints, is there any evidence that empathy does occur in our engagement with pictures? Evidence from neuropsychological research show that there is. Sometimes seeing a picture involves an immediate passive response to a depicted face. Studies accounting for emotion sharing using measures of facial electromyography (EMG) indicate that when participants were exposed to pictures of happy or angry facial expressions facial mimicry was observed (Sonnyby-Borgstrom, Jonson, & Svenson 2003; see Decety & Meltzoff 2011 for a review)¹⁸. Moreover, research using functional neuroimaging studies have shown that there are striking similarities in the neural mechanisms engaged both in the first-personal experience of pain and in the observation of other people’s pain while presented with short animated visual stimuli depicting painful and non-painful bodily situations (Decety, Michalska & Akitsuki 2008). Although these and other relevant studies were conducted to study the role of the basic somatic sensorimotor resonance in the primitive building block of empathy and moral reasoning, researchers actually used pictorial depictions as objects purporting to trigger affective sharing (e.g Lamm et al. 2007; Gu & Han 2007); so, I think, it is safe to conclude that these studies provide evidence for the mechanisms and processes underlying the generation of empathic responses to pictures. In other words, the same kind of emotional mechanism is employed for both real-life emotional responses and pictorial-directed emotional responses.

Exploring ways of responding empathetically to pictures thus starts from the neural and embodied simulation processes that prompt passive and immediate responses to depicted characters.

¹⁸ The tendency to imitate facial and other behaviour is already found in newborns (see Field et al 1982; Meltzoff & Moore, 1977) and adults, the latter exposed to pictures of happy or angry facial expressions (Dimberg & Thunberg 2012).

4.1 Neural and Embodied Simulation Processes: Passive, Immediate Responses to Depicted Characters.

Pictures depicting faces are not the only one evoking physiological or bodily responses; it has been argued that pictures of painful situations that do not however depict the face of someone in pain, such as a depiction of a hand getting injected, or pictures depicting a part of someone's body getting touched or caressed, activate the cortical network of areas that are normally involved in the experience of pain or of being touched. Interestingly enough, Freedberg and Gallese argue that a type of embodied simulation also occurs in cases such as Pollock's paintings or to the cut canvases of Lucio Fontana, where the viewer simulates the "implied gestures of the artist"; that is, the viewer may experience "a sense of bodily involvement with the movements that are implied by the physical traces – in brushmarks or paint drippings – of the creative actions of the producer of the work" (Freedberg & Gallese 2007, p.198)¹⁹. However, this is a rather different case, since these low-level responses should probably be considered as responses towards the artist's actions during the creation of the artwork rather than as responses towards what is depicted in the painting.

In the cases described above, neural processes bring about passive (involuntary) immediate (non-inferential) responses to the depicted character's emotional state and perspective. In some cases, these reflexive changes can only be detectable third personally from observation of the viewers overt behaviour or facial and bodily reactions or from the detection of the activation of analogous motor representations in the viewer at the sub-personal level. So, one type of engagement with a picture evolves as a low-level or mirroring process, leading to a "picking-up" of the depicted character's perspective or of the expressed emotions²⁰. Responses of

¹⁹ See also Freedberg (1989), Sbriscia-Fioretti et al (2013).

²⁰ Simulation theorists have come to propose accounts of empathy involving various subconscious forms of direct responsiveness to the mental states of others, such as a 'primitive, 'low-level mind-reading' (Goldman 2006, 113) or 'basic empathy' (Steuber 2006) or even phenomena such as resonance, contagion and mimicry (see Coplan & Goldie 2011 for a review). Alvin Goldman opts for a model of "unmediated resonance" (Goldman & Sripada 2005; Goldman 2006), according to which an automatic, low-level empathic

“picking-up” type are unconscious reflex reactions, automatic simulations of facial expression, vocalizations, postures, and movements of the depicted figure.

However, not all cases of passive, immediate responses to pictures remain at the sub-personal level. In other cases, the observation of a pictorially represented emotion and the activation of analogous motor representation in the observer brings about an indeterminate feeling, such as a vague feeling of pleasure or easiness caused by the prints and photographs depicting nature art in health care settings; such feelings are not however directed at a specific object nor are directly related to the pictures.

Responses of the latter type do not involve full-fledged emotions, although they can initiate emotional responses; they lie close to and just above the threshold of consciousness and characterize a transition in consciousness. So one is aware of one’s own feeling, but one does not know why she experiences it in the sense that one’s emotion is not directed at the picture’s depicted content, nor are aspects of the picture the attentional focus of the viewer’s emotion. Even though this affective response to pictures is closely related to empathic responses, it is better described as a case of emotional contagion.

As Goldie (2000, 191-194) discusses contagion is an emotional response that does not involve awareness of what the other’s emotion is about; it is a “catching” the other’s emotion without being aware that the emotion belongs primarily to the other. Hatfield et al (1992, 153-154) refer to this phenomenon as “primitive emotional contagion”, and define it as “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally”.

Thus, another condition for the viewer’s emotional response to be clearly characterized as empathic is that the viewer must also be aware of

response results from the activation of the same neural substrate both when we experience an emotion ourselves and when we observe someone else experiencing the emotion. Research on mirror-neurons is impressive and expanding rapidly; indeed, the idea that we may be “genetically programmed” to empathically respond towards the others or ‘wired for empathy’ (Iacoboni 2008, 268) is appealing and promising new solutions to persist philosophical - up to now armchair - problems.

experiencing the emotion because of some aspect of the painting's content; it is not enough that the picture caused the viewer's emotion. In order to refer to a viewer's emotional response as empathetic, the viewer must be aware that it is not her own emotion that she is experiencing; rather, both the source and object of the particular emotion lie outside herself and beyond her own life situations (Decety and Jackson 2004; Vignemont & Singer 2006, Maibom 2017).

4.2 Basic Empathetic Response to Pictorial Artworks

Let's take another example: we may think of some pictures depicting the view from a cliff from the point of view of someone looking down, where the viewer of the picture may get a feeling of fear of heights or of losing balance or falling, as if one is unwilling to look below. The response may be triggered both in the case that a person is depicted as standing on the edge of a cliff, and in the case of a scene depicted as seen from the perspective of someone standing on the edge but without that person depicted. In the former case, we probably respond emotionally towards an unrepresented hypothetical persona in the depiction (see Levinson 1996; Robinson 1994)²¹.

In these cases, besides the third-personally observable reflexive changes of the viewer, she herself is bodily aware of certain feelings caused by her seeing the painting. If, furthermore, the viewer is aware that what one is experiencing is a response to the depicted other's perspective and, therefore, one's own experience is anchored on the depicted other's experience and one maintains the self-other differentiation (one's attention is directed towards the depicted other), the response can be considered as empathetic.

Amy Coplan argues that only contagion is a direct, automatic and unmediated process, while empathy can never be fully unmediated since it

²¹ As a participant in the ESA Conference 2017 pointed, in some photographs appearing in the internet, people are depicted to smile excitedly while standing in the edge of a cliff. In such cases, the viewer's automatic and immediate response does not seem to match the depicted person's emotions. Projection prevails basic empathy, at least in the immediate response. A closer look at the photograph and the viewer's focusing on the depicted person's facial expression can alter the viewer's response.

requires perspective-taking (Coplan 2011, 9). In excluding emotional contagion and mimicry from the definition of empathy, Murray Smith also regards empathy as requiring a “higher-level type of volitional imagining” (Smith 2011, 103-104). However, as I argue, there is a type of emotional response to pictures that is non-volitional or automatic, immediate and conscious and provides a minimal access to the depicted character’s perspective²². It may and probably does comprise reflexive simulations of facial and bodily expressions, but at the phenomenological level it is not experienced as involving simulation²³. I see no reason why we should refrain from referring to this type of responses towards the subject of a picture as basic empathetic responses to pictorial artworks.

Karsten Stueber, talks about basic empathy that “allows us to directly recognize what another person is doing or feeling” when observing her facial expressions or bodily behavior (Stueber 2006, 147). Goldman also argues that we have a low-level, automatic mechanism that produces an experience of basic emotions of the others such as fear or disgust that is

²² Carroll discusses both the aforementioned types of responses to pictures as cases of emotional contagion, admitting that he does not find it satisfying since he applies the term both to “mirror reflexes” or to the embodied simulation of features of the depicted figure and to (non full-fledged) emotions, such as catching a sense of wariness of the depicted figure (Carroll 2017). He seems to allow rather easily for mirror reflexes to affect the conscious level in that even though “they do not supply us with the kind of action-guiding, affective appraisals of the relevant targets of the states in questions as do emotions-in-full [...] [t]hey convey broad phenomenological insight into what our conspecifics are feeling qualitatively” (Carroll 2017; see also Carroll 2011, 178). But if the viewer is not aware of this “picking-up” of the depicted emotions through mirror reflexes, then the best we can say is that they have a non-conscious affect on emotional responses, as a kind of response priming; they do not impart information at the phenomenological level. To accept that they do, would amount to recognize them as reasons rather than as unspecific hints that do not necessarily involve awareness that it is the other’s emotional state that relates to one’s own bodily-feeling response. Moreover, Currie is right in pointing that “simulation mechanisms are too precariously related to the state of the other to count as ways of perceiving the other’s state” (Currie 2011, 89). Differentiating between mirror reflexes/picking-up and contagion allow us to explain why the latter can indeed provide phenomenological insight to the depicted character’s perspective and may also lead to an empathic response towards it.

²³ The basic idea supports a direct perception of emotions, drawing insights from the phenomenological theories of Zahavi and Gallagher and mostly from Goldie’s non-inferential perceptual account of emotional states; see also McDowell’s direct realism.

based on the perception of the other's facial expressions that activate a neural substrate of the same type of emotion in oneself (Goldman & Sripada, 2005; Shanton & Goldman 2010; Goldman 2006). Both Stueber and Goldman take basic empathy or low-level empathy as simulation based.

However, in what I regard as basic empathetic response, a person A has a basic empathic response to depicted character B if and only if A *directly perceives* B's expressed emotions while A is aware that A's own emotional response is about B's expressed emotions. Basic empathic response has as its outcome a state of acquaintance with the depicted character's expressed emotional state.

One may object that an empathic response should comprise sharing or partial sharing of the same type of emotion as the depicted character; that an empathic response amounts not just to perceiving the other's emotional state but also sharing it. But this objection would simply mean to miss the point of basic empathic response, for in directly perceiving the depicted figure's expressed emotion one instantiates the depicted character's emotion. As Zahavi states "empathic acquaintance doesn't presuppose or entail sharing in any straightforward sense of the term. [...] [Y]ou might empathically grasp your colleague's joy when he receives notice of his promotion even though you are personally chagrined by this piece of news. The fact that you don't share his joy, the fact that you are feeling a very different emotion, doesn't make it any less a case of empathy, doesn't make your awareness of his joy merely inferential or imaginative in character." (2014, 150).

What I suggest is that the viewer can sometimes connect with the depicted character in an affective way that is phenomenologically immediate²⁴; however, what the viewer acquires from basic empathic response is usually limited, in that it does not provide rich information or full access to the other's emotional state, but the viewer is acquainted with the depicted character's basic emotional state, such as fear, anger, disgust, sadness, joy and surprise. Basic empathic response is not directly affected by knowledge about the depicted character acquired by the viewer. But the

²⁴ The fact that this response is non-inferential, phenomenologically immediate does not mean that there cannot be sub-personal or non-conscious processing or mirroring underlying it; for a relevant comment Zahavi (2014, 162).

viewer can certainly develop his perceptual skill: some people are better than others in recognizing a depicted character's emotional state. Perceiving an artwork's or a depicted figure's expressed emotion is a skill that evolves over practice and engagement with art; and acquired knowledge can affect indirectly the development of this skill.

Basic empathic response provides a minimal access to the other's emotional state²⁵; however, in our effort to have an emotionally or affectively enhanced access to the depicted character's perspective, we need to understand their situation and context (Carroll 2017). In fact, there are cases where empathizing with the other requires that we access what Goldie describes as long-term emotions, which are "typically complex, episodic, dynamic, and structured" (Goldie 2000, 12) and include bodily changes, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and dispositions (Faucher & Tappolet 2002, 110). We thus often turn to different types of engagement with the picture's depicted characters, employing more active simulation processes²⁶. The idea is that we have an ability to use our imagination to reconstruct another person's thoughts, feelings and so forth, that enables to recreate, reenact or take-in the way the other is feeling or thinking (see Goldie 2000, Stueber 2006, Currie & Ravenscroft 2002)²⁷. Two main accounts of imaginative reconstruction have been proposed, which are examined here as possible types of engagement with a depicted character.

²⁵ Cf. de Vignemont (2010, 294): "Like for empathy, we will see that the deeper our understanding of others is, the less direct it is".

²⁶ These imaginative processes may be passively initiated; however the subject is actively directing his imagination so that he simulates the depicted other's emotional state. In a relative discussion, Goldie draws on Wollheim and points that an "unplanned" imaginative experience can be "especially vivid"; however, when one comes to reflectively focus on the imaginative process he's engaged, the "vividness" of his experience is diminished (Goldie 2000, 197). That one actively imaginatively reconstructs the depicted character's perspective does not mean that he is having an unconstrained experience, such as daydreaming. The process is constrained by one's effort to understand the other's perspective, thus the world-as-depicted, the context of the picture and one's own tacit knowledge about the world impose conditions on imaginative process; moreover, the subject is constrained by the conscious awareness that one is not imaginatively reconstructing one's own experience.

²⁷ I do not side with those equating empathy with simulation (either high level or below the personal level) (e.g., Gallese 2001, Goldman 2006, Stueber 2006, Coplan 2011).

4.3 Moderate Perspective-Taking for Empathic Response to Pictures

Person A empathizes with depicted character B if and only if A centrally imagines feeling, cognizing, or perceiving, what B feels, cognizes, or perceives, while A retains the awareness that B is the source of A's own affective state and primarily belongs to B. Moderate perspective-taking for empathic response to pictures involves projection.

In a less technical jargon, the viewer imagines what she herself would feel in the depicted figure's situation (or if she were physically present in the scene depicted) by imagining the events, actions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions - what Goldie refers to as the narrative structure of one's own life (Goldie 2000) - by embracing the other's perspective of the world. Thus, such imaginings involve conscious, experiential awareness of the state imagined. This process is referred to as "in his shoes perspective-shifting" (Goldie 2000), "self-oriented perspective-taking" (Coplan 2006)

"Centrally" is Goldie's term (drawing on Wollheim's distinction between central and acentral imagining) to explain this imaginative process as the "enactment of a narrative from [the] other person's point of view" (Goldie 1999, 397); that is, to stress that one is not imagining the other's narrative from an external point of view, but from the point of view of the depicted character. For example, I do not image *myself* swimming in the ocean as seen from a point of view high above the sea, I imagine swimming in the ocean from the point of view of the swimmer. I do not image seeing the expression of fear in my face, I do not see my face, instead I imaginatively enact thoughts like "I have salt in my mouth", "The tug of the current is strong upon me", "I am afraid"²⁸. We could distinguish these two kinds of imagining by calling the former "objective" and the latter "subjective".

²⁸ Cf. Zeno Vendler (1979, 161): "We are looking down upon the ocean from a cliff. The water is rough and cold, yet there are some swimmers riding the waves. 'Just imagine swimming in that water' says my friend, and I know what to do. 'Brr!' I say as I imagine the cold, the salty taste, the tug of the current, and so forth. Had he said 'Just imagine yourself swimming in that water', I could comply in another way too: by picturing myself being tossed about, a scrawny body bobbing up and down in the foamy waste."

Noel Carroll worries that perspective-shifting ends up in putting the character in my shoes rather than putting myself in the character's shoes (Carroll 2011, 165-166), a criticism that echoes Hume's discussion of projection, according to which in putting ourselves to the other's shoes we merely use the other as a screen upon which our mind casts our personal narrative, thereby succumbing to common psychological fallacies resulting from egocentric bias, such as misattributions and personal distress (see Coplan 2011). No one doubts that this is a well founded criticism of perspective-taking. However, one can think of an empathizer that has a solid knowledge of the picture's narrative structure (as for example in the case of a 17th century historian who looks at a Tanner painting), in that case moderate perspective-taking can be successful. The point is that in subjectively imagining the other's perspective, what one does is to adopt aspects of the other's point of view without disregarding that one is able to do that through his own broader perspective; in other words, subjective imagination of the other's perspective is embedded in one's own perspective. So in the case of perspective taking, one tries to become a narrator of the depicted other's life circumstances and perspective, by using his own cognitive and emotional resources to develop more ways to tell the depicted character's story.

The fact that it is an active reconstruction of the depicted character's perspective does not mean that it is unconstrained, as for example wishful thinking. The process is constrained by the world-as-depicted and by one's own tacit knowledge about the world; moreover, the viewer is constrained by the conscious awareness that one is not imaginatively reconstructing one's own experience. It is true that, as Noel Carroll points out, 'no artist can say or depict everything that there is to say or depict about the fictional events she is narrating' (Carroll 2001, 138). The elements depicted and the extra-pictorial information support a narrative structure, that is later 'filled in' by the viewer (ibid, 140)²⁹. I draw on intra-pictorial and extra-pictorial

²⁹ My view has affinities with Noel Carroll's discussion of the relation of art to morality; according to Carroll (1996), "part of what is involved, then, in the process of filling in a narrative is the activation of the moral powers – the moral judgments and the moral emotions of audiences".

elements to fill-in the narration of the depiction; through this process of simulating experiencing the depicted situation I reenact aspects of the depicted situation and attempt to imagine the emotions and thoughts of the depicted figure. I put myself in the depicted person's shoes so that I may be able to discover tacit or implicit elements of the depiction's narrative structure. Empathizing through moderate perspective-taking is finding the best possible way to narrate the depicted character's story as his own story from a subjective point of view.

Another type of imaginative reconstruction from a subjective point of view that has been proposed is more demanding, in that one attempts to imagine *being* the other in the other's situation.

4.4 Strong Perspective-Taking for Empathetic Response to Pictures

Person A empathizes with depicted character B if and only if A imagines being B and A centrally imagines feeling, cognizing, or perceiving what B feels, cognizes, or perceives, while A maintains the awareness that B is the source of A's own affective state and primarily belongs to B.

This process is referred as "empathetic perspective-shifting" (Goldie 2000) or "other-oriented perspective-taking" (Coplan 2011)³⁰. Two issues come up:

(i) In describing both moderate perspective-taking and strong perspective-taking, should we include a condition that the empathizer not only imagines feeling, cognizing, or perceiving the depicted character's perspective but also that the empathizer thereby feels or partially shares what the depicted character feels? Berys Gaut follows this line of thinking and differentiates between identification as imagining what the character fictionally feels, and empathizing, which is imagining feeling what a character fictionally feels and actually feel what the character fictionally feels (Gaut 2005, 264).

My intuition is that if one affords to imaginatively enact the other's perspective and imagines feeling the depicted character's expressed

³⁰ For some theorists, only perspective-taking in the strong sense is taken to be empathic in essence (Coplan, Smith 2011).

emotional state from a subjective point of view, then one's experience is much like having oneself that emotional state. Adam Morton has extensively defended the view that the experience of imagining an emotion resembles that of having one (Morton 2013). So if we accept that imagining the other's perspective from a subjective point of view is possible, we do not need to insist on sharing the same type of emotion as extra condition.

(ii) To imaginatively reconstruct the depicted character's perspective (either via moderate perspective-taking or via strong-perspective taking) one must have access to the picture's narrative structure; that is, to the story and the things it describes (an intra-pictorial narration), to the related historical and theoretical context (extra-pictorial narration) (see Currie 2007; Davies 2007)³¹. Furthermore, if strong-perspective taking is to be afforded, then the empathizer must be able to somehow take in all tacit background knowledge and unconscious dispositions that support and shape the character's thoughts, feelings and deliberations; as Goldie formulates it the empathizer has to have a "substantial characterization" of the character as narrator (Goldie 1999, 409). But are we able to imagine being the depicted character and thus entertain the other's own thoughts and feelings? In particular, can strong perspective-taking be applied to our emotional responses to pictures?

I think that although strong perspective taking seems closer to what some intuitively think when referring to genuine empathy, and it avoids in theory a lot of the problems that have to do with projection, such as psychological fallacies, it is nevertheless not phenomenologically and epistemically feasible. It seems implausible that one could imaginatively reconstruct the other's experience while *consistently* and *constantly* imagining being the other.

³¹ One would object that paintings or photographs are in fact non-narrative, since they depict a time-fragment rather than a series of events extending in time (see Ross 1982). However, it seems to me that this "snapshot" view for traditional depictive artworks sets the bar too high for what it takes for an artwork to be narrative and ignores artworks implicit narratives; under this conception only artworks such as Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* would be taken as narrative. Generally, fictional kinds provide background information relevant to the particular character/hero or to the situation presented. In the case of paintings this information comes from elements of the depiction, such as the clothes of the depicted characters or the background space as well as extra-pictorial information, such as the title, the artist or information about the time created.

I will briefly refer to a criticism along these lines that draws on Goldie's work, echoing some important insights from the phenomenological tradition (Richard Moran, Jean Paul Sartre). A depictive artwork, as already mentioned, provides pictorial and extra pictorial background information regarding the depicted character. This information might be enough for me to feel how I myself would feel in the depicted character's situation, but in order to imagine being the depicted character, I would have to be able to somehow take in all tacit background knowledge and unconscious dispositions that support and shape the character's thoughts, feelings and deliberations. As Goldie (2011, 308) argues, if I am to imagine being the other, I must share not just her thoughts and feelings, but also her traits of character, intellectual traits and abilities, emotional dispositions, and non rational influences. However, even if it were possible for me to enter one's own tacit background knowledge and unconscious dispositions through empathic imagination, I would have distorted the other person's access to her own mental states, since I would have imposed to her a kind of psychological distance from her own thoughts and feelings. Our access to our conscious thoughts and feelings is intimate because it rests on the possession of tacit background knowledge and unconscious dispositions. But if empathic imagination is taken to afford access both to conscious thoughts and feelings and to tacit background knowledge and unconscious dispositions, then it distorts both aspects of the empathized mind³².

Put more generally, our access to our own mental states can be reflective or non-reflective. Ordinarily, our access to our mental states is non-reflective, our mental acts are transparent to us and we are intentionally directed towards their content. Reflection destroys this transparency and makes mental acts its object. But still the very act of reflection remains transparent to us. Namely we are non-reflectively aware of it. In sum, every conscious mental state involves two different kinds of awareness: the awareness of its content and the awareness of its act. The former is objectifying whereas the latter non-objectifying. SPT seems to presuppose the existence only of the former kind of awareness in seeking to

³² I would misrepresent the sense of agency into a "double-minded" thinking, both deliberative or practical and theoretical or empirical' (Goldie 2011, 310).

imaginatively reconstruct the fictional character's thoughts, feelings, deliberations, and so forth. Thus, strong perspective-taking starts from a distorted conception of what it amounts for one to access one's own mind.

5. Conclusion

We have seen that there are many types of empathetic responses to pictures and rarely any of them appears alone, independently of other types of empathetic or emotional responses. They can be passive and immediate, involving simulation at the sub-personal or personal level or they can be direct perceptions of the depicted character's expressed emotions; other empathic responses can be active, involving kinds of simulative imagination. In some cases, pictures acquaint us with aspects of the depicted character's emotional perspective; other times, we engage with the depicted characters by employing active simulation processes. We imaginatively reconstruct the depicted character's perspective from a subjective point of view and become better narrators of the depicted other's emotional experience. We can be good at it but we can also fail; however, the idea that in order to really respond empathetically we would have to imagine being the depicted character by embracing his broader perspective is flawed since it would inevitably eliminate the presence of one's own perspective in the imaginative process. Moreover, as I argued, one could not imaginatively reconstruct the other's experience while consistently and constantly imagining being the other. The upshot is that strong perspective-taking does not provide a sound approach for empathic response to pictorial artworks. The active imaginative reconstruction of the depicted character's perspective should be understood on the lines of what I called moderate perspective-taking.

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Ideas Pertaining to a Phenomenological Aesthetics of Fashion and Play: The Contribution of Eugen Fink

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ABSTRACT. There has been until recent times a general tendency to ignore clothing and fashion in the domain of the human sciences, in general, and in philosophy in particular. However, clothing, understood as a basic human phenomenon, and fashion, understood as one of those fundamental phenomena that really form or influence the *Zeitgeist* of the present age, have proven to be far too important for philosophy to simply keep on ignoring them – at least as far as their influence on our everyday life and, on a specifically aesthetic level, as far as their role in shaping our taste and lifestyle are concerned. Inasmuch as dress immediately covers the surface of our body and thus presents it to the world as “never naked” but “always dressed”, clothing and fashion are clearly connected in the very first place to the bodily dimension of life. Together with certain recent developments of pragmatism such as so-called somaesthetics, the philosophical tradition that has probably paid the greatest attention in our age to the rehabilitation of the embodied constitution of the human world-experience as such is phenomenology. In my paper I will focus primarily on the contribution of Eugen Fink, a great phenomenologist who, in his short but remarkable book *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel* (1969), investigated fashion with great interest and accuracy, understanding it as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. I will first contextualize Fink’s contribution to an aesthetics of fashion within his more general conception of the philosophical significance of play, presented in his essay *Oase des Glücks. Gedanken zu einer Ontologie des Spiels* (1957) and his systematic treatise *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (1960). Then I will provide an in-depth analysis and interpretation of his short but remarkable book *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel*, thus promoting a re-evaluation of Fink’s important (but relatively unknown, little studied, and seldom mentioned) contribution to a strictly philosophical investigation of the

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significance of dress, and outlining some elements of a phenomenological aesthetics and anthropology of fashion. Indeed, in this perspective the human being is understood as not only the rational and language-using animal but even as the animal that dresses itself – and quite often, actually, in a very fashionable way!

1. Philosophy and/against Fashion

I would like to start my contribution by asking a few questions. First of all, why study fashion in general and, in particular, why is fashion an object of interest for philosophy? And, along the same lines, but less generally and with indirect reference to the philosopher that I will spend most of my time on (namely, a German phenomenologist: Eugen Fink), why is fashion especially interesting in the context of aesthetics and why is it appropriate to inquire into it from a phenomenological perspective? In the present contribution I will attempt to provide at least provisional answers to these questions and, in doing so, I will pay attention – following Fink – to certain affinities between fashion and the phenomenon of play (*Spiel*, in German). With regard to this last point, what will emerge in the course of my paper are the irreducibility of both these phenomena to single principles or one-sided explanation schemes, as well as the markedly anthropological-aesthetic character of fashion and play, and their function of relief, unburdening and freedom (contrary, for example, to the quite common idea of fashion as a kind of tyranny, dictatorship etc.).

As to the first and second questions, it can be said that, notwithstanding the great importance for the human being of clothing, in general, and fashion in particular, there has been until recent times a general tendency to ignore them and neglect their intellectual and institutional significance. As has been noted, “the study of fashion is of recent origin”, and it took quite a long time “before fashion became a legitimate research topic for scholars, including social scientists”; an interest in fashion as a topic arose during the 19th century, but even in the 20th century “fashion and/or clothing as a research topic have never been popular”; so, the

scholars involved in the field of fashion studies often had and still have to face “the academic devaluation of fashion as a topic”.²

If this is true for the field of social and human sciences in general, it is even more valid for and appropriate to the specific field of philosophy. In fact, if we set aside the literary and/or essayistic writings of several poets and novelists, intellectuals, artists or moralists (including, for example, Adam Smith, George Bryan “Beau” Brummell, Giacomo Leopardi, Honoré de Balzac, Thomas Carlyle, Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly, William Makepeace Thackeray, Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Oscar Wilde, Adolf Loos, Karl Kraus and others),³ if limit ourselves to the more precise and delimited concepts of “philosophy” and “philosopher”, that is, to works that can be considered as strictly speaking “philosophical”, it becomes difficult to avoid the impression of a veritable “philosophic fear of fashion”.⁴ Of course, it is possible to come up with a list of philosophers who have provided, sometimes only short and episodic remarks on fashion, but occasionally instead extended analyses and systematic observations about it. Focusing our attention only on the last centuries, such a list might include, for example, authors like Christian Garve, Immanuel Kant, Georg W.F. Hegel, Hermann Lotze, Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Spencer, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, William James, Émile-Auguste Chartier (commonly known as Alain), Walter Benjamin,

² Kawamura 2005, pp. 6-8. As noted by Elizabeth Wilson (2003, pp. 47, 271), fashion has been “constantly denigrated” and therefore “the serious study of fashion has had repeatedly to justify itself”: “all serious books about fashion seem invariably to need to return to first principles and argue anew for the importance of dress”.

³ To be precise, I refer to Adam Smith (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759), George Bryan “Beau” Brummell (*The Book of Fashion*, 1821), Giacomo Leopardi (*Dialogue Between Fashion and Death*, 1824), Honoré de Balzac (*Treatise on Elegant Living*, 1830), Thomas Carlyle (*Sartor Resartus*, 1833-34), Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly (*Dandyism*, 1845), William Makepeace Thackeray (*The Book of Snobs*, 1848), Pierre Jules Théophile Gautier (*On Fashion*, 1858), Charles Baudelaire (*The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863), Stéphane Mallarmé (the fashion magazine *La Dernière Mode*, 1874), Oscar Wilde (*Philosophy of Dress*, 1885), Adolf Loos (*Why A Man Should Be Well-Dressed*, 1898), Karl Kraus (*The Eroticism of Clothes*, 1906).

⁴ I borrow this expression from Hanson 1993.

Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Lipovetsky.⁵ However, notwithstanding this tradition of philosophical perspectives on fashion⁶ it is difficult to deny that, in general, “fashion has been virtually ignored by philosophers, possibly because it was thought that this, the most superficial of all phenomena, could hardly be a worthy object of study for so ‘profound’ a discipline as philosophy”; in short, fashion “cannot at any rate be said to be a fashionable theme in philosophy”, it has not been “considered a satisfactory object of study”.⁷

However, it has been recently noted that “sooner or later everything comes to interest philosophy”; if, on the one hand, “there is a view of the field according to which philosophy once encompassed every inquiry and went on to lose parts of itself one by one as each field saw how to be scientific”, on the other hand there is also a view of the field according to which “philosophy’s curiosity continues to seize on more of what is said and done and not yet brought into philosophy’s consciousness”: if it was “relativity a century ago”, perhaps “it’s brain science and film today” (and also fashion, I would add).⁸ Fashion surely represents a basic phenomenon

⁵ More precisely, I refer to Christian Garve (*Ueber die Moden*, 1792, in the first volume of his work *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaftlichen Leben*), Immanuel Kant (*Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*, 1798: § 71), Georg W.F. Hegel (*Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 1835-38: § 2(c) of the chapter “The Ideal of Sculpture”), Hermann Lotze (*Microcosmus: An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World*, 1856-64: a part of the second chapter of the fifth book of the second volume), Friedrich Nietzsche (*Human, All Too Human*, 1878-79: vol. II, § 209 of Part One and § 215 of Part Two), Herbert Spencer (“Manners and Fashion”, 1854, and *Principles of Sociology*, 1876: §§ 408-415 and 423-426 of the fourth part of the second volume), Friedrich Theodor Vischer (*Vernünftigen Gedanken über die jetzige Mode*, 1859, and *Wieder einmal über die Mode*, 1879), William James (*Principles of Psychology*, 1890: a few passages of the tenth chapter), Alain (*Vingt leçons sur les beaux-arts*, 1929-30), Georg Simmel (*On Fashion*, 1911), Walter Benjamin (a part of his monumental and unfinished *Passagen-Werk*), Roland Barthes (*The Fashion System*, 1967), Jean Baudrillard (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 1976: chap. 3), Gilles Lipovetsky (*The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, 1987).

⁶ On this topic, see Marino 2016.

⁷ Svendsen 2006, pp. 7, 17.

⁸ Pappas 2016a, p. 73. As Eugen also Fink explains: “All phenomena can represent an occasion to it [*scil.* to philosophy] for pondering. Even the phenomenon of fashion (*Alle Phänomene können ihr Anlaß zum Nachdenken werden. Auch das Phänomen der Mode*)” (Fink 1969, p. 15).

of the modern and contemporary age, one of those phenomena that have proven to be far too important today for philosophy to simply keep on ignoring it.⁹ Already at the beginning of the 20th century Georg Simmel had understood and made explicit that “the *increased* power of fashion [had] overstepped the bounds of its original domain, which comprised only externals of dress, and [had] acquired an increasing influence over taste, theoretical convictions, and even the moral foundations of life in their changing forms”.¹⁰ About one hundred years later, which also means after the extraordinary influence of such artistic movements and tendencies as American pop art and, in particular, Andy Warhol (who notoriously associated in an explicit way high and popular culture, and also art and fashion, eventually leveling out every class or level distinction between them),¹¹ this has been acknowledged by some leading theorists. According to the Norwegian philosopher Lars Svendsen,

[f]ashion has been one of the most influential phenomena in Western civilization since the Renaissance. It has conquered an increasing number of modern man’s fields of activity and has become almost ‘second nature’ to us. So an understanding of fashion ought to contribute to an understanding of ourselves and the way we act. [...] Fashion affects the attitude of most people towards both themselves and others, [...] and as such it is a phenomenon that ought to be central to our attempts to understand ourselves in our historical situation [...]. [A]n understanding of fashion is necessary in order to gain an adequate understanding of the modern world.¹²

⁹ Not by chance, in the last few years some philosophical works on fashion have appeared, attempting to overcome the abovementioned hostility between philosophy and fashion. See, for instance, Svendsen 2006; Scapp & Seitz 2010; Wolfendale & Kennett 2011; Pappas 2016b.

¹⁰ Simmel 1997, p. 193.

¹¹ On the unprecedented significance of Warhol to properly understand contemporary culture, in general, and today’s “widespread aestheticization”, in particular, see Mecacci 2017.

¹² Svendsen 2006, pp. 7, 10.

Finally, as to the third question, I argue that within the broad and complex realm of various philosophical disciplines (ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, politics, metaphysics, philosophy of religion, etc.), should one want to assign fashion to a particular domain, it would be definitely aesthetics. Several reasons may be put forward for this. For example, fashion is basically an aesthetic topic because it has essentially (that is, according to its very essence or nature) to do with the fundamental aesthetic phenomena of experiencing, enjoying and appreciating surfaces, appearances, visible manifestations, coupled with imagination, creativity, style, beauty (or, in the case of “avant-garde” dresses and collections, with a deliberate absence of beauty, but rather with shock, unexpectedness or even uneasiness). Furthermore, if it is true that fashion can be understood today as the result or product of what has been defined as an “industrialized kind of inspiration”,¹³ then it might also be included (with photography, film, modern design, popular music etc.) in the domain of the so-called “industrial fine arts” that are a compelling phenomenon for contemporary aesthetics to deal with.¹⁴ During the 20th century the latter have become even more influential and relevant than the traditional arts included in the “system of the fine arts”, at least as far as their influence on our everyday life is concerned, and fashion in particular has gradually acquired a leading role in shaping our taste or, as it were, our *sensus communis aestheticus*.¹⁵ So it is apparent that fashion, together with other arts and/or crafts belonging to the domain of today’s “hyper-aesthetic” or “vaporized aesthetic” world,¹⁶ compels us to broaden and rethink the vocabulary and conceptuality of aesthetics – for instance, with regard to such notions and problems as beauty, inspiration, disinterestedness, aesthetic enjoyment as contemplation vs. consumption, individual vs. collective creativity, etc.

The preeminent aesthetic character of fashion has been emphasized, among others, by Elizabeth Wilson, who proposes “an explanation in aesthetic terms”: for Wilson, fashion is “a branch of aesthetics”, it is “one

¹³ See Pedroni 2012.

¹⁴ See Vitta 2012, chap. 1-2.

¹⁵ See Matteucci 2016.

¹⁶ See, respectively, Di Stefano 2012 and Michaud 2003.

among many forms of aesthetic creativity which make possible the exploration of alternatives”; in short, it is “a serious aesthetic medium”.¹⁷ As we will see, Fink is also very clear in emphasizing the particular aesthetic function of fashion, its belongingness to an aesthetic domain that, as such, is irreducible to the logic of economics, politics or ethics.¹⁸ On this basis, it can be said that one of the main reasons why fashion undoubtedly represents an important element of our world, something that greatly conditions our lives and even contributes to the definition of the *Zeitgeist* of the present age, probably lies in its aesthetic potentialities. For example, it lies in the capacity of fashion to express, through aesthetic means, symbolic contents that come to play a relevant role in the definition of both our individual and collective identities. As further observed by Wilson, fashion represents “an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society”; for her, “everywhere dress and adornment play symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles”, and she eventually claims that in various cases the theorists’ attempts to reduce fashion to psychology or sociology have led us to exclude, “or at best minimise, the vital aesthetic element of fashion”.¹⁹

2. Fink’s Phenomenological Approach to Play

Now, inasmuch as dress immediately covers the surface of our body and thus present it to the world as “never naked” but rather “always dressed”, clothing and fashion are clearly connected in the very first place to the bodily dimension of life. What lies at the heart of the philosophic fear of fashion, from Plato until today, is precisely squeamishness about the body

¹⁷ Wilson 2003, pp. 116, 245, 268.

¹⁸ Fink 1969, pp. 109-111. To be precise, Fink speaks of a “peculiar aesthetic function of fashion (*eigentümliche ästhetische Funktion der Mode*)”, and also observes that “only when one makes it clear that fashion has to do neither with a moral nor with an unmoral business (*die Mode kein moralisches Geschäft betreibt, aber auch kein unmoralisches*), but is rather an aesthetic realm beyond good and evil (*jenseits von Gut und Böse ein ästhetisches Reich*), can one get closer to its fascinating and enchanting essence” (Fink 1969, pp. 70-71).

¹⁹ Wilson 2003, pp. 3, 9.

as an object worthy of intellectual attention.²⁰ Together with certain recent developments of pragmatism like so-called somaesthetics, the philosophical tradition that has probably paid the greatest attention in our age to the rehabilitation of the embodied constitution of the human world-experience as such is phenomenology. From Husserl until today, investigating the body has represented a major goal of inquiry in the phenomenological tradition that has shown the body's "ontological centrality as the focal point from which our world and reciprocally ourselves are constructively projected".²¹ Furthermore, as far as our specific interest in aesthetics is concerned, phenomenological aesthetics is apparently undergoing today a process of rediscovery, appreciation and further development, as testified by various anthologies and monographs.

Far from being irrelevant for a philosophical inquiry into fashion, this proves to be very important, namely because (1) not so many philosophers, in general, have addressed fashion as a subject of inquiry, and (2), even among those philosophers who have, not so many really took into consideration the body/dress relationship, which is actually essential. A relevant exception to this mainstream is precisely represented by a phenomenologist, and indeed a very important one: Eugen Fink, emphatically defined by Husserl himself as "the greatest phenomenon of phenomenology".²² In fact, in his 1969 contribution entitled *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel* Fink investigated clothing and fashion with great interest and accuracy, connecting them to the basic anthropological structure of the human being and, in particular, to the fundamental human phenomenon of play. *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel* is a short but remarkable book that, despite its capacity to provide penetrating insights into various social, anthropological and aesthetic aspects of fashion, still

²⁰ Pappas 2016a, p. 87n.

²¹ Shusterman 2000, pp. 270-271 (to be precise, Shusterman refers here to Merleau-Ponty). In his pioneering work on somaesthetics, that is, an aesthetics precisely centered on the living body (the soma), Shusterman goes so far as to emphatically define an important phenomenologist like Merleau-Ponty as "something like the patron saint of the body [...] in the field of Western philosophy" (Shusterman 2008, p. 49).

²² Husserl, quoted in Moore & Turner 2016, p. 1. Indeed, the very title of my contribution clearly echoes that of Husserl's fundamental book from 1913: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*.

represents a relatively unknown and little studied contribution in this field of research. This is testified by the fact that Fink's book is seldom or never mentioned in the main works (articles, anthologies, monographs, etc.) that continuously appear in the broad and nowadays fully developed field of fashion studies, probably because an English translation is still missing – although Fink's work would surely deserve it.²³

Fink (1905-1975) was a German philosopher belonging to the so-called phenomenological movement. More precisely, he was one of the last pupils of Husserl and, beginning in 1928, his main scientific assistant, who greatly helped him in organizing and transcribing his late manuscripts. After the Second World War Fink became one of the main representatives of the tradition of phenomenological philosophy at the University of Freiburg, where he studied and then worked as professor from 1948 onwards. He is perhaps best-known as the author of a fundamental introduction to Nietzsche's philosophy and of a *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (obviously preceded by Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* in five parts, stemming from his 1929 Paris lectures), as well as for his ontological-cosmological interpretations of the concepts of play and world in his essay *Oase des Glücks. Gedanken zu einer Ontologie des Spiels* (1957) and in his book *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (1960).²⁴ As I said, however, he is also the author of a short but remarkable contribution to the philosophy of fashion published in 1969 under the title *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel*.

Following the careful and detailed reconstruction and interpretation of his entire path of thinking, from his early essays to his late philosophical achievements, provided by an Italian expert in the work of Fink, Simona Bertolini, it is possible to divide his thought into three phases:

²³ As the translators of the English version of Fink's fundamental writings on play explain: "We hope that the present translation will help to move the Anglophone study of Fink beyond his significance as a colleague of Husserl and Heidegger and to inaugurate a greater consideration of his original contribution to twentieth- and twenty-first-century thought" (Moore & Turner 2016, p. 10).

²⁴ See Fink 2016, now gathering in English translation all his writings on this subject: the essays *Oasis of Happiness: Thoughts toward an Ontology of Play* (1957) and *Play and Celebration* (1975), the additional short texts *Child's Play* (1959), *Play and Philosophy* (1966), *The World-Significance of Play* (1973) and *Play and Cult* (1972-73), and above all the systematic book *Play as Symbol of the World* (1960).

(1) The phenomenological apprenticeship in the late 1920s and 1930s, leading to the attempt to provide a critical reconsideration, and a systematically coherent and integrating reinterpretation of Husserl's transcendently-oriented philosophical program,²⁵ and then to the development of an original kind of "me-ontology" – that is, an ontology of the *me-on*, of "no-thing" as the "non-being" or "that-which-is-not-a-being", and finally of the originary relationship between being and nothing.

(2) The ontological "turn" of his philosophy in the 1940s and 1950s that, to some extent, led him closer to Heidegger's new way of thinking after his own "turn",²⁶ and which Fink eventually developed in terms of a phenomenologically-grounded cosmology. Namely, a philosophy centered on the concept of *kosmos* (expressed in German with such words as *Welt*, *Weltganzheit*, *Weltsein*), connected in turn to the concept of play (*Spiel*), that even comes to the point of coining the notion of "cosmological difference" between world and beings²⁷ and to define the human being as the *ens cosmologicum*.

(3) Then, still on the basis of the central role assumed by the concepts of world and play that, as such, are never put into question or abandoned²⁸ (just like his basic phenomenological approach, by the way),²⁹ the significant emergence during the 1950s and 1960s of new interests and developments in Fink's philosophy. This gradually led him in the direction of a phenomenological anthropology³⁰ and also pedagogy³¹ focused on what we may call the fundamental phenomena of the human way of inhabiting the

²⁵ Bertolini 2012, p. 57.

²⁶ I obviously refer to Heidegger's famous *Kehre*, following the interruption of the project of a phenomenological-hermeneutical ontology based on an existential analytic of *Dasein* that he had developed in his 1927 masterwork *Being and Time*.

²⁷ Fink's concept of the "cosmological difference" may clearly remind us of Heidegger's famous idea of the "ontological difference" between Being and beings, but does not fully correspond to it.

²⁸ "The notion of *world* is the key concept of Fink's entire post-war philosophical work. [...] The concept of *world-totality* (*Weltganzheit*) is the veritable barycentre of Fink's philosophy" (Bertolini 2012, pp. 128, 242).

²⁹ See Bertolini 2012, pp. 137n, 181, 218, 225, 244.

³⁰ Bertolini 2012, p. 255n.

³¹ Bertolini 2012, p. 161n.

world (or, in a Heideggerian fashion, of our way of “being-in-the-world”).³² As has been noted, “against [the] traditional views of play” that often consider it as “mere idle amusement, to be valid only as a restful pause which helps us return all the more energized to what is ‘really’ important”, Fink develops

a speculative phenomenology of play that begins from the sort of play with which we are all familiar and from there attempts to reflect on play, moving from child’s play all the way up to cosmic play, where the world itself is conceived as a “*game without a player*”. Along the way, he broaches such wide-ranging topics as embodiment, ontology, theology, sports, pedagogy, mimesis, cult practices, mythology, drama, and anthropology [and also fashion, we may add at this point].³³

So, it is precisely in the context of this late phenomenological-anthropological development of Fink’s philosophy that his short book on fashion from 1969 also must be placed. As I said, one of the main concepts of this entire phase of Fink’s thinking is that of play (*Spiel*). In his 1960 systematic work on this subject, *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, Fink first explains why play must be considered as a philosophical problem (chap. 1); then he provides a reconstruction of the metaphysical interpretation of play – especially focusing on Plato and the ontological devaluation of play at the beginning of metaphysics – and the interpretation of play in myth (chap. 2-3); finally, he focuses on what he calls the worldliness of human play, in contrast to both the metaphysical and mythological interpretations of play, and defines it as “the ecstase of the human being toward the world and the proof of the shining back of the world into being that is open to the world” – where the latter, in turn, is understood as “a game without player” (chap. 4). As we also read in *Oase des Glücks*, “[p]lay is a phenomenon of life that everyone is acquainted with firsthand” – like clothing and fashion, one might add (which clearly implies that they are specific objects of interest for an approach like the phenomenological one that attempts to philosophize

³² See Bertolini 2012, pp. 43n, 99n, 102n, 157n, 160n.

³³ Moore & Turner 2016, p. 1.

from within our firsthand experience in general). For Fink, “[p]laying does not simply occur in our life like the vegetative processes”, but

it is always an occurrence that is luminously *suffused with sense* (*sinnhaft*), an enactment that is experienced. [...] Play is not a marginal manifestation in the landscape of human life, nor a contingent phenomenon only surfacing from time to time. Play belongs essentially to the ontological constitution of human existence; it is an *existentiell*, fundamental phenomenon. Certainly not the only one, but nevertheless a peculiar and independent one, one that cannot be derived from the other manifestations of life. Merely contrasting it with other phenomena still fails to achieve an adequate conceptual perspective. Nevertheless, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the decisive fundamental phenomena of human existence are interwoven and entwined. They do not occur next to each other in isolation; they permeate and pervade one another. Every such fundamental phenomenon thoroughly determines the human being. Shedding light on the integration of the elementary aspects of existence – its tension, its conflict, and its backwards-turning harmony – remains an open task for an anthropology that [...] penetrates into the paradoxes of our lived life. [...] Death, work, ruling, love, and play form the elementary structure of tension and the outline of the puzzling and polysemous character of human existence. [...] [A]ll the essential fundamental phenomena of human existence shimmer and appear enigmatic in an ambiguous way. [...] The enactment-character of play is spontaneous activity, active doing, vital impulse; play is existence that is moved in itself, as it were. [...] If one defines play, as is usually done, only in opposition to work, actuality, seriousness, and genuineness, one merely places it, falsely, *next to* other phenomena of life. Play is a fundamental phenomenon of existence, just as primordial and independent as death, love, work and ruling, but it is *not* directed, as with the other fundamental phenomena, by a collective striving for the final purpose. It stands *over and against* them [...]. The play of human beings [...] is a phenomenon of existence of an entirely enigmatic sort. [...] All play is pleurably attuned, joyfully moved in itself – it is animated. [...] This pleasure in play is a strange pleasure that is difficult to grasp, one that is neither merely sensuous

nor yet merely intellectual; it is a creative, formative bliss of its own kind and is in and of itself polysemous, multidimensional. [...] This pleasure of play involves taking delight in a “sphere”, in an imaginary dimension. [...] Playing is a fundamental possibility of social existence. Playing is interplay, playing with one another, an intimate form of human community. [...] Originally play is a portraying symbol-activity of human existence in which the latter interprets itself. [...] Play is primordially the strongest *binding* power. It is community-founding.³⁴

It can be incidentally observed that, especially with regard to the last remarks in this long quotation, Fink’s comments are strongly reminiscent of some of the features of play that, in close connection with two other concepts (namely, symbol and fest), had also been highlighted by Gadamer in those same years in order to grasp the essence of art and beauty.³⁵ For both philosophers the essence of play seems to be a simultaneous playing-with and being-played-by, a particular dialectics of activity and passivity – which, as we will see, clearly resembles certain processes and dynamics that are also quite typical of the fashion world. Anyway, returning to *Oase des Glücks*, Fink continues by observing that playing

is always a confrontation with beings. In the plaything, the whole is concentrated in a single thing. Every instance of play is an attempt on the part of life, a vital experiment, which experiences in the plaything the epitome of resistant beings in general. [...] [W]e must distinguish between the real human being who “plays” and the human role within the instance of play. [...] In the enactment of play, there remains a knowledge, albeit strongly reduced, about [the player’s] double existence. It exists in two spheres [...]. This doubling belongs to the essence of playing. All the structural aspects touched on until now come together in the fundamental concept of the *playworld*. Every sort of playing is the magical production of a playworld. [...] The playworld is an imaginary dimension, whose ontological sense poses

³⁴ Fink 2016, pp. 15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 27.

³⁵ See Gadamer 1986, pp. 3-31, 123-130, and Gadamer 2004, pp. 102-119.

an obscure and difficult problem. We play in the so-called actual world but we thereby attain (*erspielen*) a realm, an enigmatic field, that is not nothing and yet is nothing actual. [...] [T]he imaginary character of the playworld cannot be explained as a phenomenon of a merely subjective appearance, nor determined to be a delusion that exists only within the interiority of a soul but in no way is found among and between things in general. The more one attempts to reflect on play, the more enigmatic and questionworthy it seems to become. [...] The relation of the human being to the enigmatic appearance of the playworld, to the dimension of the imaginary, is *ambiguous*. [...] The greatest questions and problems of philosophy are lodged in the most ordinary words and things. The concept of appearance is as obscure and unexplored as the concept of Being and both concepts belong together in an opaque, confusing, downright labyrinthine way, permeating one another in their interplay. [...] Play is creative bringing-forth, it is a production. The product is the playworld, a sphere of appearance, a field whose actuality is obviously not a very settled matter. And nevertheless the appearance of the playworld is not simply nothing. [...] The playworld contains [both] subjective elements of fantasy and objective, ontic elements. [...] Playing is finite creativity within the magical dimension of appearance. [...] Human play is (even if we no longer know it) the symbolic activity of bringing the sense of the world and life to presence.³⁶

As I said, Fink's concept of fashion must also be contextualized within his more general theory of the central role "played" by play (*Spiel*) in the whole of the human existence. This is confirmed by *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel*, where Fink employs the concept of play in a few strategic passages to explain what fashion really is in its very essence, i.e. not only from an anthropological but also from an ontological point of view concerning the *Seinsrang* or even *Seinssinn* of this phenomenon. As is well-known, the 20th century saw the development of a veritable tradition of a philosophy of play.³⁷ Let us simply think about the great relevance that the concept of play

³⁶ Fink 2016, pp. 23-26, 28-30.

³⁷ I borrow this concept from Matteucci 2004, p. 136.

acquired in such different thinkers as Huizinga, Caillois, Adorno, Gadamer, Marcuse, Plessner, Wittgenstein and still others (sometimes relying on insights whose original coinage can be traced back to Kant's notion of the free play of the faculties and/or to Schiller's concept of *Spieltrieb*, the "play-drive"). Fink's contribution, however, stands out in this context because of its greater systematicity and the somewhat unprecedented attention paid to play in comparison to other philosophical accounts of it, and still more because of its rigorous phenomenological-anthropological approach that eventually lead him to define play as a basic human phenomenon, as "an existential characteristic" – "existentials" or "existential characteristics" being in phenomenological philosophy, most noticeably in Heidegger's 1927 masterpiece *Being and Time*, the quintessential features of the human being as such.

This, as we will see, also has relevant consequences for his philosophical perspective on fashion. As a matter of fact, inasmuch as it belongs to the sphere of play that, in turn, is part of what Fink calls "the decisive fundamental phenomena of human existence", fashion proves to be extremely useful also from a philosophical point of view (quite unexpectedly, as it were, if one's reasoning is based, as has often happened in Western philosophy, on a prejudicial devaluation of what is merely playful and embodied, and thus not "serious" or purely intellectual and spiritual). Indeed, fashion proves to be a phenomenon that can allow us to better grasp some of the significant aspects of human existence already emphasized by Fink with regard to play. I refer, in particular, to some aspects that are of great relevance for philosophical aesthetics, such as the status of appearance (i.e. of what is apparent and seeming, imaginary and unreal, or better "real" in a peculiar, autonomous way), and then to the relevance of appearances for the life of a community or society (hence the question concerning social appearances),³⁸ and finally to the complex, polysemous, multidimensional and fundamentally ambiguous relation of the human being to his/her body and the world.

³⁸ On this topic, see for example Carnevali 2012 (especially chap. 1-4).

As we will see, Fink's capacity to provide a non-reductionist approach to fashion is remarkable – by which I mean to say, an approach that is able to avoid the reduction of such a complex phenomenon to a single and supposedly simple principle, aspect or element, and even to recognize fashion as a human activity whose “essence” consists in being one thing and at the same time the opposite (thus in an antinomical way, so to speak). When dealing with such complex cultural phenomena, it is important to grasp the complex, multifaceted, in-itself-articulated and sometimes even antinomical nature that is constitutive for them – as masterfully argued by Georg Simmel, for example, precisely with regard to fashion.³⁹ Indeed, this is probably one of the distinguishing features of an adequate theory of cultural practices like art, fashion etc., and this is one of the reasons why I suggest that Fink's conception of fashion is definitely worthy of being rediscovered today.

3. Fink's Philosophy of Fashion: A Text Analysis and Interpretation

Fink's book *Mode... ein verführerisches Spiel* consists of 7 chapters: 1) *Die magische Kräfte der Mode*; 2) *Das sozialphänomen der Mode*; 3) *Mode – der Wunsch immer anders zu sein*; 4) *Reiz und Leistung der Mode*; 5) *Die Mode hat viele Gesichter*; 6) *Führung und Verführung in der Mode*; 7) *Ist*

³⁹ Fashion is understood by Simmel as grounded at one and the same time on the twofold drive toward (both individual and collective) imitation and differentiation, or even as peculiarly suspended or oscillating between being and not-being. Fashion, for Simmel, “possesses the peculiar attraction of limitation, the attraction of a simultaneous beginning and end, the charm of newness and simultaneously of transitoriness”. Fashion is “imitation of a given pattern and thus satisfies the need for social adaptation; it leads the individual onto the path that everyone travels, it furnishes a general condition that resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example. At the same time, and to no less a degree, it satisfies the need for distinction, the tendency towards differentiation, change and individual contrast. [...] Hence fashion is nothing more than a particular instance among the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in a unified act the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and variation. [...] Connection and differentiation are the two fundamental functions which are here inseparably united, of which one of the two, although or because it forms a logical contrast to the other, becomes the condition of its realization” (Simmel 1997, pp. 188-192).

die Mode existenzberechtigt?. Should we want to basically group together the main contents of Fink's book and the distinctive features of his theory, following a thematic order without regard to the partition of the book and its exact articulation in various sections, we could probably begin our text analysis from the question concerning the particular nature of the human being – a question, the latter, that clearly presents several philosophical-anthropological echoes, so to speak, sometimes also reminiscent of Scheler, Heidegger, Plessner or Gehlen. In fact, Fink significantly defines the human being (or the person: in German, “*Der Mensch*”) as “a player (*Spieler*)”,⁴⁰ as a peculiar, odd animal that unites in itself nature and freedom, impulse and rationality: “a curious creature (*ein sonderbares Wesen*)” that “is condemned to self-organization and self-formation (*Selbstgestaltung*)”.⁴¹

It is in this context, as I said, that the fundamental significance of play for the human being and, arising from this, the “playful” character of fashion itself emerge. Fink is quite explicit on this point, and in fact he says that fashion relies on “the free play-impulse of the human being (*dem freien Spieltrieb des Menschen*)”. For him, “fashion belongs to the realm of freedom and play (*die Mode gehört zur Freiheit und zum Spiel*)” and, from this point of view, developing an adequate understanding of what fashion actually is represents “a cultural-pedagogical task of the first rank, in order to gain a self-comprehension of the human being as a player (*eine kulturpädagogische Aufgabe ersten Ranges, ein Selbstverständnis des Menschen als Spieler zu gewinnen*)”.⁴² This also leads Fink to understand fashion as belonging to the dimension of sociability (*Geselligkeit*) and free time or leisure (*freie Zeit; Freizeit*): a question, the latter, to which he dedicates many pages and remarks in his book.⁴³

⁴⁰ “The human being – as a player (*als Spieler*) – is close to fashion and all its phenomenical forms (*Erscheinungsformen*)” (Fink 1969, p. 40).

⁴¹ See also the insights and explanations on this aspect provided at pages 22-23, 53, 64 of Fink's book.

⁴² Fink 1969, pp. 90, 96, 113.

⁴³ On the general significance of sociability for human life, in general, and its connection to the domain of play, in particular, see Fink 1969, pp. 79-81, 85. Other observations variously dealing with fashion as essentially related to sociability can be found, for example, at pages 79, 81, 85, 86, 88, 93.

At the same time, insisting on the unique character of the human being (also, if not especially, in comparison to non-human animals), Fink stresses the latter's particular relationship to its own body and, connected to this, the central role played by dress precisely in its relationship to the body⁴⁴ (including, among other things, the fashion/sexuality relationship).⁴⁵ In doing so, i.e. in claiming that our existence is constitutively embodied, that we are world-open in an embodied way (*leibhaft*), that reality is bodily (*leiblich*) disclosed to us, and that the human body (*Menschenleib*) is not a thing but is rather the human being's effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*), Fink clearly relies on insights into the dual dimension of our bodily life – namely, into the dual way we can refer to our own body both as *Körper* (an objective body, i.e. a mere object, a thing among things examined from a third-person perspective) and as *Leib* (a lived body, the body of a living organism experienced from a first-person perspective) – that have characterized to a great extent the development of phenomenological philosophy.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For Fink, “the human body always already shows, reveals (*der Menschenleib zeigt immer schon*) [...] and permeates at the same time clothing with its tendency to communication (*durchdringt dabei mit seiner Kommunikationstendenz auch die Kleidung*). [...] Fashion is a phenomenon that is essentially connected [...] to the human being's embodied nature, to our existence's being-incarnated (*ein Phänomen, das mit der Leiblichkeit des Menschen, mit der Inkarniertheit unserer Existenz [...] zusammenhängt*) (Fink 1969, pp. 50, 77).

⁴⁵ On this aspect, see Fink 1969, pp. 51-53, 69, 71.

⁴⁶ There are a few passages of Fink's book on this aspect whose relevance requires us to quote them directly in the original German version. Indeed, according to him we live “vom ersten bis zum letzten Atemzuge in der sinnlichen Welt, existieren wir leibhaft [...]. Sinnlich-sinnenhaft sind wir und durch unseren Leib aufgeschlossen dem mannigfaltigen Seienden [...]. Leibhaft sind wir weltoffen. Zur Leiblichkeit unseres Daseins können wir verschiedenartig uns verhalten. [...] Die leibhafte Daseinsweise des Menschen bekundet sich nicht nur in der sinnlichen Erfahrung. Eine Vielfalt von Lebensphänomene offenbart sich leiblich. [...]. Das Spiel ist in besonderer Weise leibgebunden und leibbeschwingt [...]. Die Leiblichkeit des Menschen durchgreift alle wesenhaften Lebensfelder [...]. Der Menschenleib ist kein Außenwerk unseres Lebens, kein Gehäuse, keine Wohnhöhle und kein Instrument für Geist und Freiheit – der Leib ist unsere erdhafte, irdische Wirklichkeit, wo Natur und Freiheit sich durchdringen”. And still: “Der Menschenleib ist jedoch kein Ding, dem ein anderes Ding nur angepaßt wird [...]. Der Leib ist die konkrete Wirklichkeit des Menschen selbst, [...] der alle seine wesentlichen Existenzstrukturen ‘ausdrückt’, nicht bloß in Worten und Taten, auch in Gebärden und Mimik, in Haltung und Gang – und nicht zuletzt auch in der Art, wie er sich kleidet, Geschmack beweist, ‘Kultur’ auch in dem

Once again, far from being irrelevant for the specific purposes of a philosophical inquiry into fashion, this conception rather proves to be essential, inasmuch as it also opens up the possibility of a general rethinking of the body/dress relationship.⁴⁷ In fact, clothes serve as a cover, as a protection for the human being, but also (if not in the first place) as a proximate, “close-to-the-body (*leibnahe*)” means of expression.⁴⁸ What emerges is thus a concept of dress, and in particular of fashionable dress, as a sort of “second lived body (*zweiter Leib*)”⁴⁹ for such particular creatures as human beings that – following a long and respected tradition including Uexküll, Scheler, Gehlen, Heidegger, Gadamer and finally McDowell⁵⁰ – are not merely embedded in a natural environment (*Umwelt*) like all other animals but are rather characterized by the possession of a “second nature” and thus live in a historical and cultural world (*Welt*).

Quite interestingly, in recent times somehow analogous observations on body and dress have been made by outstanding fashion theorists such as Joanne Entwistle and Malcom Barnard (without ever mentioning Fink, however). The former, in her influential study *The Fashioned Body*, also speaks of dress as a sort of extension of our embodied Self, i.e. as a sort of “second skin”.⁵¹ While Barnard, for his part, explicitly refers to Entwistle herself and still other theorists, and argues that fashion is “about the ‘fashioned’ body”, by which he understands “*not a natural [...] body*” but rather

a “produced” and therefore “cultured” body. This is partly because one of the meanings of fashion (as a verb) is “to make” or “to

Kulturding, das er auf dem Leibe trägt und durch welches der Leib selbst sich hindurchbekundet” (Fink 1969, pp. 24-26, 34).

⁴⁷ “Verhältnis von Kleid und Leib”, in Fink’s own words (Fink 1969, p. 102).

⁴⁸ See Fink 1969, p. 50.

⁴⁹ “Dress, and essentially fashionable dress, is almost a ‘second lived body’ (*das Kleid, wesentlich das modische Kleid, ist fast ein ‘zweiter Leib’*)” (Fink 1969, p. 69). In another passage of the book Fink even compares dress to the house of the human being (Fink 1969, p. 35).

⁵⁰ On this topic, let me remind the reader of Marino 2015 (chap. 1).

⁵¹ See Entwistle 2000. It is probably not by chance that Entwistle’s original account relies, among others, also on phenomenological insights into the significance of the bodily dimension for the constitution of our world-experience in general.

produce”, and partly because *there can be no simple, uncultured, natural body*. [...] Even when naked, the body is posed or held in certain ways, it makes gestures and it is thoroughly meaningful. To say that the fashioned body is always *a cultured body* is also to say that the fashioned body is *a meaningful body* [...]. This is because saying that fashion is meaningful is to say that *fashion is a cultural phenomenon*.⁵²

With regard to this, it must be emphasized that a decisive element in Fink’s conception is represented by the human capacity to assume a distanced position from natural impulses (especially those concerning natural attraction and seduction), to learn how to manage and control them, to establish a mediated relationship with them rather than immediately attempting to satisfy them, and finally to sublimate such impulses by means of cultural activities. It is precisely at this point that fashion comes into play, inasmuch as the latter is understood by Fink as a seductive game, as a “sphere-in-between (*Zwischensphäre*)” or a “field-in-between (*Zwischenfeld*)”: namely, as a space that is the result of the typically human process of sublimation of impulses but does not function as a means for the latter’s mere repression or suppression, but rather leads to their intensification and even exaggeration, although always in the context of culturally domesticated activities. From this point of view, fashion’s relation to natural impulses and seduction is not immediate and one-sided but rather complex and also ambiguous, as if it played with them and at the same time was played by them, in an inextricable intertwinement of activity and passivity. In more general terms, in Fink’s perspective fashion seems to share with human existence as such a fundamental ambiguity:⁵³ or better, it embodies the ambiguous character that is typical of the human being as both

⁵² Barnard 2007, p. 4 (my emphasis).

⁵³ “Dress has an ambivalent, equivocal and plurivalent expressive value (*Das Kleid hat einen ambivalenten, einen zwei- und mehrdeutigen Ausdruckswert*)“ (Fink 1969, p. 36). Fashionable dress is characterized by its “ambivalence, its ambiguity and its intrinsic opposite character (*Ambivalenz, Zweideutigkeit und Gegenwendigkeit*)” (Fink 1969, p. 55). “Fashion has many faces, its smiling gracefulness is more enigmatic than the smile of the Gioconda (*Die Mode hat viele Gesichter, ihre lächelnde Grazie ist rätselhafter als das Lächeln der Gioconda*)” (Fink 1969, p. 77).

a natural and a cultural being, it takes this ambiguity on, and it actually brings it to extremes. “The phenomenon of fashion is connected to change, instability, fleetingness (*Wechsel, Unbeständigkeit, Flüchtigkeit*)”,⁵⁴ and this may be understood as a reflection, as it were, of the unstable, uncertain, always transient character of human nature as such.⁵⁵

Now, it is clear that making fashion’s essentially ambiguous and multiform character fully explicit implies (as I have already hinted at before) a refusal to adopt a simplifying or reductionist approach to this phenomenon. It is thus not by accident that Fink’s conception shows a great complexity and what we may define as an eminently dialectical or, better still, antinomical character. This appears in the perhaps clearest way when Fink introduces (sometimes a little bit *en passant*, in fact) the idea of an intrinsic dialectic between opposite moments as relevant and indeed decisive for the definition of fashion:⁵⁶ struggle for eternity vs. transience;⁵⁷ naturalness vs. artificiality;⁵⁸ imitation vs. distinction; conformism vs. originality; assimilation to others vs. individualism;⁵⁹ public life vs. private life; dressing vs. undressing⁶⁰ (perhaps understandable as an example of the

⁵⁴ Fink 1969, p. 32.

⁵⁵ See, in particular, Fink 1969, pp. 111-113, where we read (again, quoting the text directly in German): “Die Mode treibt die Zweideutigkeit der Kulturdaten auf die Spitze [...]. Die Mode hat über solche Züge hinaus die exemplarische Bedeutung, ein irritierendes Phänomen zu sein für Werten und Denken. [...] In der Erscheinung der Mode floriert die Ambiguität der menschlichen Existenz – und in solcher Hinsicht hat die Mode einen besonderen philosophischen Rang, den Rang eines Schlüsselphänomens [...]. Die Mode [gehört] zu den zweideutigsten, sich in Spiegelungen brechenden Dingen, die in gegensätzlichen Attributen aufscheinen, und in denen Sein und Schein sich unaufhörlich mischen. [...] Das Modekleid ist dialektisch, verhüllende Entbergung einer schamlosen Schamhaftigkeit, Hochspannung des Triebes durch Verdeckung der unmittelbaren Triebziele, die Verklärung des Fleisches im Zaubermittel der Textilien. Ja auch die ganze Mode als Daseinsphänomen ist dialektisch, etwas, was weder durch einseitig positive noch einseitig negative Charaktere bestimmt ist; vielmehr als ein bewegtes Gegenspiel von Gegensätzen sich darstellt. Das ist der Reiz, den dieses merkwürdige und schillernde Phänomen auch für die Philosophie hat”.

⁵⁶ As to the definition of fashion, it is possible to find several statements in Fink’s book, for example at pages 31, 41, 49, 51, 61, 96, 106, 109.

⁵⁷ See Fink 1969, p. 33.

⁵⁸ See Fink 1969, pp. 62, 69-70.

⁵⁹ See Fink 1969, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁰ See Fink 1969, p. 105.

typical phenomenological relationship between concealment and manifestation). On a terminological level, this aspect emerges, for example, in the use of such concepts as *Gegenwirkung* or *Gegenwendigkeit* or *Gegensatzmotiv*.⁶¹ For Fink, the phenomenon of fashion (just like play, as I said) is multidimensional and complex, ambivalent and ambiguous, characterized by an intrinsic oppositional character: that is, neither determined by a one-sided positive character nor by a one-sided negative one, but rather presenting itself as a dialectical play made of antagonisms and contrasts.

This implicitly leads one to ask the question as to whether or not there is a particular aspect or dimension of fashion that may be taken as a privileged key to gain an adequate access to it. Fink's answer to this question, at least judging by a few important passages of his book, seems to be that such a privileged key is represented by what we may call the *aesthetic dimension*. This emerges in a quite clear way, for example, when he emphasizes the irreducibility of fashion to other dimensions of human existence, such as economics, ethics, politics, etc.⁶² Beside this, the question concerning the "peculiar aesthetic function of fashion (*eigentümliche ästhetische Funktion der Mode*)"⁶³ also emerges in connection to other problems. This is the case, for example, with regard to Fink's observations on the question of leadership or command (*Führung*) in fashion. A question, the latter, that he proposes to solve, as it were, by introducing the concept of

⁶¹ See Fink 1969, pp. 30, 53, 96-97.

⁶² In fact, as he explains in the very last pages of his book (also connecting back, at the end of his inquiry, the question of fashion to those of play and embodiment): "Sofern die Mode mit dem Existenzphänomen des Spiels und mit der Leibverklärung zusammenhängt, kann sie offenbar nicht bemessen werden nach Wertschätzungen aus anderen Daseinsbezirken, nicht kurz und bündig taxiert werden nach Maßstäben, die ihr fremd und äußerlich sind. [...] Gewiß werden Erscheinungen wie die Mode vielfach aus der Optik moralischer Lebensdeutung heraus bewertet, abgeschätzt, kritisch taxiert. Ob aber damit über den Seinsrang, über die ontologische Valenz und die anthropologische Bewandnis solcher Phänomene etwas gemacht ist, [...] kann weiterhin bezweifelt werden. [...] Die Mode ist weder 'nützlich' im ökonomischen Verstande [...]. Noch ist die Mode sittlich gut oder sittlich verwerflich, sie ist eine Sache 'jenseits von Gut und Böse'" (Fink 1969, pp. 109-110).

⁶³ Fink 1969, p. 70.

seduction (*Verführung*) as quintessential to understand what fashion really is and above all how it functions.⁶⁴

In fact, fashion's influence on us, its capacity to determine our taste and preferences, often extending its conditioning power to our lifestyle and our decisions in other dimensions of our life, does not derive for Fink from some kind of command or authoritative coercion; rather, it is the result of fashion's persuasive power deriving from its incomparable ability to play with seduction, with the human being's fundamental need to fascinate and at the same time be fascinated or seduced. And this persuasion and seduction power is precisely exercised by fashion with aesthetic means, i.e. thanks to its capacity to play in always new ways with forms and contents, materials and colors, in order to produce original works that may fascinate us and may be aesthetically appreciated and enjoyed by us. On this basis, Fink finally draws the quasi-ontological conclusion that fashion's essential way of being (*ihr Sein*), i.e. what it really *is*, is precisely "the seductive appearance (*das verführerische Scheinen*)".⁶⁵

These questions and quotations, in turn, contain a few other elements that are quite relevant for the specific purposes of the present contribution. First of all, even the simple use of such terms as *Schein* or *Verklärung* or *Phantasie* or *Illusion* immediately reminds us of the great role of "the seeming", i.e. of the domain of *appearances* in comparison to (or even in contrast to) that of being. A question, the latter, that we have already hinted at in the context of our discussion on play and that, as I said, is of decisive importance for phenomenological aesthetics as such.⁶⁶ Beside this, we also

⁶⁴ See Fink 1969, pp. 96-101.

⁶⁵ Fink 1969, p. 101.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Günter Figal's recent treatment of this subject in relation to art, in the context of his ambitious program of an aesthetics *as* phenomenology: "an artwork is essentially phenomenal; it is an appearance that is not to be taken as the appearance of something, but instead purely as appearance. Accordingly, aesthetics essentially is phenomenology; it must be phenomenology if it wishes to grasp that which can be aesthetically experienced, and grasp it by way of art in its clearest and most distinct shape. [...] Artworks are thing-like; it is only for this reason that perception is essentially connected to the experience of them. Yet artworks are things of a special sort – not things that can also be viewed as phenomena, but rather essentially phenomenal things, or conversely, phenomena that are essentially thing-like. Artworks are, in a word, appearing

find in Fink's book some significant references to the fashion industry that he understands, in turn, as a branch of what has been commonly defined "the culture industry" from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* onwards.⁶⁷ According to Fink, "the culture industry embraces in its whole width all phenomena that are originated by human freedom and the bodily-bound, limited creative power of human beings (*umspannt in ihrer vollen Breite alle Phänomene, die der menschlichen Freiheit, der leiblich-gebundenen, endlichen Schöpfungsmacht des Menschen entspringen*)", and "the fashion industry is a particular and particularly significant branch of the culture industry".⁶⁸ Quite interestingly, however, this does *not* lead Fink – contrary to many other philosophers, writers and intellectuals – to develop a concept of fashion (understood here as an industrial activity: more precisely, an industrial *and* aesthetic activity, without any insurmountable hiatus between these two dimensions) as authoritarian, dictatorial, antidemocratic, enslaving, etc. Rather, he is quite explicit in claiming that "fashion cannot be interpreted as a form of tyrannical power (*die Mode [kann] nicht als tyrannische Gewalt interpretiert werden*)", that fashion is "by no means a manipulation, certainly not a situation of coercion, nor a dictatorship (*keineswegs eine Manipulation, erst recht nicht eine Zwangssituation, keine Diktatur*)".⁶⁹

In my view, far from being an "integrated" intellectual opposed to the so-called "apocalyptic" ones,⁷⁰ by expressing this opinion on the non-authoritarian, or non-totalitarian, nature of the contemporary fashion system Fink simply appears as a reasonable thinker who does not exclude fashion's great power (that, as such, consequently requires great responsibility) in influencing our taste, our understanding, our choices, to some extent our general way of thinking and behaving, but for this reason does not conclude that in the so-called mass society individuals have been deprived of all their

things (*Erscheinungsdinge*) – thing-like appearances, things that are essentially made in order to appear. As appearing things, artworks are beautiful" (Figal 2015, pp. 3-4).

⁶⁷ See Horkheimer & Adorno 2002, pp. 94-136.

⁶⁸ Fink 1969, p. 95.

⁶⁹ Fink 1969, pp. 40, 46. See also Fink 1969, pp. 61, 88-89.

⁷⁰ I obviously borrow this conceptual pair from Umberto Eco's famous collection of essays on mass culture *Apocalyptic and Integrated*.

power, judgment, capacity to express preferences and make decisions, etc. Moreover, his opinion on this particular aspect also appears consistent with his general framework that, as it has been presented here, generally does not tend to involve simplified or, say, determinist patterns of explanation, but rather strives to do justice to the complexity and sometimes even “antinomicity” of cultural phenomena. In this perspective, it is not a matter of undervaluing the influence and power of certain institutions or practices, but rather of interpreting this power as limited and not as unlimited, pervasive or total. To put it plainly, the undeniable fact that everybody is influenced to some degree by fashion does not imply that everybody is a fashion victim!⁷¹ More than one century after Simmel’s seminal essay on

⁷¹ Of course, these observations can only apply (if they can, i.e. if one does not adopt what I called an “apocalyptic” perspective on the culture industry, mass culture etc.) to the privileged minority, as it were, of consumers of fashionable clothing in the Western countries. Needless to say, this does not apply to other subjects equally involved in the processes that the existence and ever-growing development of the fashion industry actually rest upon: namely, the underpaid and exploited workers in the Third World or the so-called underdeveloped countries where the vast majority of the clothes that we wear everyday are effectively manufactured and produced. Only these people, I would suggest, really (and unfortunately, of course) deserve to be called “fashion victims”; for them, it is surely appropriate to speak of the fashion industry as provided with an unlimited, pervasive and total power of coercion and even enslavement. That which, once again, may confirm the in-itself contradictory nature of the phenomenon of fashion (and other analogous cultural phenomena too). In fact, as has been noted, “although fashion can be used in liberating ways, it remains ambiguous. For fashion, the child of capitalism, has, like capitalism, a double face. [...] In more recent times capitalism has become global, imperialist and racist. At the economic level the fashion industry has been an important instrument of this exploitation, [...] it today exploits the labour of the developing countries, and that of women in particular. [...] Fashion *speaks* capitalism. Capitalism maims, kills, appropriates, lays waste. It also creates great wealth and beauty, together with a yearning for lives and opportunities that remain just beyond our reach. It manufactures dreams and images as well as things, and fashion is as much a part of the dream world of capitalism as of its economy. [...] Fashion is one of the most accessible and one of the most flexible means by which we express these ambiguities. Fashion is modernist irony” (Wilson 2003, pp. 13-15). Wilson also adds that “[w]e therefore both love and hate fashion, just as we love and hate capitalism itself” – however, I would cautiously suggest consideration of the fact that only the lucky few who are allowed, mostly in the middle and upper classes of the Western countries, to benefit from this situation, and therefore can (more or less) freely and consciously make use of the opportunities provided by the capitalist fashion industry, may perhaps subscribe to this view; what I have previously defined as the real fashion victims will surely be much more suspicious towards Wilson’s perspective and other analogous

fashion,⁷² despite all the relevant changes that have occurred since then in the fashion system (such as the transition from *haute couture* to *pret-à-porter*, or the upheaval of the top-down or trickle-down model and the advent of the bottom-up or trickle-up mechanism with so-called alternative, countercultural or street styles like punk, hip-hop, grunge, etc.), it still remains possible to place fashion “at the very periphery of the personality, which regards itself as a *pièce de résistance* to fashion”:

It is this significant aspect of fashion that is adopted by refined and special persons, in so far as they use it as a kind of mask. Thereby a triumph of the soul over the given nature of existence is achieved which, at least as far as form is concerned, must be considered one of the highest and finest victories [...]. As a whole, one could say that the most favourable result for the total value of life will be obtained when all unavoidable dependency is transferred more and more to the periphery of life, to its externalities. In this respect, fashion is also a social form of marvellous expediency, because, like the law, it affects only the externals of life, and hence only those sides of life which are turned towards society.⁷³

Fink seems to take adequately into account the (even conflicting or hostile, of course) dialectics between the individual and social institutions, and does not overemphasize the latter’s power. From this point of view, his contribution may be of great help today to remind us that cultural phenomena like fashion (among others, of course), beside their obvious power of inducing at various levels a tendency to conformism or even massification, are also (and, what matters most, at the same time) important means of self-expression, of construction and strengthening of one’s identity, of mutual recognition with others and thus of intersubjective relations, and last but not least, on a specifically aesthetic level, of definition

ones... Recent and insightful observations on this aspect of the fashion world are those presented by Sullivan 2017.

⁷² For an overall and complete interpretation of all versions of Simmel’s work on fashion (1895; 1905; 1911), see Matteucci 2015.

⁷³ Simmel 1997, pp. 198, 200.

and transformation of taste preferences and style. So, returning once more to the question of play, the goal is not that of excluding the influence of fashion on our life (which, by the way, would be a poor illusion, especially in our age) but rather of becoming acquainted with it, of freely and even joyfully playing with it.

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Relation Between Education and Beauty in Plato's Philosophy

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ABSTRACT. Analyses of Plato's philosophy and his *paideia* from the aesthetical perspective usually focus on his critique of poetry and other arts. In this study, we will investigate Plato's concept of education from the perspective of aesthetics without taking the arts into account, all the while bearing his notion of beauty from his middle dialogues such as *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* in mind. We will question it with regard to two key aspects: 1) the role of the idea of beauty in the cognitive process and 2) the transformation of one's soul in ascending to beauty. The results will present how the idea of beauty has a great importance for knowledge of ideas and also its role for reaching a life filled with virtue.

1. Beauty and Art in Plato's Philosophy

Analyses of Plato's philosophy and his *paideia* from the aesthetical perspective usually focus on his critique of poetry and other arts. In this study, I will try to investigate Plato's concept of education from the perspective of aesthetics without taking the arts into account, but bearing in mind Plato's notion of beauty. I will question it with regard to two key aspects – 1) the role of the idea of beauty in the cognitive process and 2) the transformation of the one's soul in ascending to beauty.

However, in order to be able to carry out this thesis, it is necessary to highlight all the peculiarities of Plato's and the ancient Greek's understanding of art on the one hand, and the ancient and Plato's understanding of the phenomenon of beauty, on the other hand. Setting the

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concepts of art and beauty in the proper context is one of the conditions necessary for the avoidance of modern and contemporary prejudices that are sedimented in everyday use of these terms.

Ancient notion of art as *téchne* is much broader than the modern concept of art; apart from that what is now one of the arts, *téchne* also includes crafts (Грыбop, 2012, p. 67). Art as *téchne* refers to the knowledge of certain rules that must be followed when creating an object regardless of whether it is painting, sculptures, or any craft creations. This term is therefore very close to the concept of the art techniques, as well as requiring skills needed for artwork creation; and it mainly refers to painting and sculpture. In addition to the notion of *téchne*, a very important concept for the understanding of Greek art is *poiesis*. This term refers primarily to poetry, which is separate from the other arts, and is much closer to augury and religious and rhapsodical practice than other arts. Poetry conceived as *poiesis* implies inspiration of the poet provided by the gods, and therefore singing based on inspiration. That shows us a clear difference towards the other arts that involve the implementation of previously learned rules for creating. Thus, in the first case we have a needed knowledge for artwork creation, while in the second case, this knowledge is left out.

It is important to note the major role of ancient Greek poets and poetry within ancient community – poems of Homer, Hesiod and other poets were sources of knowledge about the gods, the world, politics, and other important aspects of Greek culture. Hence, Plato's interest in poetry and his critique are encouraged by the extremely important role of poetry in the educational practices of the Greek world. In fact, Plato's education theory represents a contrast to the established and existing educational practices.

Problematization and complexity of the use of the concept of beauty is marked in Plato's early dialogue *Hippias Major* – the main issue of this work is the question of everyday Greek prejudices regarding the beauty phenomenon. The concepts of beauty that Plato analyzes are identifications of beauty with a pretty girl, gold, beautifully lived life, suitability, usefulness with good purpose and satisfaction through the senses of sight and hearing (Plato, 1997a, p. 899-921). All those definitions are rejected by counterexamples and relativization – beautiful girl appears ugly compared

to the beautiful goddess, gold appears to make some things more beautiful, but it is not the beauty itself and so on. All provided answers actually miss the question that Plato raises, which refers to the definition of beauty as such, the idea of beauty. Although the *Hippias Major* ends without final resolution, still, it is of crucial importance for the understanding of the Greek conception of beauty in general, which refers to the gods, humans, animals, equipment, customs, human character, satisfaction through the senses of hearing and vision and such. Thus, the definitions of beauty from *Hippias Major* provide us with the broader context of how the Greeks understood the beautiful, as well as Plato's critique of these usual prejudices about beauty.

Bearing in mind Plato's analysis from *Hippias Major*, we can easily notice the existence of major differences between the ancient and the modern concept of beauty. The domain of Greek understanding of beauty is much broader than it is the case in modernity - word *kalon* applies not only to beautiful objects and their experience, but also to the laws, customs and so on. More specifically, modern and contemporary differentiation of aesthetic and moral values are not fully explicated in Ancient philosophy, which results in overlapping of moral good and aesthetically beautiful in concept *kalon*. This overlapping is also present in Greek term *kalokaghatia*, which refers to the beautiful and in accordance with virtue formed character, as well as to the ideal of beauty and nobility (Grubor, 2010, p. 97). Ambiguity of the ancient concept of beauty is also visible in the ancient Greek language – for concrete beautiful things Greeks used the adjective *to kalon*, while the abstract, nonsensory characteristic of beautiful was marked by term *kallos* (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 121).

The fact that further underlines the contrast between the modern and Plato's understanding of beauty and art is relation between them. Unlike 18th century concept of *Fine Arts*, which is understood as creation of fine, beautiful artworks, Plato does not explicitly talk about necessary connection between beauty and artworks. Of course, Plato will not deny the existence of beautiful works of art, but art as such it is not understood as prominent spot for self-showing of beauty, as it is the case in modernity (Grubor, 2010, p. 96). In his famous critique of poetry and other arts, question of the beauty of

art is almost never mentioned, nor does Plato see it as key aspect of art. Therefore, Plato's attitude towards the relation between art and the beauty makes a possibility to see the role of beauty alone, beauty separated from art, in context of educational and upbringing practice.

2. Idea of Beauty as Necessary Condition for Knowledge of Ideas

The main interest of Plato's philosophy is reflected in the multitude of attempts to create a coherent theory of ideas. Accordingly, his works should not be seen as a presentation of a completed system, but rather as a polemical writings in which he discusses not only with his predecessors, but also with his earlier works in order to overcome the difficulties within his own philosophical position. Plato's permanent self-criticism, therefore, should essentially influence our understanding of his entire philosophical project; his teachings should not be viewed as a pure evolutionary continuity, but rather as an effort to overcome problems of theory of ideas which was approached from multiple angles and perspectives.

Problem of beauty is present throughout almost all phases of Plato's thought – the dialogue *Hippias Major* is an attempt of problematization of phenomenon of beauty in his early thought. Then, in the middle works, the idea of beauty becomes one of the central themes of dialogue *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. Although it seems that in Plato's late period he lost interest in this issue, there are brief reviews on the idea of the beautiful in *Philebus* (Plato, 1997b, p. 441) and *Timaeus* (Plato, 1997c, 1286), where he provides us with his famous definition of beauty as a measure and proportion. In this study, I will focus primarily on the definitions of the beauty in his middle works such as *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and try to show the relationship between the theory of beauty from these dialogues with his the most significant text from the same period – *Republic*. More precisely, my main task is an attempt to prove that Plato's famous myth of the cave actually implies his theory of beauty. In other words, my thesis is that idea of beauty is necessary condition for leaving the cave, and therefore that the idea of beauty is necessary condition for knowledge of ideas in general.

In order to support this thesis, first we must look back to the previously mentioned Plato's allegory of the cave. The myth begins with vision of shackled people inside the cave, in front of whom shadows move, which also is their only access to reality. After a while, one of the inhabitants of the cave, with great anguish and pain, gets released from chains and notices the fire behind the cave dwellers as well as people walking near the fire - at that moment he realizes that shadows, which were originally believed to represent the whole reality, actually are merely a reflection of the objects and the people who were passing by the fire. Then, another inhabitant would take him to the exit of the cave, where he would see how the sun shines over other beings outside the cave (Plato, 1997d, p. 1132-1136).

Common interpretation of this myth, which we largely accept, refers to the fact that the allegory of the cave represents the path of the individual to the knowledge of the truth of reality; it begins with the shadows of sense objects that correspond to the shadows in the cave, through sensory and perishable things that correspond to those objects whose shadows are available to all people in a cave, to getting an insight of nature of ideas or beings outside the cave whose visibility is provided by the Sun or idea of good. To be more precise, ascending towards knowledge of ideas happens when One finally leaves the cave and realizes that the Sun (idea of good) provides visibility of other ideas as well as the knowledge of true reality. Although this interpretation is not problematic, it, however, does not provide us with an answer to one very important question and that is why would cave dweller even turn and get himself released from the chains in the first place, especially bearing in mind Heidegger's suggestion on the significance of the inconvenience and suffered pain at the time of this turn (Heidegger, 1998, 159). In other words, the question we ask is what is it that drives an individual to review the daily experience of the world, especially because it indeed results in feeling of distress (Barrachi, 2002, p. 29)? The answer to that question cannot be found in the previously mentioned interpretation of the myth of the cave, but we will try to make it explicit by some of Plato's insights from *Phaedrus*, which, as well as *Republic*, also belongs to the middle phase of Plato's thought.

One of the key definitions of the idea of beauty from *Phaedrus* is that the idea of beauty is only available sensual idea, the idea that can be observed through the senses of sight (Plato, 1997e, p. 528). Because of its sensory accessibility and immediacy, the idea of beauty, or the aesthetic experience of beauty is actually a highlighted place where can be seen that the ontological basis of reality is in the world of ideas and not in individual perishable beings. This is so because the experience of beauty is a special form of experience, it is an aesthetic experience that provokes us to further examining of beauty phenomenon. Judging by Heidegger's interpretation in *Nietzsche I* (Heidegger, 1991, p. 196), the idea of beauty in Plato's philosophy figures as a key idea for one's grasp of Being. In other words, the sensual availability of beauty is the trigger for the beginning of anamnestic process, the process which leads to the understanding of Being. In general, we agree with this interpretation, but we will try to be more radical – we will try to show that the experience of the idea of beauty is a necessary condition for all knowledge of ideas. To be more precise, my thesis is that only an encounter with the beautiful can lead to existential turn of the individual, which would eventually drive him to the knowledge of true reality. Of course, the idea of beauty has no ontological primacy over other ideas, but without idea of beauty, anamnestic process could never begin.

In order to demonstrate the previously mentioned role of beauty, we will take a look on one very important passage in *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, among many other problems, Plato raises questions about the nature of human knowledge. Those questions are partially answered by the thesis of pre-existence of the soul, which leads to Plato's *anamnesis* theory. Speaking in parables, Plato says that winged human soul resided in the world of ideas before becoming corporeal. By becoming one with the body, the soul had lost its wings and forgot its former residence, which also means it forgot the true nature of reality. Depending on the way of life in this world, the human soul can remember its pre-existence which drives it to the remembrance of the ideal world as well as essences of all perishable and individual beings (Plato, 1997e, p. 524-525).

In the same dialogue, Plato extends allegory of the winged soul. In

fact, in *Phaedrus*, Plato notes that the human soul, when encountering the idea of beauty, comes in a specific mood accompanied by pain, which Plato compares with fledging. More specifically, when encountering the idea of the beautiful, the soul of the individual receives a specific appetite for ascending to the world of ideas, which is symbolised by growth of feathers (Plato, 1997e, p. 529).

Bearing in mind all the foregoing, we can conclude that aesthetic experience of the idea of beauty at first glance may seem pleasant, but it also at the same time reflects the tension and anxiety (Plato, 1997e, p. 529). In other words, the encounter with the idea of beauty leads to changes in existential posture and potential existential turn – individual then loses his self-evident understanding of the world, which is the first step on the road towards discovering the truth of reality.

Taking into account the description of the experience of the beauty in *Phaedrus*, we can notice the implicit connection between Plato's conception of aesthetic experience of beauty and the moment when the individual releases himself from chains in the allegory of the cave, which is the moment when cave dweller goes through an existential turn. The first parallel that can be drawn between these two, some might say, completely separate things, is reflected in the *stimmung* which both situations share. As I previously mentioned, the moment of turning in the cave and an beauty experience are both accompanied with basic feel of discomfort, which is non the less but the moment when the existential posture of individual is radically changed – In *Republic*, after the liberation from chains in the cave, and in the *Phaedrus*, after encountering the idea of beauty begins the process of ascending of the individual to the knowledge of the ontological order of reality.

Second, perhaps even more fundamental connection between these cases refers to the question that is answered through the description of aesthetic experience of beauty on the one hand, and the allegory of the cave, on the other hand. Namely, in the myth of the cave Plato never mentions why an individual would turn from the shadows to the people who carry the objects near the fire at first place. In other words, he offers no answer to the question why would someone question their own self-explanatory

understanding of the world. Precisely, the question of the cause of existential change of posture of the individual, and in this case that means turning towards the world of ideas, remains unanswered in *Republic*. However, the answer to that question is implicitly provided in *Phaedrus*, where the aesthetic experience of beauty is actually a trigger for anamnestic process. Understanding the experience of beauty as condition which enables One's ascend towards ideas also means that access to ideas is enabled for every individual through the aesthetic experience of beauty; whether the individual is ready to actualize this, to really start to explore the ontological structure of the world, depends on his decisions. One gets to decide whether will he continue to enjoy in pleasures of sensual beauty or will he, with *stimung* accompanied by discomfort and pain, move from the idea of beauty towards other ideas.

The aesthetic experience of beauty, as we have seen, is highlighted as an important event in the existence of an individual; in potency, it is a moment that cuts and separates the two radically different types of existential postures. Therefore, primary definition of aesthetic experience of beauty is not satisfaction or pleasure, how it is often portrayed in aesthetic tradition, it rather has more fundamental role in Plato's philosophy. Understanding the specifics of beauty in Plato's philosophy can open up the possibilities not just for one unusually view on Plato's philosophy as a whole, but it also provides us with some possibilities for rethinking the concept of aesthetic experience in general.

3. Beautiful Upbringing and Upbringing by Beautiful

In the previous part of this work, I have tried to show the role of the idea of beauty for knowledge of it and other ideas; By doing that, I've tried to show mutual familiarity between the phenomenon of beauty and educational aspects of Plato's *paideia*, I approached the idea of beauty in view of its role in the educational process of the individual. This section will look at the possible connection between idea of beauty and elements of *paideia* primarily related to the wider type of education, or in other words, the upbringing and forming of good human character. I will approach this

problem bearing in mind Plato's concept of beauty presented in *Symposium* with some other observations about this topic from *Phaedrus*.

One of the key points in the dialogue *Symposium* is the famous Socrates' speech about the nature of beauty and the process of transformation of individual character in ascending towards the beauty as such. The road towards beauty is marked by two different types of ascending (Hyland, 2008, p.50) - one is related to the ascending as a result of the urge for creation in beauty for the sake of immortality. Second, and for our thesis far more important type of ascending concerns the ascending of individual beautiful things to the very idea of beauty.

The first step in this second type of ascending concerns the encounters with the beautiful bodies. It is not just the first, but also a necessary stage in the process, because the beauty of bodies, as well as other perishable things, is the first form of beauty that One can encounter; In addition, if the goal is reaching the beauty of its own, then it is necessary to grasp all its forms. When observing several beautiful bodies, One acquires the ability to rank their beauty that varies from less beautiful to more beautiful. After, One learns that the beauty of the soul is considered much more valuable and enduring than beauty of the body. Then, he becomes able to recognize the beautiful speeches, to observe the beauty of the laws and customs, knowledge, and at the end of philosophy, which enables access to the very idea of beauty (Plato, 1997f, p. 492-493).

Ascending towards beauty, besides giving us an insight into its various manifestations and knowledge of beauty as such, also has a role in forming of good human character. In other words, by distinguishing and ranking of different manifestations of the beauty, man's soul is being trained for the understanding of true nature of reality or so called world of ideas. At the first stage, an individual can see variety of beautiful bodies and can get clues about general form of beauty which is present in every single beautiful body. Then, One becomes able to recognize this form in other beings such as speeches, laws and customs, and so on, until he reaches the pure form or the idea of beauty itself. By acquiring knowledge about what is beautiful, individual, at the same time, acquires the knowledge about the nature of all other ideas, which once again confirms the thesis about crucial importance

of the idea of beauty for knowledge of ideas in general.

However, gaining insight into the idea of beauty doesn't only have pure theoretical and cognitive value. What knowledge of beauty also provides is virtuous life (Plato, 1997f, p. 493-494). Although this statement is not explicitly given in *Symposium*, it nevertheless indicates the practical and educational role of idea of beauty in process of upbringing. By gaining insight into the beauty of body and soul, a man is provided with possibilities to transform his own body and soul in accordance with the beauty. Beautiful soul, then, has an insight into the beauty of speeches, laws and customs, and finally the philosophy, which individual can aspire to. In other words, practice and life of beautiful soul lies in making of right decisions and the right choices, which in the end results in virtuous life.

The idea of beauty is not simply given as an idea, but an insight into its nature has yet to be reached via the previously outlined ascending through sensible beautiful things towards the beauty as such. However, the pursuit of beauty as such is not innate like the pursuit of sensual pleasures, but it is acquired as a desire for what is best (Plato, 1997e, p. 517). More specifically, the urge of the soul towards the idea of beauty, and therefore towards life conducted in accordance with virtue, is something One learns; for that reason, Plato discusses the love relationship between two people in the *Phaedrus*. In that relationship, one of them is always older and more experienced, and in this case he acts as a mentor - he educates and teaches the younger one by helping him to ascend above the beauty of the body, or the beauty given through sensual pleasures, to other, loftier manifestations of beauty. Hence, one of the mentor's tasks is to provide upbringing and education by beauty, which end result is nothing but good manners, and good formation of human character.

As I already pointed out when reflecting the allegory of the cave, Plato insists that cave dweller, who is leaving the cave, is accompanied by another individual who helps the leaving inhabitant to leave the cave and see the sun or the idea of good. That, maybe crucial part of the allegory, can also be interpreted in relation with Plato's concept of idea of beauty. In other words, Plato's theory of upbringing by beauty implies mentor and learner as well as his allegory of the cave also implies two individuals that

are required for leaving the cave. In that sense, situation in the cave can be understood as metaphor for previously mentioned mentor-learner relationship. Needless to say, there is no certain proof for this claim, but Plato's allegory of the cave and his upbringing theory definitely open space for such interpretation.

That being said, I can conclude that the idea of beauty not only plays an important role in anamnestic process, but it appears to be of great importance for the upbringing aspect of the Plato's *paideia*. Besides, the educational role of the idea of beauty confirms the Greek concept of beauty named as *kalon*, which main characteristic is in overlapping of aesthetic and moral values.

4. Conclusion

In previous parts of this work, I have demonstrated the role of idea of beauty in Plato's concept of *paideia*. Under the term *paideia* I meant both upbringing and education. In both of those aspects of *paideia*, the idea of beauty appears to be of crucial significance – it is the necessary condition for knowledge of ideas in general, as well as an essential factor in the formation of proper upbringing of human character. I've tried to investigate Plato's *paideia* from the perspective of aesthetics with no regards to his criticism of poetry and the other arts, but only taking into account the concept of beauty, which, in Plato's case, can be conceptually separated from the concept of art.

One of the possible ways to strengthen this thesis can be found even in Plato's writing style. Namely, if we take a look at Plato's texts, we can see that the vast majority of them are in form of dialogue. Therefore, it might be the case that Plato used the dialogue form to make his writings more aesthetically appealing to his readers (Popović, 2013, p. 130) – in that case, we could argue that the concept of *paideia* of beauty is implemented by Plato himself.

However, previously demonstrated thesis actually shows the whole of Plato's philosophy in a different theoretical light than is usually the case. One implication of the phenomenon of beauty transcends its internal

aesthetic meaning. Namely, if the idea of beauty is the trigger for the beginning of anamnestic process, and thus the beginning of philosophizing, the question is whether aesthetic experience of beauty may represent an alternative to the established and well known thesis concerning the wondering as the beginning of philosophy. This and many other questions can not only provide us with a different view of Plato's philosophy, but also it can lead to a rethinking of the very essence of philosophy in general.

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Perspectival Poetics: Poetry After Nietzsche and Wittgenstein

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ABSTRACT. Most philosophies of poetry attempt to define what poetry is, either as a genre or subgenre of literature or as a specific use of language whose characteristics are different from ordinary language. The problem of such essentialist approaches is that poetry, like art in general, seems to defy definition and to always offer counterexamples to the philosopher's definition. In this paper, I therefore shift my attention from attempting to define poetry or its characteristics to understanding what we can learn from its difference from ordinary speech. The etymology of poetry, *poiesis*, brings to the fore the idea that poetry involves a making or a creating. Following ideas from Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, I understand poetry as involving what I call a perspectival poetics. At the heart of this poetics is the task of creating perspectives which reveal new viewpoints on the world. To elaborate this notion, I focus especially on Wittgenstein's idea of 'seeing-as', which can be relevant to poetry by transposing it into 'reading as', and on Nietzsche's perspectivism which brings the idea of creation of perspectives to the fore.

1. Introduction

In comparison to its status in the 18th or 19th centuries, poetry has been rather left aside in contemporary aesthetics, especially on the analytic side. John Gibson notes in his introduction to *The Philosophy of Poetry*: 'Indeed, until very recently one could fairly say that poetry is the last great unexplored frontier in contemporary analytic aesthetics, an ancient and central art we have somehow managed to overlook more or less entirely.' (Gibson, 2016, p. 1) Philosophical studies of poetry have often taken two main directions: either as a search for an ontology in order to define poetry

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as a genre or a subgenre of literature or as a search for the essential characteristics of poetic language, in contrast to ordinary language. These two essentialist searches often encounter problems because poetry – as well as poetic language – seems to defy definition. My aim in this paper is therefore not to define poetry – be it as a genre or in its linguistic characteristics – but to take a wider scope on it and conceptualise what happens in poetry and in our relation to it. I will use poetry in order to elaborate a wider notion of poetics which could describe what is at work not only in poetry but also in many other art forms. In this paper, I however remain focused on poetry, only hinting towards possible ways to broaden the notion here and there. In order to approach what happens in poetry, I rely on one of the same assumptions as many studies of poetry, namely that poetic language functions somewhat differently from ordinary language. Rather than defining this difference in order to categorise poetry or to distinguish between two abstract and distinct entities: ordinary and poetic, I focus on the question: ‘What does this difference reveal?’ or, in an extended version, ‘What can we learn from this difference which is of use not only in poetry but to a wider extent to our relation to language and the world?’ In order to answer these questions, I build on ideas from Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. This paper is divided in two sections: in the first I show that the difference poetry reveals calls for a specific reading which can be developed through Wittgenstein’s idea of ‘seeing-as’: poetry requires to look – or read – from the right perspective; in the second I shift my attention from the reader to the poet or the artist: the idea of poetics is not only to look at something in the right perspective but – according to the etymology *poiesis* – to make or create something, to make or create perspectives. It is therefore that I call it a perspectival poetics.

2. Wittgenstein, ‘Seeing-as’, and ‘Reading-as’

Take the question: “How should poetry be read? What is the correct way of reading it?” If you are talking about blank verse the right way of reading it might be stressing it correctly – you discuss how far you should stress the rhythm and how far you should hide it. A man says it

ought to be read *this* way and reads it to you. You say: “Oh yes. Now it makes sense.” [...] I had an experience with the 18th century poet Klopstock. I found that the way to read him was to stress his metre abnormally. Klopstock put U–U (etc.) in front of his poems. When I read his poems in this new way, I said: “Ah-ha, now I know why he did this.” (Wittgenstein, 1966, p. 4)

This quote from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* presents many of the elements I will develop regarding poetry. One important thing is that it acknowledges a difference between reading poetry and reading an ordinary text. Poetry requires from the reader that she stresses the words in a way different from everyday reading. A poem makes sense only once it is read in the right way. We should not understand ‘right way’ as something too specific: there can be multiple right ways to read a poem, more precisely, the right way to read a poem is the one that makes sense for the reader. The meaning of the poem, or the way it makes sense, depends on the reader and how she reads it. It might make sense to read in this way but not in that way. This idea could be called ‘reading-as’, following Wittgenstein’s ‘seeing-as’: a duck-rabbit can be seen as a duck or as a rabbit; a poem can be read as a meaningless series of words or as a meaningful whole. Another interesting aspect from this quote is the reference to Klopstock. Although the reader is free to read the poem as she likes, the poet can indicate how it should be read and Klopstock does so by indicating the rhythm. Reading a poem in one way might not make sense whereas reading it following the instructions does. In that sense, a poem is subject to interpretation. Its meaning varies according to how the readers read it. More than that, it shows a different use of language. Reading a poem and reading a newspaper both involve reading, but not in the same sense. This difference is similar to Wittgenstein’s distinction between seeing and ‘seeing-as’. He acknowledges this distinction between an ordinary and a poetic use of language in remark 160 from *Zettel*: ‘Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.’ (Wittgenstein, 1981, p. 27) The poetic language-game, or better the poetic language-games for there are many ways of doing poetry, bring light on different aspects of language,

aspects which are not highlighted in the ordinary communicational practice. In a way, poetry resembles Duchamp's ready-mades: Duchamp takes an everyday object and transforms its meaning by placing it in a different game, in a different context. Similarly, poets take everyday words and transform their meaning. Two examples of poems show this transformation (or transfiguration in Danto's sense) of the everyday. First is an excerpt from William Carlos Williams's poem 'Two Pendants: for the Ears':

2 partridges
2 Mallard ducks
a Dungeness crab
24 hours out
of the Pacific
and 2 live-frozen
trout
from Denmark

What is more ordinary than a grocery list? The fact that it is written by a poet and presented as a poem brings us, readers, to believe there is something more to it, to read it as a poem. I believe it could work as an autonomous text, but Williams's poem is a bit more complex than that: the grocery list is a part of the poem and is introduced as follows:

Listen, I said, I met a man
last night told me what he'd brought
home from the market:

Taken in the wider context of the whole poem, the grocery list appears as a bursting in of the ordinary in the poetic and its place within a poem makes of this all too ordinary grocery list something poetic. What is interesting is not only that the ordinary becomes poetic, but also that the poem stages this ordinary becoming poetic. The context of the poem transforms the ordinary grocery list into a poetic element. Williams comments on his use of a grocery list in *Paterson*: 'If you say "2 partridges, 2 mallard ducks, a

Dungeness crab” – if you treat that rhythmically, ignoring the practical sense, it forms a jagged pattern. It is, to my mind, poetry.’ (Williams, 1963, p. 261) As with Wittgenstein’s remark, the poetic dimension arises from rhythm. In poetry, there always something more than the ordinary meaning, as Williams further comments: ‘In prose, an English word means what it says. In poetry, you’re listening to two things . . . you’re listening to the sense, the common sense of what it says. But it says more. That is the difficulty.’ (Williams, 1963, p. 262) Rhythm is one aspect which can change the perspective on words, another possible one is sound. In the poem ‘The Crate’, Francis Ponge plays for instance on the sound of the word:

Halfway between *cage* (cage) and *cachot* (cell) the French language has *cageot* (crate), a simple openwork case for the transport of those fruits that invariably fall sick over the slightest suffocation. (Ponge, 1972, p. 34)

Describing a very ordinary object, Ponge focuses on the sound of the word and brings other meanings in the word through sound similarities. He then plays with these meanings: ‘fall sick’ and ‘suffocation’ are here related to the idea of the cell and transposed onto the crate. The sound of ordinary words become the playground for the emergence of the poetic. These two examples show ways in which poetry can modify the ordinary or, better, how poetry can arise or appear from within the most ordinary words. An important dimension in this change of meaning is the context in which the word or the object appears. Depending on the context, the meaning changes. In a remark from the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein interestingly links this idea of context to that of ‘fiction’:

I can imagine some arbitrary cipher – this, 34 for instance, to be a strictly correct letter of some foreign alphabet. Or again, to be a faultily written one, and faulty in this way or that: for example, it might be slapdash, or typical childish awkwardness, or, like the flourishes in an official document. It could deviate from the correctly

written letter in a variety of ways. – And according to the fiction with which I surround it, I can see it in various aspects. And here there is a close kinship with ‘experiencing the meaning of a word’.
(Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 221)

To understand an object whose signification is unknown requires some interpretation, and Wittgenstein notes that ‘seeing-as’ has something to do with interpretation, as well as with imagining, knowing, and thinking. The ‘arbitrary cipher’ can be understood or interpreted in various fashions. What is important is that the way in which I see it is related to ‘the fiction with which I surround it’. I have to invent or imagine a fiction in which this cipher makes sense. When I encounter something completely foreign to my knowledge, I need to build a context in which I can understand it. This might be a pragmatic context, finding a possible use to an object, this might be an artistic context, finding conceptual or aesthetic qualities to an object, etc. The lack of context is an obstacle to understanding the object, and therefore requires the invention of a context. Interestingly the word ‘fiction’ translates the German ‘*Erdichtung*’ which is related to and contains the idea of ‘*Dichtung*’, of poetry. Following this idea, we could say that the poet creates a context in which a poem can make sense, but it also asks from the reader that she creates or imagines a context in which she can make sense of this poem. This idea is related to ‘experiencing the meaning of a word’ insofar as understanding a word in a Wittgensteinian sense requires understanding its use in the language-game. If the language-game is unknown – or if the use cannot be understood within the ordinary language-game – one might need to search for the appropriate language-game in which this use can make sense. Words have many uses, some of which conflict with the ordinary and therefore require a shift in perspective. In a remark from *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein uses the example of theatre to explicit this idea of perspective shift:

Let’s imagine a theatre, the curtain goes up & we see someone alone in his room walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, seating himself etc. so that suddenly we are observing a human being from outside in

a way that ordinarily we can never observe ourselves; as if we were watching a chapter from a biography with our own eyes, – surely this would be at once uncanny and wonderful. More wonderful than anything that a playwright could cause to be acted or spoken on the stage. – But then we do see this every day & it makes not the slightest impression on us! True enough, but we do not see it from *that* point of view. [...] The work of art compels us – as one might say – to see it in the right perspective, but without art the object is a piece of nature like any other & the fact that *we* may exalt it through our enthusiasm does not give anyone the right to display it to us. (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 7)

Once transposed on a stage, the most ordinary actions suddenly become more than that. The stage offers us a perspective which brings light on certain aspects which are not ordinarily caught by our attention. Theatre offers us a context in which we can look at things differently. The same goes for words in poems: a poem gives a context in which we read or hear words differently. If we do not read the poem in the right perspective, it is just a series of words. To return to Williams's lines quoted above, a poem might be a grocery list, but it is more than that: the poet writes a grocery list in order to change our way of reading or seeing it. The same goes for other works of art: if we do not see a work of art in the right perspective, it might just appear as an object among many others. But once we look at it in the right perspective, it makes sense. This is, once again, the example of Duchamp's ready-mades: by placing an ordinary object in a museum or a gallery, Duchamp forces us to look at this object from another perspective. Similarly, poetry forces us to read from a certain perspective and to shift from our ordinary way of seeing things and reading words. This idea of perspective shift can be further developed with some of Nietzsche's ideas which bring to the fore the creative aspect of the poetic.

3. Nietzsche, Art, and the Creation of Perspectives

Only artists, and especially those of the theatre, have given men eyes and ears to see and hear with some pleasure what each man *is* himself,

experiences himself, desires himself; only they have taught us to esteem the hero that is concealed in everyday characters; only they have taught us the art of viewing ourselves as heroes – from a distance and, as it were, simplified and transfigured – the art of staging and watching ourselves. Only in this way can we deal with some base details in ourselves. Without this art we would be nothing but the foreground and live entirely in the spell of that perspective which makes what is closest at hand and most vulgar appear as if it were vast, and reality itself. (Nietzsche, 1974, pp. 132-133)

In this remark from the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche as well uses theatre to exemplify the importance of perspective in understanding our everyday world. Theatre does not only give us a new perspective on the world and ourselves, it also and above all enables us to understand ourselves more than superficially. The ordinary perspective only casts light on ‘what is closest at hand and most vulgar’ and makes it appear as ‘reality itself’. If one has only one limited perspective, one will only see things in a limited way. To borrow the words from poet-rapper Kate Tempest: ‘When all you’ve got is a hammer, everything looks like nails.’ Theatre, and other art forms, makes us take distance from this ordinary perspective, enabling us to change perspective and to view ourselves and the world under a different light. In other words, art gives depth to our lives by multiplying the perspectives from which we can see the world. Returning to poetry, poets give depth to language. The ordinary perspective on language is that it is only a communicational tool and makes us believe that this is language itself. A very simplified version of such a language would be Wittgenstein’s builders’ language-game in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Such a conception of language is only a superficial or primitive understanding of language. Poetry and other literary forms play the role of expanding the scope of language and by doing so of expanding our world. Indeed, Nietzsche brings something more to this idea of perspectivism: the idea of creation. The poet creates perspectives from which we can see the world anew. By creating new words, or new uses for words, the poet might indeed create new things:

This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things *are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. [...] What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out this origin and this misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called “*reality*”. We can destroy only as creators. – But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new “things.” (Nietzsche, 1974, pp. 121-122)

The counterpoint to creation, however, is destruction and insofar as the poet creates, she must destroy. Creating new uses for words destroy the old uses and therefore new perspectives on the world also destroy the old ones. More precisely, to destroy the old perspectives, those which are superficial, one needs to create new ones. The poet and the artist do so in their domains, but Nietzsche does not limit this to artistic domains: ‘we want to be poets of our life – first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters.’ (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 240) The French poet Guillaume Apollinaire also considers poetry as being a matter of creation and that one can be a poet in any field: ‘It is that poetry and creation are one and the same; only that man can be called poet who invents, who creates insofar as man can create. The poet is he who discovers new joys, even if they are hard to bear. One can be a poet in any field: it is enough that one be adventuresome and pursue new discovery.’ (Apollinaire, 2004, p. 80) The role of the poetic therefore outgrows the limits of poetry understood as a genre or those of art in general: it becomes a way of making sense of the world and of our lives when the ordinary seems meaningless.

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Hegel's Last Lectures on Aesthetics in Berlin 1828/29 and the Contemporary Debates on the End of Art

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ABSTRACT. The thesis of the “death of art” or the “end of art” is both a central and a structural thesis in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and one of the most discussed of his philosophy. One can wonder, nevertheless, how the End-of-Art is compatible, even constitutive of a theory of contemporary art. The problem is both a current and a historical one. In this paper, I try to consider this paradox while returning to the very sources of Hegel’s philosophy, i.e. to what is deemed the origin of the “rumour” of an “end of art” thesis, namely in the letters written by his student and composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. I take then into account how the thesis appears in the last lecture on aesthetics given by Hegel at the Berlin University in 1828/29, in order to clarify to what extent the thesis is compatible or not with the possibility of modern art, and if Arthur Coleman Danto’s and Dieter Henrich’s assumptions for example are tenable regarding the new sources.

1. Introduction

The thesis of the “death of art” or the “end of art” (*Ende der Kunst*) is both a central and a structural thesis in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and one of the most discussed topics (maybe discussed too much, compared to other questions) of his philosophy. It has belonged as well to art practices and art theories from that time until the recent update in A. D. Danto’s writings and the discussions about them (see Iannelli 2014). One can wonder, nevertheless, how the End-of-Art-Thesis (EAT) (whereby art is a “thing of the past”, *etwas Vergangenes*) is compatible, even constitutive of a theory of contemporary art (whereby art is a thing per se as is self-consciousness or the spirit of the present time). The problem is both a current and a historical

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one. In the following, I will try to consider this paradox while returning to the very sources of Hegel's philosophy, i.e. to what is deemed the origin of the "rumour" of an "end of art" (Geulen 2002). I will discuss this question by relating only to the 19th century context, the Hegelian philosophy and its reception. I will take into account how the thesis appears in the last lecture on aesthetics given by Hegel at the Berlin University in 1828/29, especially in the transcript of Adolf Heimann, which has been recently published (Hegel 2017). But first, I would like to introduce my approach by clarifying both the philological and the philosophical problem.

i) The first difficulty is namely a philological one. Hegel died in Berlin in 1831 without having published his lectures on aesthetics. What we knew under the title *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* until the end of the 20th century was the posthumous edition, published by his disciple, H.G. Hotho, which has been constantly republished and translated up until today (Hegel 1835-1838). However, recent scholarship since the 1990s has shown that this edition greatly distorted the content of Hegel's lectures and began with the edition of the original sources. Not only did Hotho not distinguish between his own taste and philosophy and that of his master, but his edition did not take into account the evolution of the course in the various versions of the lectures that Hegel provided between 1820 and 1829. It superimposed, on the contrary, the various lectures without giving any information about any possible transformation. What the sources show, in contrast, is that Hegel's philosophy, which is often regarded as a dogmatic, idealistic and closed system, when not a classical one, in fact is a dynamic, critical and concrete system of one substance with the present and modernity. Relating to our topic, this leads to the hypothesis that Hegel could have modified his fundamental thesis of the "end of art" or could have given different versions of it over the years, which would have been then mixed or contradictorily juxtaposed in Hotho's posthumous edition.

ii) This is related then to the philosophical problem concerning the status of the EAT in the Hegelian system. For Dieter Henrich (2003), for example, the thesis can be regarded as one "theorem" in Hegel's philosophy. It concerns not only the philosophy of art but the whole of the system. It determines the place of art as subordinated to religion and

philosophy (and reciprocally, the place of religion and philosophy in relation to art). Nevertheless, Hegel would have retreated – according to Henrich – in his last lecture in Winter 1828/29. He would have tried to introduce a soft version of the EAT which enables the possibility of art after the end of art. This “soft” thesis could be seen as a waste of aesthetic and metaphysical radicalism, on the one hand, as well as an open door, on the other hand, to provide an aesthetics of the present and modernity. In this more minimalistic aesthetics, Hegel would also have given up the “hard” and substantial conception of the work of art on behalf of what Henrich calls – in reference to Hegel – the “partiality” of the work of art. Such a position would be also more convenient for us today, under the conditions of modernity or postmodernity, under the conditions of a postmetaphysical approach of aesthetics. The sources of Hegel’s last lecture as well as some other documents recently published related to its reception now give us the opportunity to shed some new light on this philological and philosophical problem.

In the following, I will therefore go back to the origin of the “rumour” of the “death of art” and to the question of it possibly being attributed to Hegel, while returning to the first formulation of the thesis, namely in the letters written by his student and composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Then, I would like to explore whether Henrich’s assumption is tenable regarding Heimann’s transcript, in order to clarify to what extent the EAT is compatible or not with the possibility of modern art.

2. Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the “Rumour” of the “End-of-Art”

The origin of the “rumour” of the “death of art”, according to Hegel, can be found in two letters written by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Mendelssohn was a student at the Berlin University and attended Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics in the winter of 1828-29, just before beginning his journey through Europe. He wrote from Neapel to his father Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, on Mai 7th 1831:

Aber toll ist es doch, daß Goethe und Thorwaldsen leben, daß Beethoven erst vor ein Paar Jahren gestorben ist, und daß H. behauptet, die deutsche Kunst sei mausetodt. (Mendelssohn Bartholdy 1861, 155; see also Nicolin 1970, 430)

A few months later, he wrote to his sister, from Lauterbrunnen, resuming his criticism by using another formulation. He does not say that art is “dead”, “mausetodt” according to the philosopher, but that art is over (or washed up), “Kunst ist aus”:

und da machte es mich grimmig, daß das Unwesen immer noch fortgeht, und daß der Philosoph, der behauptet die Kunst sei nun aus, immer noch fortbehauptet, die Kunst sei aus, als ob die überhaupt aufhören könnte. (Mendelssohn Bartholdy 1861, 256; see also Nicolin 1970, 432; Mendelssohn Bartholdy 2009, 367)

Both letters were first published after Felix's death by the family within the well-known edition of his *Reisebriefe* (Mendelssohn Bartholdy 1861). Since a great number of people quoted were still alive, the names are often reduced to their initials. In the Hegel-Forschung [Hegel scholarship] as well as in the Mendelssohn-Forschung, it was established until now that the letter H. referred to Hegel (Nicolin 1970). However, the recent edition of the letters of Mendelssohn Bartholdy (2009) shows that in the original Felix actually meant Hotho:

Aber toll ist es, dass Goethe und Thorwaldsen leben, dass Beethoven erst vor ein Paar Jahren gestorben ist, und daß Hotho behauptet, die deutsche Kunst sei mausetodt. (Mendelssohn Bartholdy 2009, 264)

This is not an error made by the modern editors; the manuscript of that letter clearly mentions in all the letters the name of Hotho. This implies that Felix was *not* criticizing Hegel in his letters and not referring to his lectures on aesthetics. This astonishing discovery leads to the suspicion that Hotho and not Hegel has to be seen as the author of the EAT. But it also does not

exclude the possibility that Hotho was simply restating Hegel's position. So I have tried to find some explanations about what Hotho's conception of the "end of art" could have been at that time and how far his conception could have been different from Hegel's own assumption in his last lecture. I just want to make two short remarks.

i) The first thing is that Mendelssohn is using the adjective "mausetodt". I did not find in the sources of Hegel's lectures the idea that art could be "dead". I did not find either, as such, the idea that art is "aus" (as the last letter of Mendelssohn indicates). However, I have found, for example, this last expression in one of the writings of Hotho, i.e. in one of his *Morgenblatt* chronicles written in 1828. He wrote:

Ein Hauptgrund des allgemeinen Verfalls fast aller deutschen Bühnen ist in der heutigen Stellung der Kunst überhaupt zu suchen. Ihre Zeit ist aus; sie steht in dem Widerspruche, einerseits noch die Prätension zu haben alles Höchste und Beste, Tiefste, Gedigenste, alle großen Interessen des Lebens, alle Wahrheiten des Himmels und der Erde darzustellen zu wollen, und dennoch anderseits für die Darstellung solchen Inhalts nicht mehr die genügende Form zu seyn, und mehr und mehr inneren Ernst zur Sache nur des Spasses und Amusements verkehrt zu sehen. Die Kritik ist an die Stelle des Kunstgenußes getreten, und die Kunst hat ihre Majestät verloren. (Hotho 1828, 188)

We can notice that Hotho is using the EAT for criticizing what seems for him to be a decline of art in Germany. Art is becoming an entertainment without any true or ethical content. And that is precisely the form of art that Mendelssohn wanted to produce at that time. We can also notice that Hotho is speaking about the performances of the Theatre of Königsstadt, and this is exactly the place where Hegel liked to go to attend comedies and Italian opera. Hotho and Hegel did not agree about this kind of music and theatre. This was not a symptom of death or decline for Hegel. On the contrary, Hegel's enthusiasm for Italian opera is without any equivalent in his letters. And this was not only private entertainment for him, but the lectures of 1826 and 1828 show that his experience with Rossini's operas and especially with the performance of Italian singers improvising is a speculative one, and a

key for his music aesthetics.

ii) The second thing is that Mendelssohn evokes, in the first quotation, the possibility that there are no more (German) artists in the contemporary world. This could be confirmed by the quotation – believed to be by Hegel – in the posthumous edition of the Aesthetics (in the chapter about the “End of the Romantic Form of Art”) that it is no longer possible that great artists like “Dante, Ariost oder Shakespeare in unserer Zeit hervortreten” (“No Dante, Ariosto or Shakespeare can appear in our day”, Hegel 1835-1838, vol. 2, 236; Hegel 1970, vol. 14, 235; Geulen 2002, 14). I did not find this idea in Heimann's transcript. But Thorwaldsen and Goethe are mentioned when Beethoven is not directly mentioned.

We can notice that this is a discussion between Hotho and Mendelssohn about the future of German art and not about art in general. It is obvious that Hotho – often in opposition to Hegel – tried to rehabilitate in his writings and in his edition German art from the past, while criticizing the productions of the present. In his own lectures on Goethe written in Winter 1832 (“Über Goethe als Dichter”) recently published by Francesca Iannelli (2007), Hotho considers that “the pure principle of art is exceeded” in the last period of Goethe's production (the period of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, of the *West-östlicher Diwan* and the last version of *Faust*) on behalf of a form of “Oriental wisdom”:

Das reine Prinzip der Kunst ist überschritten. Orientalische Elemente einer Weisheit, aber Wo es gilt, ist aber noch die alte Frische. (Hotho 1832/33, in: Iannelli 2007, 343)

There is no evidence that Hegel considers Goethe as a minor artist, or that his last productions would not belong to art, or that they would be expressions of a decadent form of art. On the contrary, Hegel undertook in his last lectures an apology of Goethe's *West-östlicher Diwan*, which was criticized at that time by some of his own nationalist students. Goethe's *Diwan* – like Klopstock's Oden, like oriental Poetry – seems to consider the end of art as the fulfilment of the romantic work of art, when not the higher expression of freedom and subjectivity.

The fact that Mendelssohn does not attribute the EAT to Hegel but to Hotho in his letter, now makes us suspect that Hegel would not have indeed pronounced it in his lecture of 1828/29, but that could be indeed an extrapolation by Hotho in the posthumous edition.

3. The EAT in the Lectures of 1828-1829

But this is not really the fact. Things are more complex, as is usual when reading Hegel. It is not true that Hegel gave up the EAT in his last lecture. He emphasized on the contrary, such an assumption. Hegel even spoke of the “Auflösung der Kunst” (a “dissolution of art”, Hegel 2017, 206) referring to the end of the romantic form or to the antique comedy. In the introduction to his lecture, he spoke – according to Heimann, and what one does not find in the edition of Hotho and the other versions – about a “Vernichtung der Kunst” (an “annihilation of art”) (Hegel, 2017, 25). He also said that “Kunst hat auch ein Nach”, “art has also an after” which is the “Bewusstsein von Kunst”, the “consciousness of art” in modern times (ibid.). The conclusion of the lecture is:

Für uns ist die Kunstphilosophie eine Nothwendigkeit geworden, da wir über die Kunst hinaus sind. (Hegel 2017, 207)

According to this, the EAT does not imply that art is not possible in the present day. Hegel mentions that art is still in progress. There is no end to art history, but our relationship to art has changed. There is now a scientific consideration for the works of art instead of a fetish or religious attitude towards objects. Not only does the EAT imply that art is possible in the present, but it makes possible the apprehension of art as art, the consideration that objects are works of art. This opens the possibility for a new “régime esthétique” as Rancière would say for an aesthetical relationship of everything. This is the end of a heteronomous relationship towards art. Before this aesthetic turn, works of art were not perceived as such; they were, for example, religious objects.

All this seem to confirm A. Danto's interpretation of the EAT. But

this does not necessary mean that “the philosophy of art” is the “fulfilment and fruition” of art, or that “art already is philosophy in its vivid forms” as Danto (2005, 16) writes. Art is not a form of philosophy for Hegel, but – according to me – art is, in his system, the realization of a radical principle of freedom and subjectivity, which is specific to modern times, which can be seen as the signature of modernity. This principle of freedom and subjectivity finds its concretization both in Goethe’s last poetic works and in Rossini’s vocal music.

This is the reason why the “hard” version of the EAT, where art belongs to the past, is compatible with the soft thesis of the “end of art”, where art belongs to the present as a form of “art after the end of art”, i.e. art in the period after the age of enlightenment. There is no contradiction and there is need to think that this would be an evolution in Hegel’s thought, as Henrich thinks.

If we come back to Henrich’s (2003) hypothesis, we have also to know, if Hegel had introduced a new category in his last lecture, namely the category of “objective humour” to describe the final state of the work of art at the end of the romantic form of art. But this is not an innovation which appeared in the system in 1828. The category of “objective humour” is attested to in the lecture of 1820/21, in the transcript of W. Asheberg, published by H. Schneider (Hegel 1995). The conception of humour is to be found in all different versions of Hegel’s lectures. Moreover, the concept of humour is as well attested to in Hotho’s own lectures on aesthetics from 1833 on. And it does not mean that a humorous work of art like Goethe’s *Divan* would be a minor form of the work of art, and that Hegel’s legitimization of contemporary art should be what Henrich calls a Biedermeier option. The humorous works of art – according to Hegel – are progressive forms; they are not less significant than the works of art of previous times. They are, on the contrary, the realization of the radical principle of modernity we have already mentioned, i.e. the successful expression of free subjectivity. The work of art disappears as such to make way for a higher principle, which is the positive assertion of a new concept of subjectivity. The end of romantic art opens a period where subjectivity is emancipated from the objectal and naive conception of the work of art. The

subjectivity of the producing subject (the brilliant artist) and that of the spectator lays claim to its rights: its superiority regarding the content and the materiality of the work of art. The death of art is only the death of the object: the *Zerfall* of the ontological conception, not the death of art as such. This is why the “soft” thesis regarding art after the end of art is not a minor thesis, a concession toward the metaphysical options; but this soft thesis coincides with the central principle of Hegel’s philosophy.

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4. Paganini, Humour and the End of Art

I would like to evoke another example of humorous work characteristic of modernity for Hegel, which does not belong to the field of poetry like Goethe’s *Divan* nor to the field of vocal music like Rossini’s operas; but, in continuity to this, to the field of instrumental music. Hegel uses for the first time the concept of the “humorous” at the end of the chapter on music in his lecture of 1828/29. He describes there the phenomenon of musical virtuosity and ingenuity as a form of the fulfilment of the musical work of art. The “genius shows his mastery upon the exteriority and his interior unattached freedom”. The fact that the musician “interrupts himself in a humoristic way” is a mark of his “freedom” and “free will” (*Willkür*):

In der Virtuosität verliert das Instrument sein Recht als Sache, es wird Organ des Künstlers, das Genie zeigt seine Meisterschaft über das Äußere und innere ungebundene Freiheit. Das Momentane beweist die Willkür, melodisch fortzugehen, humoristisch sich zu unterbrechen, und auch innerlich seine Freiheit über das Instrument darzutun. Der Künstler kann aus einem beschränkten Instrument, wie Violine, ein großes machen, den Charakter überwinden, und die Mannigfaltigkeit von Klangarten anderer Instrumente hervorbringen. Wir haben jetzt das wundervolle Geheimnis vor den Ohren, daß ein solches Instrument zu einem selbstlosen, beseelten Organ geworden [ist], und das innerliche Produzieren der genialen Phantasie wie in keiner andern Kunst. (Hegel 2017, 187)

Hegel probably refers here to the performances of Niccolò Paganini he had heard in Berlin at that time, in the Spring of 1829 (see Olivier 2003, 80). Such a performance would have legitimated for him this new and conclusive

development regarding modern instrumental music and especially modern virtuosity, which was criticized in the previous lectures. The reason for this new appreciation is to be found in the fact that this form of music is related to the same principle as the late modernity of humour, of radical subjectivity and freedom. As Alessandro Bertinetto (2012) reminds us, Paganini does not repeat himself: this kind of improvisation is a “fleeting moment” which is hard to seize, even theoretically and which questions the objective structure of the work of art. In Hotho’s edition, this mention of the “humorous” does not appear and we do not understand the significance of this new evaluation of musical virtuosity within the framework of Hegel’s aesthetics. Like Goethe’s *Divan* and Rossini’s operas, this example of a non-old-German-work of art is underestimated. But it is also true that this does not confirm the idea that art would be “a thing of the past”, or that artists like Dante, Ariosto and Shakespeare are no longer possible in the present.

5. Conclusion

I would like to conclude in this paper by distinguishing again between two interpretations of the EAT we have considered. The first one is a naive and objective interpretation of the EAT: the idea that there is no more work of art in the present, or that the artistic productions of the present are lower than the productions of the past; there is no more innovation. This first interpretation seems to agree with Hotho’s position but not with Hegel’s. The other interpretation is a more critical one, which concerns a rather epistemological level. The end of art is the beginning of a free reflexive and critical or philosophical relationship toward the works of art. The EAT is therefore a structural thesis which makes the work of art and the discourse on art possible, at least the philosophy of art. So we have to understand dialectically that the EAT is the condition of the possibility of art, the beginning of art as such. Art does not only survive in the philosophical or critical discourse, but also survives in the exhibition of the creative and intellectual process of its production, which thus becomes the substantial element.

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'Afropolitanism' as an Example of Contemporary Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. Afropolitanism, a term coined by the South-African theorist Achille Mbembe is summarized by him as “a stylistics and a politics, an aesthetics and a certain poetics of the world”. He endeavours to identify Afropolitanism as a paradigm not only of personal modes of existence under globalised conditions, but also of contemporary artworks, and not only those originating from Africa. I will question this term in relation to Edouard Glissant’s term of “composite cultures” since both try to respond to the inevitable cultural entanglements of artistic expressions not only from the Non-Western world. And I will provide an aesthetic example of an “affirmed and non-imposed (cultural) partition” (Glissant): Jean-Pierre Bekolo’s Camerounian film *Le complot d'Aristote* (1995) which succeeds in parodying standardised Western film dramaturgy, but also the state of cinema in Africa. As he tries to prove Afropolitan aesthetics not only demonstrates the aesthetic/political interwovenness of cultural statements today, but also calls for the abandonment of the idea of individualism in favour of dividual self-understandings and artistic articulations.

“Afropolitanism is a stylistics and a politics, an aesthetics and a certain poetics of the world. It is a manner of being in the world which refuses, on principle, any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not conscious of the injustices and the violence which the law of the world inflicted on this continent and its people” (Mbembe 2016, p. 289).² The South-African theorist Achille Mbembe, author of this statement, endeavours to identify “Afropolitanism” as the paradigm of actual modes of existence of persons mainly from non-Western countries and of their complicated empowerments in the globalizing world. With Afropolitanism

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² Mbembe, Achille (2016), *Ausgang aus der langen Nacht. Versuch über ein entkolonisiertes Afrika*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, p. 289.

he provocatively refers to the concept of cosmopolitanism, the term Kant coined for the enlightened self-understanding of being a (bourgeois) citizen of the whole world. This term was recently actualized by the sociologist Ulrich Beck for a cosmopolitan sociology which aims to have the world-society in mind, but nevertheless refuses to understand it as a continuous territory where Western laws, values, scientific perspectives should be dominant and mandatory for everybody. He claims that quite the opposite is true: that in the era of globalization “there is no fixed point of observation from which local and national processes of change can be adequately analysed and understood” (Beck 2010, p. 19).³ Beck sketches an inevitable epistemological relativism which urges sociological statements to indicate their spatial and temporal framing, the selection of their phenomena and to justify the choice of their analytical approach and its (Western) presuppositions.

Mbembe refers to cosmopolitanism in a different way when he refuses to connect Afropolitanism with “any form of victim identity” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 289); he has in mind actors who correspond to the Western idea of cosmopolitan people, self-assured African persons living and working in various metropolises. By refusing a certain cliché of African-ness, Mbembe may also allude to the historical exclusion implied in the term cosmopolitanism, since African people were not considered to be part of the Western enlightenment. In this sense, the term “Afropolitanism” supplements “cosmopolitanism” but provocatively includes the people of Africa and of the southern hemisphere; it also points at the fact that new actors have emerged who are generally better adapted to globalized conditions than Western people because they are used to the colonially imposed mixture of cultures and languages from birth onwards.

The idea of complementing the Western self-understanding with a supplementary one in order to bring about a “One-World” may have been inspired by the Caribbean poet Edouard Glissant, who called for the consideration of “Tout-Monde.” He underlined the inevitable relationality

³ Beck, Ulrich (2010), ‘Risikogesellschaft und die Transnationalisierung sozialer Ungleichheiten’, *ibid.* (ed.), *Große Armut, großer Reichtum. Zur Transnationalisierung sozialer Ungleichheit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, p. 19-40 (19).

and interconnectedness of the parts of this One-World in his seminal text “Poétiques de la relation”⁴ at the beginning of the 1990s. In his view all cultures and their geopolitical “islands” interact with each other, rhizomatically⁵ linked by rhythms of historical and actual repetition and difference much like the islands of the Caribbean archipelago. Edouard Glissant coined the term “cultures composites”⁶ for this relational and hybrid model of cultures, of human existences and the works of art that go with it. He understands this concept as a paradigmatic one for all cultures ever subjugated to colonialism and to historical impositions of other cultures; he believes them to resemble each other with respect to their analogous history and its inevitably multi-layered and hybrid expression, whilst nonetheless differing in the language of their expression and local particularities. Obvious differences can in fact be observed between the English and French-speaking Caribbean islands, whilst the shared common destiny of indigenous heritage has been more or less eliminated, supplemented by cultural imports of African slaves and by different European powers imposing their languages and their different concepts of culture. Whereas French speaking islands developed significant forms of creolization, shifted the accent of French pronunciation and diffracted the entire rhythm of the spoken language so that the colonizer could no longer understand his own idiom, this was not so much the case in the English speaking territories, with their pidgins. When appraising the fact that the colonized subverted the imposed linguistic regime by transferring it into a regional patois or Creole, Glissant had a specific cultural composition in mind which does not exist in the same form on the Anglophone islands. What is important is Glissant’s idea that the aesthetic differences within these cultural compositions, between the appropriated and the newly added or transformed elements, must not be synthesized, must remain audible and visible, and must betray the clashes between the different cultural signs.

⁴ Glissant, Edouard (1990), *Poétiques de la Relation*, Paris: Gallimard.

⁵ Using this term of Deleuze/Guattari, Edouard Glissant calls this conception “une esthétique de la terre, dégagée des naïvetés folkloriques, mais rhizomant dans la connaissance de nos cultures”, Glissant, Edouard, *Poétiques de la Relation*, p. 164.

⁶ Glissant, Edouard (1997), *Traité de Tout-Monde*, Paris: Gallimard.

Keeping together apart – this is the formula of a composite culture in Glissant's sense. He wants to underline the inner tensions within artistic expressions because otherwise a homogenised culture could arise preparing the ground for subsequently organised folklorization and depersonalisation by the State, as Glissant warns. He pleads for a reinforcement of the heterogeneous character of the cultural composition in order to give voice to the divergent cultural layers.

Actualising Glissant's conception, Mbembe focuses on today's increased mixture of cultural elements within any one person's life, and especially in the lives of people from the southern hemisphere. "Afropolitanism" is intended as the name for their form of existence between different places and cultures, for their capacity to combine heterogeneous expressions and for realising "an interlocking of here and somewhere else", a "presence of elsewhere in here." (Mbembe 2016, p. 285)⁷. This description of cultural and spatiotemporal mixtures within a person's or a group's (fragmented) identity and their respective aesthetic stylisations does not include any sort of negativity; on the contrary, it affirms cultural entanglements and highlights the participation of African people in symbolic and economic value creating chains as a timely response to the challenges of globalization.

In its affirmation of personal participation in ubiquitous life style modes, the idea of Afropolitanism is also a compliment to another concept of Achille Mbembe which he unfolds in his *Critique de la Raison Nègre*⁸ (2014) translated into German as "Kritik der schwarzen Vernunft" (note the symptomatic shift of *nègre* to black/*schwarz* in the German translation). In this text, he envisions the "*conditio nigra*" expanding to become the deracialised outset situation of all those who are not participants in economic and symbolic value creation chains, and continue to live in political disregard and medial invisibility. Whereas Afropolitanism highlights self-confident composite-cultural human and artistic existences, the *Critique* speaks of multitudes of fairly poor people who are forced to migrate, to look for jobs in foreign countries, and who do not deliberately

⁷ Mbembe, Achille (2016), *Ausgang aus der langen Nacht*.

⁸ Mbembe, Achille (2014), *Critique de la raison nègre*, Paris: La Découverte.

deal with divergent cultural norms. In his two recent publications, Mbembe seems to focus on two different classes of population who both live composite-cultural identities – one being able to conceive of it as free choice, the other as indispensable for survival.

“Afropolitanism,” which concerns us here, is valued for its timely mode of aesthetic and economic participation, for its expression of personal and artistic empowerment due to forms of appropriation and recombination. Becoming Afropolitan means accepting and intensifying a composite-cultural life, a (de-in)dividuated identity, a permanent intellectual and affective readjustment to varying contexts and their metastable integration into a necessarily dividuated particular style. Afropolitanism is an aesthetic attitude which acknowledges its constitution by local and globalized codes, its mixture of codes, affectivities and attitudes from African and other backgrounds and their innovative amalgamation. It is an attitude of people and contemporary artworks not only from the African continent, but of all aesthetic expressions which are aware of not being culturally pure, of deriving from different sources, appropriating given formats and transforming them in order to provide a timely response. Afropolitanism in a more general sense is the name for a becoming “normal” of cultural composites which cannot easily be identified or classified as “African.”

I wonder if we can nevertheless speak of specific forms of Afropolitan aesthetics or if the fact that its expressions derive from different sources necessarily brings about formal amalgamations lacking a recognisable style. Today, when we all use the current *lingua franca*, the English language, creating new ways of speaking English, we normally do not expose the differences between our idiom and the appropriated one, and the possible tension between their idiomatic expressions. Instead, we try to melt them into one – hiding the “presence of elsewhere in here”, betraying our affirmed alienation only by the errors we commit – and bringing about new accents and expressions in an extended range of pidgins.

A question remains as to how to conceive of the practice of Afropolitanism in artworks and their heterogeneous compositions. How does such an artwork proceed in order to constitute itself within given aesthetic norms and languages while exhibiting the disruptive assemblage of

the appropriated and the newly added elements and their cultural tension? Mbembe provides no further explanation, whereas Glissant interestingly highlights the strategies of “desindividualisation” (Glissant 1990, p. 211) within the practice of creolization. Thanks to the diffractive use of the master idiom, the creole diversifies the French language, which thus loses its individual character. For Glissant, this is an adequate tactic to subvert the official cultural politics representing only individual persons and thereby hindering the perception of their common and non-individual, collective existence. He even calls for an “explosion” of the unified national culture and for an affirmed “dividuation,”⁹ as I would call it: “*La créolisation emporte dans l'ouverture du multilinguisme et dans l'éclatement inouï des cultures. Mais l'éclatement des cultures n'est pas leur éparpillement, ni leur dilution mutuelle. Il est le signe violent de leur partage consenti, non imposé*” (Glissant 1990, p. 47). If I use the term dividuation – a prolongation of the term “dividual” used by Gilles Deleuze¹⁰ in order to describe the non-individual character of time-based film images and their permanent metamorphosis – I am not trying to indicate divisions and exclusions, but the opposite: the term is supposed to translate the conviction that cultural expressions, when they expose the tensions between their culturally heterogeneous elements, should not be named “individuals,” meaning literally “undivided” entities.

Here we come to the heart of our discussion: What does it mean to understand innovative culture tactics not as a form of de(con)struction, but as an “affirmed, non imposed partition (*partage consenti, non imposé*)”? A partition which at the same time means participation and division, being part and maintaining a certain distance, being together and a being apart with/of/from something which is a non-homogeneous composition? What does an artwork look like that does not mirror the fragmentation of former cultural expressions, but provides an aesthetic symbolization of affirmed differences between the participant elements? As far as I understand, creolisation, a certain poetic and decanonizing practice, is the auditive sign

⁹ Ott, Michaela (2018), *Dividuations. Theories of Participation*, London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁰ Deleuze, Gilles (1993), *Cinéma 1. L'Image-Mouvement*, Paris: Ed. De Minuit.

of a non-imposed and affirmed participation of all people within the postcolonial condition of the Caribbean islands.

Before discussing what kind of strategies Afropolitan aesthetics might offer for similar purposes, I would like to question further the concept of “partage” as an essential and seemingly self-contradictory procedure for aesthetic compositions today. For it indicates, on the one hand, the affirmed participation in symbolic, economic and technological systems borrowed from other (mainly Western) cultures and, on the other hand, their necessary diffraction, dividualisation and transformation into particular expressions and aesthetic counter-strategies. This twofold procedure teaches us that participation and dividualisation become possible only when we concede that we are always already imbedded in composite-cultural articulations, in (non-in)dividual semiotic codes and systems of enunciation. This is even more true for a life in the digitalized world, where digital images and sounds whose origin is often unknown to us are appropriated and put together into new cultural composites; such artistic practices are the result of non-imposed and affirmed partitions, bringing about (non-in)dividual articulations and, in the best case, joining them in a loose and epistemologically demanding way. They might stress their affirmed partition, acknowledging their entanglements in culturally different expressions while considering themselves as particular expressions. It is the privilege of artworks to voluntarily de-individualize given canonized forms by exposing their inherent and unnoticed diversity, subverting their universalized norm or their claim of uniqueness and parodying stereotypes by shifting between the actual and virtual status of aesthetic signs, by intensifying the conflicts within a narration and so on. They can criticize forms of negation of cultural codes on both sides and develop a hilarious play with the imposed and affirmed partition and their contradictions. They ask for a scrupulous analyse of their particular form of partition and of their aesthetic dividualisation. I will present a filmic example which is excellent in parodying the own and the imposed cultural tradition at the same time.

I would claim that Afropolitanism has become an exemplary form of symbolic enunciation for self-reflective and affirmed participation in the globalized world. For non-Western cultures Afropolitanism seems the

obligatory form of expression because they have been forced into self-dividuations since colonial times and are used to combining different layers of expression: a local substrate, a nationwide superstrate and a globalized pidgin. In their art practices, they deal with local narratives, and possibly nationalized styles and globalized codes. If they want to realise films, they have to adapt to Western concepts, to economically enforced aesthetic formats and to narrative normings occurring between globalized film industries and TV standards worldwide. Today, Southern discourses respond to this imposition not so much by rejecting them and by exposing their murderous consequences as by appealing for models of expression and for aesthetic patterns to be adapted critically, to be reversed parody-fashion and to be amalgamated with local and globalized codes so that, ultimately, they become new variations of artistic expression without a clear cultural affiliation to be retraced. It is obvious that the concept of composite cultures today embraces different tactics. Of greatest interest are aesthetic forms of encounter that expose their reworkings of patterns and traditional formats, their subversive appropriations of stereotypes or fixed contents in the form of parody, caricature and so forth. We, the inhabitants of the West or the global North, should learn from them: symbolic statements today should aim to act out the given cultural differences, not opposing them to each other, but differentiating them in an aesthetically and epistemologically demanding way.

The curator Okwui Enwezor, who translates Glissant's ideas into the status of contemporary art practices and, much like Mbembe in his concept of Afropolitanism, recommends avoidance of both negative and positive stigmatising as an African or indigenous person or artwork, saying that one should obscure origins as much as possible, thus assuming a post-ethnic identity and avoiding being consigned by the art market to yet another niche (and marketed on that basis.)¹¹ He understands medial and composite-cultural (re)mixes and samplings as an excellent solution to the required constitution for contemporary art, and the best way of not being reduced to a simple African-ness and commodified as such. While Enwezor focuses on

¹¹ Okwui Enwezor (2009), 'Situating Contemporary African Art: Introduction', *ibid.*, *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, Bologna: Damiani, pp. 9-50.

the (post)ethnical condition of the possibility of access to the globalized platforms of art, the cultural theorist Rey Chow concentrates on national cultures, underlining that the concept of culture in itself is a problem.¹² Similarly to Glissant, she highlights the fact that official culture is the result of political interests and of the systematic division of populations into ethnic groups by the state, attributing to them specific cultural practices and privileging certain articulations at the disadvantage of others. She nonetheless claims¹³ that visual or narrative stereotyping may be indispensable for mutual social representation and for the recognisability of groups within a national frame, even if they are not desirable in the sense of producing violence.

Postcolonial recommendations of post-ethnic statements on the one side, of stereotyping on the other: The film *Le complot d'Aristote* (1995) of the Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Pierre Bekolo tries to respond to both. He plays with aesthetic and cultural stereotypes, with artistic formats and filmic norms, and exposes African-ness, or rather an imagined Africa as projected by the West. But the main thrust of his research refers to the question of what African cinema is today and what it can become considering the Western origin of film technology, its globally standardized dramaturgy and the inevitable financialisation of the film by Western production companies. Bekolo develops a sardonic play on the French term “cinéaste” and its English misunderstanding as “silly-ass,” with divergent understandings of high and low cinema and so forth. The film parodies the Aristotelian and Hollywood film dramaturgy and its conception of narrative patterns and of affective aims and casts a critical eye on the status of cinema in Africa and the state of mind of African moviegoers, with digressions on prominent film genres such as Westerns and gangster movies. It also questions the image of Africa stereotypically produced in Western iconographies, and the way it always aims to bring about – in accordance with Aristotle’s poetics – affects

¹² Rey Chow (2002), “‘Brushes with the-Other-as-Face: Stereotyping and Cross-Ethnic Representation’, *ibid.*, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, p. 50-94.

¹³ Rey Chow (1995), ‘On Cultural Studies’, John Rajchman, *The Identity in Question*, New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 251-295.

of pity and fear.



Screen shot from Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film "Aristotle's plot" 1995



Screen shot from Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film "Aristotle's plot" 1995



Screen shot from Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film "Aristotle's plot" 1995



Screen shot from Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film "Aristotle's plot" 1995



Screen shot from Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film "Aristotle's plot" 1995

Documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel has demonstrated not only single artworks, but the whole exhibition trying to become a composite-cultural expression, while defying the commodification of artworks and providing postcolonial perspectives. An exhibition such as documenta 14 is Afropolitan in the sense of being an affirmative partition which keeps together/apart so many different aesthetic statements and such a variety of culturally different expressions that it becomes impossible to synthesise the artworks into a coherent aesthetic or epistemological statement. It may be read as a concentrated and affirmed expression of aesthetic dividualations due to the heterogeneity of the assembled artistic articulations, of their aesthetic interferences with each other and of the tensions arising between them. Giant composite-cultural shows of this kind bring about new problems, namely the question of how to find an aesthetic compromise between the particular cultural compositions and a coherent expression of the whole exhibition, with the intention of intensifying the expression of being/together apart, the interlocking of here and elsewhere and so on.

To conclude, I would like to argue that, after all, we should not strive to define what a dividual cultural composition today should be in order not to produce new generalized aesthetic norms. Instead, we should pay attention to the minimally different expressions of cultural composites, the specific narrations in Afropolitan statements and their loosely coherent articulations. It is precisely the liberation from determined norms and the affirmed cultural entanglements which foster Afropolitan aesthetics. They can, of course, be realized in different complex ways and are not always heightened to the kind of parodistic game which Bekolo's film succeeds in unfolding. Afropolitan artworks will differ in their decisions on how to moderate their dividual character and how to accentuate the tensions between their components, including in relation to other globalized works of art.

As people of the West and the northern hemisphere, we should discover that we are necessarily part of these statements; therefore we should affirm our inevitable partition in the articulations of others and start to determine and to moderate our destiny of dividuality. This represents the only way not to lose our aesthetic particularity and our personal coherence within the contemporary normalities of continuous (in)voluntary dividuality.

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Kant's Ideal of Beauty as the Symbol of the Morally Good and as a Source of Aesthetic Normativity

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ABSTRACT². Kant claims in §59 of his *Critique of Judgement* that beauty is the symbol of the morally good because the mode of reflection in judgements of beauty is analogous to the mode of reflection in moral judgements. Contrary to common interpretations that often neglect differentiations between kinds of purposiveness, I interpret §59 in light of §17 and argue that the beauty Kant has in mind when talking of the symbol of the morally good is the ideal of beauty rather than merely free beauty. My attempt to make sense of both of the notoriously complex paragraphs (§17 and §59) not only solves the problem of integrating §17 into Kant's aesthetic theory but also reveals that while Kant's aesthetic and moral theories are not as dissociated from one another as is often suggested, they are still sufficiently independent from one another so as not to jeopardise their respective autonomies. I show this by relating kinds of freedom with kinds of purposiveness and by interpreting the freedom involved in the judgement of the ideal of beauty as the perfection of the freedom involved in the judgement of free beauty. By showing that the internal objective purposiveness of the ideal of beauty has a moral analogue, whereas the formal subjective purposiveness of free beauty does not, it is possible to show how the morally good can be expressed aesthetically through the ideal of beauty – i.e., through the 'human figure'. Moreover, this interpretation shows that the normative validity of moral judgements and of judgements of beauty can be grounded on internal objective purposiveness employed as a constitutive and as a mere regulative principle of reflection, respectively, without compromising the role of free play of the cognitive faculties in grounding judgements of beauty in general.

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² More details on my argument presented here can be found in my 2014 University of Leeds PhD thesis, where I analyse the 18th-century notion of moral beauty and from which this paper evolved; see Plato (2017) *The Aesthetic Expression of Moral Character: Moral Beauty in the Eighteenth Century*, Münster: mentis Verlag.

1. Introduction

Kant claims in §59 of his *Critique of Judgement* that beauty is the symbol of the morally good.³ He grounds this claim on the thought that the mode of reflection in judgements of beauty is analogous to the mode of reflection in moral judgements. One of the analogies that Kant draws attention to is the freedom of the cognitive faculties and of the will involved in judgements of beauty and moral judgements, respectively. By looking into the details of this analogy and its role in Kant's notion of symbolization, I argue that, contrary to standard interpretation (e.g., Guyer 1993, Allison 2001, or Recki 2001), the beauty Kant refers to in this claim is a kind of adherent beauty rather than free beauty. I argue that we must interpret §59 in light of Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty that he mentions in §17. This is because Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty is defined by using the same kind of freedom – internal objective purposiveness⁴ – that is used to define the moral agent. Judgements of free beauty, on the other hand, require the free play of the cognitive faculties, which involves formal subjective purposiveness that has no role to play in moral judgements. Consequently, the mode of reflection involved in judgements of the ideal of beauty, rather than the mode of reflection involved in judgements of free beauty, is analogous to the mode of reflection involved in moral judgements. Therefore, the ideal of beauty, rather than simply free beauty is the symbol of the morally good.

This conclusion is important because it reveals that Kant's aesthetics and morality have a common source of normativity, namely, internal objective purposiveness. The crucial qualification, however, is that while internal objective purposiveness is employed as a mere regulative principle of cognition in judgements of beauty, it is employed as a constitutive principle of cognition in moral judgements. This, I argue, distinguishes the source of aesthetic normativity from that of moral normativity. This is why

³ All references to Kant's works are to the pagination of the Akademie edition (Kant 1902ff) included in the following translations: *KU*, for: *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Kant 1790/2000), *CPR* for: *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1781/1998), and *GMM* for: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1785/1996).

⁴ For details on 'purposiveness', see part 4 below.

the ideal of beauty is merely a symbol of the morally good rather than identical with it.

As I will discuss in detail in this paper, Kant's distinction between regulative and constitutive principles of cognition enables him to explain how the morally good can, despite not being identical with the ideal of beauty, still have an aesthetic expression (i.e., a symbol) *through* the ideal of beauty. The perfect moral agent – who is surely as much an ideal as the ideal of beauty – acts according to the self-imposed laws of practical rationality, i.e. according to internal objective purposiveness.⁵ The phenomenal appearance, i.e. the effect, of moral action is what Kant calls the 'visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings' (*KU*, 5: 235-236). In its idealized perfection, this 'visible expression' of the moral agent is the empirically perceivable 'human figure' (*KU*, 5: 235). The actual empirical perception of this 'human figure' is, as its idealized status already suggests, surely only achieved in approximation. Yet, the concept of the empirically perceivable 'human figure', even if never, or only rarely achieved, is necessary to secure the possibility of perfection. As I will further explain in detail below, the judgement of the ideal of beauty is (similarly rarely) achieved when the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties is *regulated* by the principle of internal objective purposiveness – the very same principle that *constitutively* determines the moral law that becomes available for a judgement of beauty though the performance of moral action.

Besides discussing why Kant's thesis that beauty is the symbol of the morally good is best interpreted by including the ideal of beauty as presented in §17, I will also highlight and solve a major problem that this interpretation creates. The inclusion of §17 in interpreting Kant's account of judgements of beauty faces an almost insurmountable challenge: how is it possible to ground judgements of beauty on both the formal subjective purposiveness that is characteristic of the *undetermined* free play of the

⁵ The fact that moral perfection is a mere ideal is an important qualification that should not be ignored when trying to make sense of the aesthetic (i.e., phenomenal) yet ideal (i.e., intelligible) nature of an ideal of beauty (I say more on this in the conclusion of this paper).

cognitive faculties and on the internal objective purposiveness that is characteristic of the *determined* ideal of beauty? This problem is best avoided by dismissing Kant's thoughts of §17 and by suggesting that free beauty symbolizes the morally good. As I will show and criticize below, this is the route that authoritative Kant commentators have taken in order to safeguard free play as the essence of Kant's account of judgements of beauty.

I will argue that this common move obscures the most interesting connection Kant makes between aesthetics and morality, namely that both, judgements of beauty and moral judgements, rest on internal objective purposiveness as a shared source of normativity and that the moral agent thereby has an aesthetic expression through the 'human figure'. I will then explain how it is possible to maintain formal subjective purposiveness, i.e. the free play of the cognitive faculties, as the fundamental requirement for judgements of beauty and, at the same time, include Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty into his aesthetic theory.

The benefits of including §17 into Kant's aesthetic theory should be obvious: first, it contributes to the internal coherence of the *Critique of Judgement*, second, it gives a more holistic account of the interaction between the aesthetic and the moral values that we, as humans, have, and third, it is the only possible way to make sense of §17 and §59. These two paragraphs are only intelligible if we interpret them conjunctively, since each contains incomplete arguments concerning the aesthetic presentation of moral ideas and since each is completed when combined with the other. Interpreting §59 in light of free beauty rather than in light of the ideal of beauty, as most commentators do, either questions the coherence of Kant's aesthetic theory or requires us to ignore §17 altogether, both of which I would like to avoid by combining §17 with §59.

2. Hypotyposis and the Analogy between Modes of Reflection (§59)

Let me begin by outlining Kant's symbol thesis as presented in §59. Kant starts by referring to what he calls hypotyposis, by which he means the

presentation of concepts in the sensible world so as to demonstrate the objective reality and validity (i.e. empirical meaningfulness) of the concepts in question.

Hypotyposis is a cognitive process that works either through what Kant calls schematization or through what he calls symbolization in order to link concepts with intuitions (i.e. sense-impressions) and thereby yield cognitive judgements through which either the objective reality of concepts is demonstrated or through which intuitions are 'exposed', i.e. given their conceptual form. Concepts that cannot be linked to intuitions are, according to Kant, indemonstrable (or simply 'blind'), whereas intuitions that cannot be linked to concepts are inexponible (or simply 'empty') (*KU*, 5: 342-343). Hypotyposis, i.e. linking concepts with intuitions in a rule-governed manner is, therefore, an essential element of any meaningful cognition according to Kant's epistemology.⁶

This view of cognition is a result of Kant's dichotomy between the intelligible and the phenomenal worlds, i.e. the opposition between the world of pure concepts that our faculty of understanding (*Verstand*) can grasp and the world of sensation that is grasped by our faculty of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*). The intelligible and the phenomenal worlds are linked together in cognition by way of hypotyposis through the faculties of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and reason (*Vernunft*). These faculties provide the principles for synthesizing sensations or intuitions and concepts that are then brought to the conscious mind of the reflecting person by the faculty of apperception. Without going into great details of Kant's epistemic framework, let me just mention a few essential differentiations in order to contextualize the relevant aspects of hypotyposis.

Concepts of the understanding, i.e. most concepts that we use, or 'tree' to take a particular example, are processed by schematization rather than symbolization. This is because schematization of empirical concepts is demonstrative, i.e. it uses empirical sense intuition to directly represent the concept in question. The objective reality of the empirical concept 'tree', for instance, is demonstrated by examples, i.e. by the corresponding empirical

⁶ On these basic epistemic principles also see (*CPR* A51/B75, A239-240/B298-299, and A240-242/B299-300).

sense intuition of a tree that we perceive when looking at a tree. In other words, when cognizing a tree the sensory intuition of a tree is assigned to the concept of 'tree', thereby combining the intelligible world of concepts with the sensible world and thus allowing us to have an apperception of a tree.

In contrast to those concepts that can be demonstrated by way of examples, there are concepts that do not have a corresponding sensory intuition, such as immortality, God, or, most importantly for the present purposes, freedom. These are not concepts of the understanding but rather pure concepts of reason, as Kant calls them. There is no corresponding intuition that could be assigned to them in order to demonstrate their objective reality. For these concepts, schematization, i.e. direct presentation, does therefore not work. Hence, Kant argues that pure concepts of reason must be presented indirectly, i.e. by symbolization rather than by schematization.⁷

The cognitive process of symbolization does not work by demonstration since there is no corresponding intuition. Symbolization, according to Kant, works by analogy rather than by demonstration. Analogy here involves a 'double task' of the power of judgement: first, the application of a concept to an object of sense intuition and, second, the rule of reflection of this intuition is applied to another object (*KU*, 5: 352). As an example of presentation by symbolization, i.e. by analogy, Kant suggests that the concept of a despotic state (which, of course, has no corresponding sensory intuition) can be symbolized by a hand-mill. The way one reflects on the workings of a despotic state and the way one reflects on the workings

⁷ Controversies regarding the precise distinction between symbolization and schematization should not automatically damage the argument of this paper as long as a distinction between direct and indirect presentation is maintained. A more serious problem arises when hypotyposis is interpreted in a pragmatist way, as Jennifer McMahon (2014) does. She attributes the normative justification of the objective validity of concepts to a version of Habermasian community communicability. While McMahon's extremely valuable thoughts might be appealing to modern ears, I would like to resist applying her interpretation to an historical analysis of Kant's theory of taste because a pragmatist interpretation distorts the kind of realism that I think Kant intended to convey through his moral and aesthetic theories. I will discuss McMahon's pragmatist interpretation of Kant's aesthetic reflective judgement and its link to morality in more detail elsewhere.

of a hand-mill are, so Kant says, analogous.

The hand-mill example and the 'double task' of judgement point to the most important difference between hypotyposis by schematization (i.e. by demonstration) and hypotyposis by symbolization (i.e. by analogy). It is the difference between constitutive principles and regulative principles of cognition. Hypotyposis by schematization uses concepts as constitutive principles, i.e. the concepts determine the constitutive content of sensory intuition. The sensory intuition of a tree only gets its 'tree' content, its form, that is, because the concept 'tree' is applied constitutively to the respective sensory intuition.

Hypotyposis by symbolization, on the other hand, uses concepts merely as regulative principles. Regulative principles of cognition are heuristic rather than ostensive, i.e. they do not tell us anything about the constitutive conceptual content of an object, but rather determine the way we are to reflect about an object so as to achieve cognition of it.⁸ Regulative principles thereby determine the manner in which the understanding and the imagination relate to each other in order to give meaning to (i.e. demonstrate the objective reality and validity of) either an intuition that has no corresponding concept (i.e. an inexponible intuition) or a concept that has no corresponding sensible intuition (i.e. an indemonstrable concept).

This regulative use of concepts is an implication of the way in which analogous rules of reflection are put to use in the symbolization process: the analogy is meant to hold between the rules of reflection of the symbolized and the symbolizing objects rather than between the conceptual or sensory content of these objects. The constitutive content of the symbolized object is not what connects the symbol with the symbolized object. It is the 'isomorphism' between the modes of reflection – as Henry Allison (2001: 255) calls this particular Kantian analogy – that legitimizes, according to §59, the link between the symbol and the symbolized object.

Let me now apply these general building blocks to beauty and the morally good. To explain his claim that beauty is the symbol of the morally

⁸ For Kant on regulative principles, see (*CPR* A516/B544 and A563-4/B591-2). For a discussion of the regulative principle in relation to aesthetic experience see Recki (2008: 204) and Chignell (2007: 419).

good, Kant highlights in §59 four analogies between the modes of reflection in judgements of beauty and moral judgements that are supposed to serve as the basis of the morally good being 'made sensible', i.e. presented by way of symbolization. I will focus on what I think is the deepest and most fundamental of those four analogies – the one regarding freedom:

The freedom of the imagination (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of the beautiful as in accord with the lawfulness of the understanding (in the moral judgment the freedom of the will is conceived as the agreement of the latter with itself in accordance with universal laws of reason). (*KU*, 5: 354)

Here Kant highlights the analogy between the freedom in judgements of beauty and the freedom in moral judgements. A differentiation between various kinds of freedom involved in judgements of beauty and in the moral law, respectively, will not only show what exactly is analogous and what is not, but it will also reveal why Kant claims in §17 that beauty expresses moral ideas.

Before going into the deeper details of freedom, it should be reiterated that the purpose of drawing attention to the four analogies, and thus to freedom, is that they serve as the basis of hypotyposis by symbolization. And hypotyposis by symbolization, as just explained, is supposed to 'make sensible' a pure concept of reason, which is why Kant says in §60 that 'taste is at bottom a faculty for the sensible rendering of moral ideas' (*KU*, 5: 356). Considering the difference between constitutive and regulative principles in hypotyposis, 'making sensible' here, of course, does not mean pairing sensible intuition with a concept of the understanding (as in direct presentation of schematization). It rather means regulating our cognitive faculties in such a manner that what we perceive through sensible intuition is perceived in a way that implies an agreement with the regulative principle that is given by the pure concept of reason that is to be symbolized by that sensible intuition.

The thought in Kant's symbol thesis is that the pure concept of reason of 'the morally good' is the one that beauty is supposed to 'make

sensible'. In other words, whatever concept of reason the morally good is, this is supposed to structure, i.e. regulate, the way we are to perceive sensible intuition. It is well known that the morally good, according to Kant is freedom of the will, i.e. the will in accordance with the laws of practical rationality (*GMM*, 4:385-4:463). It would follow, then, that the laws of practical rationality, determine as regulative principles, or, to put it less deterministically, *agree* with the rules of reflection that are used in judgements of beauty.⁹

Yet, Kant uses the notion of purposiveness, rather than a direct reference to the laws of practical rationality, in order to describe what the regulative principle is that regulates our mode of reflection in judgements of beauty. Despite saying that beauty is the symbol of the morally good in virtue of analogies between modes of reflection, the reason why Kant does not refer directly to the laws of practical rationality in order to describe what the regulative principle in judgements of beauty is, is that he aims at the laws of practical rationality in general, rather than at any particular law of practical rationality. Were Kant to take a particular law of practical rationality that is constitutive of a particular moral good, this would unduly restrict the mode of reflection for judgements of beauty to that particular law of practical rationality. Aiming at the moral law in general (i.e., at self-imposed autonomy) requires a concept like purposiveness that captures this in general terms.

So, the reference to freedom in Kant's symbol thesis of §59 involves two key thoughts that need to be further analysed: first, in what way are our cognitive faculties regulated, and second, at what point in that regulation process does the law of practical rationality (or a reformulation of these laws in terms of purposiveness) function as regulatory instance? Analysing these thoughts will provide the distinctions required to understand how the symbolization makes use of the concept of freedom or purposiveness as an

⁹ Here, of course, the conceptual space between determination and agreement highlights the challenge of spelling out what 'regulation' in the Kantian regulative principle of cognition really means and implies and to what extent, if at all, the rules of reflection are determined by concepts, intuitions, or the synthesis thereof and vice versa; I am working on this in my current research on the aesthetics of law that is inspired by the normative and self-legislative nature of the Kantian free play of the cognitive faculties.

analogous feature between the two modes of reflection. This will show how different kinds of beauty involve slightly different notions of freedom or purposiveness that are not all analogous to freedom of the will. Kant thereby gives room for beauties that are not morally expressive and thus allows for beauties that are independent of morality.

The complexity and prima-facie unintelligibility of Kant's symbol thesis is primarily due to Kant's many differentiations of kinds of beauty that all involve different notions of freedom or purposiveness so that they cannot all be fed into his symbol thesis. Let me therefore briefly characterize these kinds of beauty.

3. Differentiations between Kinds of Beauty

The two major kinds of beauty that Kant distinguishes are free or pure beauty on the one hand and adherent beauty on the other. Much confusion results from not keeping these two kinds of beauty apart.¹⁰ We must therefore distinguish the kinds of freedom that each of these two kinds of judgement of beauty involves. This will show why I think §17 is indispensable for a proper understanding of Kant's symbol thesis of §59. The ideal of beauty referred to in §17 is, as Kant says, a *fixed* kind of beauty – i.e. an adherent beauty rather than a free beauty. Besides a brief comment by Henry Allison (2001: 143 and 236-276), highlighting that the ideal of beauty is a kind of adherent beauty adhering to the rational idea of morality, this detail has not received appropriate attention in the literature.¹¹

The fact that Kant does not specify which kind of beauty is symbolizing the morally good requires one to assess potential candidates. My interpretation that it is the ideal of beauty contrasts with the standard interpretation suggesting that free beauty symbolizes the morally good.

¹⁰ Even more confusion arises when conflating Kant's other aesthetic judgements, the agreeable and the sublime, with the beautiful. For brevity, I will leave Kant's link between the sublime and the moral aside and discuss this in a separate paper.

¹¹ For some discussion that is very informative but fails to do justice to the benefits of combining §17 with §59 see, e.g. Guyer (1993, 1997, 2005, and 2006), Wenzel (2006) Kemal (1998), Makkreel (1998) Zammito (1992) Zuckert (2005) Kuhlenkampff (1994: 234), Menke (2008), and Rueger and Evren (2005).

Among those, Birgit Recki's analysis of the symbol thesis is the most thorough analysis of the issue as it goes into the details of what kind of freedom and what kind of beauty Kant might have intended to use for his symbol thesis (Recki 1998, 2001:170-171, and 2008). As the following passages show, Paul Guyer and Henry Allison, respectively, have equally been explicit in using free or pure beauty as the candidate for the symbol thesis:

The experience of beauty is a symbol of morality precisely because it is an experience of the freedom of the imagination from any constraint by concepts, including the concept of the morally right and good themselves. (Guyer 2005: 239; also see 2005: 186)

The pure judgment of taste does not make a valid demand on others because it symbolizes morality, but rather it is because of the "purity" underlying the validity of its demand that it symbolizes morality. (Allison 2001: 267; also see 2001: 255 and 263)

Stefan Bird-Pollan (2013: 141-149), on the other hand, takes Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty more seriously by considering that its necessary link to the morally good might help us avoid the morally problematic objectifying aestheticization of human beings when we apply judgements of free beauty to persons.¹² Yet, like most commentators analysing §17, Bird-Pollan also prefers to eventually dismiss the ideal of beauty for the sake of the popularized view that Kantian judgements of beauty contain the free play of the cognitive faculties and can therefore supposedly not be as tightly linked to morality as §17 and the ideal of beauty would suggest.

Jane Kneller also tries to accommodate Kant's ideal of beauty into Kant's moral theory rather than dismissing it. Yet, she explicitly denies that

¹² For an argument suggesting that there are moral reasons not to apply judgements of free beauty to human beings, see Schmalzried (2014). I agree with Schmalzried that judgements of human beauty must always be judgements of dependent beauty. Yet, as I will discuss elsewhere, Schmalzried's combination of moral and aesthetic judgements in this argument unnecessarily compromises the autonomy of aesthetic judgement. I think that Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty contains a more direct reason that is internal to aesthetic judgement and precludes judging human beauty as free beauty.

the ideal of beauty can function as a symbol of morality. She says that the ideal of beauty is a mere artistic 'model' of the human being and 'it is not the re-application of a rule appropriate to one object to an entirely different object, as in the case of the hand-mill that symbolizes the state' (Kneller 1991: 673; also see 2007: 53-55). Kneller's reasoning ignores that, as I will show below, the ideal of beauty does contain – as its second element – a re-application of the moral law, i.e. of the 'ends of humanity' as a regulative principle of cognition (*KU*, 5: 235-236). Kneller might be right that the object of application – the human being – is not an 'entirely different' one. Yet, the distinction between the human being as a moral agent (i.e. the moral will) and the human being as the aesthetic appearance of moral agency (i.e. the ideal of beauty) secures sufficient differentiating criteria (namely, intelligible vs. phenomenal) so as to satisfy the rules of hypotyposis by symbolization – this holds despite the fact that ideals are seldom phenomenally perceivable. It is important to note that the mode of reflection is re-applied as a mere regulative principle of cognition rather than as a constitutive one, which, indeed, differs from the hand-mill example, but which secures the aesthetic nature of the symbolizing object.

In order to show why the notion of the ideal of beauty should not be dismissed and that it is the only candidate for Kant's symbol thesis of §59 let me highlight which kinds of freedom are involved in the various kinds of beauty. This will lead me to the required distinctions between various kinds of purposiveness that inseparably go hand in hand with the kinds of freedom.

The freedom involved in judgements of free beauty is the one that is paradigmatic and famous for Kant's theory of beauty: the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties. The pleasure that we feel when the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding are in harmonious free play with each other is what makes us judge the perceived sensory intuition to be beautiful. Kant famously centres his theory of beauty – free beauty, that is – on four moments, as he calls them, which constitute such a judgement. Judgements of free beauty are subjective, universally valid, purposive, and necessary. These four moments are all implied by what it is for our cognitive faculties to be in harmonious free play. It is not my primary aim

here to explain the nature and role of each of these four moments or what it means for the cognitive faculties to be in free play with each other.¹³ My aim here is to shed light on the issue by focusing on Kant's differentiations between kinds of purposiveness that are another way to conceptualise the kinds of freedom that Kant connects to different kinds of beauty.¹⁴

Adherent beauty is the beauty of particular objects considered as instances of a specified object, e.g. gardens, houses, horses, or, most importantly for the present purposes, of human beings. Adherent beauty is also the beauty of artworks *as* artworks; and Kant discusses the value of various art forms in great detail. Particular objects may well be judged to have free (i.e. pure) beauty. Yet, such a judgement must not take into account the categorization of that object under a particular concept (*KU*, 5: 231). The important aspect that needs to be highlighted is that judgements of adherent beauty are not pure judgements of taste since they involve considering the object of perception in relation to the perfection of the kind of object it is. The better an object fulfils its purpose, i.e. the closer to perfection it is, the more beautiful it is, adherently beautiful, that is. This obviously calls for a thorough analysis of the precise nature and role of purposiveness in Kant's theory of beauty.

In contrast to his theory of free beauty, Kant's theory of adherent beauty is much closer to other theories of taste of his time as it adopts the reference to perfection of the object as a standard that is to be approximated. The free play of the cognitive faculties is thereby restricted since the perceived object has been determined by the application of a concept. What kind of freedom Kant thought would still prevail between the cognitive faculties, despite this initial determination to a particular object, is even more difficult to interpret than how the free play itself is supposed to bring the cognitive faculties into harmony with each other – suffice to say that free play must be present to some extent in any kind of judgement of beauty.

¹³ For Kant on free play, see e.g., *KU*, 5: 217, and *KU*, 5: 240-244. The probably most extensive analysis of free play is Wachter (2006); but also see Guyer (1997 and 2008), Allison (2001: 288 and 386), Rogerson (2008: 162), or Fricke (1990: 134).

¹⁴ Surely, there is much more to the relation between freedom and purposiveness that would need to be spelled out in order to make my argument more complete. I devote some research to this relation in a forthcoming paper.

Kant's theory of genius and how art is created by geniuses and therefore still open to free play would probably need to be addressed in detail in order to adequately describe the extent to which free play is involved in judgements of adherent beauty (*KU*, 5: 313-318). Without going into these details, however, I wish to continue looking at the kinds of purposiveness involved in differing kinds of beauty.

4. Differentiations between Kinds of Purposiveness

In general, purposiveness means that an object has an end or final cause – i.e. it denotes in general terms that there is a reason in virtue of which something exists or is done. To mention only the most basic distinctions, this reason for being can be subjectively grounded or objectively grounded; it can be internally grounded or externally grounded. Most objects have *objective* purposiveness due to their determination by concepts of the faculty of the understanding. Moreover, most objects have *external* objective purposiveness. The purpose of a pen, for example, is objective since the reason for being of a pen is grounded in the concept that determines a pen to be a pen. The pen's purpose is external since pens are objects of use; they serve a function external to their being. Objects that have internal objective purposiveness have their reason of being in their own perfection; they are self-grounded. Humans have such internal objective purposiveness, Kant suggests. For any objective purposiveness the concepts contain the end or purpose of the object, since concepts determine the 'ground of the possibility of the object' (*KU*, 5: 227). Subjective purposiveness involves no conceptualization and is based on, e.g. pleasure that can be internal (within the subject) or external (for other people's pleasure).

The free play of the cognitive faculties in judgements of free beauty involves what Kant calls 'subjective purposiveness without an end'. Purposiveness without an end is merely the form of purposiveness rather than some particular or *material* purposiveness, as Kant also calls it. Hence the kind of purposiveness that free play contains is '*formal* subjective purposiveness' (*KU*, 5: 220-221, 5: 228, and 5: 361). The understanding

does not determine the law or the end of the free activity of the imagination, i.e. no concepts (which would bring in objectivity) have determined the end of free play. The pleasure that arises from that harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties is not the end or purpose of free play but rather a concomitant occurrence of it, through which we judge the perceived manifold to be an object of beauty (*KU*, 5: 221). Nevertheless the imagination is not without a law; it has a lawfulness that still corresponds to the laws of the understanding without actually being determined to a particular law by the understanding (*KU*, 5: 228, also see Ginsborg 1997). Were the understanding to restrict the imagination to a particular law of association by applying a particular concept to an intuition, this would determine the purpose of what is being perceived to a particular end – and hence create ‘objective purposiveness’. In other words, no cognition or hypotyposis takes place during free play, which accounts for the aesthetic purity of judgements of free beauty.

The notion of purposiveness without an end therefore directly points to transcendental freedom, i.e. the self-given rules that determine the mode of reflection (free play, that is) during judgements of free beauty.¹⁵ This is what motivates Recki (2001: 155-177) to locate the analogy between beauty and the morally good in transcendental freedom, since the morally good equally involves such self-given law. In contrast to free beauty, adherent beauty involves purposiveness with an end, namely the end that is determined by what the concept that is applied to the intuition during cognition presents the object as being. Adherent beauty therefore has objective purposiveness, which is internal or external depending on whether the end is grounded in the object itself or in its utility. Such beauty is therefore closely dependent on the extent to which an object attains the end, i.e. to the degree of how perfect it is in relation to its end. This brings us to Kant’s notion of the ideal of beauty, which has as its end an internal objective purposiveness.

¹⁵ Again, as with the relation between purposiveness and freedom, the notion of transcendental freedom is complex; and I devote more space to it in my current research on the aesthetics of law.

5. The Ideal of Beauty (§17)

The ideal of beauty is the ‘highest model, the archetype of taste [...] in accordance with which [one] must judge everything that is an object of taste or that is an example of judging through taste’ (*KU*, 5: 232). This suggests that any judgement of beauty assumes an archetype of beauty that serves as an exemplar that needs to be approximated; and the aesthetic value will be scaled according to the degree of approximation towards such an ideal of beauty.

An ideal, according to Kant, is ‘the representation of an individual as being adequate to an idea’ (*KU*, 5: 232). An idea, in turn, is a concept of reason and points to the maximum or the perfection of the kind of object it denotes. In this vein, the idea of beauty, Kant suggests, points to the maximum, to perfection of beauty. The maximum in matters of taste, however, cannot be based on concepts since judgements of beauty are, within Kant’s theory of taste, only experienced subjectively and result from the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties, rather than being based on an objective principle of reason. Thus, a representation of the idea of beauty while being based on ‘reason’s indeterminate idea of a maximum’ is an ‘ideal of the imagination’ rather than of reason (*KU*, 5: 232). Thus, the ideal of beauty is, strictly speaking, not the representation of a rational idea or concept of reason. It rather is the representation of an aesthetic idea that, while being based on the indeterminate idea of a maximum and thus anchored in reason, still depends on the imagination rather than merely on reason. The idea of beauty is the aesthetic counterpart of an idea (a concept) of reason – it thereby is something that regulates our reflective judgement so as to be able to achieve, not theoretical cognition, but rather a judgement of beauty – that, admittedly, contains elements of theoretical cognition to the extent that it is or contains a judgement of adherent beauty.

Kant might seem to aim at what appears to be impossible within his own theory of beauty: the perfection of beauty that serves as a standard or exemplar in relation to which other beauties will be scaled. And in fact Kant proposes that various art forms contain varying degrees of aesthetic value depending on the extent to which the art forms approach this ideal (*KU*, 5:

320-325). It is difficult to say whether the scale really is orientated towards the approximation of perfection or towards the highest level of freedom in free play.

The reference to such perfection of beauty creates a tension with the purity of free beauty. What criterion counts more: purity or perfection? Or, to frame the same question differently, is the purity of beauty as a result of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties higher in aesthetic value than the perfection of beauty according to this ideal of beauty? It is probably due to his own doubts about the issue that Kant chooses to put more emphasis on free play as the essential criterion for the universal validity of judgements of beauty rather than on perfection. Although very reluctant to provide an objective rule of taste, Kant suggests in §17 that the ideal of beauty is 'the empirical criterion of the derivation of taste' (*KU*, 5: 232). Yet, he admits that this criterion is 'weak and hardly sufficient for conjecture' (*KU*, 5: 232), making his discussion of the ideal of beauty look almost futile. This explains why most commentators chose to sideline the ideal of beauty.

Rather than dismissing the ideal of beauty, I would like to highlight that the tension between perfection (i.e. the ideal of beauty) and purity (i.e. free play) arises due to the seeming incompatibility between the indeterminateness of free play and the determinateness of perfection. I would further like to propose that the tension between perfection and purity could be resolved by suggesting that the perfection of free play is its maximum freedom, which directly leads us to the maximum freedom that we find in the moral law, namely, self-determination, i.e. heautonomy. I would suggest that the judgement of the ideal of beauty requires the kind of transcendental freedom that is not only present *as an ideal* (a regulative principle) in moral autonomy but also in the free play of the cognitive faculties.

The reference to heautonomy approaches Recki's interpretation of transcendental freedom. Yet, Recki resists interpreting transcendental freedom in terms of the ideal of beauty when it comes to Kant's symbol thesis. She prefers to keep free beauty as the candidate for symbolization since the ideal of beauty would threaten the purely sensible nature of the

aesthetic side of the symbol analogy.¹⁶ I think this threat can be neglected when the freedom that leads to judgements of the ideal of beauty is conceived of as the perfection of free play and when highlighting that a merely regulative principle of cognition does not determine the *content* of the perception but merely the mode of reflection.

It is a defining feature of free play that it is not determined by any particular end, nor is it without any law whatsoever. The law that it follows is supposed to be in accordance with the laws of the understanding, which follows from what it is for free play to be purposive rather than without any purposiveness whatsoever. Saying that free play contains formal subjective purposiveness is perfectly compatible with saying that the perfection of free play contains internal objective purposiveness since the perfection of free play is a particular determination that has been determined by the free, self-active, internally determined spontaneous stimulation of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties. As long as this internal objective purposiveness is merely a regulative principle of cognition rather than a constitutive one, the understanding has not determined the cognitive content of the reflective process but has rather enabled the imagination to be in harmony with the understanding without having destroyed the indeterminateness that is essential to free play.¹⁷

Keeping in mind this solution to the seeming incompatibility between purity (i.e. free play) and perfection (i.e. the ideal of beauty), let me say more about the most complex details of the ideal of beauty and why I think this makes it the only candidate that can be used in Kant's symbol thesis of §59. The ideal of beauty requires two ingredients in order to be presented as an ideal: first, a sensible intuition and second, an idea of reason (*KU*, 5: 233). The sensible intuition in question is called the aesthetic normal idea; and the idea of reason here, I would say, is what Kant means by internal objective purposiveness. The relevant passage regarding these two ingredients reads as follows:

¹⁶ As Recki suggested to me in conversation (Hamburg, 25th January 2013); also see Recki (2001).

¹⁷ For an alternative interpretation highlighting the differences rather than the interconnectedness between free and adherent beauties, see Feger (1995: 177).

There are two elements involved here [i.e. in the human being as the ideal of beauty]: first, the aesthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination) that represents the standard for judging it as a thing belonging to a particular species of animal; second, the idea of reason, which makes the ends of humanity insofar as they cannot be sensibly represented into the principle for the judging of its figure, through which, as their effect in appearance, the former are revealed. (*KU*, 5: 233)

The first ingredient, the aesthetic normal idea, is an empirical intuition that results from aggregating all perceptions of particular instances of what is judged beautiful. Kant likens this to averaging the sizes of a thousand men in order to get the normal size of men. While Kant admits that this aesthetic normal idea can be culturally relative, as it depends on empirical intuition, the important function of that empirical intuition is that it makes the actuality of the second ingredient, the idea of reason as regulative principle, possible. This is comparable to the sensible intuition of a tree giving objective validity to the concept of a tree. The crucial difference here, however, is that the concept 'tree' functions as a constitutive rather than as a merely regulative principle of cognition.

Without a sensible intuition, our modes of reflection need not be regulated and the second ingredient would be 'blind'. Without the concept of reason, the sensible intuition cannot be processed and would remain 'empty'. Hence, the second ingredient, internal objective purposiveness, is a concept of reason that regulates the way we are to process the sensible intuition. Internal objective purposiveness is the only concept of reason that is able to maintain the indeterminate free play of the cognitive faculties as it contains the end of its existence within itself rather than being determined by or for a particular end. Any other concept – Kant mentions, among other concepts, the concept of a beautiful garden – does not contain its purpose within itself and is therefore inadequate for regulating the rules of reflection that the ideal of beauty requires. We must not forget that although internal objective purposiveness is a concept of reason, it is only employed

regulatively in this instance and does thereby not lead to theoretical cognition but rather remains an element of aesthetic reflection – and secures the autonomy of aesthetic judgements.

We can now understand that the ideal of beauty is, as mentioned above, ‘the representation of an individual as being adequate to an idea’ (*KU*, 5: 232), to the idea of beauty, in this case. Whatever this individual is, it must have objective purposiveness. Moreover, this objective purposiveness must be internal rather than external since the purposiveness of the idea of beauty is contained within itself. It is part of the definition of free play that it is self-determined, i.e. autonomous, rather than heteronomous, i.e. determined by external reasons. Kant tells us in §17 that only the human being as moral agent is self-determined in this way and that therefore the sensible appearance of the human being, the ‘human figure’ as Kant calls it, is the only candidate for an ideal of beauty. Regarding the human figure Kant says:

In the latter [the human figure] the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, without which the object would not please universally and moreover positively (not merely negatively in an academically correct presentation). The visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings, can of course be drawn only from experience; but as it were to make visible in bodily manifestation (as the effect of what is inward) their combination with everything that our understanding connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest purposiveness – goodness of soul, or purity, or strength, or repose, etc. – this requires pure ideas of reason and great force of imagination united in anyone who would merely judge them, let alone anyone who would present them. (*KU*, 5: 235-236)

The thought that the human figure is the aesthetic expression of the moral law that governs the human agent goes beyond the mere analogy between beauty and the morally good that §59 interpreted on its own would suggest. Interpreted on its own, §59 would lack the resources to analyse what really is analogous to each other, since the terms ‘beauty’ and ‘freedom’ that are central for the argument are insufficiently specified. Only by looking at

what kind of specification is needed in order to make sense of the analogy claim of §59 does the necessity to include §17 and the reference to the human figure become obvious. Conversely, the reason why the expression claim contained in §17 can hold in this way is only intelligible by taking into account what Kant says about hypotyposis in §59 since hypotyposis unpacks in precise details what the vague term 'expression' means.

6. Conclusion: Symbolization (§59) as Expression (§17)

It follows from the combination of §17 and §59 that internal objective purposiveness, i.e. the freedom that this notion implies is the locus of the analogy that Kant's symbol thesis refers to. The perfection of the human being is the moral agent who acts according to internal objective purposiveness, i.e. according to the self-imposed laws of practical rationality. The perfection of beauty, i.e. of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties, is achieved when the imagination is regulated by the principle of internal objective purposiveness. The phenomenally perceivable effect of the moral action that is determined by principles of morality is what Kant calls the 'visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings' (*KU*, 5: 235-236). This 'visible expression' is a sensible appearance of the moral agent – i.e. it is the ideal of beauty represented by the empirically perceivable 'human figure' (*KU*, 5: 235).¹⁸

¹⁸ Objections to my argument that the ideal of beauty cannot be the symbol of the morally good since the ideal of beauty is a mere ideal rather than something sensible neglect two things. First, they neglect the fact that moral perfection is a mere ideal and nothing that Kant expected humans to fully achieve; and second, they neglect the fact that it is an ideal, i.e. that this is nothing that we should expect to actually encounter in the phenomenal world except in approximations. Thus, I see no problem if the symbol of the morally good is a mere ideal as well – and we should remember that the internal objective purposiveness in the ideal of beauty is a mere regulative principle of cognition rather than a constitutive one, which maintains the purely phenomenal character of beauty. Only when moral perfection is achieved through action, does the ideal of beauty become phenomenal. Yet, were Kant to make the symbol of moral perfection something phenomenal, he would commit himself to the view that we can perceive the holy will (i.e., God) that is the only entity that achieves moral perfection. What this tells us about the divine nature of the Kantian notion of the human figure as the ideal of beauty (or, indeed, about the divine nature of human moral agents) is a matter that I will discuss elsewhere.

'Expression' is here to be understood as 'presentation' in the context of hypotyposis by symbolization as discussed above. The law of morality itself remains within the intelligible world in a similar way as the free play of the cognitive faculties remains merely aesthetic and 'empty' from the point of view of theoretical cognition.¹⁹ Only once the moral agent acts, do the effects of the law of practical rationality enter the realm of sensation and thereby become not only subject to the judgement of beauty but simultaneously allow the law of practical rationality to become the regulative principle according to which the sensory impression is to be synthesized for that judgement of beauty – a judgement of the ideal of beauty, that is.

It is important to note that the law of practical rationality is not a constitutive principle of cognition in the judgement of the ideal of beauty, as this would indeed threaten the aesthetic nature of the ideal of beauty. The ideal of beauty is an adherent beauty because it contains the moral law as an idea of reason that acts as a regulative principle in that judgement. Yet, since this specific idea of reason is an internal objective purposiveness, the free play of the cognitive faculties is not restricted in the same way as other concepts, involved in judgements of adherent beauty, would restrict the free play of the cognitive faculties. It is rather brought to its own perfection, namely to self-determination.

Interpreting the ideal of beauty in this way as compatible with free play allows us to find the kind of freedom that is analogous to moral freedom and that is suitable as a basis for hypotyposis by symbolization. Moral freedom is the self-given law of practical rationality, i.e. internal objective purposiveness. The only analogue to this that is to be found in aesthetics is the internal objective purposiveness that defines the ideal of beauty. Taking the freedom that the free play of the cognitive faculties as analogous to moral freedom, as most commentators do, neglects that free play as such contains the wrong kind of purposiveness, namely formal subjective purposiveness. There is no moral analogue to formal subjective

¹⁹ For an interpretation of why the moral law itself (*Moralität*) can remain purely intelligible and at the same time be made sensible (as *Sittlichkeit*) through symbolization, see Munzel (1995).

purposiveness, which is why free beauty (without further qualification as its own perfection) cannot be the symbol of the morally good according to §59.

The rather unexpected concomitant implication of the combination of §17 and §59 is that both, judgements of beauty and moral judgements, rest on internal objective purposiveness as a shared source of normativity. Far from being a threat to the autonomy of aesthetics, the fact that the internal objective purposiveness is a mere regulative principle of reflection in judgements of the ideal of beauty and a constitutive one in moral judgements highlights the distinctness between the two. The autonomy of each is thereby not only strengthened; but their interrelations are being made explicit. It is now possible to explain how the morally good is symbolized (i.e. expressed) through the ideal of beauty without questioning either the ideal of beauty or the free play of the cognitive faculties (i.e. of formal subjective purposiveness) as equally valid and compatible sources of aesthetic normativity.²⁰

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Dissonance and Subjective Dissent in Leibniz's Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. According to the classical view, beauty is grounded on the universe's objective harmony, defined by the formula of unity in variety. Concurrently, nature's beauty is univocal and independent of subjective judgement. In this presentation I will argue that, although Leibniz's view coincides with this formula, his philosophy offers an explanation for subjective dissent in aesthetic judgements about nature. I will show that the acceptance of divergences on aesthetic value is the result of a conception of harmony that includes dissonance.

1. Introduction

Leibniz's aesthetics fall within the Pythagorean tradition in so far as he agrees that the beauty of the universe is an objective value grounded on the cosmos' harmony. In this view, harmony is a property of systems, defined as unity in variety. According to this tradition, beauty is univocal and indifferent to subjective judgement. In this paper I argue that, despite Leibniz's complete adherence to this formula, his interpretation explains and justifies the subjective dissent in aesthetic judgements. I show that the possibility of valid divergences regarding the aesthetic value of nature is the result of a Leibnizian conception of harmony that includes dissonance.

In the next section (2), I argue that for Leibniz, beauty is an expression of perfection that corresponds to the formula of unity in variety and does not need to be subjectively perceived.

Afterwards (3), I explain the role of dissonance in Leibniz's notion of harmony and beauty. According to Leibniz, the world is beautiful because of the heterogeneity of its constituents. He postulates that, in a

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series of mostly consonant and harmonic elements, dissonances are the best diversifiers, and are required to enhance harmony and beauty. This entails the counterintuitive idea that dissonances maximise harmony by opposing it.

In the last section (4), I argue that Leibniz's concept of aggregates explains the existence of subjective harmonies that run in parallel with the objective harmony of the world. Aggregates are formed when the mind gives unity to a variety of things through an idea. As a result, aggregates comply with the formula of harmony and beauty as unity in variety. Since ideas are subjectively grounded, they enjoy a certain level of freedom regarding the way in which they select the multiple elements they unite.

At this point I argue that dissonances become imperative for there to be diversity in aesthetic judgements. This is the case because the presence of dissonances in the world allows ideas to form aggregates with different combinations of consonant and dissonant elements. As a result, aggregates can resolve dissonances harmonically with different degrees of success, thus generating different aesthetic judgements about nature.

In this sense, I conclude that different, and even contradictory, aesthetic judgements are explained and justified, despite the adherence to an objective notion of beauty.

2. Beauty and Unity in Variety

For the Pythagoreans, the cosmos was created following perfect proportions based on mathematical ratios, which resulted in it being harmonious. Timaeus of Locri reportedly claimed that God created a perfect and beautiful universe, following harmonically combined proportions, to which the mind adjusts and perceives beauty (Navon, 1986, pp.116-118). Harmony was first and most significantly a metaphysical force that ruled the universe. As the Pythagorean Philolaus reportedly described it; '[t]he harmony is generally the result of contraries; for it is the unity of multiplicity, and the agreement of discordances' and dissimilar things 'must be organized by the harmony, if they are to take their place in the connected totality of the world' (Navon, 1986, pp.131-132).

"Unity in multiplicity" is also Leibniz's definition of harmony and, just like Philolaus, Leibniz thought that harmony was the principle that ruled the universe. Consequently, harmony is an objective value of the cosmos. In an essay entitled *On Wisdom* (1693-1700?), Leibniz states that:

[U]nity in plurality [*Einigkeit in der Vielheit*] is nothing but harmony [*Übereinstimmung*] and, since any particular being agrees with one rather than another being, there flows from this harmony the order from which beauty arises. (GP VII, p.87/L, p.426)²

Leibniz's notion of beauty coincides with the Pythagorean view that beauty is harmony or "unity in plurality". Different versions of this latter expression, such as "diversity compensated by identity" (A VI 1, p.484) or "agreement in variety" (GW, p.172), are found throughout Leibniz's works. Although all of these different phrasings have diverse contexts and slightly varied connotations, they all express united variety, which is harmony. Furthermore, this structure also entails perfection, as Leibniz states that, 'the perfection a thing has is greater, to the extent that there is more agreement in greater variety, whether we observe it or not' (GW, p.171/AG, p.233). According to this and other textual evidence, Gregory Brown argues that it would not be completely wrong to assume that harmony, beauty and

² I employ the following abbreviations: A = *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt and Berlin: Berlin Academy, 1923-; AG = R. Ariew and D. Garber, trs. & eds., *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989; GP = C. I. Gerhardt, ed., *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols., Berlin: Weidman, 1875-90. Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1965-; Grua = G. Grua, ed., *Leibniz: Textes Inédits*, 2 vols., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948; GW = C. I. Gerhardt, ed., *Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz und Christian Wolf*, Halle: H. W. Schmidt, 1860; H = E. M. Huggard, tr., *G. W. Leibniz: Theodicy; Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951. Reprint, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1985; L = L. E. Loemker, tr. & ed., *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969; LDV = P. Lodge, ed. & tr., *The Leibniz-De Volder Correspondence: With Selections from the Correspondence Between Leibniz and Johann Bernoulli. The Yale Leibniz*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013; M = M. T. Mason, *Correspondence with Arnould*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967; MP = M. Morris & G. H. R. Parkinson, *Philosophical Writings*, London: Dent, 1973; RB = P. Remnant and J. Bennett, trs. & eds., *G. W. Leibniz: New Essays on Human Understanding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

perfection are the same thing (Brown, 1988, p.577). It is also worth noting that in the last part of the quote Leibniz adds, 'whether we observe it or not', thus reinforcing the idea that perfection –and hence beauty– does not depend on subjective perception.

For Leibniz, the more united variety there is, the greater the harmony (Grua, p.12), hence the greater the beauty. In this sense, beauty has degrees that are accounted for according to the measure of the two terms, unity and variety. The question is, what are unity and variety? As we will see in the next section, for Leibniz, unity refers to a principle of order. On the other hand, variety is almost always a multiplicity of things, representations or properties.

Leibniz mentions the formal structure of unity in variety, mainly referring to the objective beauty of the world, based on the objective degree of the unity and variety of the most perfect possible world. But how does this notion of objective beauty relate to us? The answer is pleasure. The relation between pleasure and beauty appears in Leibniz's works from his earliest texts. For example, in a text entitled *Resumé of Metaphysics* (1697), Leibniz defines pleasure as: 'An intelligent being's *pleasure* is simply the perception of beauty, order and perfection' (GP VII, p.290/MP, p.146). In the following sentence of the same text, he relates pleasure to completeness and order, explaining that pain, contrary to pleasure, contains something disordered and fragmented. Nevertheless, in reality, all natural things are objectively ordered. Therefore, disorder is 'only relative to the percipient' (ibid). In Leibniz words: 'So when something in the series of things displeases us, that arises from a defect of our understanding. [...] and to those who observe only some parts rather than others, the harmony of the whole cannot appear' (GP VII, p.290/MP, p.147). Thus displeasure is caused by a certain subjective partial appreciation, which does not capture the whole. This is a recurrent theme in Leibniz's writings, often used to describe the problem of evil and dissonances in aesthetics. For example, in his *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* (1697), Leibniz states: 'Look at a very beautiful picture, and cover it up except for some small part. What will it look like but some confused combination of colors, without delight, without art' (GP VII, p.306/AG, p.153). And again in §134 of his *Theodicy*

(1710), he states:

[W]e acknowledge, [...] that God does all the best possible, [...] when we see something entire, some whole complete in itself, and isolated, so to speak, among the works of God. Such a whole, shaped as it were by the hand of God, is a plant, an animal, a man. We cannot wonder enough at the beauty and the contrivance of its structure. But when we see some broken bone, some piece of animal's flesh, some sprig of a plant, there appears to be nothing but confusion. (GP VI, p.188/H, p.207)

The contemplation of whole things is required from us, so they can delight us with their objective beauty, since a partial observation prevents us from grasping things without confusion. As I will explain, it is precisely this failure to grasp the whole that makes room for subjective aesthetic value. Furthermore, it is because the objective variety of the world includes dissonances that we are able to unite partial aspects of the world and create different harmonies with different degrees of aesthetic value.

3. Variety and Dissonance

Although there is an undeniable agreement between Leibniz and the Pythagorean view, there are significant differences that make Leibniz's version diverge from the original one. The most relevant difference is the introduction of dissonances in the context of variety. It is quite common to find some Pythagoreans expressing certain kinds of Manicheism in their cosmology. For example, according to Archytas, harmony was a force aligned with order, reason and consonance, which excluded disorder, irrationality and dissonance (Navon, 1986, p.142). On the contrary, Baroque thinkers, such as Kepler (Pesic, 2005, pa. 3.19), Mersenne (1965, p.131) and Leibniz postulated a universe that includes an infinite number of things, among which a small amount of them seem evil or dissonant.³

³ This view correlates in many ways with the advances of music theory and practice in the 17th century. For example, see Marin Mersenne's *Harmonie Universelle*

I claim that in Leibniz's writings it is possible to distinguish two types of variety. I will call the first one "quantitative variety". This type can be found in definitions of beauty such as the one Leibniz offers in *On Wisdom*, where he states that beauty comes from unity in variety, which takes place when 'the one rules many outside of itself and represents them in itself' (GP VII, p.87/L, p.426). "Many" in this context is an expression of quantitative variety, since it refers to a quantity of things, representations or properties.

On the other hand, there are expressions of a "qualitative variety", which is expressed, for example, in what Leibniz calls the "law of delight" (*laetitiae lex*):

On that same principle it is insipid to always eat sweet things; sharp, acidic, and even bitter tastes should be mixed in to stimulate the palate [...] Pleasure does not derive from uniformity, for uniformity brings forth disgust and makes us dull, not happy: this very principle is a law of delight. (G VII, p.307/AG, p.153)

In this case, variety is not just a quantitative denomination, but also involves a notion of diversity that is qualitative. In other words, variety is a significant difference between two or more qualities, such as bitter and sweet. Qualitative variety can refer to opposing values that disrupt or limit each other and at the same time augment the degree of the overall positive result.

Leibniz often exemplifies this idea with music, more specifically with the figure of dissonance: '[T]he most distinguished masters of composition quite often mix dissonances with consonances in order to arouse the listener [...] so [...] the listener might feel all the more pleasure when order is soon restored' (G VII, p.306/AG, p.153). Indeed, the idea of qualitative variety perhaps finds the most suitable representation in dissonance, since it is a value that is opposed to the very thing that it improves, harmony. For example, Leibniz writes in the *Theodicy* that, '[t]here are some disorders in the parts which wonderfully enhance the

(1636) (1965, p.121) and Menendez 1999.

beauty of the whole, just as certain dissonances, appropriately used, render harmony more beautiful' (GP VI, p.384/H, p.385).

For Leibniz, dissonance is not just a musical metaphor but a value of the universal harmony that rules the world and grounds its beauty. As is well known, Leibniz claims that the actual world is the most perfect possible world. The highest degree of perfection means the highest degrees of harmony or unity and variety (GW, p.170). However, Leibniz insists that the harmony of the most perfect possible world possesses dissonance as well as evil. Dissonance and evil have the same function in Leibniz's metaphysics; both are negative values that work against the main positive features of the world, i.e. harmony and goodness (G VI, p.384). Leibniz suggests that the inclusion of dissonance and evil is in fact better than their exclusion:

I believe that God did create things in ultimate perfection, though it does not seem so to us considering the parts of the universe. It's a bit like what happens in music and painting, for shadows and dissonances truly enhance the other parts, and the wise author of such works derives such a great benefit for the total perfection of the work from these particular imperfections that it is much better to make a place for them than to attempt to do without them. (Grua, p.365-6/AG, p.115)

Regarding evil, Leibniz explains that 'he [God] can banish evil, but that he does not wish to do so absolutely, and rightly so, because he would then banish good at the same time, and he would banish more good than evil' (G VI, p.435/H, p.441). In this sense, good and evil or consonance and dissonance seem to be inextricably interrelated in order to achieve a greater positive value. In other words, a greater harmony is not without the variety introduced by dissonance. In this sense, our world is not just composed of perfect consonances, but also dissonances that bring about the heterogeneity required by beauty.

Yet this is not enough. For Leibniz, beauty is achieved with the reduction or "redemption" of the apparent and temporal disorder between things. This disorder is brought about by qualitative variety that includes dissonant elements. As he states, harmony 'is greatest in the case where a unity of the greatest number of things disordered in appearance and reduced,

unexpectedly, by some wonderful ratio to the greatest elegance' (A VI, 3, pp.122-123/ CP, pp.43-44). In this sense, harmony –and hence beauty– reaches its peak at the moment when the dissonances are harmonically resolved.⁴ The moment when dissonances are suddenly redeemed and order is restored corresponds to the aesthetical supremacy of the whole in Leibniz's philosophy, as described in the previous section. Thus, only the whole exhibits the true beauty of something, since the whole is associated with the moment of the resolution of dissonance and the highest peak of harmony. Hence beauty is not merely quantitative multiplicity or qualitative diversity, but also the resolution of dissonances in certain complete final unity.

4. Unity and Aggregates

Beauty as harmony has been defined with a formula involving two terms: on the one side "unity" and on the other "variety". This formula is equivalent to several other expressions coined by Leibniz, such as 'diversity compensated by identity' [*diversitas identitate compensata*], 'variety reduced to unity' [*varietas reducta in unitatem*] (GP I, p.73/ L, p.150), 'unity in plurality' [*Einigkeit in der Vielheit*] (GP VIII, p.87/ L, p.426) and 'agreement or identity in variety' [*consensus vel identitas in varietate*] (GW, p.172/AG, p.233). However, a careful comparison of these phrases highlights the following issue: Although the terms "variety", "plurality" and "diversity" refer more or less to the same idea, the terms on the other side of the formula ("unity", "identity" or "agreement"), are at odds with each other. "Unity" and "identity" are not evidently equivalent to "agreement" in the same way that "multiplicity" and "variety" are equivalent to each other. In this sense, Leibniz's concept of unity cannot be limited to oneness or union, but should also include identity and agreement. In order to embrace all of the significations that unity involves in reference to harmony and beauty, a more general concept is required.

⁴ Later in the same text, Leibniz applies this same principle to art, calling it "the rule of art" (see A VI, 3, p.147/CP, p.103).

I propose that unity must be understood as a principle of order. This is a wide notion that applies to laws, rules or designs, or any other principle that induces order such as organisation, coordination or direction. Principles of order not only produce unities, and constitute identities and the agreement of their internal multiplicities, but also *are* the unity that the postulated formula of harmony/beauty expresses. In Leibniz's ontology, unifying principles of order can be found at any level where it is possible to designate unities: from the set of all possible worlds, through each one of these possible worlds, to any individual that inhabits those worlds. Therefore, harmony's unity interpreted as a principle of order permits the universal extension of beauty to every ontological level.

We can see this notion of unity as a law or rule in the case of the unity of the world and its relation with individuals. For Leibniz, 'each possible individual of any one world contains in the concept of him [the individual] the laws of his world'. As Leibniz states in a letter to Arnauld (14/07/1686):

I will add that I think there is an infinity of possible ways in which to create the world, according to the different designs which God could form, and that each possible world depends on certain principal designs or purposes of God (*desseins principaux ou fins de Dieu*) [...] or certain laws of the general order of this possible universe with which they are in accord and whose concept they determine, as they do also the concepts of all individual substances which must enter into this same universe .(G II, p.51/L, p.333)

Each world has a particular and unique principle of order framed within a more general structure of possible logical combinations. This principle or design defines the particularity of a possible world, as a particular law of order for each world that determines the inclusion of certain individuals and brings them into accord. Therefore, any world should also be understood as a unity, with identity and agreement, because of its design. This design is an objective principle of order or unity, as it is given by God independently of our subjective appreciation.

In contrast to the objective unity of the world, there is another type

of unity: the unity of aggregates. For Leibniz, 'an aggregate is nothing other than all the things from which it results taken together, which clearly have their unity only from a mind, on account of those things that they have in common, like a flock of sheep' (GP II, p.256/LDV, p.275). Although Leibniz never explicitly considers the relation between aggregates and beauty, it is quite clear that aggregates express the same formula of beauty and harmony: unity in variety.

Aggregates are not objective unities, since their unity is found in subjective ideas. However, this unity by aggregation is not radically created by the mind *ex nihilo*. Paul Lodge states that although 'aggregates exist only if a mind exists and apprehends the relation that constitutes the essence of that aggregate', it is still necessary to have 'things standing in those relations' (2001, p.473). Therefore, an aggregate also depends on there being objective substances that can be apprehended as related by the mind, as Leibniz states that, '[t]he unity of the idea of an aggregate is a very genuine one; but fundamentally we have to admit that this unity of collections is merely a respect or a relation, whose foundation lies in what is the case within each of the individual substances taken alone' (RB, p.146).

The foundation of the uniting idea of an aggregate is the set of relations found in the nature of individual substances, which are the idea's constituents. In other words, relations are not mind dependent, since they do have an ontological base in the individual concept of substances.⁵ For example in his correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz states that:

[T]he concept of the individual substances contains all its events and all its denominations, even those that commonly calls extrinsic (that is to say, that belong to it only by virtue of the general connexion of things and of the fact that it is an expression of the entire universe after its own manner), since there must always be some basis for the connexion between the terms of a proposition, and it is to be found in their concepts. (GP II, p.56/M, pp.63-64)

⁵ This is a contested view. On the one hand, some commentators, including Lodge, take relations to be 'not features of the real world' (Lodge, 2001, p.477). On the other, some commentators have argued the opposite. See, for example Hide Ishiguro (1990, p.107) and Nachtomy (2007, p.118). Here I agree with the latter view.

Relations or extrinsic denominations are in the individual substance; they are not a mere product of the mind.

That said, as Lodge puts it, 'aggregates are very cheap', since they come into existence with an extraordinary facility (2001, p.473-4). Yet this is to be expected from Leibniz's harmonically interrelated world, where every individual thing is related to every other (AG, p.100). This allows the mind to discover connections everywhere and, hence to group together individuals almost at will. Following this line of argumentation, aggregates are not just based on relations established by the subject's mind, but rather are the product of a mental process of selection of certain relations –existing in the substance's concept– where the mind includes some and excludes others, following a determinate principle of order such as a criterion given by an idea.

It is exactly this process of selection where the possibility of subjective dissent takes place. As said earlier, beauty is harmony as unity in variety. Regarding variety, the world objectively contains not only consonant elements with consonant relations, but also dissonant ones. Thus the variety offered by the world is objectively heterogeneous. On the other hand, the subjective aspect of aggregates refers only to the capacity to provide a principle of order or rather unity. The mind is quite versatile in providing uniting ideas, so in principle it is possible to unite (include and exclude) almost any relation of elements offered by nature. Yet, this subjective unity must select to unite elements from an objectively given variety that includes contrasting values. For Leibniz, when we are able to observe the objectively united whole –or at least a substantially united part of the whole– we notice that the dissonant elements and relations are finally harmonically resolved. Yet, since aggregates can unite partial chunks of reality, according to subjective criteria of order, it is possible that from the very beautiful picture that is the whole, we unite only 'some confused combination of colors, without delight, without art' (GP VII, p.306/AG, p.153). When this happens an idea is selecting and uniting as one a 'series of things [that] displeases us' since we are observing 'only some parts rather than others', and hence 'the [objectively given] harmony of the whole cannot appear' (GP VII, p.290/MP, p.147).

If nature did not offer qualitatively different values –such as consonances and dissonances– aggregates could only create harmonies with homogenous values, since ideas would find only similar elements to unite. Thus there would be no significant differences between aesthetic judgements. However, the presence of dissonance in the world allows ideas to form aggregates with different degrees of consonant and dissonant elements. Aggregates, as subjectively united series, might be able to resolve dissonances harmonically with different degrees of success, generating different aesthetic judgements about the world or parts of it. For example, some aggregates might include a specific balance between consonant and dissonant elements that fails to resolve dissonances, resulting in a negative aesthetic judgement regarding certain aspects of the world. Others could include mostly consonant elements, lacking in variety, and thus encountering an aesthetically dull nature. In extreme cases, some might find only discordant elements and experience pure displeasure and ugliness.

Furthermore, for Leibniz, these judgements are to be expected from ideas generated by finite minds that only have a limited apprehension of the world. Nonetheless, these cases are still judgements of incomplete series of elements, grounded on ideas that do not reach the unity in variety offered by an objectively beautiful world. These unities show how flexible the unity per aggregation is and that Leibniz's philosophy allows a kind of dynamic unity and hence divergent aesthetic judgements. However, Leibniz's philosophy allows and pretty much promotes the possibility of the encounter between subjective unity and objective unity. The objective unity of the world includes several other objective sub-unities, such as laws of nature and the unity of infinitely many individual and corporeal substances. Hence there are almost an infinite number of objective principles of order cohabitating within the unity of the world. In this sense, it is not uncommon for the mind to grasp or conceive of a unity that coincides with these natural unities. An example of beauty under these circumstances would be the beauty of scientific theories in natural sciences.

Finally, it must be said that this does not mean that beauty is subjective. Beauty is always objective for three reasons. First, the rules with which a unity per aggregation must comply to reach beauty are objective,

i.e. they are in God's understanding (e.g. unity, variety, wholeness, etc.) (A VI 3, pp.122-3). Second, the relations that are united by an idea must be founded on individual substances, i.e.; objective reality. Third, for Leibniz, beauty is a property of the object, since, even if we are able to establish arbitrary unities and hence create "new objects" (even as ideas), these objects have being in the mind of God even before we conceive them. In other words, any conceivable unity already has being in the mind of God.

5. Conclusion

As I have tried to show, the given interpretation of Leibniz's philosophy provides an explanation for subjective dissent between aesthetic judgements through his notions of aggregates and dissonances. This is so despite the fact that he upholds the traditional objective position, which states that beauty is unity in variety or harmony.

Although Leibniz did not offer an explicit account of the relation of aggregates and aesthetics, I argued that aggregates respond to the formula of unity in variety and therefore they replicate the structure of beauty. In this context, the harmony of aggregates consists in a subjective idea that unites an objectively given variety according to its own principle of order. In this way aggregates are characterised as harmonies that differ from the objectively given harmonies of nature, since the latter ones have objective unity. Furthermore, aggregates' harmonies not only differ from nature's objective harmonies, but also from each other. The result is subjective dissent among aesthetic judgements.

Yet, in order to explain subjective dissent something else is needed. As I have pointed out, the possibility of subjective dissent is given by a qualitative notion of variety that exhibits dissonances. Nature's beauty is not just the unity of qualitatively different things, but also a union of things with contrasting values that produce dissonance. Nonetheless, for Leibniz, the tension introduced by dissonances in the universe is harmonically resolved in the unity of the whole, resulting in an objectively beautiful world. The same result is achieved in all of the objective unities that compose the

universe.

Nevertheless, in the case of aggregates this can go a different way. Subjective unities cannot always reach this final harmonic resolution of dissonances. Aggregates can be unities of many different combinations of elements. Some unities successfully resolve their dissonant elements, while others not so successfully, or not at all. The result is divergence among subjective judgements.

In this way, Leibniz offers a philosophical view that explains why there are different aesthetic judgements about nature. These different judgements are the consequence of a mismatch between subjective unities and objective natural unities. When this mismatch is too drastic, we might perceive less beauty (or none) than what nature really has to offer. In this cases, subjective aesthetic judgements are characterised as a sort of limitation of our capacity to grasp an objective unity. Yet, for Leibniz, if we succeed in matching our subjective unities with objective ones we should not fail to encounter the full extent of nature's beauty.

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Aesthetics as Politics:

Kant's Heuristic Insights Beyond Rancière's Ambivalences

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ABSTRACT. In this article I aim to show that, despite having coined the phrase “Aesthetics as Politics”, Rancière fails to fulfill the heuristic prospects of this concept, mainly because he addressed this topic on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”. Firstly, I argue that the reduction of Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art appears all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake, since it confines Aesthetics to a micropolitical level instead of a cosmopolitical one. Secondly, I show that Rancière’s interstitial bias, resulting in the failure of the promise of emancipation embedded in “Aesthetics as Politics”, led to the postmodernist “aesthetic break” and to Rancière’s “sublimization” of the Kantian Beautiful which fails to grasp Kant’s heuristic insights of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics”. Finally, I argue that the free pleasure in the Beautiful, inasmuch as it fits both the apriority of its universal validity and the “universal without concept”, grounds Kant’s freedom-based conception of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics”.

1. Introduction

Jacques Rancière coined the phrase “Aesthetics as Politics” in his essay *Aesthetics and its discontents*². My claim is that Rancière, by addressing this topic on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”, did not fulfill the promises of this heuristic phrase which, consequently, must be rethought from a different perspective.

In order to clarify the philosophical grounds that will support my theses, I must specify two points. First of all, by Politics I shall mean the freedom-based conception of Politics according to Arendt’s view when she

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² Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, Polity Press, 2009.

said: ‘the *raison d’être* of politics is freedom³. I shall take into account, secondly, Hannah Arendt’s heuristical attempt of paving the way to a political reading of the Kantian judgement of taste⁴, highlighting its cosmopolitical dimension⁵. Given these two presuppositions, it is possible to understand “Aesthetics as Politics” in this way: the point of Aesthetics is to provide a universal access to a freedom-based conception of Politics, expanded to the cosmopolitical dimension of the world citizen.

Kant reframed Aesthetics in such a way that freedom is at the core of the pure judgment of taste based on the enlarged mentality which makes us able to face Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics. However, “Aesthetics as Politics” is still fundamentally unnoticed, although more than two centuries have now passed since Kant wrote his third *Critique*.

As it is impossible to consider all the factors of this denial, I shall focus on two criteria. My first claim is that the regrettable temptation to reduce Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art appears all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake. I shall analyse, secondly, why the postmodernist tropism for the Sublime at the expense of the Beautiful has been prejudicial to the understanding of Kant’s contributions to a freedom-based conception of Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics. Finally, I shall try to advocate that Kant’s heuristic insights go beyond Rancière’s ambivalences as far as the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is

³ See Hannah Arendt, *Freedom and Politics: A lecture, Chicago Review*, Vol.14, N°1 (Spring 1960), 28.

⁴ The fact that H. Arendt paved the way of the political reading of the Kantian judgement of taste is fundamental. But it does not mean that I adopt all the elements of her political reading of Kant. In the previous Congress of ESA organized in Portugal (*cf.* “What Taste and Perfume add to the political interpretation of the Kantian aesthetic judgment by Arendt and Deleuze” in ESA Proceedings 2012), I was dealing with the blind spot of Arendt’s reading of Kant as far as its incidences upon taste and perfumes are concerned. In my own reading, the political incidences of Kant’s judgment of taste are anchored in the political dimension of the culture of taste which goes back to the role of the reflecting judgment in the Greek symposium.

⁵ See Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Edited by Ronald Beiner), The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 75-76: ‘one is a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human; this is one’s “cosmopolitan existence.” When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one’s bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen’.

at stake.

2. “Aesthetics as Politics” Irreducible to Rancière’s “Aesthetic Regime of Art”

2.1. *The Ambivalences of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”*

There is a blind spot in Rancière’s posture ensuing from his choice of addressing “Aesthetics as Politics” on the grounds of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”. According to Rancière, the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” would be the tension between two attitudes, namely “the becoming-life of art” and the “autonomy of art”. This tension would be what ‘threatens Aesthetics as Politics but also what makes it function’⁶. ‘The finality [that the becoming – life of art] ascribes to art is to construct new forms of life in common, and hence to eliminate itself as a separate reality’⁷. By contrast, ‘The second [attitude – the one of the “autonomy of art”] encloses the political promise of aesthetic experience in art’s very separation, in the very resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life’⁸.

In his essay “Aesthetics and its discontents”, Rancière’s ambivalence goes so far as to say: ‘I do not intend to decide in favour of one or another of these two attitudes’⁹. Concerning art as a separate reality, Rancière is ambivalent too. He seems to be in favour of the promise of a ‘community that is free insofar as it /.../ no longer experiences art as a separate sphere of life’¹⁰. But, on the other side, he wants ‘to preserve the material difference of art apart from all the wordly affairs that compromise it’¹¹. The problem is that these ‘wordly affairs’ from which art would need protection are also the only ones which have a ‘worldwide dimension’ according to Rancière. In Rancière’s interstitial perspective, the scope of the egalitarian perspective of

⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 44.

⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹¹ Ibid., 42.

Politics is bound to be spatially and temporally limited, as opposed to the worldwide scope and continuity of the Police¹². That is why Rancière himself emphasizes his pessimistic prospect: ‘Politics is thus the name of nothing. It cannot be anything other than policing, that is, the denial of equality’¹³.

Given this pessimistic mood, the prospect of a worldwide scope for Aesthetics could only result in its globalization under the reign of Police. But Jacinto Lageira opposes to this “aesthetic globalization” the requirements of “cosmopolitical aesthetics”:

The hypothesis is thus the one of cosmopolitical, critical, universalist aesthetics as opposed to the mainstream of globalization in the arts /.../ Against globalization /.../, we must choose /.../ difference and diversity, cosmopolitism, because there is only one world.¹⁴

By contrast to these recent researches partially based on Kant’s insights¹⁵, Rancière doesn’t help to pave the way to the necessary difference between a “cosmopolitical aesthetics” and the damages of globalization. His dissensual and interstitial bias fails to give even the possibility for a freedom-based “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” to offer an alternative as opposed to the worldwide unequalitarian reign of the Police. In his view, the interruptions of Politics can only make a tear in the unequalitarian web of Police.

¹² See Ruben Yepes, « Aesthetics, Politics and Art’s Autonomy: a Critical reading of Jacques Rancière », in *Eventual Aesthetics*, 3, N° 1 (2014), 42: ‘To understand this, we must first outline the difference that Rancière draws between police and politics. In *Disagreement Politics and Philosophy*, Rancière reconceptualizes the habitual sense of the term “politics” to avoid the kind of “politics” subsumed under the practices of contemporary liberal democracies. /.../ Practices and institutions referring to ‘the aggregation and consentment of collectivities, the organization of powers, the distribution of the places and functions, and the system of legitimization of that distribution’ are not political but merely police.’

¹³ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, translated by J. Rose, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 35.

¹⁴ Jacinto Lageira, *L’Art comme Histoire*, Editions Mimèsis, 2016, 279 ; 284. [my translation]

¹⁵ Ibid., 271: ‘By his founding texts, he [Kant] is clearly the one whose influence continues to enlighten us about our “cosmopolitical condition”.’ [my translation]

2.2. Plato's Negative Influence on Rancière

The cost of this pessimistic view is the capacity of "Aesthetics as Politics" of reaching freedom. We must decipher the reasons for this reductive aspect of Rancière's model. My claim is that the reason lies within the influence of Plato's *Republic* upon Rancière's reduction of Aesthetics to the "partition of sensible".

Rancière first recalls that in the Platonic Republic there is 'a partition of the sensible that at once excludes both art and politics'¹⁶. He scrutinously specifies that 'The famous exclusion of poets is often interpreted as the mark of a political proscription of art. However, the Platonic gesture also proscribes politics'¹⁷. But one may feel uneasy with his following statement: 'Theater and assembly: these are two spaces /.../that Plato was obliged to repudiate at the same time in order to constitute his republic as the organic life of the community'¹⁸. The connotations of this 'Plato was obliged to' seem to exonerate Plato of this exclusion. Moreover, the following argument, while matter-of-fact, ultimately fails: 'The other way consists in the simple observation of their material incapacity to occupy the space-time of political things – as Plato put it, artisans have time for nothing but their work'¹⁹. But if this were true, why would Plato's Republic be led to consider the artists as so dangerous for the artisans that they have to be exiled? What holds the artisan in his proper place (which is supposed to have no part in political affairs) is not lack of time but acceptance of an inherited system of casts. This system forbids each member of the Republic their escaping the place chosen for him. This is the reason why the artists, the mimeticians, are dangerous.

In Theater, mimeticians put themselves in the place of any other man. But, in so doing, they may give to the public the desire and capacity of escaping their place. In Kantian terms, we may say that mimeticians pave the way to the *sensus communis* under which 'we must include the idea

¹⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 31.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 26.

/.../of a faculty of judgment which /.../ takes account /.../ of the mode of representation of all other men /.../. This is done /.../by putting ourselves in the place of any other man²⁰. If Plato's Republic exiled mimeticians, it is due to their contagious power. The counter power to Plato's Republic is the spread of the dyonisiac contagion which was supported by Nietzsche, and later on by Samuel Weber, whom I quote:

knowing one's place. Or rather, having a place that is stable enough that it can be known. It is such stability of place and of placing that the teatrocracy profoundly disturbs. In this respect, its perverse effects are only the culmination of Plato's worst fears concerning mimesis in general /.../ For in the theater, everyone tends to forget their proper place²¹.

In Rancière's model, it is quite the reverse: Art has renounced its contagious power. The obsession of Art is, on the contrary, to protect itself from the contagion of ordinary life.

2.3. *Aesthetics, Art and Play within Limits*

In the light of Roger Caillois²², we may say that Art is much more like Play than like Sacred according to Rancière. In Caillois's definitions, Sacred needs to be confined within hermetic frontiers, because its contagious power is considered to be dangerous for ordinary life, while Play must be confined within limits in order to protect itself from the contamination of ordinary life. Rancière doesn't exclude the promise of the possibility of an art which would destabilize the places in ordinary space²³. But he favours the model

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 40. (J.H. Bernard translation, New York: Hafner, 1951)

²¹ Samuel Weber, « Displacing the body (The question of digital democracy) », Los Angeles, May 2, 1996. ([www://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/weber/displace.html](http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/weber/displace.html))

²² Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le sacré*, idées/Gallimard, 1980.

²³ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 23-24: 'In 'relational' art, the construction of an undecided and ephemeral situation enjoins a displacement of perception, a passage from the status of spectator to that of actor, and a reconfiguration of places.'

of Art as an exception²⁴ which is localized in a specific place²⁵, protected, as Play, from ordinary life²⁶.

Rancière's interpretation is misleading when he pretends to amalgamate²⁷ with his own definition of play (compatible with that of Caillouis) Schiller's conception of play and, a fortiori, Kant's one. But the major problem is that Rancière pretends to define Aesthetics by reducing it to the same local specific dimension as Art: 'there is no art without a specific form of visibility and discursivity which identifies it as such. There is no art without a specific distribution of the sensible tying it to a certain form of politics. Aesthetics is such a distribution²⁸'.

Rancière's choice of addressing "Aesthetics as politics" on the sole ground of the "Aesthetic Regime of Art" led him to forbid a worldwide dimension of Politics, able to face the worldwide domination of the Police. In Rancière's view both Aesthetics and Politics (and consequently "Aesthetics as Politics") are deprived of a worldwide dimension. On the contrary, Simondon²⁹ conceives Aesthetics as the reticular power of webbing links between all the places in order to build something that can be felt as a world, or a universe. Given the bias of the "Aesthetic regime of Art", Rancière's conception of Aesthetics reduces its scope to the localized

²⁴ Ibid., 25: "both register the same logic: that of 'politics' of art which consists in suspending the normal coordinates of sensory experience."

Ibid., 23; 25; 26: 'What the term 'art' designates in its singularity is the framing of a space of presentation by which the things of art are identified as such. /.../art and politics /.../are two forms of distribution of the sensible, both of which are dependent on a specific regime of identification.'

²⁶ Ibid., 19;27: 'Art's radicality here, then, is /.../ the power that tears experience from ordinariness./.../the *medium* at issue is /.../ a sensible milieu, a particular sensorium, foreign to the ordinary forms of sensory experience./.../As a sensory form, it is heterogeneous to the ordinary forms of sensory experience /.../. It is given in a specific experience, which suspends the ordinary connections'.

²⁷ Ibid., 30: 'It is precisely this new form of distribution of the sensible that Schiller captures with the term 'play'. Minimally defined, play is any activity that has no end other than itself, that does not intend to gain any effective power over things or persons. This traditional sense of play was systematized in the Kantian analysis of aesthetic experience'.

²⁸ Ibid., 44.

²⁹ For a more detailed study of Simondon's conception of Aesthetics, see Isabelle Rieusset-Lemarié, "Du réseau comme monde: dépasser l'abjection de la technique", in *Travail médiologique* n°1, Juillet 1996.

space of Art. However, Rancière was on the verge of suggesting that the singularity of the autonomy of aesthetics is irreducible to the autonomy of art: 'For aesthetic autonomy is not that autonomy of artistic 'making' celebrated by modernism. It is the autonomy of a form of sensory experience. And it is that experience which appears as the germ of a new humanity, a new form of individual and collective life³⁰'. But he did not develop the consequences of this fundamental difference, as it was highlighted by Ruben Yepes:

If the autonomous aesthetic experience produced by art is relational, contingent upon the spectator-subject's discursive and sensible disposition, then art's political effect is not a broad, structural one but rather one that occurs at a micropolitical level. It does not seem to me that art can aspire (as the avant-gardes did) to produce a major, structural redistribution of the sensible as if it were the leading field of human endeavor in which politics are played out. Rather, art's political effect is localized, contingent, and always precarious. /.../it runs the risk of being reabsorbed into the dominating sensorium /.../. When Rancière states³¹ that the object of the autonomous aesthetic experience is "aesthetic" insofar as it is not art, we must identify a fundamental suggestion: the effects that the autonomous aesthetic experience produces /.../ are in relation to a specific circumstance or configuration that does not necessarily appertain to the discourses of the regime of art. /.../ It is a shame that Rancière, invested in maintaining art's autonomy, does not develop the insight he offers when referring to the object of the autonomous aesthetic experience³².

Hence my conclusion of the damages of the reduction of Aesthetics to the

³⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 32.

³¹ See Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, (London: Continuum, 2004), 116-117: 'First, the autonomy staged by the aesthetic regime of art is not that of the work of art but that of a mode of experience. Second, the "aesthetic experience" is one of heterogeneity such that, for the subject of that experience, it is also the dismissal of a certain autonomy. Third, the object of that experience is "aesthetic" insofar as it is not, or at least not only, art.'

³² Ruben Yepes, « Aesthetics, Politics and Art's Autonomy: a Critical reading of Jacques Rancière », in *Eventual Aesthetics*, 3, N° 1 (2014), 57.

sole domain of art (and a fortiori to the sole domain of the “autonomy of art”) which prove all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake, and which reduce the perspectives of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” to a localized, micropolitical level.

3. Ambivalences of the Postmodern Influence on Rancière

3.1. *Rancière’s Evolution from the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” to the “Aesthetic Effect”*

The author who helps to support my claim is, paradoxically, Rancière himself, in another essay untitled « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art »³³. In this essay, Rancière goes so far as to criticize, not only the politicization of art³⁴, but the pretension of Art itself to be the sole candidate, or even the best candidate, in order to fulfill the political aim of emancipation. The “aesthetic effect” would be the best candidate instead of Art:

What works out are processes of dissociation : the break in a relation between sense and sense - between what is seen and what is thought, what is thought and what is felt. Such breaks can happen anywhere at any time. But they can never be calculated.³⁵

I decipher this quotation as Rancière’s avowal of the irreducibility of “Aesthetics as politics” to Art. These things which can happen anywhere, at any time, are not matters of the separated realm of Art but are matters of Aesthetics which can be faced in any place and not only in spaces which have been calculated for Art’s sake. Rancière could have quoted here the Kantian opposition between free beauty (mainly related to Nature) and

³³ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art », in *Art & Research*, Volume 2, N°1, Summer 2008.

³⁴ Ibid., 5: ‘The same reason that makes the aesthetic ‘political’ forbid any strategy of ‘politicization of art’.’

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

adherent beauty (mainly related to Art)³⁶. In Kant's view, "adherent beauty" (which is calculated 'in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility'³⁷) has nothing to do with the Beautiful and, consequently, with the pure aesthetic judgment. But, at this moment of his essay, Rancière's focus is not on the Beautiful but on what he calls the "aesthetic break".

Rancière's tropism for this "aesthetic break" echoes the postmodern mood. On that score, it is not so much the question of a presumed influence of Lyotard or Derrida that counts but the fact that Rancière addresses his own topics on the ground of an implicit debate with these philosophers. Postmodernity and Deconstruction function as the common ground of a worldwide intellectual debate in which Rancière seeks not only to participate but also to value his difference. But, from a second level of reading, it is not so much the divergences (either minor or not) that count than the very fact to nourish this debate as if it were the common space in which you are required to display the signs of your intellectual identity. In that aim, one of the means which prove efficient consists in trying to change the very terms of the debate in order to shift the focus. Rancière tries to show that the reduction of the debate to the simplistic (in his view³⁸) opposition between Moderns and Postmoderns results into a blind spot

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 114: « There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) or merely adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it."

³⁷ Ibid., 115: 'Now the satisfaction in the manifold in a thing in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility is a satisfaction grounded on a concept; the satisfaction in beauty, however, is one that presupposes no concept /.../. Now if the judgment of taste in regard to the latter is made dependent on the purpose in the former, as a judgment of reason /.../ there is no longer a free and pure judgment of taste.'

³⁸ See Jacques Rancière, « Artistic Regimes and the Shortcoming of the Notion of Modernity », *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Translated with an Introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004, 20: '- *Certain of the most fundamental categories used for thinking about artistic creation in the twentieth century, namely the categories of modernity, the avant-garde and, for some time now, postmodernity, also happen to have a political meaning. Do these categories seem to you to have the slightest interest for conceiving, in precise terms, what ties 'aesthetics' to 'politics'? - I do not think that the notions of modernity and the avant-garde have been very enlightening when it comes to thinking about the new forms of art that have emerged since the last century or the relations between aesthetics and politics.'*

which prevents the grasping of the fundamental grounds of the debate:

This is what mimesis means: the concordance between the complex of sensory signs in which the process of poesis is displayed and the complex of the forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood /.../ Because there was a language of natural signs, there was continuity between the intrinsic consistency – or the ‘autonomy’ – of the play and its capacity of producing ethical effects in the minds of the spectators in the theater and in their behaviours out of the theater. /.../ The stage, the audience and the world are taken in one and the same continuum. Most of our ideas about political efficiency of art still cling to that model. /.../ Modern or post-modern as we purport to be, we easily forget that the consistency of that model was called into question as soon as the 1760s or the 1780s. Rousseau first questioned that supposed straight line between the performance of the actors on the stage, its effects on the minds of the spectators and their behaviour outside the theater in his *Letter on the spectacles*.³⁹

Sharing the deconstructionist tropism of calling in question the dual oppositions, Rancière applies this critical posture to the very opposition of Moderns and Postmoderns. Rancière tries to exonerate himself of this binding opposition by supporting a third choice. What either moderns or postmoderns have missed would be Rousseau’s critic of the mimesis.

While pretending to ground his third choice upon Rousseau’s critic of Theater (and, especially, of actors), Rancière goes back to his tropism for Plato’s conceptions. Rancière pretends to escape the Modern/Postmodern debate by going back to Plato. But, in doing so, he echoes the postmodern posture. As Paul Allen Miller⁴⁰ highlighted, notwithstanding their different

³⁹ Jacques Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community”, 7.

⁴⁰ Paul Allen Miller, *Postmodern Spiritual Practices / The construction of the subject and the recipient of Plato in Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault*, The Ohio State University Press, 2007, 1; 7; 10; 17; 21: ‘This book argues that a key element of postmodern French intellectual life has been the understanding of classical antiquity and its relationship to postmodern philosophical inquiry. /.../ As my argument unfolds, it will become clear not only that Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault’s knowledge of ancient literature is broad and detailed, but also that their understanding of Platonic philosophy is central to their theoretical project and the debates that animated them. /.../ Posmodernism represents not

positions about Plato, the postmodern philosophers revealed one fundamental aspect of their multifaceted conception by their shared posture consisting in giving a new importance to Plato's heritage.

Echoing the platonician negative apprehension of the actors on the basis of their plurality of roles that he assimilates to duplicity, Rancière reactivates the negative connotations of the word 'hypocrite'⁴¹ which, initially, designed the actor⁴². The underlying assumption would be that if you refuse to be confined in only one role (assigned to one place) you would automatically adopt a duplicitous posture. The actors, as the paradigmatic mimeticians⁴³, would not only be guilty of embodying the fundamental lie of the mimesis. Rancière goes further than Plato on that point since he makes the actors responsible for the failure of theater concerning its pretension of producing real effects upon the minds of the spectators. This pretension would be what Rancière means by mimesis and what Rousseau stigmatizes as a false pretense. According to the implicit faith accredited by mimesis, what is being performed on stage could have metaphorical (or metonymical) effects upon spectators thanks to a continuum between the real world and the realm of Representation. What is at stake in Rancière's "aesthetic effect" is the break of this continuum. Rancière does not only apply the postmodernist deconstruction of faiths to the mimetic effect. The scope of the "aesthetic effect" is broader and more radical:

What is broken is the continuity between the thought and its signs on the bodies, between the performance of the living bodies and its effects on either bodies. Aesthetics first means that collapse; it first

the rejection of the classical tradition but precisely its revitalization as a living means of thought. /.../ Finally, it is precisely this pursuit of a thought from the outside that separates the postmoderns and their use of antiquity from that of their great modernist predecessors. /.../ It is also perhaps this shift to a humanism of self-fashioning, as opposed to the existential humanism of the fully constituted Cartesian cogito, that explains the postmodern focus on Plato.'

⁴¹ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 7: 'How can the theater unveil the hypocrites since what they do is what defines its own essence: showing the signs on human bodies of thoughts and feelings that are not theirs.'

⁴² See υποκριτης (hypocrites) which means, in ancient Greek, actor.

⁴³ See μιμος (mimos) which also means, in ancient Greek, actor.

means the rupture of the harmony that allowed the correspondence between the texture of the work and its efficiency. /.../Aesthetic efficiency means a paradoxical kind of efficiency that is produced by the very break of any determined link between cause and effect. It is precisely this indetermination that Kant conceptualized when he defined the beautiful as ‘what is represented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept’⁴⁴.

In Rancière’s view, what he had conceptualized as the “aesthetic effect” would be equivalent to what Kant conceptualized as the Beautiful. But this claim needs to requalify the Beautiful in postmodern terms. Now we must decipher the consequences of the postmodern influence on Rancière in his very singular conception of the Beautiful which forbids him to grasp Kant’s heuristic insights about “Aesthetics as Politics”.

3.2. The “Sublimization” of the Beautiful by Rancière

It is as if Rancière felt like a trauma the suspicions of the postmodernists:

My inquiry in the constitution of the aesthetic regime of art has often been suspected of proposing a return to the fairy times and fairy tales of aesthetic utopias and aesthetic community, which either have brought about the big disasters of the 20th century or, at least, are out of steps with the artistic practices and the political issues of the 21st century.⁴⁵

Rancière never stopped to try to exonerate himself from those postmodernist suspicions. It sounds as if he has adopted the postmodernist vocabulary, in order to make his claims more acceptable. But, in so doing, he did not only adopt the vocabulary but also part of the ideology of postmodernism. That explains Rancière’s tropism both for the “aesthetic break” and, more generally, for the “disagreement” and the “dissensus”. In this postmodernist perspective, what matters is to stigmatize everything that echoes Consensus,

⁴⁴ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 7-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

and even Harmony. In Rancière's view, that is why postmodernists (especially Lyotard) favoured the Sublime at the expense of the Beautiful. Hence his task has become to reframe the Beautiful in order to adapt it to the postmodern tropism for dissensus, break, conflict, all that echoes some sort of rupture:

Lyotard's reading of Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful*, which in his later work will make him turn to the sublime anyway, first and foremost focuses on the promised reconciliation or a future 'marriage' even of the two incompatible and divorced stems of understanding and imagination. In contrast to that, Rancière aims at their tension and conflict.⁴⁶

If its conflictuous nature eventually made him turn to the Sublime, Lyotard did not make a false interpretation of the Beautiful and respected its Kantian definition in which the free play of Imagination and Understanding 'is the ground of this pleasure in the *harmony* of the faculties of cognition'⁴⁷.

On the contrary, Rancière reframed the Beautiful by conferring to it a characteristic which belongs to the Sublime *as opposed* to the Beautiful. This "sublimization" of the Beautiful is consistent with Rancière's conception of 'Disagreement' on the ground of which his 'aesthetic regime of art' is based. For Rancière the relation of the two faculties is a 'conflict' not only for the Sublime but for the Beautiful as well (while according to Kant it is conflictuous – but 'harmonious even in their contrast'⁴⁸ – for the

⁴⁶ Stefan Apostolou – Hölscher, « The Hanging Garden: Community, Beauty, and Dis-identification in Rancière, Talk at (retro-) Avantgardes, HU Berlin, 3.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 103. [my emphasizing]

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141-142: 'The mind feels itself moved in the representation of the sublime in nature /.../ This movement /.../ may be compared to a vibration, i.e., to a rapidly alternating repulsion from and attraction to one and the same object. /.../ Even in this case, however, the judgment itself remains only aesthetic because, without having a determinate concept of the object as its ground, it represents merely the subjective play of the powers of the mind (imagination and reason) as harmonious even in their contrast. [my emphasis] For just as imagination and understanding produce subjective purposiveness of the powers of the mind in the judging of the beautiful through their unison, so do imagination and reason produce subjective purposiveness through their conflict [my emphasizing]'.

Sublime as opposed to ‘harmonious’ for the Beautiful).

Rancière wants to support the Beautiful, as opposed to Lyotard’s tropism for the Sublime. At a first level, this choice is consistent with Rancière’s own tropism for equality, since on Kant’s avowal, the Sublime is not the best candidate for equality because it would require certain qualities which are not shared by all:

There are innumerable things in beautiful nature concerning which we immediately require consensus with our own judgment from everyone else and can also, without being especially prone to error, expect it; but we cannot promise ourselves that our judgment concerning the sublime in nature will so readily find acceptance by others. For a far greater culture, not merely of the aesthetic power of the judgment, but also of the cognitive faculties on which that is based, seems to be requisite in order to be able to make a judgment about this excellence of the objects of nature. /.../In fact, without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, called sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person.⁴⁹

But a scrutinous reading of Rancière shows that his very way of addressing the topic of equality vs inequality echoes the postmodern tropism for the Sublime more than the Arendtian favor for the Beautiful:

While sharing with Lyotard the suspicion towards the idea of a totalizing consensus, Rancière locates politics precisely in the local attempts to resolve a “wrong”. Rancière agrees that it would be impossible to politically overcome the gap altogether (e.g. by creating a perfect society without a miscount of parts), as this would necessarily constitute nothing else but another form of a police-like attempt to distribute the sensible. However /.../Rancière fails to see that his local attempts to approach the gaps of inequality are inherently characterised by the Kantian sublime. The distance to the sublime taken by Arendt is, at the very least, comprehensible. After all, she has good reasons to avoid its disruptive elements, as they would be

⁴⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 29, 148.

potentially detrimental for her political reading of *sensus communis*. The same, however, cannot be said about Rancière, as his idea of politics lays emphasis on dissensus and disagreement as a radical disruption of the sensual order- a striking resemblance to the Kantian sublime⁵⁰.

Rancière can't bear to support a notion linked with harmony, since it could nourish the suspicion of his supporting modernist utopias. Then, on the ground of his misreading of the Kantian Beautiful that he reframes as conflictuous, he can value this aesthetic notion since it is leading now to the unavoidable 'break':

Aesthetic efficiency means a paradoxical kind of efficiency that is produced by the very break of any determined link between cause and effect. It is precisely this indetermination that Kant conceptualized when he defined the beautiful as 'what is represented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept'. That definition has often been aligned with the old definition of beauty as harmony and it has been contrasted with the break of the sublime that would give the formula of modern rupture with representation. I think that this view dismisses the radical break with the representational logic that is entailed in the 'apart from any concept'. /.../Art means the implementation of a set of concepts, the beautiful has no concepts⁵¹.

In this statement, we are facing Rancière's paradoxical relation to Kant. Rancière needs to misread the Kantian Beautiful, in order to give it a kind of postmodernist aura. It sounds as if Rancière gave to himself the right to support Kant, under the condition that he produced evidence that he had a postmodern conception of Kant. But, in my view, this pseudo postmodernist vision of Kant fails to grasp the heuristic power of Kant's insights as far as the incidence of the "universal without concept" upon "Aesthetics as Politics" is at stake.

⁵⁰ Daniel Tkatch, 'Transcending Equality: Jacques Rancière and the Sublime in Politics', *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* (Edited by Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu), Volume 7, 2015, 15.

⁵¹ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 8-9.

4. Kant's Heuristic Insights: Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics

4.1. Freedom as the "Res Communis"

I argue that Kant's third *Critique* (and especially the "universal without concept") grounds Aesthetics as Politics, although the rationale I offer for this claim differs from Rancière's attempt of requalifying the Beautiful on the pattern of the Sublime. Contrary to Rancière's promise of emancipation which is bound to fail, on his own avowal, under the reign of the Police, Kant's third *Critique* gives us grounds for considering Aesthetics as Politics while adhering to the assumption that 'the *raison d'être* of politics is freedom'⁵². Moreover, Kant's third *Critique* has another major implication, that of opening this freedom-based conception of Politics to the worldwide dimension of the world citizen. But this freedom-based conception of Cosmopolitics could not have been granted without Kant's demonstration of the universal validity of a special kind of judgment, the particularity of which is to be grounded upon a "universal without concept".

Concerning the pure judgment of taste, the challenge of the third *Critique* is twofold: first, it must fulfill the requirement of the aprioricity of its universal validity; second, it must fulfill the requirement of the universal without concept. Up to the third *Critique*, these two requirements seemed contradictory⁵³. But Kant provides a solution which fulfills both validity *a priori* and universality without concept thanks to the free play of imagination and understanding⁵⁴. The polemics about the aprioricity of the

⁵² See Hannah Arendt, 'Freedom and Politics: A Lecture', *Chicago Review*, Vol.14, N°1 (Spring 1960), 28.

⁵³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9 "Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former", 102: 'Nothing, however, can be universally communicated except cognition and representation so far as it belongs to cognition. For only so far is the latter objective, and only thereby does it have a universal point of relation with which everyone's faculty of representation is compelled to agree.'

⁵⁴ Ibid., 102: 'Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general. /.../ Thus the state of mind in this

pure judgment of taste often lie in the confusion between its universal or common validity⁵⁵ and its universal communicability⁵⁶. However, Kant clearly explained that the latter is the consequence of the former⁵⁷.

Most of the so-called obscurities of the third *Critique* vanish if you take into account the fact that the mediating role of the third faculty (the feeling of pleasure) is opposed to a law-driven or a concept - driven model. Compared with the second *Critique*, Kant's conception of freedom has changed: freedom is no longer law-driven and is even presented as opposed to the constraint of its command:

For where the moral law speaks there is, objectively, no longer any free choice with regard to what is to be done; and to show taste /.../is something very different from expressing one's moral mode of thinking ; for the latter contains a command and produces a need, while modish taste by contrast only plays with the objects of satisfaction.⁵⁸

Kant's aim in the third *Critique* is to apprehend universal validity and communicability with freedom as their ground. Hence the only good candidate is the pleasure in the Beautiful since it can require the universal communicability of its satisfaction without the mediation of a concept:

The satisfaction in an action on account of its moral quality is by contrast not a pleasure of enjoyment, but of self-activity /.../. *This*

representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general'

⁵⁵ *Allgemeingültigkeit*

⁵⁶ *allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103: 'The subjective universal communicability (*allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*) of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable (*allgemein mitteilbar*), just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition'.

⁵⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 5, 96.

feeling, however, which is called moral, requires concepts; and does not exhibit a free, but rather a lawful purposiveness, and therefore also cannot be universally communicated other than by means of reason, and, if the pleasure is to be of the same kind in everyone, by means of very determinate practical concepts of reason. /.../ By contrast, the pleasure in the beautiful is neither a pleasure of enjoyment, nor a lawful activity /.../ but of mere reflection. /.../ This pleasure must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general /.../. For this very reason, one who judges with taste /.../ may also require the subjective purposiveness, i.e., his satisfaction in the object, of everyone else, and may assume his feeling to be universally communicable, even without the mediation of concepts⁵⁹.

This has deep consequences for the *sensus communis* and the cosmopolitical perspective.

H. Arendt was right in delivering a heuristic political interpretation of the third *Critique*, especially of the *sensus communis*. But she used the notion of a “common world” which can be misleading. Instead of trying to prove that Kant’s third *Critique* fits a traditional conception of politics, which gives rise to objections, Arendt should have highlighted that the conception of politics embedded in the third *Critique* is radically new. The political aim of the third *Critique* is not to build something common between men, either at a local or international scale. The aim of the third *Critique* is that freedom becomes the “res communis”. The aim of Kant in the third *Critique* is neither to find any common denominator to be shared by everyone nor to build a “common world” at any cost. The challenge at stake is to find a *free* common denominator on which a cosmopolitical perspective, if not a “common world”, may be shared by everyone with freedom as its ground.

Freedom is the most precious thing which is “received as one’s share” by any human and which has the vocation to be shared as a pleasure with every world citizen.

⁵⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 39, 172-173. (my emphasis)

4.2. *The Intrinsic Political Incidences of the Free Pleasure*

This free something resting “on the same conditions in everyone⁶⁰”, able to be shared by all, is the specific pleasure in the Beautiful. But this pleasure could not have been free if it had been ‘established (empirically and psychologically) from the natural tendency of human beings to sociability⁶¹’. This pleasure is free because its universal validity fits the aprioricity of the pure judgment of taste:

For I cannot combine a determinate feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) *a priori* with any representation, except where my ground is an *a priori* principle of reason determining the will; for then the pleasure (in the moral feeling) is the consequence of it, but precisely on that account it cannot be compared with the pleasure in taste at all, since it requires a determinate concept of a law, while the judgment of taste, by contrast, is to be combined immediately with the mere judging, prior to any concept. Hence all judgments of taste are also singular judgments, since they combine their predicate of satisfaction not with a concept but with a given singular empirical representation. Thus it is not the pleasure but *the universal validity of this pleasure* perceived in the mind as connected with the mere judging of an object that is represented in a judgment of taste as a universal rule for the power of judgment, valid for everyone. It is an empirical judgment that I perceive and judge an object with pleasure. But it is an apriori judgment that I find it beautiful, i.e., that I may require that satisfaction of everyone as necessary⁶².

In order to facilitate the acceptance of her unusual political interpretation of the third *Critique*, H. Arendt often focused on empirical aspects⁶³. But,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁶¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, 103.

⁶² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 37, 169.[Editor’s emphasizing]

⁶³ For a study of the limits of Arendt’s standpoint in her political interpretation of the judgment of taste see Isabelle Rieusset – Lemarié, « What taste and perfume add to the political interpretation of the Kantian aesthetic judgment by Arendt and Deleuze », International Conference of ESA (European Society for Aesthetics), Braga, Portugal, in *ESA Proceedings* 2012.

presented as such, the political incidence of the third *Critique* may appear as a peripheral by-product. On the contrary, if we admit with Arendt that freedom should be the main purpose of politics, and if we take into account the fact that freedom is the fundamental common thread of the third *Critique*, then its political incidences are parts of its intrinsic meaning. But, in that case, we also must admit that this freedom – based conception of politics is intrinsic to Aesthetics too. This is why my claim is that “Aesthetics as Politics” is the underlying motto of the third *Critique*.

This political result is anchored in the free pleasure. Beatrice Longuenesse highlighted the link between ‘an *a priori* ground to/.../the aesthetic pleasure of reflection⁶⁴’ and ‘an *a priori* grounded community of judging subjects⁶⁵’. She says that this link is based on the demonstration of the third *Critique* that ‘the peculiar kind of pleasure that is aesthetic pleasure is the very fact that it is universally communicable, or makes a claim to the possibility of being shared by all human beings⁶⁶’. The only word missing in this quotation is *free*: this peculiar pleasure is to be shared by all precisely because it is *free*. If the pleasure in the Beautiful has its universal validity (and consequently communicability) on *a priori* grounds it is because, contrary to the pleasure in the agreeable, it is free:

For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself completely *free* with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone.⁶⁷

It means that freedom is closely related to the *a priori* grounds both of the

⁶⁴ Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 271.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, 96-97.

pleasure in the pure judgment of taste and of the community which can be grounded on it. Hence the *sensus communis* and the community which results from the pure judgment of taste possess the crucial singularity to have freedom as their ground. This is one of the main upshots of the third *Critique*.

In the *Preliminaries to Perpetual Peace* Kant suggests that you can reach perpetual peace and the cosmopolitical perspective thanks to the mere mechanism of nature, but in that case this aim will be reached by ‘very unpleasant means’ (especially war). This pessimistic perspective springs from Kant’s doubts concerning the ability of human beings to act according to moral law. According to *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the path of duty leads to failure, since it would require a feeling of pleasure of which it is impossible to define the apriority:

In order indeed that a rational being, who is also affected through the senses, should will what reason alone directs such beings that they ought to will, it is no doubt requisite that reason should have a power to infuse a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the fulfillment of duty/.../ But it is quite impossible /.../ to make it intelligible *a priori*, how a mere thought, which in itself contains nothing sensible, can itself produce a sensation of pleasure or pain⁶⁸

The third *Critique* led Kant to bypass the impossibilities of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. The revolution of the third *Critique* lies in the linkage of a feeling of pleasure both with apriority and with freedom. Kant is the only philosopher to have fulfilled this aim. But the third *Critique* goes a step further since this free pleasure fulfills the achievement of *sensus communis* on which the cosmopolitical perspective is grounded. It means that even when the moral law doesn’t work for men, we are not bound to the cosmopolitical perspective as described in the pessimistic plot developed in the *Preliminaries to Perpetual Peace*. We are not bound to be treated as mere means both by political moralists and by Nature itself.

⁶⁸ Kant, « On the Extreme Limits of all Practical Philosophy », Third Section, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Thanks to the third *Critique* which discovered a specific pleasure for which an *a priori* ground can be found, it is possible to apprehend a cosmopolitical future that is not subordinated to the mere mechanism of Nature and which has freedom as its ground. The third *Critique* proved that there is an alternative path: a cosmopolitan organization can be conceived as ‘a whole /in which/every member should surely be purpose as well as means⁶⁹’, provided that this cosmopolitical awareness were based on this specific free pleasure, and on the enlarged mentality. The point of Politics (as re-conceived by the third *Critique*) is empathy for the freedom of any other world citizen. In the light of the third *Critique*, this empathy for the freedom of other men may succeed because it is accessible as a free pleasure rather than a duty. In Kant’s third *Critique*, “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” is grounded upon the universal validity (and, consequently, communicability) of the free pleasure.

5. Conclusion

First, I have argued that the reduction of Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art proves all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake. I have given evidence of the damages of this reductive standpoint in Rancière’s choice of addressing “Aesthetics as Politics” on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” which, as highlighted by Ruban Yepes, resulted in the reduction to the localized space of Art, bound to a micropolitical level, as opposed to the worldwide sphere of influence of the Police. By pointing out Rancière’s own avowal of the pessimistic outcome of Politics, which can only hope to make an interstitial tear in the worldwide web of the Police, this paper contributed to prove that the aim of emancipation, as it was embedded in Rancière’s conception of “Aesthetics as Politics”, cannot be fulfilled as long as you forbid an all-encompassing approach at a worldwide level instead of a localized one.

The first upshot of my argument is that, from the moment that your aim (pursuing “Aesthetics as Politics”) deals with emancipation and

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 16.

freedom, the enlarged dimension of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” proves to be a necessary requirement. If such is not the case, this emancipation aim is bound to fail and you don’t give way to a “cosmopoliticization of aesthetics”⁷⁰ able to offer an alternative to the damages of globalization, provided that this “cosmopoliticization of aesthetics” does not become an uncontrollable phenomenon⁷¹ and does not result in an “aestheticization of politics”.

It is the place to pay homage to Rancière’s choice of addressing the topic of the linkage between Aesthetics and Politics, not so much as relations implying a fatal instrumentalization by one of them at the expense of the other (as it was the pitfall of the debates about “aestheticization of politics”) but as an intrinsic collaboration, bordering on quasi mutual identification⁷², which is precisely what is at stake in Rancière’s phrase “Aesthetics as Politics”. My main argument is to emphasize the discrepancy between the heuristic insights offered by the phrase coined by Rancière, namely “Aesthetics as Politics”, and the actual developments, in Rancière’s work, which fail to fulfill the promises of this fruitful concept. But the analysis of the causes of Rancière’s failure proved to be fruitful too. First of all, I have argued that one might make the claim that the role of the “universal without concept” in “Aesthetics as Politics” is crucial, without indulging in Rancière’s misreading of the Kantian Beautiful based on the conflictuous model of the Sublime. If Rancière escaped the postmodern tropism for the Sublime (despite its unequalitarian nature) at the expense of the Beautiful, he did not escape the pitfall of the “sublimization” of the Beautiful. But, at a second glance, what appears more fundamental in

⁷⁰ Jacinto Lageira, *L’Art comme Histoire*, Editions Mimèsis, 2016, 274 : ‘what /.../ Ulrich Beck calls the First Modernity, which would now be absorbed by the Second Modernity, the one of /.../ globalization to which he opposes /.../ firmly the cosmopolitization’. [my translation]

⁷¹ Ulrich Beck, *Qu’est-ce que le cosmopolitisme ?*, Aubier, 2006, 43 : ‘the cosmopolitism, in the Kantian meaning, is something active /.../. The cosmopolitization, on the contrary, compels us to see something uncontrollable and passive’. [my translation]

⁷² See Rafał Czekaj, “Aesthetics and the political turn in Art”, *Art Inquiry*, 2015, vol. XVII, 85: ‘It is in the latter book, in the essay *Aesthetics as Politics*, that Rancière advances the thesis of a strong bond between aesthetics and politics. It is so strong that one can even speak of an inextricable connection between aesthetics and politics.’

Rancière's causes of failure regarding his heuristic promise lies in other philosophical assumptions. I have highlighted the influence of Plato on that score. But, what really matters as far as methodological insights are at stake, is the fact that this analysis of the causes of "Rancière's failure" (in order to fulfill the promises offered by his "Aesthetics as Politics") has led me, thanks to a demonstration by default, to disclose the necessary requirements of "Aesthetics as Politics", its conditions of possibility as far as an implicit freedom – based conception of Politics is embedded in this concept, as was the case for Rancière.

On that score, the main upshot of my argument is to show that the crucial elements deciphered as necessary (but which default in Rancière's essays) were eventually deciphered as present in Kant's third *Critic*. First of all, in the third *Critic*, Aesthetics is definitely not reduced to the sole domain of Art, as is manifest both in Kant's tropism for the free beauties of Nature and in the requirement of very subtle arguments⁷³ in order to subsume some artworks under this category of free beauties. Second, "Aesthetic as Politics" is definitely not reduced to a micropolitical level in Kant's approach, since his third *Critique* gives to it a cosmopolitical extension. And, last but not least, I have argued that, contrary to Rancière's essays in which the requirement of emancipation seems to burden the task of "Aesthetics as Politics" to such a point that it cannot fulfill its aims, Kant's choice of addressing the topic of the aesthetic judgment on the ground of freedom sustains its ability to have a universal validity and to ground the cosmopolitical scope of the *sensus communis*. Hence the upshot of my argument which gave evidence of Kant's consistency, precisely in the fact that it is his freedom-based conception of Aesthetics that led him to pave the way both to "Aesthetics as Politics" and to "Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics".

What remains a puzzle for subsequent aesthetic researches is the crucial role of the free pleasure. On the one hand, its universal validity which grounds the *sensus communis* is what matters. But on the other hand, the gist of Kant's discovery of "free pleasure" lies in the linkage between freedom and the sensible realm, which might lead us to reconsider, from

⁷³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 45.

another standpoint than Rancière's, the political incidence of their relations.

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The Artwork Process and the Theory Spectrum

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ABSTRACT. The paper suggests a notion called ‘the artwork process’ which maps all the phases in the process from an artwork’s initial manufacture to its experience as an artwork by an audience. It examines various definitions of ‘artwork’ that have offered and suggests that they share the common structure of locating artwork ontology at some or other definite phase within the artwork process. One result of this is that there is a common structure of objections to such theories, arising from counter-examples sourced from other phases of the artwork process excluded from the proposed definition, with the consequence that the definition becomes prescriptive towards actual artistic practice. This structure is then used to analyse the ‘performance theory’ of art: It’s suggested that this is the latest in the line of these definitional projects, novel in that it concentrates exclusively on the actions of artists for the source of its definition. The structural analysis is then used to generate two objections to performance theories, arising from phases of the artwork process it excludes. The paper then plots the different proposed definitional projects on the ‘theory spectrum’ according to which phases of the artwork process each proposed definition includes or excludes from its scope. It concludes by suggesting that only a comprehensively contextualist definition which makes reference to all phases of the artwork process can hope to be resistant to this structure of objection and defence. It concludes by speculating on why this might be so and suggesting ‘manifested performance theory’ as a plausible candidate for just such a comprehensively contextualist position.

1. Introduction

The recent history of aesthetics has contained offers of many different characterisations or more formal definitions of what an artwork is, often included within some wider definition or theory of ‘art’. Here is a brief familiar genealogy: Before the mid-twentieth century these proposed

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definitions *usually*² took the form of an artwork being an artefact of a certain *kind* doing a certain *thing* – such as imitating reality, expressing an emotion or mental state, communicating an idea or feeling, providing an aesthetic response, or acting as some sort of symbolic representation.³ Under the pressures of the artistic experiments of Modernism these definitions were nuanced, developed and transformed within theories of ‘art’ so that the artefacts that did this – imitating, expressing, providing aesthetic experience, etc. thing – were made within some sort of *artistic context* or in some precise *sort of way*. So, we have the rise of institutional, contextualist and recursive definitions of ‘art’ which include some reference to an artwork’s context of presentation or provenance. Sometimes, these theories even drop the requirement that an artwork needs to be an artefact which has to function in some way with respect to an audience.⁴ Most recently, the pendulum has swung even further from the audience: In performance theories of art, artefacts are also removed from the substance of the definition of an *artwork*, so that artworks are some sort of action, or achievement, by an agent with the artefact the record, or focus of appreciation, of this achievement.⁵

There’s an internal logic to this story in that these different definitions of ‘art’ and the characterisations of an artwork they contain were each proposed to overcome the difficulties seen to beset earlier attempts. These difficulties arose from objections that standardly demonstrated that each definition or theory of ‘art’ is unnecessary and/or insufficient, in that however ‘artwork’ is defined within each, either an artwork is found that

² ‘Usually’ as some, such as Dewey’s (2009) do not fit this description. The subject of these works was usually ‘aesthetics’ as distinct from ‘artworks’ and the characterisations of ‘art’ they provided were supplemental to their more general aesthetic theory.

³ Representatives of each in the broadest sense are respectively: Plato *Republic*, bk. 10, Tolstoy (1994); Beardsley (1953) *Aesthetics*.

⁴ Such theories, ‘contextualism’ broadly construed, represent the mainstream of current analytical philosophy. The discussion concentrates in filling in how the contextualised object is to be characterised. See Danto (1981) (interpretability); Dickie (1984) (institutional); Levinson (1990) “Defining Art Historically” in *Music, Art & Metaphysics* (historically); Carroll (1988) (identifying individual narratives). Stecker (1997) (historical and functionally)

⁵ See David Davies (2004) for the most comprehensive performance theory thus far presented. Currie (1989) should also be included.

does not do what the definition states the artwork is supposed to do, or a non-artwork is found that *does* do what artworks is supposed to do.

2. The Artwork Process

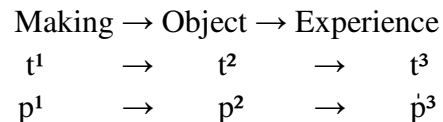
I now want to introduce an idea I call “the Artwork Process”. This idea applies to all and each individual artwork, albeit in different ways. It sets out the process of making artworks in a way that is somewhat analogous to the business tool of ‘process mapping’: That is, a technique in which the temporal or procedural stages of a process are set out, so that it’s clear that the later phases cannot occur without the earlier phases having occurred. The ‘*artwork* process’ is broadly, that idea applied to artworks. Here is a set out in a simplified fashion:

Phase 1: The process of making an artwork:

Phase 2: The Artwork Object itself;

Phase 3: The audience experience of the artwork as such.

These 3 (broad) phases stand in temporal (t) and procedural (p) relation to each other so that:



So, if we think about *any* artwork we can, in principle, identify the process(es) by which each is made and comes to be recognised as an artwork. This process characterises *all* the phases between an artwork’s initial manufacture to it being experienced as an accepted and identified artwork by an audience. Broadly, there are three main phases to this process standing in temporal and procedural relation to each other; (i) its manufacture, (ii) its standing as a completed object and (iii) its being accepted and identified as an artwork.

Artworks within different forms and different artworks within each form will manifest these three phases of the artwork process differently. The nature of making, the results of that making and the kind of appreciation of a work will differ between works in different art forms - paintings, sculptures or conceptual works. Indeed, for some artworks in newer art forms with more fluid conventions, or which are combines of elements from different forms or genres combined into a 'piece', *what* is manifested at each phase of the process may be a matter of debate. For some conceptual artworks for instance, a physical artefact may be documentation about the artwork, with the artwork itself being a set of specifications or conditions that need to be met. For performance artworks, the completed work may be an event that is experienced by its audience *as* it is being made. However, each remain just different ways of producing artworks – even conceptual or performance artworks are made, have existence conditions and can be appreciated by an audience as a particular work.

The artwork process claims no more than that the process applies similarly to each artwork – it says nothing, and need say nothing about *how* it applies to any particular work or class of works – that's a matter for more detailed investigation. We should then note, that the artwork process does *not* either offer or presuppose one kind of definition of 'artwork' or offer an ontology of artworks. So, for the artwork process, the input is the activity of the author(s), whatever that is, and the output is the thing the audience gets (whatever that is).

The artwork process can be used as a tool to do two things: Firstly, as a tool to map the terrain of the definitional project (and any associated ontology of artworks associated with, or consequent on, that definitional project) and set out the relationships and commonalities between different proposed definitions, and secondly, to use the results of this mapping to suggest what sort of position might be able to deal with the (structurally similar) problems that beset these other proposed definitions.

So, on the first point, if the different characterisations of an artwork within the different definitions of 'art' are aligned with the artwork process then we can see that these are those theories that approach the subject from the audience's perspective tend to characterise artworks solely in terms of

the *experience* or appreciation of a completed artefact and which tend to ignore its *manufacture*. These theories will tend to have an explicitly *aesthetic* and *perceptual* aspect, usually tied to audience appreciation of a completed artefact, usually assumed to be ready for appreciation.

Then there are those theories that characterise artworks as being some kind of artefact with certain properties doing some kind of thing: These theories concentrate on the properties of objects (broadly speaking) and their ability to generate aesthetic experiences, or to have resulted from a (perhaps specified kind of) intentional making. Lastly there are those theories that characterise artworks exclusively in terms of the activities involved in *making* artworks. These theories will tend to ignore aesthetic concerns and focus instead on an agent's intentions or contextually explained actions when making some artefact.

Aside from these come the various hybrid definitions in which different aspects of these positions are variously conjoined with characterisations of artefacts as produced by agents or as experienced by audiences.

My first claim then is that each of these theories can be mapped on to the artwork process to show that each concentrates exclusively on *some* part, or parts, of the process at the expense of other parts. So, although they appear superficially different, each can be structurally described as sharing common features using the framework of the artwork process. One phase of the artwork process, or some sub-set of phases within the total process is deemed *sufficient* to define 'artwork'.

This similar structural description derives from the fact that although each of these theories implicitly recognises the entire artwork process, each also explicitly relegates some parts of the process as inessential, or unimportant to the definition of 'artwork' offered. These parts, are then *excluded* from that explicit definition.

Consequently, there is also a structural similarity in how theories deal with *objections* to the proposed sufficiency of their account. So, objections raised about the *sufficiency* of any proposed definitions came from artworks plausibly claimed to necessarily require input from *other* excluded phases of the artwork process in order to be artworks.

For example, theories such as mimetic, symbolic form or expression theories, isolate the scope of the definition to the properties of the *made artefact* and (possibly) its impact (broadly speaking) on an audience. Objections to their sufficiency, therefore come from the making and the experience phases of the artwork process: That is, from non-art making actions that result in an appropriate object, or artworks that are not identifiable as such from the object of perception considered in isolation: Modernism produced artworks that were perceptually indiscernible from non-artworks. Philosophy then decided that non-perceptual factors were needed to differentiate artworks from non-artworks and that this needed to be reflected within theories or definitions of 'art'. This produces objections to the earlier theories.⁶

These objections then prompted the defence (ultimately unsuccessful, I'd say) of the theory either becoming extensionally prescriptive towards identified examples from art history so that for each kind of theory, a category of pseudo-artworks is created – things that may appear to be artworks, are treated as if they're artworks, but which actually given the terms of the theory, are not artworks (such as aesthetic based theories denying that readymades can 'really' be art); or of dismissing aspects of provenance and relational properties apparently necessary to an artwork's existence, as only art historically relevant - facts about the *artist* rather than the *artwork*.⁷ The form this defence takes is to ring-fence as sufficient the appropriately described phase of the artwork process, and to identify troubles thrown from elsewhere on the artwork process as in some way *epistemological or qualitative* but not *definitional* in order to preserve the proposed definition.⁸

Setting this out structurally shows that there an obvious immediate response to this problem of the sufficiency of *any* one traditional position within the genealogy of theories. That response has been to simply to *move*

⁶ The locus classicus for this approach is Danto (1964) & (1981).

⁷ For defences of maintaining a distinction between facts about a work and facts about an artist see for instance, Hanfling (1992); Lessing (2002). A summation of the earlier aesthetically focussed responses to contextualist definitions is given in Levinson (1990, p.38).

⁸ For an example of this see the discussion of Performance Theories below.

the definition of what an artwork is to a *different* phase of the artwork process to try a definition there. This tactical response has consequential effects: To take one example, if definition in terms of an uncontextualised object is now hopeless, then we can downplay the role of the aesthetic, so that *it* then becomes an *qualitative*, rather than *definitional*, feature of artworks. Then aesthetic questions get asked of artworks separately from classificatory questions, and we can search for the definition of 'artwork' elsewhere.

Indeed, for some, the aesthetic, once revealed as unnecessary to an artwork's status, can even be regarded as irrelevant to that status. As an example of this kind of move, consider Binkley's writings (1976 & 1977),⁹ which although explicitly not providing a definition (he's a non-essentialist), state that artworks are 'pieces' that have been indexed subject to the specifying actions of an artist where this specification (i) ranges over anything the artist chooses and (ii) functions to index an object as an artwork. For Binkley-type theories there is *no* role for the reception of the object – the ontologically relevant relationship exists between the act of an agent and an object, with success or failure criteria for making an artwork being determined exclusively by the agent. His account thus stands emblematic of this structural move of re-locating the account of 'artwork' to a different discrete sub-section of the artwork process and defining artworks exclusively there.

This structural analysis shows why such accounts are themselves also susceptible to the same kinds of objections as those they attempted to replace. Just as we can object to the artefact and aesthetic based theories in terms of how an artwork is *made*, we can object to indexing-type theories on the basis of *audience experience*: So, because at theoretical level, the idea of indexing may not allow failure, the theory is forced to become extensionally prescriptive towards actual art history because we think (a) such failure is *possible* and (b) has been *actual*; Or we effectively expand this second point about actual failure and take the necessity and sufficiency route to objections by highlighting artefacts that are not artworks *despite* indexing,

⁹ See Binkley, (1976) & (1977).

or in which an artwork would seem not to have been the subject of indexing.

So, simply moving from one part of the process to another just means that objections emerge from the phases of the artwork process *not* included within the definition. Structurally, it changes nothing - a different category of pseudo-artworks, specific to this definition, is once more created. Author-focussed indexing-type positions and spectator-focussed aesthetically based reception positions are *similar* theories with *similar* problems in terms of how each relate to the artwork process. The question is whether we can move beyond these competing attempts to a position where these structures of objections can no longer be made.

3. Performance Theories

It is against this structural background that I wish to consider 'performance theories' of art (articulated most forcibly and eloquently by Greg Currie (1989) and David Davies (2004)). These have been considered a massively revisionary approach to the project of defining artworks since they identify the artwork exclusively with the *actions* of artists. Can they provide a way out of this structure of argumentation?

Alas, no. Against the background of the artwork process, performance theories stand revealed as another alternative traditional theory, exactly modelling earlier attempts in terms of taking a discrete sub-section of the artwork process as the *exclusive* location sufficient to provide a definition of an artwork and relegating the other phases from its definitional project. 'Performance theories' have simply moved that exclusive location to another, previously unproposed, part of the artwork process.

This is not to denigrate them, but it does show that performance theories are structurally part of the *same* project - of where to exclusively locate the definition of an artwork within the artwork process - as the aesthetic and object based theories that came before. Where they do innovate of course, is by for the first time suggesting effectively removing the artefact or object from the definitional project. The difference to the already established Binkley-type indexing accounts is that in those the indexing was the making but the artefact or object itself remained the

artwork. Whereas performance theories identify the actions as the artwork itself.

Now, with this characterisation in mind, it is easy to locate the potential source of objections to performance theories. Since the theory defines an artwork with the actions of an author manufacturing an object, challenges will originate from the phases of the artwork process that this excludes – broadly speaking objects and their reception.

Just as exclusively aesthetically based theories are attacked for ignoring the contribution of how artworks are made, the performance theory is susceptible to attack for ignoring the contribution of artefacts as objects of experience, interpretation or criticism to a definition of artworks. This provides a guide for where within the artwork process we can find potential objections and what kind of objections those might be.

Here, I mention briefly two such objections: The first concerns lost or destroyed artefacts and the second situations in which an artist goes through the performance of making (and thereby makes an artwork), but where nothing to experience, (in the broadest sense) results.

Lost and/or destroyed artefacts are a problem for performance theories, since, as these theories identify the artwork exclusively with an artist's *actions*, the result of those actions is not itself the artwork – Davies (2004, pp. 50-74), for example, calls objects 'the focus of appreciation' of an artist's achievement. So, when the artist stops working, the ontological work is done and the work of criticism and appreciation begins. The first problem is that if the artefacts themselves are not a necessary part of the artwork then every painting in every gallery can be burned to a pile of inappreciable cinders without losing or destroying a single artwork. As a corollary, artworks that we think no longer exist, where the artefact has been lost or destroyed, are, on the terms of performance theories, revealed as not in fact lost, since we know that they *were* made, and their making was what constituted those artworks. It is comfort then, to know that Aristotle's *On Comedy*, or that Titian's *Battle of Spoleto* are not lost but only that the focus of our appreciation has gone.

The second objection is the converse of the first. This is, to use

Davies'(2004) terminology¹⁰, (for shorthand): The articulated artistic statement that is presumably made but never articulated – this is when an artist performs all her actions that, on the performance theory's terms, *could* constitute her artistic statement and so makes an artwork, but where *nothing to experience issues from that work*. For Davis' (2004) original formulation, this means there is no articulation of an artistic statement in a vehicular medium. In these circumstances, since the artwork *is* the performance of the artist, an artwork *is* made. It can't also require that as well as the performance itself, its expression in a vehicular medium is also necessary, since this will stop the theory being a pure performance theory. Moreover, there would appear to be no criterion by which a pure performance theorist can differentiate these undoubtedly different situations, since they all, on the terms of the performance theory, have the same evidence base. For the performance theorist, these works, along with destroyed artefacts, occupy a category of inappreciable yet existing, artworks. We can question the point of this category and ask how it is different from the category of non-existing artworks.¹¹ This is the weak point of performance theories identified through the analysis of its structure in respect of the artwork process.

However, concluding the wrongness of performance theories from these thoughts would be false, since for performance theories, because artworks are a different kind of thing - actions, or action types¹² - they are made and lost under different circumstances. Indeed, on the terms of the performance theory, because paintings, books etc. are *records* of the performances of actions by artists, it might be said that *all* artworks are lost

¹⁰ See Davies (2004 – 'artistic statement' 52-54, its relation to vehicular medium 52-62, and defined, 59).

¹¹ There are consequent problems for the performance theory, perhaps most pressing for conceptual art cases, which similarly target its failure to provide a criterion for differentiating between scenarios. The first is that if there is no objective product to my making actions, how and why does this differ from me simply doing things and not thereby making an artwork? The second is that the performance theory provides no criterion through which to discern successful from unsuccessful attempts to make an artwork. Moreover, if no artefact is produced as a focus of appreciation, what is the basis for the difference between you reporting me performing these actions, and you reporting that I have made an artwork? Without any resulting artefact, then the artwork cannot be spoken about *without* speaking about me and my actions. Work has become authorship.

¹² For Currie, for instance, artworks are 'action types'.

once that performance is complete.¹³

Yet, in a sense, the precise force of these *particular* objections do not matter – what it demonstrates is that the sorts of objection that will be formed against the performance theory are determined by how its definition is focussed exclusively on one part of the artwork process. These problems arise broadly from its definitional unhooking of the artist's actions from the result of those actions.

Similarly, for its defences against those objections: These will be structurally similar to those of other traditional theories. So, the performance theorist will say that as long as an artistic statement is articulated an artwork is made, and so these are not problems really – by demanding an object I've shifted away from artworks, (which are art related performative actions or action types), to talk about what I'd need for appreciation (i.e. objects). So, what I've done is highlighted odd situations within the performance theory of inappreciable yet existing, artworks, so this is an epistemological problem of art appreciation. Performance theories stand revealed then as mirror images of aesthetic empiricism.

So, despite providing a very uncomfortable fit to our intuitions, to argue simply that performance theories cut across our existing classifications is to assume an ontology that it does not accept. These objections, do however force the question of the *point* of the performance theory, since they raise severe doubts about what is *valued* in artworks. It presumably would be common ground that it's of immense regret that the artefacts are lost and destroyed – and, whilst what remains - our knowledge of the artist's achievement - is undoubtedly of value – it's of less value to us, separated in time and space, than the result of their labours: Or perhaps these arguments point to a wider suggestion that it is an aim for any theory of art to be able to reflect the current sources of art's value in human culture – which, I think currently include objects that can be appreciated separately to consideration of the actions that went into making them.

¹³ The fact I am unclear how actions or action types can be lost may be a consequent problem for performance theories, since it becomes hard to make sense of the whole category of 'lost artworks'.

4. Contextualism & the Theory Spectrum

Now, in order to use the artwork process and to think more about this definitional project and ask whether we can move beyond these competing attempts, to a position where these challenges can no longer be made, I want to introduce another notion: The 'theory spectrum'. The theory spectrum is basically a map of which part(s) of the artwork process a particular definition homes in on. Each theory can be positioned within the theory spectrum according to what is *included* with the definition of 'artwork' and what is *excluded*. What is considered sufficient for a definition and what parts it does not. This can be set out in the following diagram:

Artwork Process Stage		
<i>Making</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Theory Type		
<i>Performance Theories</i>	<i>Artefact Property Theories</i>	<i>Aesthetic Response Theories</i>
Hybrid Theories		
<i>Making and Object</i>	<i>Object and Reception</i>	
(Complex) Contextualism		

At one extreme the performance theories concentrate attention on *process*, to the exclusion of *objects* and *audiences*. They are then extremely amenable to those *making* artworks. At the other extreme there are aesthetically based theories concentrating their attention on perceptual objects. These are extremely amenable to those seeking to *enjoy or understand* artworks. Performance theories have great success in dealing

with the variety of ways in artworks can be made in a post-medium artworld but can produce extremely counter-intuitive results when applied to appreciating artworks from the past. Aesthetic theories are good at explaining the point and value of encountering all and any art but hopeless when presented with the recent and contemporary artistic practice. In the middle of this spectrum are the object based theories, on attack from each side by somehow indiscernible non-artwork counterparts, either not sharing a required property, or not being made in the same appropriate way.

Mapped this way, it's obvious that there is an alternative to the traditional one (or two) phase approach: To reject the structure of theory that ring-fences phases or parts of the artwork process as the exclusive location of a sufficient artwork definition and to instead *extend* the definition of artwork throughout the artwork process to include *all* of its phases within its scope.

My claim then is that a definition of 'artwork' can only hope to be free from these structures of argumentation if it includes within its compass the whole artwork process - from the moment of the artist's initial inspiration to the experience of the audience consciously appreciating the completed artwork: The history of production of the artwork, the work itself and its appreciation are each and all *necessary* components in a definition or underpinning ontology of 'artwork'. Such theories will reach out to position themselves across *all* the theory spectrum, overlapping with the positions of all the traditional theories discussed thus far. My claim then is that the ability of such positions to be immune from the structures of argumentation that any traditional theory is prey to is a *prima facie* compelling reason (at the very least at a pragmatic level) to prefer process-wide theories. Beneath this however, I also think that this methodological point suggests that being immune to similar structures of argumentation points to the fact that a process-wide theory is actually providing a better kind of attempted definition of 'artwork' – one that will be extensionally adequate in the face of past, contemporary and future artistic practise.

In talking of such process-wide theories, I am talking of course, about any form of contextualism that can meet these requirements. Some forms of contextualism can potentially reach across each different part of

the artwork process and include them all: (i.e. $t^1 - t^3$ and $p^1 - p^3$) within a proposed definition of 'artwork'. These kinds of contextualist account also reach out across the theory spectrum to incorporate the reach of all traditional t^n or p^n focussed accounts (either concentrating on a single phase or hybrid).

These positions, increasingly baroque in their formulations – recursive, conjunctive, disjunctive, clustering etc. – still face the same type of challenge to their necessity and sufficiency as the others. However, because they reach out across the artwork process, these challenges are themselves more baroque, but no less relevant for that. Thus, for recursive theories there are the problems of first art, for institutional theories the problem of the romantic artist and for recursive historical theories the problems of alien art.¹⁴ These are well established questions and I will not go into them here. However, contextualist accounts are crucially different in that they can, because they do not *exclude* any phase of the artwork process from the definition, tweak their accounts in order to accommodate these baroque objections, (if necessary by fiat, or ideas such as co-option) without also having to become prescriptive towards the extension of art or actual artistic practise or indeed sacrificing whatever intuitive, or pre-theoretical fit they have to how we think about and what we value in artworks.

Indeed, it may be a tacit acknowledgement of this re-tweaking potential that underpins the attraction of cluster theories,¹⁵ as a cluster can contain elements ranging across the entire artwork process and can, if structured appropriately, permit the inclusion of additional sufficient reasons to make something an artwork from anywhere within that process.¹⁶ However, I don't think an explicitly non-essentialist cluster theory is required, since I think it's arguable that a disjunctive definition can always more rigorously do the work that a cluster theory can do.

To conclude, my claim is that if you are in any way invested in the

¹⁴ For these theories and their problems see respectively: Levinson, (1990); Stephen Davies (1991); Dickie (1984); Beardsley (1983); Carney (1984); Currie (1993); Stecker, (1997).

¹⁵ For cluster theories see Weitz (1956); Wollheim (1980); Adajian (2003); Davies, Stephen (2004); Gaut (2005).

¹⁶ This is a claim Gaut makes especially for his formulation.

overall project of defining 'artwork' then the ideas of the artwork process and the theory spectrum set the structural framework for that project – and my specific claim here is that if you define anywhere within that process you have to define everywhere throughout that process.

Viewed through this structural framework, what is required is a definition of 'artwork', that is complexly contextualist, in that its formulation reaches out to include necessarily *all* phases of the artwork process from maker to spectator.¹⁷ Thus the various conjunctive, disjunctive and ever more complex definitions, or cluster accounts often criticised for being amenable only to philosophers rather than practitioners, may be what's philosophically required to capture this complex practice¹⁸. All other theories that *exclude* some part of the artwork process, no matter which, are *bound* to fail, since they will be susceptible to counter-examples that undermine their sufficiency. They simply are not able to capture some part of the artwork process in its lived and enjoyed actual complexity.

We might ask why this might be so – what is so special about artworks that they are like this and need to be defined in terms of their whole process of manufacture? I think the answer lies in history: The grouping together of various different creative practices that produce cultural artefacts under the designation 'art' has led to an ontological variety within artworks of the different art forms and even within the same form – artworks then, can perhaps be any of material objects, events, abstract structures and continuants. So, 'artwork' as a term is best viewed as an umbrella term, collecting together various different individual practices that issue in productions with different ontologies. Additionally, within the umbrella term 'artwork' we not only have this ontological variety but also a developmental history in terms of activities that can be grouped under the umbrella term 'artwork'. In trying to define 'artwork' then, we are trying to define, under a single concept, a group of things with different ontologies and existence and individuation conditions. This means that a search for

¹⁷ That's not to say that it need to include all the sub-parts within each section; i.e. about intentional making, or type of intention etc. This is where the squabbles of the fruitful present, and the successful future, lie.

¹⁸ Stecker (2000, pp.45-64) makes this claim.

what they might have in common has to come from how they relate to the concept under which they are made e.g. 'art', rather than anything arising from the particular ontology of any one art form.

Given this, the process approach provides the best chance of providing a definitional framework that can apply to *all* artworks irrespective of the differences between art forms and individual artworks and which can cope with the developmental history of art as it has unfolded in the past and will unfold in the future: Whatever and however artworks have been, or will be made, they can be mapped onto the artwork process.

Very tentatively, I would suggest something that could be called 'manifested performance theory' as a plausible whole-process theory (others are available of course!).¹⁹ This would be a position in which (1) the achievement of an artist in making an artwork, as an item within an historically evolving and ongoing cultural practice is recognised, but where (2) there is a requirement that this achievement is manifested within an artefact²⁰ that has determinate existence and individuation conditions separate to that artist's actions, and which (3) permit an audience to meaningfully view that object as an item within that evolving cultural practice. This kind of theory has necessary requirements that bear on maker, artefact and audience as equal component parts of its whole. Additional requirements might impact on the precise formulation of each part of this definition.

In building this kind of definition, elements of the partial definitions of 'artwork' discussed above can be retained. These elements, abstracted from their definitional role, might nevertheless, when built upon the foundation of a bare process-wide *definition* of artwork, provide the first steps in a more substantial *theory* of artwork providing insight into the value of artworks, and indeed art. The way this complexly contextualist definition gets formulated will determine precisely *what* in each phase of the artwork

¹⁹ This may actually, on some readings of the theory, be the performance theory. However, I'm clear that it's not the performance theory since it has necessary requirements for maker, for artefact and for audience as component parts.

²⁰ 'Artefact' here is to be construed widely, meaning 'cultural artefact' and to include physical things, specifications of conditions, processes, events, etc.

process becomes definitional and what qualitative – but *something* has to be there from each phase.

So, for instance Levinson's (1990) and Davies' (2004) positions, can be seen within this structural framework as attempts to build up a characterisation of what's needed in an account of phase 1 of the artwork process. Complex contextualism doesn't *require* this, but does require that there be something there. Given this framework the debate becomes whether what is offered as accounts of each phase of the process is accurate and/or works as part of a wider process-wide account.

However, that's not to say that all forms of complex contextualism are as good as each other. One form of complex contextualism is simply to weld the performance, expression and aesthetic positions together in as full-bodes a form of each is possible. This would be a very thick definition of 'artwork' and will as such emerge as extremely prescriptive towards the current extension of art, requiring an artwork to overcome three individually robust and necessary hurdles in order to be an artwork. This is caused by this theory's attempt to pack too much content into its requirements of each phase of the art work process. This should be seen as a practical demerit in any offered version of complex contextualism. However, it is open to us to see this prescriptiveness and attempt to cure it through re-tweaking our complexly contextualist account so that we move some requirements from the definitional to the epistemological whilst retaining coverage of all phases of the artwork process.²¹ The effect of this of course, (especially if repeated in the face of multiple challenges against this offered definition) is to make the content of the definition thinner, whilst elevating the possibility of a progressively thicker and thicker theory of how we experience and judge the quality of artworks.

So, why manifested performance theory? For me, it's because it's the kind of theory that results from this weeding and refining and focussing of the varieties of complex contextualism. This would be a position in which

²¹ This mirrors the above mentioned tactic adopted by the various competing traditional 'one-phase' theories which moved problematic features from the definitional to the qualitative. Now, however, there's a requirement that each phase retains at least a toehold in the definitional, for the sufficiency of the entire project.

the performance theory's concentration on the value artworks have in representing the achievement of an artist; the historical and recursive theories' insight that art has a developmental history as a concept as well as a narrative of individual artworks; and the ability of aesthetic theories to explain why we value experiencing artworks rather than just reading art criticism or the biographies of artists, could all be incorporated.

Additional requirements might impact on the precise formulation of each part of this definition. For instance, independent conditions relating to the *kinds* of artefacts that can be produced as artworks, and the properties that artefacts within those kinds might have might have, may also obtain. There might be requirements about the *types* of work an artist can, or must, do – perhaps related to particular circumstances of author, material and action - in order to produce an artefact that meets those conditions: There might be requirements on the artefacts and on the audience that determine the circumstances under which we make mistakes about artworks and whether our response to artefacts as artworks can be correct. Finally, *how* we characterise our artworks might determine the nature of these mistakes – for instance, the properties we attribute to the actions of an artist may be incompatible with the properties of the artefact he makes, and we will need a way to decide these cases.²² However, it may be that beyond and beneath these we cannot safely go.

Yet, it's here I think, that fruitful philosophical work can be found – by investigating these and other consequences for the projects of defining 'artwork', or providing a substantial theory of 'art' - using the tools of the artwork process and the theory spectrum.²³

5. Coda

It might be, if you think the entire definitional project as wholly wrong-

²² I am grateful to Derek Matravers for highlighting this issue.

²³ A much earlier and substantially different version of this paper benefited from the comments of Derek Matravers & the attendees of the Graduate Aesthetics conference, University of Southampton, September 2007. An abridged version of this paper benefited enormously from comments of attendees of the European Society for Aesthetics conference in Berlin 2017.

headed, that the ideas of the artwork process and theory spectrum can be re-cast as tools in an epistemological project.

The artwork process and theory spectrum approach can also provide a framework within which other substantial questions about art and individual artworks can be approached. For instance, in those instances where we are perhaps unsure of what the artwork is - an event, a physical object, an installation, a set of conditions etc. - we can use the artwork process to try to locate the most plausible candidate for that artwork's ontology and ask 'If the artwork is like this, then what is phase (i) and what is phase (iii)? We can then choose, comparing the possibilities for the option that gives maximal coherence. The idea of the artwork process can provide a rationale for obtaining the most rationally compelling answer in each case.

Additionally, these ideas might shed light on what commitments we need in order to *know* that something is an artwork. One potential way of viewing such a project might be to suggest that in order to be correct in an identification of an artwork at phase 3 of the process, one has to have appropriately acquired knowledge of whether and if so how that putative artwork when through phases 1 and 2 of the process. As with ontology, if you want to know at all, you have to have knowledge from all phases of the artwork process. However, it's important to remember that these tools will not contribute to the epistemological project of what counts as appropriate methods of *gaining knowledge* about artworks, but rather about the *body of knowledge* that is required in order to securely identify something as an artwork – we need to know about how it was made, what sort of thing it is, and how it is meant to be used once made.²⁴

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²⁴ I am grateful to James Hamilton for prompting this discussion.

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The Cutting Effect: a Contribution to Moderate Contextualism in Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. The *cutting effect* appears when the expressive power of a visual or a sound fragment (a scream or a bloodied face, for example) shown in an assumed representational medium (such as the radio, TV or movies) becomes isolated (or extracted) from the normal context that modulates its particular meaning and then the audience experience a momentary feeling of strangeness and distress due of the fleeting lack of context of reference. I am convinced that there are some interesting consequences to learn from these kinds of situations concerning the aesthetics of expressive and perceptive phenomena in representation. My hypothesis is that if I feel the distressing momentary impression after the scream of the *cutting effect*, it is not only (or not mainly) a cause of the lack of a context, but a cause of a primary expressive power of the scream that comes to touch me (to hurt me). This primary expressive power is normally (that is, out of the *cutting effect* situations) modulated by the context conditions, but emerges extraordinarily in the *cutting effect* cases. If my hypothesis is right, there is a coming back consequence, or I would prefer to speak better of a new way of explanation for some kind of ordinary (that is, no *cutting*) cases of reception. (1) We could refer to some particular cases as “resistance to the anaesthesia of context”. For example: a lot of people are unable to watch some scenes from violent or horror movies even being aware of the representational conditions. Moreover, (2) it would reinforce the idea that the scream or the bloodied face are not a property, a monopoly or a free tool of the actor nor the filmmaker, but rather they have an expressive power which leaks and exceeds the intention of the actor (or the emitter). Finally, (3) it would help us to support the idea of the perceptive character of the expression in aesthetic understanding. It means that there is for the audience a perceptive element which, even though it is not *natural* (to the extent that it comes from culture and education), it has to be not just *understood* but rather (at the same time) *perceived*.

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I was listening to the radio while I brushed my teeth. Suddenly, in the middle of the radio programme (in fact, it was a radio ad about a new radio show) I heard a scream and somebody said “no, no, please!” in a very distressing way. Some seconds later I became aware of the fact that the cry was produced by the voice of an actor announcing a new programme of radio *noir* stories entitled “Noir and criminal”. I felt a strange impression: my first reaction to the scream exceeded (for me) the standard dose of discomfort tolerable when normally listening to the radio. In other words, it was not an especially foreseen or previously contextualized moment.

A second example: I was watching a basketball match on my TV and suddenly, without any warning, a bloodied face appeared to me in close-up on the screen. Some seconds after I discovered that it was a short ad for the telefilm which was programmed just after the match, but for a few seconds I felt the same strange impression of helplessness and distress as I did in the previous example.

I would propose to name this phenomenon “the *cutting effect*”: it appears when the expressive power of a visual or a sound fragment becomes isolated (or extracted) from the normal context that modulates its particular meaning and then the audience experience a momentary feeling of strangeness and distress due of the fleeting lack of context of reference.

I am convinced that there are some interesting consequences to learn from these kinds of situations concerning the aesthetics of expressive and perceptive phenomena in representation. But I need to make some previous remarks about my examples. Firstly, my examples are cases of not necessarily artistic objects: a radio programme and a telefilm could be artistic objects, though not necessarily (as is often the case). However, it would be easy likewise to imagine that the scream or the bloodied face were originally part of a Hitchcock film. The context of reception concerning the experiences of both examples is not an artistic one either, even if we could imagine artistic situations for it (without excluding radio and television media). Secondly, the *cutting effect* has not necessarily been connected with the problem of fictional status, for such an effect could be perfectly conceived as resulting from a scream or a bloodied face being part of a non-fictional structure (a documentary, or a news program, for example).

Thirdly, I have underlined the representational condition of that phenomenon in order to purposely exclude the cases of screams or bloodied faces perceived in direct or living situations. The context is still playing a relevant role in our reaction, of course, but in this case the scream or the bloodied face are not shown in an assumed representational medium (such as the radio, TV or movies). I cannot deny the influence of my experiences of reaction towards direct screams and bloodied faces on my perception of represented ones, but the representational element (that is, the scream or the bloodied face on the radio, film or TV excerpt) is a requisite for the aesthetic (and not necessarily artistic) interests of my paper. Fourthly, my paper has just a tangential relationship with the theoretical discussion about the nature of expression in art and aesthetic experiences (*vid.* Kivy, Davis, Matravers, etc.) However, later I will utilise a Gombrich's classical distinction between different kinds of functions of the expression in art with the purpose of supporting my thesis.

The initial approach in order to explain the *cutting effect* is a certain underlining of an aspect of contextualism, namely that aspect concerning the immediate surroundings of a fragment (that is, the textual context). Of course, contextualism emphasizes other aspects (historical ones, especially) of the context of the work. Moreover, I'm aware of the fact that I'm proposing a certain generalization of the contextualist thesis, given that Levinson's contextualism concerns artworks while the objects of the *cutting effect* may not necessarily be artistic objects. Then, the textual context is just the closer or internal part of a broader context that has been claimed by contextualists such as Levinson, in the analytical field of study. I quote Levinson:

Structures or forms *per se*, detached from their emplacements in traditions, styles, oeuvres, and historical moments, are simply incapable of conveying the meanings, significances and resonances that informed criticism and response to artworks normally ascribes to them. (Levinson 2007, p. 8)

If my generalization is (*grosso modo*) accepted, any representation (in

aesthetic situations, at least) has to have a perceptive-understanding background without which neither effective expression nor effective reception can be explained. It is difficult to deny that the representational meaning of a scream or a bloodied face is deeply modulated by *rhetoric*, which we could define as the codes governing the particular syntactic and semantic contexts of the aesthetic discourse in a particular medium. A scream in a film by Hitchcock takes its particular and characteristic meaning from the editing work, the narrative frame, Hitchcock's filmic style, and the implicit condition of filmic representation and reception. The meaning of a bloodied face in a chapter of a TV series (*CSI*, for example) is specifically supported and conditioned by the particular context of reception (including socio-historical conditions) in which that image fits. Of course, fiction is just one of the possible contexts. We could think of other possible contexts of representation such as TV news, documentaries or theatre pieces where a scream or a bloodied face can feature. Several theorists have shown that idea brilliantly through theoretical fields of study like Semiotics (for instance): Calabrese, Leutrat, etc. Nevertheless, Levinson's contextualism seems to convey a superior version of that idea built into a theoretical frame.

Prima facie, the *cutting effect* seems to provide support for contextualism, for my feeling of strangeness due to the *cutting effect* stops working when the normal contextual conditions are present. But, is that all? Is the only and complete cause of my feeling of strangeness aroused from the *cutting effect*? My answer is no: there is something more than the lack of context, something to learn from these exceptional cases in order to understand the working of reception and expression in normal artistic and aesthetic cases.

I'm not interested in reviving here the debate about when and why a telefilm can be considered an artistic object or not. I have enough to ponder over by remarking that the conclusions resulting from the analysis of the *cutting effect* involve cases that are not necessarily artistic. In fact, we can find effects of strangeness very similar to the *cutting effect* in commercials, for some launch campaigns insert images or sounds apparently (or momentarily) out of context in TV ads or billboards in order to capture the audience's attention. Of course, in artistic cinema we can find a lot of effects

of strangeness and disturbing feelings, a cause of the disgust caused by the images of a mechanic peacock (Eisenstein's *October*), or a slit eyeball (Buñuel's *Un chien andalou*), even if we ought to specify very different kinds of context and situations "out of context" in these cases. We can also ask, concerning the *cutting effect*, if the same feeling of strangeness produced by the examples of the scream and the bloodied face would be produced by fragments without "bleeding" (in the sense of appealing less to our basic fears, alerts and preventions).

What other causes could be involved in the feeling of strangeness in the *cutting effect*? Let's look for a second (complementary) explanation from what I will call "the *primary* approach": the *cutting effect* reveals the existence of a primary (basic) underlying layer of expressive power which is the main reason for our feeling of strangeness in those especial cases of *cutting effect*. I have consciously avoided the temptation to speak of a *natural* underlying layer because it is also culturally and educationally conditioned in the end. I prefer rather to speak of a primary or basic underlying layer. My hypothesis, then, is that if I feel the distressing momentary impression after the scream of the *cutting effect*, it is not only (or not mainly) a cause of the lack of a coherent context, but a cause of the primary expressive power of the scream (or the bloodied face) that comes to touch me, to *hurt* me. This primary expressive power is present as well, even if modulated by the context conditions, in normal cases, but emerges extraordinarily in the *cutting effect* cases. Coming back to the examples of the *cutting effect*, I feel disturbed when I hear the scream or I see the bloodied face because its expressive primary power activates my "natural?" (well, not exactly...) sensitivity to it (something which reminds me of reactions to danger, my neighbour's pain, or something like that).

There are a lot of very interesting developments of that idea. I will sketch out some of them in the last part of my paper. However, I have decided to focus on the non-naturalistic character of the primary power. In order to this, I will use Gombrich's theory of the feedback of expression in art. Gombrich's theory claims for a continuous interacting of feeling and form in art which could be able to underpass the limitation of three previous (historical) theories of expression: the magico-medical theory, the Romantic

theory and the theory of collective mind. Every theory in turn activates one or more of the three functions of expression described by Gombrich: the function of symptom, the function of signal and the function of symbol. Concerning the function of symptom, "We can say that frowning is such a symptom of anger, blushing a symptom of embarrassment" in a way similar to "the dog wagging its tail to welcome its master displays such a symptom" (Gombrich 1996, 142). The function of signal refers to "the possibility of arousing emotions through visible or audible signs", like "the hen" calling "the chickens to their food" or "warning them of impending danger" (Gombrich 1996, p. 142). The function of symbol, exclusive of humans, implies that "signs can be used to represent or depict emotional states, as when a writer describes a scene and makes us understand the feelings of his hero" (Gombrich 1996, p. 142). Gombrich's example of the trumpet call tries to synthesize it (I quote):

[...] consider a trumpet-call. The ancients would have stressed its capacity to arouse the emotion of courage and aggression; the Renaissance would have used it, say in an opera, to represent martial feelings; a Romantic composer might have inserted a trumpet-call into his symphony to express his emotion of triumph: all these interpretations seem to me legitimate. But we must never forget that the trumpet-call is part of the tradition of the culture, and that the composer who used it discovered its power by studying his own response. Having done so, he can find new applications, new variants and new feeling tones, and make us realise that this trumpet call is his and his alone. (Gombrich 1996, pp. 154-5)

Obviously, a trumpet call has a cultural component much more sophisticated than a scream or a bloodied face. However, we cannot forget that these last two examples, to the extent that they can be utilized as expressive resources in an artwork, also have cultural components, and it can be proved just by comparing a Christ sculpture by Salzillo with a close-up by Tarantino, or a scream in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* with Janet Leigh's scream in Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

Gombrich's theory is a centripetal one because:

The expressive signs come first, and it is they which release the emotional response in the actor, the orator and, and I should like to believe, in any artist, whether painter, poet or musician. (Gombrich 1996, p. 151)

What if we think about our scream or bloodied face in terms of Gombrich's theory? The scream comes first and it releases the emotion of disturbance. But the frayed edge which appears in the *cutting effect* is just the same thing that the artist develops for artistic expression, to the point of bringing an original and personal meaning to it. The sound or the image that make our examples of the *cutting effect* do not make an artwork, and then there is no room for the original development which is characteristic of artistic expression. Of course, I am not denying the emotions currently linked to the scream and the bloodied face: the scream terrifies me and the bloodied face startles me, but what we have in the case of the *cutting effect* are a scream and a bloodied face already represented in an audio-visual medium different to the direct live experience. "Represented" means also performed by an actor or actress, but it means especially that the audience is carrying some expectations for receiving an expressive sign appropriately articulated in a discourse, fitting in it. The problem which constitutes the *cutting effect* is that, on the contrary, the expressive sign does not fit in its context for the spectator and it pushes a button which causes a raw, even if not exactly "natural" response.

What does "natural" mean in terms of the naïf (and mistaken) "naturalistic" version of the primary approach?

Of course, a scream is a natural reaction (almost universal) to experiences of pain and everybody is able to hear it as a symptom of pain. But remember that in the *cutting effect* we have a represented scream, not a direct one, even if it is not an artwork. The exception of our *cutting effect* examples would be radio or television being utilized for live and direct broadcasting, but in our examples the audience is never expecting that the scream could be the expression of a pain actually felt or that the bloodied

face could be the expression of a live attack to somebody's face just an instant ago. While in contrast we have strong reasons to support the anti-naturalist character of the primary approach: the *cutting effect*, being part of an aesthetic object or being part of an artistic object, is language in the same sense of Gombrich's assertion in his centripetal theory when he says that it is not the case that feelings and emotions come first (feelings and emotions that would get dressed up by the artist with words of his native language), but on the contrary (I quote),

As with the symptoms of the expression, only more so, it will be language which suggests and arouses his feelings in a constant movement of interaction. As the great English critic, I.A. Richards, increasingly stressed, after he had himself turned to the writing of poetry, it is the language which inspires the poet. Once more we can speak of the centripetal theory of expression: language offering the poet the means to shape his feelings or thoughts into artistic creation. (Gombrich 1996, p. 152)

We would say that in the *cutting effect* the centripetal force of the expressive element is like an idle wheel spinning in the air. Just because it lacks the development existing in the aesthetic structure, and very especially in the artistic structure. Just because it lacks the bonus of creativity which makes the artistic meaning untamed for it lays on the complexity, wide range, and openness of the context. It allows, in short, "the idea of art as self-expression" (Gombrich, 1996, p. 155). And it is perfectly compatible with the idea of aesthetic appreciation as laying on basic human acting (in the beginning is the Act, Wittgenstein *dixit*).

How might my reflection on the *cutting effect* contribute to a moderate contextualism? What kind of moderation may it provide to contextualism? In short, it provides two things. First, to emphasize the existence of an underlying layer of expressive power which is at the base of aesthetic understanding (and, especially, at the base of artistic understanding). That basic or primary layer brings with it the idea of a kind of stratification in the process of aesthetic and artistic understanding intimately linked with the natural and cultural conditions of expressive acts

and also intimately linked with the central role of context (in a wide sense of context). Second, the *cutting effect* proves that there is a constant interaction between language and expressive results (as feelings, emotions or thoughts) which is necessary to account for the creative and receptive processes in aesthetics and art experiences. And that second remark is, in the end, just a way to underlie the dynamic (that is, interactive) character of expression in the framework of a contextualist approach.

Finally, I would modestly sketch some ways of developing the consequences drawn from the *cutting effect* analysis. Of course, my aim is simply to point to some aesthetic sub-zones or aesthetic problems which could somehow be illuminated, even if not clearly solved, taking advantage of some tools derived from the *cutting effect* analysis. (1) The particular cases referred to as “resistance to the anaesthesia of context”. A typical example: a lot of people are unable to watch some scenes from violent or horror movies even being aware of the representational conditions. Is there some kind of basic layer involved which is perfectly compatible with the awareness of the representation and the contextual conditions? (2) The classical opposition between the idea of the expressive element as a property, a monopoly or a free tool in the hands of the actor or the filmmaker, and the idea (summarized by Diderot in his *paradoxe du comédien*) that the good actor has to be in complete control of his own emotions in order to express effectively the emotions of the character. Of course, the *cutting effect* is a really extraordinary situation and for that very reason it works as a valuable test or symptom of a component of ordinary expressive situations, but it would help us to explain more ordinary aesthetic cases where a scream or a bloodied face have an expressive power which leak and exceed the intention of the actor (or the emitter), for example in art criticism, in order to justify a negative aesthetic judgment about a particular *montage* or a particular performance. In my opinion, it could be somehow useful in order to reinforce the idea that the emitter (actor, filmmaker, documentarist, etc) works in order to modulate and knock into shape that expressive power, but he does not have the absolute domain of it. (3) Thirdly, if my hypothesis is right, it would help us to support the idea of the perceptive character of expression in aesthetic understanding. It means that

there is for the audience a perceptive element which, even though it is not *natural* (to the extent that it comes from culture and education), it has to be not just *understood* but rather (at the same time) *perceived*.

Just to finish, I have to insist on the fact that I am aware of the differences between aesthetic and artistic cases. I am also aware of the very important differences and nuances imposed on my hypothesis by the particular characteristics and the particular rhetoric resources of every medium (film, radio, painting, opera, etc.). However, I hope that I have been able to show that there are interesting conclusions to draw from the kind of experience that I have proposed and baptised (as the *cutting effect*), even if my conclusions are disputable or provisional.

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Horowitz Does Not Repeat Either!

Free Improvisation, Repeatability and Normativity

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ABSTRACT. A common way of characterising improvisation, and even more specifically *free* improvisation, is to point out its *unrepeatability*. Such characterisation misses the point. If we consider improvisation as a *sonic product*, the above characterisation is plainly *false*, as it is possible for a performer, who has never been acquainted with a previously improvised performance, to improvise by chance that same sound structure a second time. If we consider improvisation as an *overall performance*, then unrepeatability becomes a *non-informative* characterisation, as it doesn't help at all in distinguishing an improvised performance from *any other* live musical performance.

Another possibility is to characterise free improvisation as *neither a composition nor a performance of a normative sound structure*. Following this characterisation, however, the risk of cataloguing performances of standard jazz as free improvisations is unavoidable, as many of them do not intend to instantiate the normative structure provided by the standard, but take it only as inspiration for improvisation.

In order to provide a plausible characterisation of free improvisation, I will develop my argument in two different steps. In a *first step*, I will characterise free improvisation as a *non-interpretative musical performance*. This does not exclude that in free improvisations existing musical material can be used, as is often the case. But, differently from a standard jazz performance, the performer *does not commit in advance* to any specific musical material to be used (as normative sound structure or as simple inspiration) for his performance. In a *second step*, I will make use of Niklas Luhmann's notions of *code* and *program*, and thereby characterise free improvisation as a *self-programming musical performance*. These two steps will provide respectively the necessary and sufficient identity conditions for a free musical improvisation.

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1. Introduction

When, in our daily conversation, we talk about an improvised musical performance, or about an improvised speech, or more generally about an improvised event, we normally don't run the risk of misunderstanding. Roughly, we know what we are talking about. This is not something to be taken as obvious, as if the daily speech were *per se* roughly clear and simple, while complications only arise when philosophers start questioning about it. In fact, there are notions, like for example the notions of *intelligence* and of *culture*, which can already be misunderstood in their daily, non-theoretical use. Any person with a minimal pedagogic touch knows that, when we speak of a kid being *intelligent*, we can mean very different things, as intelligence encompasses very different dimensions. The same is true of culture: When we say that a person is *cultivated*, we can mean very different things, concerning his studies, his way of behaving in different contexts, his linguistic skills, and so on.

With the notion of *improvisation* such daily misunderstandings don't usually happen, and not just within the musical domain. When one says that a politician is improvising a speech, we understand what that means, in the same way as when we refer to a particular musical or theatre performance as being improvised. This *daily unambiguousness* however turns out to be very misleading, as we find ourselves deeply embarrassed when we develop a theoretical reflection about this concept. In this paper I will try to analyse such theoretical difficulties within the musical domain, more specifically when we try to characterise a free improvised musical performance from other kinds of musical performances.

Accordingly, this paper will have a negative objective, namely the criticism of some existing characterisations of free musical improvisation; and a positive one, that is the formulation of a plausible characterisation of free musical improvisation. These two objectives will be developed along the four following sections of the paper: In the *second section* I will develop a criticism of the characterisation of free improvisation as *unrepeatable*, i.e., *non-multiply instantiable musical performance*. In the *third section* I will develop a criticism of the characterisation of free improvisation as *neither*

*composition nor performance of a normative sound structure.*² In the *fourth section* I will propose a first characterisation of free improvisation as *non-interpretative musical performance*.³ In the *fifth section* I will formulate a second characterisation of free improvisation as *self-programming musical performance*.

Before ending this introduction I would like to present a definition of free improvisation as formulated in a musicological context:

Free improvisation means here in the widest sense a ‘compositional’ process in which, at any given moment, there is the possibility of making decisions in any direction, free from any *predeterminations*. This freedom refers to the absence of any kind of *presettings* [...] such as rules of play, predetermined forms, planned outlines, graphic notations, [...] images as sources of inspiration.⁴

Four points have to be stressed:

² These two characterisations are quite commonly adopted in the literature – see for example Bertinetto 2012, Brown 2011 and Canonne 2016. A third characterisation, according to which in musical improvisation *creation and performance occur at the same time*, seems from the beginning problematic. As Bertinetto, among others, showed, in fact ‘a lot of decisions about what and how to play are taken in advance, i.e. before the performance’ and in any case ‘it would seem odd to say that if the improviser, while soloing, plans to play a certain melody in the next chorus and, in so doing, establishes and prepares a performing routine, the performed melody is not improvised’ (Bertinetto 2012, pp. 106-107).

³ The opposition between improvisation and interpretation is not new – see on this point for example Goehr 2007 and Canonne 2016. However, as will be shown later, such opposition has been often *biased* by an implicitly assumed notion of interpretation in terms of *Texttreue*. In this case it is quite evident that what is improvised is, per definition, opposed to interpretation, as non-faithful to the text. In any case, in this paper I would like to apply such opposition also to interpretative practices where the notion of score compliance is not considered as positive value.

⁴ Fährdrich 2007, p. 185, my translation, my italics. More recently, Canonne arrives to very similar conclusions: ‘Firstly, free improvisation is an improvisation without reference: not because it pretends to free itself from any inherited cultural reference, but because the musicians who practice it try to improvise without prior reference, pre-existing action or schema that would predetermine their way of organising their decisions on an intermediate time scale. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of improvised action, namely the fact of not following a previously established plan’ (Canonne 2016, p. 33 – my translation).

1. This definition has to be taken as a point of departure for the further analyses and in order to have a first idea of what free improvisation is, as well as in comparison with other performances (baroque music, jazz standards, and so on) which contain improvised elements but which don't qualify as free improvisations, as being executed according to some pre-established elements (musical scores, harmonic and melodic structures, as well as more generally, idiomatic and stylistic pre-settings).
2. The two words I put in italics are strategic for the argument I intend to develop. Free improvisation *can* (and possibly necessarily *does*) use existing musical material. But such existing musical material is *not programmatically chosen in advance* by the performer, who therefore is *not committed* to it. He can at any moment decide whether to use specific musical material or not, and he is *entitled* to do so. All this will become clearer in the next pages.
3. The term 'compositional' (*kompositorisch*) is correctly put (by the author) into inverted commas, as it has to be understood *almost metaphorically*, or in any case in a very minimal way, as the fact that the improviser 'puts together' some notes during his performance. However, as among others Bertinetto and Brown pointed out, there are radical differences between the two activities.⁵
4. All the considerations developed in the next sections are not only meant to be valid for a particular *musical genre* (free improvisation), but for the notion of improvisation *per se*. *Free improvisation* is taken paradigmatically as the musical genre where we can observe improvisation *in its purest state*, and therefore the characterisation of it against other kinds of performances will be helpful in order to understand what *improvised* means, as well as in relation to other kinds of performances which, in spite of not qualifying as *free improvisations*, contain however relevant *improvised* elements.

⁵ See Bertinetto 2012, Brown 2000 and 2011.

2. Improvisation as Unrepeatable Musical Performance: A First Criticism

I will start with the criticism of the notion of free improvisation as *unrepeatable*, i.e., *non-multiply instantiable* performance.⁶ In order to criticise this notion, I will refer to the well-known distinction formulated by Philip Alperson⁷, according to which a musical improvisation can be understood as a *sonic product* or as a *performance*. Accordingly, the notion of free improvisation as unrepeatable entity can be criticised along two different perspectives. In order to develop my argument I will refer, in both the sides of the criticism, to two passages from a classic article of Lee Brown. In the first case, if we consider a musical improvisation as a sonic product, Brown designs the following scenario, which immediately falsifies the above mentioned characterisation:

Suppose that an improvisation by Corman Hackins (H1) just happens to be perceptually indistinguishable from the famous "Body and Soul" solo of Coleman Hawkins (H2) [...] this pair not only parallel each other perceptually, but they are equally spontaneous. I shall call such a pair a *perfect pair*.⁸

This scenario, though *highly implausible*, still cannot be categorised as *impossible* (it is like to imagine that the number 27 will come out 345 times consecutively at the roulette wheel – quite difficult, but not impossible). In fact, it is plainly possible for a performer, who has never been acquainted with a previously improvised performance, to improvise *the same sequence of notes* a second time after its first instantiation. As sonic products, these two sound sequences will be *two tokens of the same type* and so cannot be labelled as *unrepeatable*.

⁶ The equivalence between repetition and re-instantiability will be taken here as a common assumption in musical ontology. See for example this passage of Julian Dodd: 'Here are some ontological facts about works of Western classical music. First, such works are *repeatable* (that is, multiply instantiable) entities whose instances are their respective individual performances' (Dodd 2014, p. 278).

⁷ Alperson 1984, pp. 21, 23.

⁸ Brown 1996, p. 358.

If we refer, however, to musical improvisation as *performed action*, rather than as performed sonic structure, it seems that unrepeatability turns out to be an appropriate property to characterise it. Let's read Brown again:

An improvisational action is an aesthetic singularity. If H_1 and H_2 really are improvisational in character, then each harbors its own generative act. Essential to H_1 is its being *this* spontaneous action; essential to H_2 is its being *that* one. H_1 and H_2 each possess a kind of *aesthetic indexicality*, so to say.⁹

I want to stress the following point: in my view, in this passage, and in spite of Brown's purposes¹⁰, the aesthetic singularity of an improvised performance seems to be dependent on its being characterised as an *event*

⁹ Brown 1996, p. 360.

¹⁰ In fact, Brown wants to distinguish on the one side between autographic arts and improvisations, and on the other side between the aesthetic uniqueness of a specific improvised performance and the fact that is, as musical performance, an acoustic event. However, in order to stress such differences, he employs the notion of *presence* which, *de facto*, is related to spatio-temporal location: 'I observed earlier that improvisational and autographic art both feature a kind of *directness*. However, there is a difference in this respect between the two. I shall term the kind of directness that typifies improvised music *presence* [...] The feature of the music that I have called presence suggests that it is over *processes* that an autographic principle of continuity would have to range, if we are to apply it at all. Improvisations are not excluded from the sphere of the autographic simply because their effects are ephemeral results of processes. They are excluded because improvisations *are* transient processes. Indeed, they are *actions* [...] The way the acoustic material is generated in these cases is an essential component of the genuine article' (Brown 1996, pp. 356-357). A first point to be made is the following: The statement that the very notion of *presence* should direct the investigation on *processes* rather than on *things* or *events*, is a very questionable assumption, as the considerations developed by Walter Benjamin in his *Artwork-Essay* concerning the notion of *aura* quite convincingly show (see Benjamin (1969)). But independently from any considerations about the *auratic presence of authentic artworks*, there is another point which is in my view decisive in this context. I can agree with Brown's statement that 'The way the acoustic material is generated in these cases is an essential component of the genuine article'. But this way characterises also, and *in the same way*, a non-improvised live performance against the product of it, while the main question of understanding what an improvised performance is, is not to characterise a *live* performance against what is *not live*, but rather to characterise an improvised performance against another *live performance which is not improvised*. The notion of aesthetic singularity, in this respect, does not work, in my view, as it characterises any other performance (more or less improvised) which is, as *live* performance, unique. And this characterisation has to do exactly with its *presence*, as spatio-temporal location.

much more than as an *action*. Both the use (in another passage – see Note 10) of the notion of *presence* and the putting in italics the terms *this* and *that* in the above quoted passage, in fact, highlight the critical role of the spatio-temporal location in determining the aesthetic indexicality of an improvised performance. All this, in the first instance, seems not to be problematic for the notion of free improvisation as unrepeatable musical performance. *Free improvisations, as musical events, are per definition unrepeatable*. This is true. However, I do believe that such a conclusion misses the point, for at least the following two reasons:

1. The characterisation of free improvised performance as *aesthetic singularity* (and so, unrepeatable) doesn't help at all to distinguish it from *any other live musical performance*, which is, *as live performance*, aesthetically singular. This explains, among others, why there are many people who are ready to invest a lot of money and time in order to attend a *Première*: Of course, there are deep social reasons connected with such behaviour. But it would be *naïve and superficial* to think that those are the *only* reasons for it. In fact, one of the main reasons for attending a *Première* is the assumption that on *that* particular occasion, in *that* particular situation, music will be *played* and *heard* in a unique atmosphere and with a unique feeling, which cannot be repeated in any of the replicas of that particular program.
2. There is more than that. Unrepeatability can even become a *programmatic objective* of the classical performer; as Vladimir Horowitz pointed out in his famous remark: 'I can say that a work should never be played the same way. I never do. I may play the same program from one recital to the next, but I will play it differently, and because it is always different, it is always new'.¹¹

Along these lines, it seems to me, that the characterisation of free improvisation as unrepeatable musical performance is on the one side *false*, if we consider the product of the improvisation, as it is in principle possible for another improviser to repeat the same sound structure improvised a first

¹¹ Mach 1991, p. 119.

time by someone else; on the other side it is *non-informative* if we consider the whole performance, as in this case musical improvisation turns out to be *unrepeatable, as any other live performance*.

3. Free Improvisation as Neither Composition nor Performance of a Normative Sound Structure: A Second Criticism

In this third section, as in the previous one, the criticism will be developed along two different directions, included in the double characterisation (as composition or as performance) of this second definition of free improvisation. This time, however, I will develop my argument based on the considerations of another main contributor to the literature about musical improvisation, namely Alessandro Bertinetto.

If we start with the first part of the definition, according to which a free improvisation is *not a composition of a normative sound structure*, we can immediately state the following: An improvised performance is not meant to define a norm for further instantiations. It is meant to be, and to remain, a singular event. In this sense, as pointed out by Bertinetto, even if somehow the improviser *composes* something, as he *puts together* some notes, the improvisation should be understood as the *other* of composition:

An improvised performance is, as such, a ‘composition’ only in the sense that it ‘puts together’ sounds and silences (composition derives from the Latin word ‘con-ponere’). It is not a ‘proper’ composition, which is the construction of a set of instructions (the performable MW) that are prescriptions for further performances.¹²

The notion of musical score implicitly adopted by Bertinetto, as a *set of instructions*, is in my view more than questionable. However, the argument I intend to develop does not depend on this assumption. In fact, even by considering the musical score as a representation of a sound structure (as I think is the case), what remains untouched is that *multiple performability* is somehow entailed in the very idea of composing. In this respect, we could

¹² Bertinetto 2012, p. 212.

state that a free improvisation is *not a composition at all*, musically speaking (as already pointed out by many authors). And in fact, it is not even only a question of producing a sound structure which is not meant to be re-instantiated. It is the very process of composition which entails characteristics, like *correctability*, which are not entailed in a performed improvisation. Such elements are tacitly assumed in the musical domain as essential elements of composition. That is why, for example, when Salieri, in the famous scene from *Amadeus*, discovers that Mozart's manuscripts were 'first and only drafts of the music. Yet they showed no corrections of any kind', he states immediately after that all this 'was puzzling – then suddenly alarming'¹³. What is implicitly assumed in such puzzlement is that composition is a correctible process, and that only such correctability enables composers to put in place very complex structures. So, in relation to this first part of the definition, it seems that there is not so much to be criticised.

If now we move to the second part of the definition, according to which a *free improvisation is not a performance of a normative sound structure*, it seems, again, that such a definition is more than plausible. The same meaning of *improvviso* (not foreseen - done in the moment) seems in fact to exclude the use of pre-established sound-structures, or performing instructions, as a *rule to be followed*. That is why the very notion of *wrong-note* is, in a certain respect, incompatible with the notion of improvisation, as again pointed out by Bertinetto:

Musicians who have to perform composed works run the risk of playing the wrong notes, i.e. notes that are not indicated in the score. Therefore, they can make mistakes. Conversely, improvisers do not follow a score while performing their music. They cannot make mistakes because they just play what they want to play in the moment of the performance [...] Performers of composed works seem to risk more than improvisers do, because they can easily fail to exactly perform the music prescribed by the score. Hence, where there are no scores to be followed, performers obviously do not run the risk of

¹³ Shaffer 1987, p. 90.

making these kinds of mistakes. Precisely in this sense, Miles Davis claims that there are no mistakes: you cannot make mistakes when there are no norms to violate.¹⁴

We have to clarify: In the passage immediately following his essay Bertinetto clearly states that, evidently, an improviser *can* also make mistakes.¹⁵ However, the situations of an improviser and, for example, a classical music performer (and so, someone who is performing a normative sound structure) remain radically different, for (at least) the following two reasons:

1. Mistakes in a free improvisation are not to be understood in terms of *compliance* with a pre-established sound structure. So, the people, when attending to an improvised performance, do not expect that the performer will play such and such notes. They are not only curious about *how* the performer will play some notes, but also about *which notes* he will play.
2. The normativity governing a free improvised performance is a *real-time normativity*, which can change during the performance. So, for example, the improviser can *decide*, during the performance, how to resolve a particular harmonic situation, or how to continue a melodic line. This is why, in a free improvisation, *mistakes* can become *opportunities* for new developments, and this capacity of transforming mistakes into opportunities is an essential part of the art of the improviser, as convincingly expressed in a well-known quote from Art Tatum: ‘There’s no such thing as a wrong note. It all depends on how you resolve it.’¹⁶

Finally, it seems that concerning this second part of the definition, we have

¹⁴ Bertinetto 2016, p. 86).

¹⁵ ‘The fact that improvisers can make technical and aesthetic mistakes seems a truism. Even though they do not follow instructions provided by a score, improvisers have (technical, aesthetic, historical, social...) backgrounds that sustain and feed their practice [...] In reference to those backgrounds, their music can be judged as more or less good or bad’ (Bertinetto 2016, p. 86).

¹⁶ Quoted from Bertinetto 2016, p. 88.

no problems. In fact, a free improvisation is *neither a composition nor a performance of a normative sound structure*. So why, and on which grounds, should such a definition be criticised? The problem is the following: This characterisation of improvised performance does not help us to distinguish between free improvisation and other forms of musical performances, like standard jazz performances. While on the one hand none of them is performed in order to be re-instantiated, so cannot be regarded as *composition* in the strict sense, many of them are not even based on the normative structure provided by the standard, but take it only as inspiration for improvisation. A classic and often quoted example is Chick Corea's version of *Sophisticated Lady*, which is considered as a performance of Duke Ellington's standard in spite of (according to Andrew Kania) 'containing no obvious statement of the melody, and substituting chords all over the place.'¹⁷

Still, one could ask again: so, *what is the problem?* Possibly, standard jazz performances and free improvised performances *should not* be distinguished from each other. Or, even if they should, it is a question of being more detailed, and in this sense the definition will in any case be valid, even if not detailed enough to differentiate between two kinds of improvisation. The question is in my view a bit more complicated, and the reason for my criticism does not reside in a mere request for more precision, and in any case, such a request is not just *for the sake of precision*. The point is that, in my view, in the non-differentiation between standard jazz and free improvised performances lies a *slippery slope risk*: if we include standard jazz performances and free improvisations in the same set of *neither compositions nor performances of normative sound structures*, then why not also include in this set baroque performances, which include relevant improvised elements, and why not also Mozart's Piano-Concertos, which include cadenzas that are often fully improvised? In fact, a great number of

¹⁷ Kania 2011, p. 394. In fact, Kania's statement can and should be questioned, as the very use of the term *obvious* calls immediately into question *obvious for whom?* It seems to me that some passages of Corea's interpretation of *Sophisticated Lady* can sound, to a jazz professional or even a simple jazz connoisseur, as obvious statements of Duke Ellington's standard. Anyway, the argument I am going to develop in the main text is independent from the rightness of Kania's considerations in this specific respect.

classic performances (particularly when we take into account performances practices of the 19th Century or before) should also be included in such a set, without however being considered as musical improvisation, as in fact they are rather *performances of musical works containing relevant improvised elements*. Finally, the result of such a move would be to consider any performance which intentionally deviates from a given musical score as an improvisation, even when such deviations are decided in advance or are in any case following some well-established rules and/or codes. Finally, *by labelling any deviation from a given normative sound structure as free improvisation, we risk trivialising the very concept of improvisation and we will no longer be able to differentiate what, in fact, is improvisation from what is not*. In this risk of trivialisation and in this lack of differentiation reside the main points of my criticism.¹⁸

4. Free Improvisation as Non-Interpretative Performance: Three Preliminary Objections and two Defences

After having developed my criticism against two existing characterisations of musical improvisation, in this fourth section I intend to propose a first characterisation of free improvisation in terms of *non-interpretative performance*. Such a characterisation is nothing new. Many authors, more or less recently, implicitly or explicitly, have already defined improvisation in opposition to interpretation. Before positively arguing for it however, I will formulate three possible objections against such a definition of musical improvisation, in order, in a second moment, to develop my argument by defending such a definition *against* such objections.

¹⁸ Bruce Ellis Benson's well-known book *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue* runs, in my view, the above-mentioned risk of trivialisation. If every musical act, including composition, performance (more or less improvised), and reception, are *per se* defined as improvisation, then we would better substitute the word *improvisation* with the word *music*. But my interest is exactly to differentiate improvised from non-improvised music: 'I will argue that the process by which a work comes into existence is *best* described as improvisatory as its very core, not merely the act of composing but also the acts of performing and listening. [...] I think that the activities that we call "composing" and "performing" are essentially improvisational in nature, even though improvisation takes many different forms in each activity' (Benson 2003, p. 2).

The first possible objection relates to the considerations made by Lydia Goehr and Clement Canonne, according to which improvisation defined itself ‘in opposition to the praxis of interpretation, understood as faithful rendition of the work’¹⁹, only during the 19th Century, when composers started to provide detailed scores and consequently interpretation started to be understood in terms of *faithfulness to the work* (*Werktreue*) and *faithfulness to the text* (*Texttreue*). This point is made very clear by Lydia Goehr:

As long as the composers provided incomplete or inaccurate scores, the idea of performance extempore could not acquire its distinct opposite, namely, the fully compliant performance of a work. Such a contrast emerged fully around 1800, just at the point when notation became sufficiently well specified to enable a rigid distinction to be drawn between composing through performance and composing prior to performance.²⁰

It is evident, however, that the notion of interpretation, when also limited to the musical domain, cannot be simply identified with the notion of *Texttreue*. Many, if not the majority of the interpretative practices, within and beyond the Western musical tradition (and including interpretative practices of the 19th century, in which improvisational elements *survived*, in spite of the dominance of the notion of interpretation in terms of *Texttreue*) contemplate, and in most cases, *require* improvisational activities. So, we can summarise the *first criticism* to the notion of improvisation as not interpretative performance in the following three statements:

1. A musical performance does not have to be faithful to the musical text in order to qualify as interpretation of a specific MW.
2. An interpretation of a MW can contain improvisational elements, as regularly happens in several interpretative practices.
3. The notion of improvisation seems *prima facie* to be compatible with the notion of interpretation.

¹⁹ Canonne 2016, p. 19.

²⁰ Goehr 2007, p. 188.

The second objection relates to the following passage of Stephen Davies, where the opposition between MW and improvisation is understood in terms of *uniqueness* of a musical improvisation against the *plurality* of interpretations of a MW:

In contemplating a musical piece, we consider the different ways it can be interpreted. If someone is interested in a work, she could not be completely satisfied by hearing it performed a single time only [...] By contrast, when people improvise, it is the immediacy and presence displayed in what they do that attracts us.²¹

In spite of its plausibility, such a point is not at all a valid criterion in order to differentiate an improvised performance from a performance of a MW. One can easily imagine a MW (in contemporary music such cases are quite common) which contains the performing instructions of *being performed only once and thereafter of destroying the score*. In that case, we could go to listen to the *first and only* performance of it (the composer could even indicate the performer), which still would not at all be an improvised performance.

In order to develop the third objection, I will refer to a passage of Alperson where a free musical improvisation is considered as not interpretative as there is no MW to be interpreted in an improvised performance:

Interpretation [...] may be safely said to be absent from an improvisation: it makes no sense to characterize an improvisation as an interpretation or to praise it as a good interpretation of a previously existing work since no such work exists.²²

Again, in spite of its apparent plausibility, such a statement is more than problematic. First of all, an improviser *can* and almost always *does* use existing musical material during the performance, as quotes or allusions. Such use of existing musical material is possibly a necessary condition of

²¹ Davies, 2001, pp. 13-14.

²² Alperson, 1984, p. 26.

every improvised musical performance. In this sense, as Nicholas Cook correctly stressed: ‘The concept of ‘free’ improvisation is in a certain sense self-defeating.’²³ Secondly, we can safely argue that Alperson’s statement is, at least in one respect, false (- we will see later that in another respect it is true). In theory, it is possible for a performer to improvise, by chance, a note sequence, which faithfully reproduces an existing musical score which is unknown to him, and possibly that has never been performed, or that has been performed only a couple of times at the beginning of the 18th century, and which thereafter fell into oblivion. Accordingly, the non-existence of a corresponding MW is not a *necessary* condition for categorising a musical performance as improvised. And, as a matter of fact, it is not even a *sufficient* condition, as a performer can play a memorised sound sequence which does not appear in any existing musical score or other artefact that can serve for identifying a MW. In that case, therefore, the performer *is not* improvising even if he is playing a sound sequence which *does not* correspond to any existing MW.

In spite of the objections formulated, I do believe that the definition of free musical improvisation as a *non-interpretative musical performance* can and should be defended. It is true that a) an interpretation of a MW can contain massively improvisational elements, that b) a MW can contain the instruction of being performed only once, like a free improvised performance, and that c) a free improvised performance can make use of existing musical material, and even instantiate, by pure chance, the same sound structure of an existing musical score, whether or not it has already been performed. In spite of all that, I do believe that a free improvised performance should be understood as a non-interpretative performance as *a performer of a free improvised performance can neither commit nor refer in advance to any musical work or musical material to be used (as rule to be followed or as inspiration) for his performance*. This is in fact already included in the definition by Walter Fähndrich previously quoted, and constitutes my first defence. My second defence consists in *drawing the consequences of that definition* in terms of the kind of aesthetic judgment

²³ Cook, 2013, p. 226.

that we can formulate in relation to a free improvised performance.

Free improvisations, contrarily to musical interpretations, *should not* be judged based on criteria relating to the MWs or the musical material they *use for their own purposes*. And this is exactly because the improviser *does not commit* to referring to any MW or musical material in advance. This makes a big difference, for example, with improvisations performed in the context of a standard jazz performance. We can take again the example mentioned before. In spite of the fact that, according to Kania, Corea's version of *Sophisticated Lady* contains no obvious statement of Ellington's standard, one can still ask if it is a better interpretation than Ellington's original version. The fact that text-compliance in this case will not be a significant criterion does not mean that I can still refer to the original MW in order to formulate some judgment. One can even say that *the less faithful interpretation is the best one*, the one which best respects the *spirit* of the work. This is open and to be discussed in every single case. But the *legitimacy* of an aesthetic judgment based on the reference to the MW which Chick Corea *claimed, and therefore committed, to performing*, seems to me more than defensible.²⁴ The very statement of Kania is in this sense a confirmation of this point. Why should one notice that Corea's performance contains no obvious statement of *Sophisticated Lady*? *Because he implicitly assumes (correctly) that Chick Corea committed to interpreting that MW.*

²⁴ In this respect I fully agree with Julian Dodd, who does not see any ontological discontinuity between classical MWs and Jazz Standards: 'Prima facie, the jazz *cognoscenti* treats standard form jazz as ontologically akin to classical music. Consider [...] Thelonious Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." People knowledgeable about jazz speak and act as if "Straight, No Chaser" is a multiply performable entity: they describe "Straight, No Chaser" as having been performed by various ensembles, and they happily compare such performances *as* performances of the same number. It is easy to imagine someone saying that they prefer one performance of it [...] to another' (Dodd 2014, p. 277). So, when in a performance the original standard is not at all recognizable, people *can* (and in my view *may*) formulate negative judgments. In fact, one can easily find in *you tube* comments of the following sort: 'This is a great improvised performance, but is not *Sophisticated Lady*!' One does not have to agree with such judgments, which can be wrong. Possibly the problem is not that Corea's performance *is not based on Sophisticated Lady*, but that *one is not able to recognize* the harmonic or melodic references, which can be hidden (and this is as licit as faithfully executing the original score). Such judgments can therefore be taken, in some cases, as *admissions of ignorance*. Still, they seem to me more than legitimate.

On the contrary, no one would ever be surprised if, in a free improvised performance, no existing MW were recognisable. And even if one could recognise some melodies or harmonic sequences typically exemplified in a very well-known MW, it would make no sense to judge that improvised performance based on the better or worse rendition of those patterns. Such judgment, in my view, should be considered *illegitimate*, as *one would judge the performer on something he did not commit to do*.²⁵ In fact, free improvisations cannot be catalogued as “commentaries” on the pieces upon which one improvises.²⁶ They are not interpretations, and even less commentaries. They are rather *statements on their own*, in which performers sometimes (and not necessarily) use *heteronomous* musical material for *their own* purposes.

5. Free Improvisation as Self-Programming Musical Performance.

While the characterisation of free improvised performance as non-interpretative performance seems to me more than defensible, it does not constitute in any case a *sufficient* identity condition, but only a *necessary* one. If a two year old kid plays randomly on a keyboard, he is surely not interpreting but, most plausibly, he is not even *improvising*. So, while no interpretation can be considered as, strictly speaking, free improvisation, not all non-interpretative musical performances can be considered, just from that, as free-improvised musical performances. We therefore need a supplementary criterion in order to provide the *necessary* and *sufficient* identity conditions for free improvised musical performances.

²⁵ I will use an extreme and even provocative case in order to clarify my point. Judging a free improvised performance based on the rendition of recognisable musical patterns, in my view, would be (almost) equivalent to judging an improvised performance based on the colour(s) of the shoes of the performer(s). Of course, it is not *forbidden* to formulate the statement ‘I did not like today’s improvised performance because the musicians were wearing black shoes, while I prefer brown ones.’ However, and in the same way, it is not forbidden to consider such a judgment a quite *illegitimate* one. This is exactly what I do in the case mentioned in the main text.

²⁶ Benson 2006, p. 458.

In order to do that, I will refer to Niklas Luhmann's theory of art, and specifically to his two interrelated notions of codes and programs:

The codes are [...] distinctions by which a system observes its own operations; they determine the unity of the system. [...] The system of science includes all and only the communications which orient themselves to the code true / untrue, the legal system only those which orient themselves to the code just / unjust, etc. [...] The observation of art is based on a specific code, which in the traditional aesthetics was expressed by the distinction beautiful / ugly. Today this distinction is reinterpreted through the alternative fits / does not fit [...] Programs establish criteria for the correct attribution of the code values. [...] The programs of science (theories and methods) establish the conditions that must be fulfilled to assert a truth [...] Programs compensate the strict binarity of codes [...] by introducing decision criteria external to the system.²⁷

According to Luhmann, while art, for many centuries, was more or less strictly regulated by external programs, sorts of aesthetic *frameworks* providing formal and thematic criteria both for the production and the evaluation of artworks, modern aesthetics, paradigmatically exemplified in Kant's notion of *genius*, requires the artist to *break rules* much more than *implementing existing canons*.²⁸ So, each artwork can no longer be justified on the basis of the implementation of pre-existing schemas, but should find within itself its own aesthetic criteria of construction. This situation is what Luhmann defines as *self-programming*:

As, in the modern age, from work of art is demanded novelty and no longer merely the correct application of certain rules, one needs

²⁷ Baraldi, Corsi, Esposito 1997, pp. 36, 105-106, 139-141, my translation. In his theory of codes and programs Luhmann implicitly refers to the aesthetic judgments which apply to *artworks*, more than their *performances*. The fact that, in the specific case of musical *performances*, we can use other codes for aesthetic judgment (like good-bad, plausible-not plausible, or even authentic-not authentic) is not so relevant for the argument developed in this context.

²⁸ The *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* can possibly be considered as the main cultural scene where this conflict about aesthetic programs within the European tradition has been staged. All of this subject, in any case, exceeds the limits of this essay.

specific programs which, for each distinction, make it possible to determine whether it fits or not. In the case of art, one can speak of self-programming; Every work of art is self-programmed in the sense that the necessity of the order produced by this programming is the result of the decisions made in the work of art itself. [...] The bonds, therefore, do not derive from external laws, but from the way in which one begins. The program is the result of the operations it programs itself.²⁹

The situation described above should not be understood mechanically, as a sort of implementation of an algorithm, which would be a simple *substitute* of the canons inherited from the tradition. It has rather to be understood as a situation where the artist finds himself continuously in a *contingent* situation, where freedom and constraints are interrelated, where free decisions can be taken on the basis of the constraints constituted from *what happened*:

Creating a work of art [...] generates the freedom to make decisions on the basis of which one can continue one's work. The freedoms and necessities one encounters are entirely the products of art itself; they are consequences of decisions made within the work.³⁰

The decisive point in all this is that this situation *almost literally corresponds to the way improvisers understand themselves and their activity*. The following passage from Max Roach seems almost an exemplification of Luhmann's notion of *self-programming*:

After you initiate the solo, one phrase determines what the next is going to be. From the first note that you hear, you are responding to what you've just played: you just said this on your instrument, and now that's a constant. What follows from that? And so on and so

²⁹ Baraldi, Corsi, Esposito 1997, pp. 108-109 (my translation).

³⁰ Luhmann 2000, pp. 203-204.

forth. And finally, let's wrap it up so that everybody understands that that's what you're doing.³¹

What I want to argue now is that the notion of *self-programming* is what we need in order to differentiate a free improvisation not only from an interpretation of an existing MW containing even massive improvisational elements (as in the case of many standard jazz performances), but also from a simply randomly produced series of notes, as in the case of the above mentioned two year old kid.³² While both executions can be characterised as non-interpretative, only the improvised performance is self-programmed, as proceeding based on what it has produced. The improviser, in fact, differently from the two year old kid, continuously takes *free decisions within a scene of constraints*³³, aiming, in temporal terms, to *open an unforeseen future based on a given present*.

A final consideration deserves, in my view, to be made: the notion of self-programming seems to be very apt in characterising modernity (in fact, it is the central notion of Luhmann's characterisation of modern aesthetics), as the *epoch of autonomy*, which can 'no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from models supplied by another epoch', and which consequently 'has to create its normativity out of itself.'³⁴ On the other side, the very praxis of improvisation seems to *exceed* another key

³¹ Berliner 1994, p. 192.

³² In this respect, the criterion of self-programming already *includes* the criterion of non-interpretative performance, as no self-programming performance can be, strictly speaking, an interpretation. However, if I had limited myself to this second criterion, I would have lost an important *piece of information* contained in the notion of non-interpretation. In this respect, the characterisation of free improvisation as non-interpretative performance has (among others) the *argumentative function* of explicating, to take the example used in this paper, the difference with Standard Jazz Performances, which, in spite of containing many improvised passages, are to be considered as *interpretations*, whilst free improvised performances are not. This is the claim. Economy is an important criterion for structuring an argument, but not the only one.

³³ I refer here to Judith Butler's recent work *Undoing Gender*, where she uses explicitly the metaphor of improvisation: 'If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint' (Butler 2004, p. 1).

³⁴ Habermas 1990, p. 7.

notion of modernity, as characterised by Jürgen Habermas, namely what he calls the *principle of subjectivity*.³⁵ In fact, in free improvised performances the performers continuously react to what has happened, almost in an *ecstatic attitude*. This is very evident in collective free performances, where the improvisation is driven by the continuous responses between the interpreters. But the passage of Max Roach shows that all this is also basically valid for solo improvised performances. The improviser, in fact, acts in consequence not to *what he intended to do*, but rather to *what he did*. Also in this second sense, mistakes can become opportunities. There is, in this respect, a *radical exposure to contingency*, which is implicit in the very praxis of improvisation. The counterfactual basic statement ‘If I had not made this *mistake*, I would have continued my improvisation in a totally different way’ seems not only licit, but also a *necessarily endorsable statement*, in order to qualify a performance as freely improvised. In this respect, the notion of improvisation, in spite of its modern connotations, is also compatible with one of the key features characterising post-modernity, namely the notion of contingency.³⁶ Whether or not all this can lead to characterising post-modernity, not as the epoch which moved ‘beyond the horizon of the tradition of reason in which European modernity once understood itself’³⁷, but rather which *moved the notion of reason beyond its modern tradition* (rooted in the principle of subjectivity), is a question which cannot be tackled in this context.

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³⁵ ‘In modernity [...] religious life, state, and society as well as science, morality, and art are transformed into just so many embodiments of the principle of subjectivity. Its structure is grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes’s “*cogito ergo sum*” and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image – literally in a “speculative” way’ (Habermas 1990., p. 18).

³⁶ I refer here to Zygmunt Bauman’s classic characterisation of postmodernity as ‘the age of contingency *für sich*, of self-conscious contingency’ (Bauman 1992, p. 134).

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“All grace is beautiful, but not all that is beautiful is grace.”

A Critical Look at Schiller’s View on Human Beauty

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ABSTRACT. Few philosophical treatises focus on human beauty. Schiller’s “On Grace and Dignity” is one of the exceptions. Like many of Schiller’s philosophical attempts, his theory of human beauty is strongly influenced by Kant, but he still presents an autonomous theory. He defends a characterological theory of human beauty according to which human beauty is physical-expressive beauty. More precisely, he distinguishes between two kinds of human beauty. Fixed or architectonic beauty refers to the physical side of a person’s appearance; changeable beauty or grace covers its expressive side. Grace is found in sympathetic movements, that is unintentional movements accompanying willful movements. They are graceful if they express a beautiful soul, that is moral virtuousness. A person’s physical frame is architectonically beautiful if it appears as a gift of nature to her technical form. This paper asks how Schiller’s theory of human beauty can be successfully justified based on his own theoretical assumptions, and examines three possible arguments. The moral-aesthetic-harmony argument builds on Schiller’s claim that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because they please morally. The beauty-response argument relates to the experience evoked by human beauty, namely love. The *Kallias* argument finally tries to deduce Schiller’s view on human beauty from the objective principle of beauty formulated in the *Kallias Letters*, namely that beauty is freedom in the appearance. This paper argues that although Schiller elaborates an inspiring view on human beauty, none of these three arguments succeeds in the end.

Kant has strongly influenced Schiller in his philosophical deliberations (see, e.g., Feger 2005; Schaper 1979, chap. 5).² But Schiller does not only comment on Kant’s moral and aesthetic theories, he develops his own

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² Norton (1995, pp. 225-226) emphasizes that one should not only discuss Schiller’s philosophical writings with regard to the question how he (mis-)interprets Kant.

ideas—often based on Kantian grounds. In his essay “On Grace and Dignity”, he presents, e.g., a definition of virtue which is significantly different from Kant’s definition although it is built on Kant’s moral theory. Many philosophers show interest in this essay mainly because it contains Schiller’s virtue theory. It is, however, not primarily an essay on moral philosophy, but rather an aesthetic treatise (see Guyer 2016, sect. 8.1). Schiller’s main topic is the beauty of human beings. In the course of the endeavor to better understand personal beauty, he also writes about virtue because he defines a beautiful soul as a virtuous soul. Once again, it is easy to recognize the strong Kantian influence in what Schiller says about human beauty. Large parts of “On Grace and Dignity” read like a response to the § 17 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this paragraph, Kant speaks about the ideal of beauty which turns out to be an ideal of human beauty. Despite the undeniable Kantian influence, Schiller elaborates an autonomous theory of human beauty.

As an aesthetic treatise “On Grace and Dignity” is quite unusual. Although beautiful persons are often mentioned as examples of something beautiful, few philosophical works explicitly focus on human beauty. As far as I can tell, Schiller’s essay is one of the big exceptions. Schiller does not formulate a general theory of beauty, but explicitly a theory of human beauty in “On Grace and Dignity”. Hence this essay is a must-have-read if you are interested in philosophical perspectives on human beauty. Despite this special position in philosophical aesthetics, Schiller’s theory of human beauty is not much discussed among aestheticians, especially not as an autonomous theory. What is missing in particular is an in depth discussion about how Schiller justifies and defends his theory. Therefore I raise exactly this question in this paper. I want to discuss Schiller’s theory as an theory of its own right.

To do so, I will first summarize Schiller’s theory of human beauty and will shortly compare it with Kant’s theory (section 1). Then I will scrutinize whether this theory can be justified successfully based on Schiller’s own theoretical assumptions. By concentrating on “On Grace and Dignity” and on the *Kallias Letters*, I will examine three possible justification attempts. First, the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument builds

on Schiller's claim that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because they please morally (section 2.1). Secondly, the beauty-response argument relates to the experience evoked by human beauty, namely love (section 2.2). Thirdly, the *Kallias* argument refers to the objective principle of beauty presented in the *Kallias Letters*, namely that beauty is freedom in the appearance, and tries to deduce Schiller's view on human beauty from this principle (section 2.3). I will argue that although Schiller presents an inspiring view on human beauty, unfortunately, none of these arguments sufficiently justify his theory.

1. Schiller's Characterological Theory of Human Beauty

Schiller defends what I call a characterological theory of human beauty.³ Such a theory builds on the assumption that whether someone is (judged to be) beautiful depends on her sense-perceptible appearance. This means that a person's beauty at least partly depends on how she looks like or how her voice sounds like (perhaps also on how she smells like or how it feels like to touch her). With this assumption, a characterological theory rejects the Platonic idea that a person's character, mind, or soul can be literally beautiful and that inner beauty is one kind of human beauty (see, e.g., Plato 1958, 402d; 444e; 2006, 216d; 218d). In the *Kallias Letters*, Schiller explicitly claims that speaking about inner, moral beauty should only be understood as an indirect, metaphorical way of speaking because beauty belongs to the sensory realm (see Schiller 1971, p. 28). By saying that a person's beauty adheres to her appearance, a characterological theory assumes that whether someone is beautiful depends on her bodily frame. Thereby it does not defend the thesis, however, that it only depends on physical features, that is that human beauty and physical beauty are identical. Its core idea is rather that human beauty is physical-expressive beauty. A human being as a person has a will and has feelings. Both find their expressions in gestures and facial expressions (see Schiller 1971, p. 82). Schiller even believes that they can manifest in permanent facial

³ I owe this terminology to Jerrold Levinson.

features and bodily postures over time (see Schiller 1971, pp. 84-85). If so, a person's appearance is partly determined by her will and feelings. Therefore, a person's sense-perceptible appearance is not a mere physical, but rather a physical-expressive appearance. That is why a characterological theory claims that human beauty depends partly on physical features and partly on expressive features and is thus physical-expressive beauty.

This basic structure of a characterological theory helps to understand why Schiller presents a two-part view on human beauty according to which human beauty consists in fixed beauty supplemented with changeable beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 70; p. 84). Fixed or architectonic beauty refers to the physical side of a person's appearance, changeable beauty to the expressive side.

Architectonic beauty is the beauty of the human frame (see Schiller 1971, p. 74). Nature determines this kind of beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 74; p. 82). Schiller further describes it as "the gift of nature to her technical form" (Schiller 1992, p. 360). This statement is quite vague. Fortunately, Schiller also becomes more specific and draws the following image of an architectonically beautiful person: "A fortunate proportionality of limbs, flowing contours, a pleasing complexion, tender skin, a fine and free growth, a well-sounding voice, etc., [...]" (Schiller 1992, p. 342).

Changeable beauty is the beauty of movements (see Schiller 1971, 71). Schiller calls it also grace (see Schiller 1971, p. 70). Whereas nature determines architectonic beauty, each human subject can produce grace by willfully changing her appearance (see Schiller 1971, 74). As each subject is the source of grace, grace can only be found in willful movements (see Schiller 1971, pp. 72-73). If the wind moves your hair, e.g., this movement cannot be graceful. Also a reflex movement like a knee-jerk is precluded from grace.

Schiller continues to argue that although grace is an attribute of a willful movement, a willful movement is graceful due to the unintentional movements accompanying it (see Schiller 1971, p. 86). Schiller calls them sympathetic or speaking movements (see Schiller 1971, p. 86; pp. 92-93). He restricts grace to these unintentional movements because he assumes that grace has to be determined by nature or at least it should appear to be

determined by nature. It has at least to appear to be unintentional (see Schiller 1971, p. 90). This is true of speaking movements because they are induced by emotions (see Schiller 1971, p. 86). As we cannot (fully) control our emotions and how they express themselves in gestures and facial expressions, sympathetic movements cannot be faked (see Schiller 1971, pp. 88-92). They reveal how a person actually feels about an action that she has decided to perform. Our fine-grained facial expressions reveal, e.g., whether we like what we intend to do, whether we have to overcome any psychological barriers, whether we are hesitant about it, etc., etc.. So, unintentional movements induced by emotions unveil a person's true character. Schiller thus defends a transparency thesis: certain bodily, expressive movements, namely sympathetic or speaking movements, allow to reliably deduce a person's true character.

To actually be graceful, a sympathetic movement has to be expressive of a beautiful soul (see Schiller 1971, p. 113). At this point, as already mentioned, Schiller starts to speak about virtue. Someone has a beautiful soul if she is a morally virtuous person (see Schiller 1971, pp. 110-111). And someone is morally virtuous according to Schiller if she possesses the stable disposition to act morally out of inclination for the moral law (see Schiller 1971, p. 106). If so, "sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination harmonize" (Schiller 1992, p. 368) and acting morally has become her second nature (see Schiller 1971, p. 32).

As comparing Schiller to Kant is so common when one writes about Schiller's philosophical thoughts, allow me to point out some salient similarities and also dissimilarities between their approaches to human beauty. Both authors defend characterological theories (see also Schmalzried 2014; 2015^b). Both assume that beauty has to depend (at least) partly on sense-perceptible features (see Kant 1963, §14), and thus both assume that human beauty has to depend on a person's appearance. As they also agree that a person's appearance is not only determined by physical features, but is also expressive of her character and mind, they think of a person's appearance in terms of a physical-expressive appearance.

Also the two-fold structure of Schiller's beauty theory has its roots in Kant's thoughts. In § 17 of his third Critique, Kant sketches the ideal of

beauty. He describes an ideal as an representation of an individual being adequate to an idea of reason (see Kant 1963, AA 5:232). That is why an ideal of beauty can only be an ideal of dependent beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:232). Unlike a judgment of free beauty, a judgment of dependent beauty presupposes a concept of the object judged to be beautiful and an idea of what this object is supposed to be (see Kant 1963, AA 5:229). Human beauty is one paradigmatic example of dependent beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:230). As only with respect to human beings we know *a priori* what they are supposed to be because only they are ends in themselves, the ideal of beauty can only be an ideal of human beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:233). In order to count as an ideal of beauty, a person's appearance first has to conform to the aesthetic normal idea, that is the image of a standard human appearance (see Kant 1963, AA 5:233). As the aesthetic normal idea only determines the average physical appearance of human beings (see Kant 1963, AA 5:234-235), Schiller's architectonic beauty parallels with it. In order to count as the ideal of beauty, a person's appearance additionally has to be expressive of moral ideas (Kant 1963, AA 5:235). Formulated differently, gestures and facial expressions have to be expressive of a moral character, that is a good will. Someone has a good will if she fulfills her moral duty out of respect for the moral law (see Kant 1961^a). If someone possesses the stable disposition to act in this way, she is a virtuous person according to Kant (see Kant 1961^b, AA 5:84; 1983, AA 7:147; 1986, AA 6:394-395). So although Kant and Schiller disagree about how to define virtue, both agree that bodily expressions of moral virtuousness contribute to a person's beauty. Schiller goes one step further and identifies inner beauty with moral virtuousness, whereas Kant does not draw such a connection.

Another similarity between Kant's and Schiller's view on human beauty can be found. Kant assumes that a person's appearance can conform to the aesthetic normal idea without being expressive of moral ideas, and *vice versa* (see Kant 1963, AA 5:235; 1983, AA 7:299). In order to count as an ideal of beauty, both aspects have to come together, however. Schiller agrees. Right at the beginning of his essay when he speaks about the myth of Juno, the Greek goddess of beauty and her belt of grace, it becomes clear

that fixed and changeable beauty are independent from each other (see Schiller 1971, pp. 69-74). One person can be merely architectonically beautiful, and another can only be graceful. But Juno, the symbol of perfect beauty, has both, is architectonically beautiful and graceful at the same time.

2. Three Justification Attempts of Schiller's Characterological Theory

After having recapitulated Schiller's theory of human beauty, the question arises how he justifies his theory. This question can aim at two different levels: first, one might wonder why one should defend a characterological theory of human beauty, and secondly why one should defend Schiller's version of a characterological theory and not, e.g., Kant's or Burke's version (see Kant 1963, § 17; Burke 2008, p. 107). In what follows I want to concentrate on the second question. I will ask whether and how one can justify Schiller's theory drawing on his own theoretical assumptions that he makes in "On Grace and Dignity" and in the *Kallias Letters*.

But before I discuss the second question, allow me to shortly address the first one. The justification for a characterological theory of human beauty rests on two assumptions. First, one has to defend what I call the sensory-dependence-thesis. According to this thesis, genuine, literal beauty has to depend at least partly on sense-perceptible properties. Schiller expresses his agreement with this thesis in "On Grace and Dignity" as well as in his *Kallias Letters* (see, e.g., Schiller 1971, p. 25; p. 28; p. 100). Unfortunately, however, he only affirms it, but does not argue for it. As I have shown elsewhere, many philosophers accept (or reject) this thesis without much argument (see Schmalzried 2015^a). As since the 18th century most aestheticians favor the sensory-dependence-thesis, it might have become an aesthetic axiom. Without going further into detail, let us say that Schiller is good company supporting this thesis (see, e.g., Beardsley 1962, p. 624; Burke 2008, p. 83, pp. 101-102; Danto 2003, p. 92; Home, 2005, p. 105; Kant 1963, § 14; Nehamas 2007, p. 63; Zangwill 2001, p.122, p.127). If one accepts the sensory-dependence-thesis, the beauty of a person has to depend on her appearance.

The second assumption upon which a characterological theory rests is that human beauty is physical-expressive beauty, that is that it depends on physical as well as expressive features. To argue for this assumption, Schiller hints at what I call the inseparability phenomenon (see Schiller 1971, p. 77). It describes the psychological difficulty to abstract from expressive features of a person's appearance if we see her as a person. The reason is that if we see someone as a person, we are aware that she has a will and has feelings and that they express themselves in her outward appearance. Therefore we immediately look for expressive features as clues to what kind of person someone is. If so, we always perceive expressive features along with physical features. If seeing someone as a person implies that we perceive her physical-expressive appearance and a person's beauty depends on her appearance, it thus depends on physical as well as expressive features.

These two assumptions build the background to defend a characterological theory. They do not yet provide any information about how a physical-expressive appearance of a beautiful person should look like. Arguing for Schiller's characterological theory thus needs to be supplemented with further arguments. In what follows, I try to justify Schiller's characterological theory in three different ways by sketching and discussing the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument, the beauty-response argument, and the *Kallias* argument.

2.1. The Moral-Aesthetic-Harmony Argument

One core claim of Schiller's characterological theory is that sympathetic movements revealing a beautiful soul, that is a moral virtuous character, are graceful and thus determine the expressive side of a person's beauty. To defend this thesis, he says that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because "where moral sentiment finds satisfaction, the aesthetical does not want to be cut short [...]" (Schiller 1992, p. 359). This justification builds on the above mentioned transparency thesis: sympathetic movements reliably reveal a person's character. If so, I have to be morally pleased if I see expressive signs of a morally virtuous character. And if there

is a harmony between moral and aesthetic satisfaction, I have to be aesthetically pleased as well. Therefore, grace depends on bodily expressions of moral virtuousness. This is the basic idea of what I call the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument.

To discuss this argument, one might first wonder whether the transparency thesis is actually true. But even if it would turn out that sympathetic movements do not (always) reliably show a person's true character, it is enough if we tend to interpret them as reliable character expressions. I believe that we often interpret them in this way. If so, we are morally pleased if we see bodily signs that we associate with a morally virtuous character. Even if our satisfaction was erroneous insofar as the person in question looks like she is morally virtuous without being actually morally virtuous, our satisfaction would still count as a moral satisfaction.

The crunch-point of the argument is not the transparency thesis, but the claim that moral and aesthetic satisfaction have to harmonize. Schiller tries to support this harmony claim by saying:

However sternly reason may demand an expression of morality, just as persistently will the eye require beauty. Since both these demands befall the same object, albeit from diverse standpoints of judgment, then satisfaction for both must be provided by one and the same cause. (Schiller 1992, p. 359)

This argument is a clear *non sequitur*, however. Even if we approach an object from two different, but equally important standpoints of judgment, the cause which leads to a positive judgment from one standpoint does not also have to lead to a positive judgment from the other standpoint. If these are two different and separate standpoints, their judgments can fall apart. We might wish that they were in harmony, but still they might not be. So, if one does not equate the moral with the aesthetic standpoint, and Schiller obviously wants to keep them distinct, the question is still open why moral and aesthetic satisfaction have to harmonize. If one continues reading, it becomes more and more clear that Schiller does not actually argue for the harmony claim, but rather stipulates it. That we experience bodily

expressions of moral virtuousness as beautiful is a free effect of nature (see Schiller 1971, p. 100). Schiller sees it as “a favor which morality grants to sensuousness” (Schiller 1992, p. 360).

Let us accept for a moment the harmony claim for the sake of the argument. Even so, the beauty-response argument is not yet successful. One might wonder why expressions of moral virtuousness in Schiller's sense rather than in Kant's sense aesthetically please. As pointed out in the previous section, Kant defends the idea that a person's appearance has to be expressive of moral virtuousness in his sense in order to amount to the ideal of beauty.

Some fear that Schiller only circularly answers this question by arguing that expressions of moral virtuousness in his sense are beautiful because such virtuousness makes a soul beautiful, and *vice versa* (see Hamburger 1956, pp. 388-390; Norton 1995, p. 240). It is true that some passages of his essay read as if Schiller had this circular argument in mind. But he also hints at a non-circular answer: in everyday life, we rather experience expressions of a beautiful soul as graceful than expressions of virtuousness in Kant's sense (see Schiller 1971, p. 102). Being virtuous in Kant's sense implies that one defeats one's inclinations and only acts out of respect for the moral law. Assumedly, being morally virtuous in Kant's sense requires a lot of effort. Bodily expressions of such a state of mind are not experienced as beautiful according to Schiller because: “Already the general opinion of mankind makes ease the chief characteristic of grace, and whatever requires effort can never manifest ease” (Schiller 1992, p. 361). I read this as an empirical observation. One can agree with Schiller that we rather judge expressions of virtuousness in his sense than expressions in Kant's sense as graceful. But still one can wonder whether only expressions of virtuousness in Schiller's sense please aesthetically. Bodily expressions of additional, non-moral character traits or even cognitive abilities might be experienced as beautiful in everyday life. It might be that also expressions of wit and humor, intelligence, or talent, to mention some examples, count in favor of a person's beauty (see, e.g., Burke 2008, p. 107). Schiller does not address and rule out this possibility.

Besides all this, the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument only

concentrates on grace as the expression of a beautiful soul and does not speak about architectonic beauty. If one is looking for a justification of Schiller's characterological theory as a whole, one should also speak about architectonic beauty. So, even if the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument was successful—which it is not—, it would only partially justify Schiller's characterological theory.

2.2. The Beauty-Response Argument

Broadly speaking, one can theoretically approach beauty in two different ways. One can focus either on the objects judged to be beautiful or on the subjects and their beauty experience. One can try to analyze either what makes an object beautiful or what is distinctive about a beauty experience. At the beginning of "On Grace and Dignity", Schiller states that changeable beauty belongs to the object (see Schiller 1971, p. 71). Assumedly, the same is true of fixed beauty. This is in accordance with his claim of the *Kallias Letters* that he is looking for a sensual-objective account of beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 6). That is why he mainly pursues the first approach. This does not mean, however, that Schiller says nothing about how we experience human beauty. In the second part of "On Grace and Dignity", he shortly describes the experience of beauty as one of love, and defines it as a kind of pleasure which relaxes the senses and animates the mind and leads to an attraction of the sensuous object (see Schiller 1971, p. 128). He adds that love is "an emotion which is inseparable from grace and beauty" (Schiller 1992, p. 381).

This remark inspires what I call the beauty-response argument.⁴ It rests on two assumptions. It first assumes that the beauty experience is an experience of love and secondly that we experience love if and only if a person is architectonically beautiful and graceful. It tries to justify Schiller's object-related characterological theory in an subject-related way, that is by drawing on the beauty experience.

⁴ To avoid any misunderstandings, I do not claim that Schiller himself had urged this argument. The idea is rather that based on what he says about the beauty experience it might be possible to build an argument in support of his general theory.

So, the first premise of the beauty-response argument is that the beauty experience is one of love. It is important to keep Schiller's exact definition of love in mind. Otherwise it is easy to overemphasize the difference between Kant and Schiller. Other than Schiller, Kant analyses *en detail* how we experience beauty. He famously distinguishes the pleasure in the beautiful from the pleasure in the agreeable and the pleasure in the good by saying that only the former is disinterested (see Kant 1963, §§ 2-5). This means that we are indifferent to its actual existence. The mere representation pleases in the case of beauty (see Kant 1963, § 2). Schiller agrees with Kant that our experience of beauty is a pleasurable one. He also agrees that it is different from mere sensuous pleasure, that is lust (see Schiller 1971, p. 129). If we feel lust, our mind is relaxed and our senses are animated. It is the other way around with love. Here, he takes up another of Kant's ideas. Kant stresses that beauty animates our cognitive faculties (see Kant 1963, AA 5:219). But Schiller also departs from Kant. He claims that in the case of beauty "an attraction of the sensuous object must follow" (Schiller 1992, p. 381). Due to this attraction he calls the experience of beauty love (see Schiller 1971, p. 128). Kant on the other hand explicitly denies a connection between the pleasure in the beautiful and an attraction to the object. According to Kant's thesis of disinterestedness, the pleasure in the beautiful neither rests on an interest nor does it produce an interest in the existence of an object (see Kant 1963, AA 5:205). According to Kant, neither our sensuous nor our rational side is attracted to the sensuous object, whereas Schiller assumes that our rational side is indeed attracted to it.

This leads to the question why one should agree with Schiller that the experience of beauty is best described as one of love. Guyer points out that Kant's strong claim that a beauty experience cannot ground an interest in the existence of an object is highly contra-intuitive and is independent from his more plausible weaker claim that it is not grounded on such a interest (see Guyer 1978, p. 449). Kant's strong claim becomes even more problematic if one keeps in mind that we are speaking about the experience of human beauty at the moment. There seems to be a close connection between human beauty and attraction (see, e.g., Burke 2008; Nehamas 2007, Platon 2006). It is quite difficult to think of a situation in which one has

experienced a person to be beautiful and still was completely indifferent to her actual existence. We tend to feel attracted (although not necessarily sexually attracted) to beautiful persons. So, Schiller's characterization of an experience of human beauty as one of love is not far-fetched. This might not suffice for an actual defense of the first premise. Still, let us assume for the moment that it is.

The second assumption of the beauty-response argument is that love is inseparable from grace and architectonic beauty. A natural way to understand this thesis is to interpret it as an empirical claim: a person whose appearance counts as architectonically beautiful and graceful according to the first part of "On Grace and Dignity" evokes love, and only such a person evokes love. The afterthought is important. If bodily expressions of character traits and cognitive abilities besides moral virtuousness or physical features not associated with architectonic beauty evoke love, Schiller will have only partially captured human beauty. To empirically prove the second premise is a challenge. Even if one thinks that it is to be expected that grace and architectonic beauty (often) evoke love, to actually show that *only* grace and architectonic beauty provoke love is another and assumedly more problematic task.

Schiller should give a hint why one should expect such a close connection between grace and architectonic beauty and love. Otherwise the second premise is a mere stipulation. As already seen, Schiller defines architectonic beauty as the gift of nature to her technical form and grace as the expression of a beautiful soul. Both definitions are object- and not experience-based. Therefore, they provide no reason to believe that features determining fixed and changeable beauty and only those evoke love. To build the bridge between the object-based definitions and the claim that we react to grace and architectonic beauty with love, an additional argumentative step is necessary. Schiller builds the bridge by giving the following explanation of why grace and architectonic beauty are inseparable from love:

In grace on the other hand, as in beauty generally, reason sees its demands fulfilled in sensuousness, and suddenly strides to meet it as

the sensuous appearance of one of its own ideas. This unexpected concord of the fortuitousness of nature with the necessity of reason, awakens an emotion of joyous approbation, good will, which is relaxing for the senses, but animating and engaging for the mind, and an attraction of the sensuous object must follow. (Schiller 1992, p. 381)

So, reason is pleased, animated and feels attracted to a sensuous object if the object's appearance makes an idea of reason sensuously accessible. This is so because reason sees its own demand sensuously fulfilled. And if this happens, the object is beautiful.

Schiller's story that and how love is evoked if reason sees one of its ideas reflected in an object's appearance is a story that can be told. In order for the beauty-response argument to succeed, this is not enough, however. One would also have to show that this is the only or at least the best way to understand how love is evoked. Schiller has not shown this (and probably has not intended to show this). The challenge is that Kant offers another and more influential explanation of how our pleasure in the beautiful is evoked. He famously claims that it rests on a free play of our cognitive faculties (see Kant 1963, § 9).

Secondly, the claim that something is beautiful if and only if reason sees one of its own ideas in its sensuous appearance reflected is not yet supported by arguments. If one assumes that grace is the sensuous expression of moral virtuousness and keeps in mind that reason demands to be morally virtuous, one can understand why Schiller claims this with respect to grace. But here two problems arise. The first one is that one has thereby not yet shown that also architectonic beauty and beauty in general can be understood in this way. The second and with respect to the beauty-response argument even more important problem is that this would lead to a circular argument. If one has already accepted that the expressive side of human beauty can be understood as grace and grace as the sensuous expression of a beautiful soul, one might argue that a graceful appearance sensuously fulfills a demand of reason. And this might lead to the assumption that it evokes love. But if so, starting from the assumption that

our beauty experience is love cannot lead to a defense of Schiller's characterological theory without begging the question.

So, even if one agrees with Schiller that the experience of human beauty can be described as an experience of love, the beauty-response argument fails due to its second premise. It lacks sufficient empirical support, and the non-empirical justification leads to a question begging argument. Although the beauty-response argument fails, discussing it was not pointless. The discussion has shown that although Schiller chooses an object-based approach to human beauty, he does not completely ignore the subjective side of beauty, and tries to explain how grace (and architectonic beauty) evoke a beauty experience best described as love.

2.3. *The Kallias Argument*

There might be another way to justify Schiller's characterological theory by referring to his objective principle of beauty from the *Kallias Letters*. Schiller writes these letters to his friend Gottfried Körner, and between January and February 1793 they intensely discuss aesthetic matters. Schiller doubts Kant's claim that beauty cannot be defined with reference to the object (see Schiller 1971, 5). He sets himself the task to find an objective principle of beauty, and finally formulates such the principle in the letter from the February 8, 1793: "Beauty is freedom in the appearance" (Schiller 1971, p. 18). Schiller does not apply this principle to human beauty in the *Kallias Letters*. He promises, but never writes a letter accomplishing this task (see Schiller 1971, p. 41). "On Grace and Dignity" might fulfill this promise although it does not explicitly mention the principle. Still, some passages of this essay made me think of the *Kallias* formula, e.g., when Schiller speaks about ease as one of the main characteristics of grace (see Schiller 1971, p. 102) or when—as just discussed—he claims that in the case of a beautiful appearance reason meets "the sensuous appearance of one of its own ideas" (Schiller 1992, p. 381). If one could deduce Schiller's characterological theory from his beauty principle and could give an independent justification of the principle, one would have found an elegant way to justify Schiller's view on human beauty. This is the idea behind what

I call the *Kallias* argument.

The first step of discussing the *Kallias* argument is to try to deduce Schiller's characterological theory from his principle of beauty. For this purpose, one has to say a little bit more about the principle. Its first key term is "freedom". Schiller defines freedom as being self-determined, as being determined from within (see Schiller 1971, p. 35). The second key term is "in the appearance". As already mentioned, Schiller restricts beauty to the sensory realm. Therefore "freedom in the appearance" should be read as "freedom of the appearance". Here a problem arises, however. An appearance is part of the sensible world, and Schiller accepts Kant's claim that only something supersensible can truly be free (see Schiller 1971, p. 17). Schiller adds, however, that it only matters that an object appears to be free, not that it is actually free (see Schiller 1971, p. 17). In order to appear to be free it, it suffice if it appears to be self-determined.⁵ It is important that one feels no need to look for any external determination or cause. The appearance should be kind of self-explanatory. Following these definitions and clarifications, "beauty is freedom in the appearance" can be translated into "beauty is appearing to be self-determined of appearances."

Let us try to apply this principle to human beings. As already argued, a person's appearance has a fixed, physical and a changeable, expressive side. That is why Schiller distinguishes between architectonic and changeable beauty. If the principle holds, the changeable, expressive side of a person's appearance has to appear to be self-determined in order to be graceful. In "On Grace and Dignity", Schiller speaks of grace as "the beauty of the form moved by freedom" (Schiller 1992, 350) and as the "beauty of frame under the influence of freedom" (Schiller 1992, 349). One might fear that these statements are at odds with the *Kallias* formula. It seems to be possible that unfree movements appear to be free, and *vice versa* (see Beiser 2005, chap. 3, sec. 8; Hamburger 1956, p. 385). No contradiction occurs, however, because grace refers to human movements. What is special about human movements is that they can actually be caused by freedom. As Schiller defends the transparency thesis, only actually free movements can

⁵ Hamburger (1956, p. 384) speaks about a metaphorical notion of freedom.

appear to be free. This helps to understand why Schiller restricts grace to movements expressive of moral actions as the only truly free actions (see Schiller 1971, p. 73; p. 92).

Now, one can also understand why grace is found in expressions of moral virtuousness in Schiller's and not in Kant's sense. If sympathetic movements express that one has acted morally only out of respect for the moral law, these movements cannot appear to be completely self-determined because reason as well as sensuousness belong to our self and our reason determines our sensuousness. Also if our sensuousness would determine our reason, the resulting movement would not appear to be completely self-determined. Only if inclination and duty harmonize, neither reason determines sensuousness, nor *vice versa*. Only if a movement results from this state of mind, it can appear to be truly self-determined (see Schiller 1971, pp. 102-104). So, Schiller's comments on grace well fit with his *Kallias* formula, I think.

Two passages of "On Grace and Dignity" suggest that also architectonic beauty can be deduced from the beauty principle. First, as already mentioned, Schiller characterizes architectonic beauty as the gift of nature to her technical form (see Schiller 1971, p. 100). With the *Kallias* formula in mind, architectonic beauty might be the gift of nature to her technical form because a beautiful human frame looks self-determined, that is as if it has given itself its purpose and likes to fulfill it. Secondly, Schiller describes architectonic beauty as the sensuous expression of a concept of reason (see Schiller 1971, 81). He leaves open which concept of reason he has in mind. Against the backdrop of the *Kallias Letters*, one can assume that he thinks of freedom. If so, architectonic beauty counts as the sensuous expression of freedom. If our bodily frame sensuously expresses freedom, this might mean that it appears to be free.

But although what Schiller says about architectonic beauty can be partly associated with his *Kallias* formula, applying his beauty principle to the physical side to a person's appearance is still problematic. Although the *Kallias* principle claims to be an object-related principle, one cannot deduce from it that architectonic beauty consists in a "fortunate proportionality of limbs, flowing contours, a pleasing complexion, tender skin, a fine and free

growth, a well-sounding voice, etc.” (Schiller 1992, 342). The principle is much too vaguely formulated for this.

Setting this difficulty aside, a more basic question arises for the *Kallias* argument, namely how Schiller justifies his objective principle of taste. He mentions two possible lines of justification in the letter from January 25, 1793: first, one can prove it from experience, and, secondly, one can legitimize it *a priori* (see Schiller 1971, 5). Schiller aims at an *a priori* legitimation. He presents his aesthetic deduction in the letter from February 8, 1793 (see Schiller 1971, pp. 13-18). The deduction starts with defining reason as the capacity of connection. Theoretical reason either connects concepts with concepts or concepts with intuitions, either forming necessary, logical or contingent, empirical judgments. Practical reason either applies the concept of freedom to actions as free events or to natural events, either forming moral judgments or—and this is the crucial step of the aesthetic deduction—aesthetic judgments. This classification follows because aesthetic judgments unlike judgments of theoretical reason are not based on concepts. As they refer to mere appearances, they are also different from moral judgments. Nonetheless they are judgments of reason. Beiser suggests that attempts to justify aesthetic judgments supports this claim (see Beiser 2005, chap. 2, sec. 4). If so, taste has to occupy the blank space of practical reason. Unclear is, however, why Schiller denies Kant's claim that judgments of taste are reflective judgments of the power of judgment. Furthermore, why should one accept Schiller's definition and classification of reason in the first place?

As the letter from February 23, 1793 shows, Schiller himself doubts the complete success of his deduction. He additionally tries to show empirically that those properties which make objects appear to be self-determined are the same that makes them beautiful. At this point, the problem of the principle's vagueness becomes fatal. If one asks which features are responsible for an object appearing to be self-determined, one cannot answer this question on a concrete, object-related level, and neither can Schiller (see also Beiser 2005, chap. 2, sec. 7; Norton 1995, p. 230). We have already seen this with respect to architectonic beauty, and the examples that Schiller mentions in the *Kallias Letters* point to the same difficulty.

Norton criticizes: "Yet he never revealed what perceptible qualities do have something to do with beauty, [...]" (Norton 1995, p. 230). In the end, the danger is that one simply stipulates that freedom in the appearance must be given if one judges an object to be beautiful, and *vice versa*. This, of course, is no satisfactory justification.

In the letter from February 23, 1793, Schiller also mentioned a subject-related way to show that beauty and freedom in the appearance are the same, namely if one could show that beautiful objects and objects appearing to be self-determined evoke the same kind of experience (see Schiller 1971, pp. 33-34). But the vagueness of the principle hinders the success of this procedure as well. To test the hypothesis that an object appearing to be self-determined evokes the same response as a beautiful object, you first have to single out objects appearing to be self-determined. But in order to do so, you need some kind of clear idea about how they look like. You cannot simply assume that they look like beautiful objects without begging the question. But due to the vagueness of the principle, you have no such idea and hence you cannot test your hypothesis.

Allow me to sum up the discussion of the *Kallias* argument. First, one can understand some aspects of Schiller's characterological theory of beauty against the backdrop of his objective principle of beauty. But one cannot completely deduce Schiller's view on human beauty from this principle due to its vagueness. Secondly and more importantly, Schiller's *a priori* and also *a posteriori* justification attempts of the principle are not successful. Even if one would have been able to completely deduce his characterological theory from his objective beauty principle, the *Kallias* argument would still fail because it misses a persuasive justification of the *Kallias* principle.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to present and to discuss Schiller's theory of human beauty as a theory in its own right, and not only as a reaction to or modification of Kant's theory. I have argued that Schiller defends a characterological theory. Such a theory has the big advantage that it can

reconcile two widely held and also plausible, but seemingly incompatible assumptions about beauty. It has to deny neither that beauty is only skin-deep nor that true beauty comes from within. It can defend both claims because it first assumes that beauty depends on the sense-perceptible appearance of a person and secondly that this appearance has an expressive as well as a physical side.

Schiller further develops this characterological idea by claiming that human beauty is architectonic beauty supplemented with grace. He defines architectonic beauty as the beauty of the human frame and describes it as the gift of nature to her technical form. Grace is found in the unintentional, sympathetic movements accompanying willful movements and is given if they reveal a beautiful soul, that is moral virtuousness. In my opinion, Schiller's view on human beauty is an inspiring and *prima facie* plausible theory. Still, this does not suffice to argue that he has fully and adequately analyzed human beauty. Therefore, I have set myself the task to find a way to justify Schiller's view on human beauty based on his own theoretical assumptions. Unfortunately, neither the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument, nor the beauty-response argument, nor the *Kallias* argument has been fully convincing. At the end of this paper, Schiller's theory is thus still lacking a persuasive justification, even if the basic characterological idea is persuasive. The next step might be to look for a justification from without Schiller's theoretical framework. But this is the task of another paper.

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Purposiveness and Sociality of Artistic Action in the Writings of John Dewey

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ABSTRACT. The concept of the end is transformed by Dewey into an intrinsic purposiveness which he explains by recourse to the meaningfulness and value of human actions. He sharply distinguishes this intrinsic purposiveness of meaningful action from the pursuit of rigidly set external ends. For Dewey's concept is not based upon a separation of rational means from individual and public values but rather upon the idea of a completeness. The focus of the text is Dewey's theory of art which he understands as an experience and reaction in its actualization and as an activating experience in its reception. Finally, this theory will be contextualized in its social dimension. From the perspective of Dewey's aesthetic theory of art, the contribution which art and design are able to make in the framework of democratic processes, can be discussed in a quite specific manner – a manner which averts the frequent accusation that art and design are being instrumentalized.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the writings by the pragmatist John Dewey on artistic action and esthetic experience have played a minor role in the German language context of esthetic theory construction. Already in a very brief appraisal of Dewey's concept of esthetic experience by the literary theorist Hans Robert Jauß... it becomes clear that in Dewey – barring the application of his concept of experience – his entire philosophic scenario which he developed around this concept, has not been received in the mainstream of esthetic theory construction. Jauß writes, notably critical:

To the extent that Dewey extends the focus on the esthetic beyond art and describes his field as if it were limitlessly extendable, classicistic

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definitions of the art beautiful such as order, form, harmony are turned undetected into characteristics of an esthetic thing world and Aristotelian definitions of the unity of the epic fable become the condition for the possibility of experience in general. (Jauß 1991, 162 pp.)

Jauß was unable to appreciate Dewey's claim that esthetic experiences are also of democracy theoretical concern. Not the alterity of the esthetic stands at the centre of Dewey's theory, but rather its exemplariness for human conduct, also in a democracy. This program, which Dewey already developed in the 1930s, does not have a figure of withdrawal or refusal at its center, but rather the experience of completeness. Here, art is not just the instance upon which the esthetic ignites – it also merely represents one of the activating possibilities of projecting oneself towards a community. In this elision or gap, which is only briefly mentioned here, a historical contingency in theory construction reveals itself which it would pay to examine more closely. But this is not the topic of this paper. Instead, I would merely like to explain some of the premises in Dewey's theory of art as well as to show the connection to his concept of esthetic experience which goes far beyond Dewey's thoughts on artistic action. I shall conclude by briefly sketching the embedding of his art theoretical thinking in the framework of his democracy theory.

The concept of the end is transformed by Dewey into an intrinsic purposiveness which he explains by recourse to the meaning and value of human action. He sharply distinguishes this internal purposiveness of meaningful action from the pursuit of rigidly set external goals. Let us consider Dewey's concept with regard to two prominent applications of the concept of the end. His 'teleology of the intrinsic pursuit of self-set goals' stands in contrast to Hannah Arendt's proposal of a separation of working action (as an at times violent achievement of goals) from action in the public realm. According to Arendt, it is not possible to achieve self-set goals while acting. Similarly, Dewey's version of the concept of the end stands in contrast to Max Weber's distinction of the *zweckrational* from the *wertrational*. For Dewey's concept is not based upon a separation of rational

means from individual and public values but rather upon the idea of completeness. Here first of all a summary of the epistemological and anthropological premises underlying Dewey's concept of intrinsic purposive action will be presented. The focus of the paper will be Dewey's theory of art which he understands as an experience and reaction in its actualization and as an activating experience in its reception. Finally, this theory will be contextualized in its social dimension.

2. Conceptual Difference between Aesthetic Experience, Artistic Action and Art

Dewey sees a dimension of specifically 'aesthetic' experience in all those realms in which it is possible to unify that which has been experienced; or in other words, to bring into a process of becoming complete. Here, he distinguishes his concept of esthetic experience from the traditional concepts of experience in philosophy prevailing in his day. Dewey criticizes these concepts for *retroactively* carrying out the attribution of a unity in the sense of the cognition of a logical relation. In contrast to these concepts, his concept involves a *unifying* movement in the experience (Dewey 2005, pp. 36). According to Dewey, the artistic however is not to be equated with this experience process because it implies consequently an "action that involves materials and energies outside of the body" which are indeed processed by artists but which cannot be subsumed under the intrinsic processes revealed. During this action something more than this experience emerges; *something* emerges – an object or a designed product. With the aid of this object, an esthetic experience is again able to be had as "*an* experience" (Dewey 2005, p. 38) but which is systematically not to be equated with the artistic (Dewey 1958, p. 356). In order to have an esthetic experience of an artwork, one does not need to participate "in the operations of production"; but in order to determine the artistic, one has to include these processes. (Ibid.) Thus Dewey deplores not only the frequently occurring confusion of the esthetic with the artistic; he also deplores the fact that the artistic is often seen as

subordinate to the esthetic.²

The concept of art – or fine art, as Dewey says – stands for all manner of things produced in its name: architecture, painting, novels, dramas etc. These are “a production, which in reality is largely a form of commercialized industry in production of a class of commodities.” (Dewey 1958, p. 364) These things play their roles in the framework of economic processes which adhere to certain rules. They do not need to evoke esthetic experiences. Dewey says of them: „Obviously no one of these classes of activity and product or all of them put together, mark off anything that can be called distinctively fine art. They share their qualities and defects with many other acts and objects.” (Ibid.) Dewey has other criteria in mind for a definition of art: an “instrumentality” which means that art works become means for esthetic experiences. For Dewey, this constitutes the definition of the concept of art with regard to the *quality* of activities and products.

3. Theory of Evolution Principle Idea

“A bird builds its nest and a beaver its dam when internal organic pressures cooperate with external materials so that the former are fulfilled and the latter are transformed in a satisfying combination.”
(Dewey 2005, p. 25)

This empirically esthetic approach constitutes the foundation for Dewey’s concept of art. Here Dewey places the focus on the fact that human and thus also artistic intentions always depend upon internal and external parameters. This perspective both includes the body in reflections as well as making clear that all action means an interaction with external “energies”(Ibid.) Thus the intention of the artist is fundamentally anchored in an “impulsion” but does not completely coincide with it: “Because it is the movement of the organism in its entirety, impulsion is the initial stage of any complete experience.” (Dewey 2005, p. 60) But only by overcoming obstacles in the course of achieving a targeted goal does one become conscious of that

² Cf. *ibid.* p. 357.

which is targeted. According to Dewey “instinctive tendencies are transformed into contrived undertakings.” (Dewey 2005, p. 62) Reflection is brought about by “resistance and check.” (Ibid.)

We are constitutively uncertain about everything that we begin. This uncertainty of ours inherent in action is due to action always being a beginning in concrete situations about which we cannot know whether and which results are brought about. At first sight, this concept of action recalls that of Hannah Arendt’s. According to Dewey, the key issue here is to establish a philosophical difference between actions which are open-ended and detached observations or contemplative participation in that which already exists. A certain kind of anthropologized naturalism enables Dewey to consider this difference more precisely. Throughout the most diverse texts and different periods, Dewey constantly maintains an anti-dualistic stance. He rejects the traditional dualities of “theory and practice”, “cognition and action”, “mind and matter” etc.³ Instead, his naturalism is based upon the premise of evolutionary continuity. We human beings are an embedded part of the organic and yet, because of our capacity for cognitive anticipation, we are also distinct from the organic world. However, this fact is not to be regarded in light of a nature – culture dualism, nor in the sense of an opposition between the animal and the human. Instead at issue here is the notion of a progressive development of abilities.⁴

Of great interest for current debates concerning this theoretical setting is surely the fact that Dewey explains the process of thought not only through recourse to verbal cognition but by employing a concept of design which emphasizes the pictoriality of thought. By this he does not just mean the metaphoricity of our language, but a kind of visual contact that every organism has with its environment. On the one hand, the environment is always being observed, but on the other hand, it is also being *formed*.⁵ The

³ Cf. Dewey 1998, pp. 7–29.

⁴ Cf. Matthias Jung 2010, pp. 145–165, here p 160: “Nevertheless, Dewey’s naturalistic stance is very special in that it combines radical antidualism and evolutionary continuity with full acknowledgment of qualitative differences between human action and organic behavior.”

⁵ In his text about the influence of Darwinism on philosophy Dewey describes this fact as “as the old problem of design versus chance.” (*Erfahrung, Erkenntnis und Wert*,

relation of the organisms to the environment is thus always more than just their passive experience and evaluation of it: it also involves the constant act of pre-reflexive construction of design in the sense of an anticipation of possible options of action. Individuals are thus guided away from a state of 'being orientated to' towards their well-being. This dimension cannot solely be explained by analysis of propositional relations of substantiation. Rather, it occurs "through processes of resistance and adaption, or, in Dewey's terminology, 'doing and undergoing.'" (Fluck 2000, p. 179) And yet, according to Dewey, at issue here is indeed a dimension of thought and cognition and not, for instance, their opposite.

The difference to "wertrational action" in Max Weber is quite obviously the following: action-guided values are, in Dewey's view, not fixed, but rather dynamically conceptualized, constantly emerging and shifting, also in regard to the situation of specific individuals. Hence action-guided ends are comprehended by Dewey also as intrinsic ends and no longer as the external setting of ends ("externalist means-and-ends model" (Ibid., pp. 149). But to become conscious of one's own intentions always means at the same time to consciously or unconsciously include one's own experiences in the momentary act. Dewey describes such a repository of experience as "inner material" – pictorial representations, memories and sensations, which are "progressively re-formed" (Dewey 2005, p. 77).

4. Material

Dewey's concept of material is thus twofold: "concrete" (that is, external) materials, about which Dewey says, "every one knows that they must undergo change" (Ibid.), correspond to the inner material which is re – formed in the artistic act. Through this supposed scenario it also becomes apparent that the re-forming of materials cannot be solely consciously

2004 p. 36), interestingly, Martin Suhr has translated "design" as "Zweck", which provides a link to the traditional philosophical question about the relation of end and design. Dewey's remark that the Aristotelian concept of design "eidos" was translated by the scholastics as "species" (the concept of the species in biology) also connects the Gestalt character with the idea of the creation of an order. Cf. Dewey 2004, pp 31-43.

conceived – they must entail a more complex process of change.⁶ According to Dewey, the artistically forming individual is driven by a yearning for unity. This yearning is not to be understood in psychological, but rather in evolution theoretical terms. Here one sees at work a variation of the Aristotelian teleology principle towards perfection. In the sense of a rhythmicity, however, the unity of “action, feeling, and meaning” (Dewey 2005, p. 15) appears and disappears. It is only in a kind of touching with the external that Dewey calls world, that the vitality and also completeness of *an* experience (the esthetic experience) can emerge. It emerges namely then when there are momentary co-incidences, orders or harmonies; when something merges. In such moments something “is expressed” (Ibid., p. 74)

Values “that past experiences have incorporated in personality” (Ibid.) are revealed in external material in which “meaning...is...[thus] incorporated.” (Ibid., p. 14) But at the same time they also reveal themselves as altered values through the esthetic experience. (Ibid., p. 14) Here also, Dewey’s antipathy towards the antique model of philosophical contemplation becomes apparent. Against this model he sets the “active and alert commerce with the world” (Ibid., p. 18) How this achieved harmonization or merging that occurs while dealing with materials and concrete situations is to be precisely understood, is certainly here a kind of epistemological foundational question of considerable importance. Dewey leaves us in no doubt that it is not solely to be understood as an inter-subjective process or a process of projection.

On account of the impulses and struggles of the artist subject which are forever being diverted and changed by hurdles and obstacles, an “intrinsic integration” emerges - one could say, a state of the subject emerges. This state has been co-formed by the contents and materials of the environment and these have been integrated into the inner through a chain reaction. But consciousness also emerges in a similar manner. It emerges with the aid of the ‘problems’ requiring solutions and tasks as a reflection of its own activity and contents. Activities such as choosing, simplifying, clarifying, abbreviating and summarizing are described by Dewey as

⁶ Cf. *ibid.* p. 75.

processes of abstraction during which that which is of significance is so to speak filtered out. (Ibid., p. 99) Because every artist has an individual reservoir of experiences at her disposal, it is evident that in each individual case (at least considered in systematic terms) something different can emerge. The process of artistic action is comprised of different stadia in which the material, up until now modified, “sets up demands to be fulfilled and it institutes a framework that limits further operations.” (Ibid., p. 116) Dewey also uses the concept of relation” to describe such esthetic “modes of interaction.” (Ibid., p. 140) He thus relates the concept of form to a relation that is conceptualized as dynamic to the extent that it is seen as being in constant change.

5. Work

Allowing that the „predetermination of an end-product” (Ibid., p. 144) by the artist at the outset of her activity is impossible – it leads at best “to the turning out of a mechanical or academic product” (Ibid.) – the artwork that does emerge is on the one hand “self-identical throughout the ages.” (Ibid., p. 112) On the other hand, however, “as a work of art it is recreated every time it is esthetically experienced.” (Ibid., p. 113) Thus the artwork is so to speak comprised of two components: that which is fixed, self-identical and that which is respectively experienced afresh. Both these concepts of the work, or both of these aspects of the work, constitute an analogy to the two aforementioned aspects of the material as inner material and external materials. The fact that “upon its completion an artwork is also a part of the objective world, like a locomotive or a dynamo” has remained valid up until the present day. This also applies to works which only continue to exist in their documentations or which have passed into the history of art as documents. This holds true, for example, for theater productions. Here, not only a prescribed text is always fixed just as it is in many music scores, but in a certain sense recordings, photos, videos, catalogues can also be thought of as fixed – they have become “part of the world.”

Artworks represent for other persons the experiences of those persons who produced them and they bring about new actions. Thus Dewey

treats art works in the final analysis as mediating objects and not as subjects of action. In this manner, an ethical dimension of art emerges. It concerns the responsibility of artistic actors for the instrumentality of their works for others, although Dewey does not claim that artists can prescribe what may and may not be done with their works.

6. Collectivity / Society

For Dewey, democracy theoretical and pedagogical consequences follow from the exemplarity of artistic action and experiences. I shall cite here something Winfried Fluck said in 2000. “If there is a reason to re-examine Dewey’s work, then it would be that it represents a contribution to a concept of democracy in which the social dimension of individual self-realization is always implied.” (Fluck 2000, p. 188) While this interpretation may not be entirely new, it has not lost its validity. For, from the perspective of Dewey’s esthetic theory, the contribution which art and design are able to make in the framework of democratic processes, can be discussed in a quite specific manner – a manner which averts the frequent accusation that art and design are being instrumentalised. In the act of art and the experience of art something can be practiced or experienced which is substantial for the democratic constitution of a society in its entirety: the succeeding relationship of the individual to something which transcends it, namely to society as its historically concrete environment. For Dewey, succeeding in this context does not mean the achievement of a stabile harmony, and certainly not the submission of oneself to external rules, that is, rules set by other persons. Nor does it mean being locked into an organic community. Rather, the relationship to society is regarded as a process of encountering and working through obstacles which leads to a concretely experienced *feeling* of the meaningfulness of a whole. Analogously – perhaps we could also say: ‘at a small level’, such a process takes place during the experience of an art work. This is not to say that the experience of the art work occurs in the mode of the ‘as if’, a figure of thought which plays a role in so many esthetic theories. For at issue here is precisely the same kind of activity and intensity attributable to many situations. Dewey says: “A work of art elicits

and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation for that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity.” (Dewey 2005, p. 202)

At first sight, this “distinctness and clarity” invoked by Dewey recalls the esthetic teleological judgment in Kant. As a supposition of meaning, the esthetic teleological judgment is essentially a conceptual judgment which a subjectively apprehended wholeness inheres. The fundamental difference however between both models is that “distinction and clarity” in Dewey are results of a self-relationality. Meaning arises during action or on account of stimulation through something (e.g. an artwork), from which the subject has received an impulse which influences it even in action. The meaning which arises here is the result of reactions and their numerous inner corrections which are responding to a contextual environment – it is not the content of a onetime judgment. Speaking in history of philosophy terms, one might thus say that the subjectivity of the Kantian esthetic judgment is relativized in Dewey through ‘contact’ with the things and the environment. The ‘instrument’ of the relativization is the vital interest of each and every individual. This interest is conceived by Dewey neither solely materialistically and nor, as in Weber, as a purely technical interest in finding the best means to obtaining a defined end in a disillusioned world. According to Dewey, the genuine interest of the human being lies in giving meaning to his own actions and the contexts connected to them.⁷

Translation: Oliver Schumacher

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⁷ Cf. Kloppenborg, 2000 p. 50: „Nach Dewey ist Erkenntnis untrennbar verknüpft mit den Zwecken und Konzepten, die der Mensch als denkendes und wertendes Wesen in eine Situationserfahrung mit einbringt.“

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An Aesthetics of Noise?

On the Definition and Experience of Noise in a Musical Context

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ABSTRACT. In this article I consider the possibility of approaching the experience of noise in a musical context as an aesthetic one. I do this in the light of many 20th century musical developments, many of which have been described as increase in noise. Adopting a perspective from the discipline of sound studies, I examine some different approaches to noise and delineate three main claims concerning noise in music: (1) ontologically every sound is noise, (2) noise is distortion of musical form and, as my claim, (3) noise offers aesthetic pleasure mixed with unpleasant experience. To back up my proposal, I offer an example of (anti-)musical praxis of Noise music, proponents of which I see as striving to create works that would remain noise in reception, despite noise's tendency to succumb to familiarity and hence to lose its force as noise.

1. Introduction

What is noise? Such a basic, even naïve question shall be the point of departure of my paper. I am not the only one posing such a query, as the topic of noise in musical context has emerged with increasing force during the last ten years.² The milieu for this debate has primarily been that of so-called sound studies, itself a fairly recent field of research concerning sound in its various manifestations in different areas of practice and theory. To summarize briefly, sound studies is an interdisciplinary field of human and

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² In addition to various article-length texts, at least three major monographs of noise-research have been published during the last ten years, namely *Noise/Music – A History* by Paul Hegarty (2007), *Noise Matters – Towards an Ontology of Noise* by Greg Hainge (2013) and *Beyond Unwanted Sound – Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* by Marie Thompson (2017).

social sciences that addresses the role of sound in various conceptual configurations. Expanding the scope of musicology and acoustics to incorporate the traditions and methodologies of anthropology, history, sociology and media studies, to name but a few, the topic of sound studies are different sonic worlds and how they affect us, or are affected or even born into existence due to human action (Sterne, 2012, p. 3).

This movement of expansion in thinking sound beyond traditional musicological concepts has brought up new theoretical concerns, such as the role of noise in music. What is common to considerations of noise is that they devote significant amount of work to problematizing the concept of noise itself. There is a good reason for that: noise is a notoriously slippery term. As Marie Thompson describes it, noise “often functions as a floating signifier: it can be used to talk about almost anything” (Thompson, 2017, p. 2).

In the first place, the concept of noise appears, outside the discourse on music, in several different fields of enquiry, ranging from physics and acoustics via information theory to sociology and politics. Arguably the most researched perspective is noise as an environmental or occupational factor that may be harmful to the well-being of those who are exposed to it. A title of World Health Organization publication from 1966 puts the problematic nature of noise in a concise way: *Noise: An Occupational Hazard and Public Nuisance*. It is understood that modern world and its processes of industrialization and urbanization have created an increasingly noisy environment, the effects of which are studied in health sciences and psychology (see Jones & Chapman, 1984).

Another major field of research on noise is information theory. In that context approaches vary to a great extent, but in most cases noise is considered random information whereas signal is planned information. From the point of view of transmission of information, noise appears as a necessary evil: all signals contain an amount of noise and, correspondingly, engineering research is oriented towards minimizing transmitted random information in order to maximize intended information flow. In the particular case of audio information, noise can appear as background noise (unwanted sounds captured while recording a distinct sound; the “hum” or

“hiss” produced by the recording or playback equipment), distortion or other such phenomena that are considered as interference in relation to the intended signal (see Pierce, 1981).

Yet, neither of the previous approaches concerns itself very much with the *subjective* experience of noise as they are devoted to researching the (mostly harmful) effects of noise and how they might be minimized. And if we are to examine the possibility of noise as an aesthetic concept, subjectivity will have to come into play at some stage. In order to consider noise as a mode of aesthetic experience – or, from another perspective, a form or content revealed in a work of art – one would need to define what exactly that experience (or form or content) might consist of.

And therein lies the very problem. What do we make of the concept of noise in the first place? We can agree that, when talking about noise as subjective reception, we are addressing a certain kind of experience. A first-hand, common-sense idea of noise would be something akin to undesirable interruption in the subjectively felt flow of experience. Accordingly, many dictionary definitions of the word noise describe its one meaning as “intrinsically objectionable” (*Britannica*) or “unpleasant” and “disturbing” (*Oxford*) sound.

This unpleasantness, combined with the acoustical understanding of noise as irregular vibration producing a complex of sound waves of different frequencies, one gets to the core of the notion of noise as unmusical sound – musical sounds being traditionally understood as being those of regular vibration.³ From this equation we tend to make a division between music and noise and to associate the experience of music with pleasantness and that of noise with unpleasantness.

Yet, like sights, tastes and smells, responses to sounds vary according to the receiver. To take a step back from a musical context for a second, when

³ “Properly” musical tones and instruments were often strictly defined in the history of Western musical theory. For instance, in his influential *Musikalisches Lexikon* from 1802, Heinrich Christoph Koch defines a musical instrument by its ability to produce tones instead of noises (cited in van Eck, 2017, p.27). Likewise, 19th century physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, studying the physics of sound, based his acoustical research on the notion of harmony produced by consonance in tones and harmonic overtones in string instruments.

looking at noise from the subjective perspective it is easy to see that, appearing in experience, noise is extremely relative phenomenon. Even the sweetest, most pitch-perfect sounds feel like noise when emanating from the neighbour's apartment at 4 AM. Likewise, the steamy hiss and metallic screech of an old railway engine can be the favourite sound for a train enthusiast.

The problem with the definition of noise as disturbance, as something that we would be happier to be without, is that it does not get us very far in thinking about noise as a quality, let alone aesthetic quality. Can there be an aesthetics of noise? That would require a formulation of some kind of quality that we could affirm as being characteristic of noise in experience – noise as object of avoidance provides only a negative definition and concerns only the listeners' reaction to specific audio-events.

2. Noise as Sound

In order to tentatively approach the idea of noise-aesthetics, I shall now consider some appearances of noise in a musical or artistic setting. What to make of music as a site of noise? At least the acoustic environment seems to be a natural habitat of noise. Noise may be thought to be most acutely resisted factor namely in auditory reception, in comparison to, say, visual noise. Hearing the screech of chalk on a blackboard does seem to offend more than seeing a distorted image on badly tuned television. Accordingly, in everyday parlance the word noise is often associated to sound phenomena. Thus, noise seems to become readily apparent in the contexts of sound and music.⁴

⁴ The notion of the inherent intimacy of sound – against the supposed distance created and maintained by vision – speaks on behalf of noise as being most immediate namely in the audio realm. Here it must be noted that the assumption of sound's immersive quality has come under criticism in the field of sound studies (see e.g. Sterne, 2003, p. 15; Kim-Cohen, 2016, pp. 6–7) as following a false and outmoded dichotomy between orality and literacy that in effect obscures novel advances in thinking about sonic cultures. Yet, I appeal to everyday experience in claiming that the boundaries of audio-noise are more porous than those of visual noise: we cannot shield ourselves from sound in the same manner as from excessive visual content (sound penetrates physical barriers and we cannot avert our hearing like we can turn away our gaze).

Despite traditional musicological emphasis on music as formal arrangement of clear and distinct tones, 20th century musical developments have sometimes been characterized as increase in noise within the prevailing musical idiom (Ross, 2007, p. xvi). Since Edgard Varèse's utilization of non-traditional orchestral instruments such as sirens in *Amériques* (1921) and the *intonarumori* noise maker devices of the Futurist composer Luigi Russolo from 1910's onwards, modern art music's expanded tonalities – achieved by compositional and instrumental means – have been received not only as dissonant, but also as “noisy” in a more general way. In music produced by the standard Romantic orchestra, one rather straightforward factor to the experience of noisiness might be the increasing use of percussion instruments in art music (see Riddell, 1996, p. 161).

Perception of noisiness applies also to altogether new musical effects in experimental and popular music, such as the possibility of distortion and feedback introduced by electrically amplified sound, the use of synthesized or computer-generated sounds, as well as recordings or samples of any kind of acoustic phenomena used as compositional material.

Reactions to new musical forms or timbres as noise are not restricted to the use of instruments or technology outside the romantic orchestras' instrumental variety. Now well-established features of classical orchestral works such as Richard Wagner's famous “Tristan chord” in *Tristan und Isolde* (1859) or Igor Stravinsky's use of building crescendos and dissonance in *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913) have elicited accusations of them being noise rather than music at the time of their premieres.

Thus, on the basis of this it would seem that noise – as a concept taken in a musical context – would align itself as opposite to music “proper” and be evaluated as undesirable element against the pleasurable presence of music.

A major current in studies of noise and music adopts this presumption. For instance, Paul Hegarty, author of the first monograph devoted solely to noise in music, claims that “[w]hat exactly noise is, or what it should do, alters through history, and this means that any account of noise is a history of disruptions and disturbances. This means that the history of noise is like a history of the avant-garde ...” Yet, as history of the avant-garde is not

linear, but concerns the very ruptures that work against the idea of smooth progression, avant-garde – and, by extension, noise – is “constantly failing ... as it becomes familiar or acceptable practice.” The result of this kind of understanding of noise is that “noise is a negativity (it can never be positively, definitively and timelessly located)” (Hegarty, 2007, p. ix).

On the basis of such a claim, it is clear to see that the noise–music dichotomy is, at least to some degree, a historical and cultural state of affairs, susceptible to change over time. However, it remains to be questioned whether there is still room for noise as negativity or “anti-music” as it could be argued fairly convincingly that after all the artistic and technological developments of the 20th century, it has become difficult to evaluate any sound as intrinsically “non-musical” and as a result of this relegated to the category of noise. This is due not only to changing cultural habits, that is, the shifting paradigm of what music can be and what we expect and tolerate as listeners, but crucially also due to changes in the production of music itself – and this leads us to consider an ontological claim on noise where noise is affirmed as sound in itself without any intrinsic value judgments.

I nominate that approach “noise-ontology” with its claim being “all sound is noise”.

3. Noise-Ontology

In the contemporary situation where most of the musical content we encounter is electro-acoustic – i.e. produced via studio techniques utilizing both acoustic and electronically generated sounds, composed and compiled via audio collage of several different sources and takes, and disseminated via recordings over loudspeakers – we encounter an ontological situation where everything we hear can be reduced to alternating audio frequencies without intrinsic evaluation or categorization. This sonic regime could be named a “democracy” of sound. Sonic environmentalist R. Murray Schafer nominated the “dissociation” between “the sound from the makers of sound” as “schizophonia” (Schafer, 1969, p. 43), predicting a changing, more stressful relationship between our sensing bodies and our environment.

Assuming more positive perspective, pioneering composer of *musique concrète* Pierre Schaeffer called this type of listening to sound-as-it-is “acousmatic” (from the Greek *akousmata*, “the things heard”) as encountering musical sound without traditional trappings of performative gestuality detaches the ideal listener from cultural conditioning and enables a more receptive and analytical mode of listening (Schaeffer, 2004, pp. 76–77).

In media theorist Friedrich Kittler’s description of the contemporary acousmatic situation, brought about by sound recording media, “our ears ... have been trained immediately to filter voices, words and sounds out of noise” whereas electronic sound recording, editing and reproduction machines register “acoustic events as such” (Kittler, 1999, p. 23). Kittler’s wording *as such* could here be read to mean *acousmatically*.

Separated from the master-text of the musical score, sounds arranged on the surface of a recording medium construct a flat ontological plane of sound where every event is to be evaluated on equal grounds, without prioritizing typical affordances of sonic information. In such horizontal sound-ontology there can be no intrinsically “wrong” notes or sounds. The understanding of sounds as frequencies or sound as noise, ontologically speaking, is emphasized especially by the experimentalist streak in music, interested in the properties of sound itself, exploring and expanding the range of sensations that can be acquired via “sonic materialism”.

Edgard Varèse’s notion of music as “organized sound/noise” (*son organisé*), or John Cage’s discovery of a perpetual background noise produced by the perceiving body itself, thus making ideal silence impossible, open a way to approach every acoustic event as being contingent in value. What could be evaluated is the success of organization of a certain musical work; yet such evaluations must take place “as such” in each case, without relying on pre-given values that would be universally applicable to all music.

Yet, if we adopt the ontological view that every sound is noise, does the term retain any qualitative power of distinction? Noise-ontological stance affirms the heterogeneity of the sound-world and acts to maintain an open horizon for future sound-events. Yet, what we lose here is noise’s special

character: to be of distinctive quality. If we are to consider the experience of noise as an aesthetic one, the ontological view erases the critical difference of noise.

Hence, another approach should be considered – one where noise is linked to interference, distortion and degradation of form, to the increase of the factor that one, after Georges Bataille, could call the *informe* or formlessness in musical works.

4. Noise-Informatics

This view links the use of noise with the understanding of the concept as it is applied in various strands of information theory – noise as distortion and interference in the transmission signal of information. Further, applied to the social context, this perspective encompasses also the confrontational and transgressive strategies applied by various avant-garde movements in the arts. Even though the definition of noise may be subject to contingencies of taste and norm in different historical situations, what is not contextual is the process of degradation or deformation: noise distorts the assumed “good form” and constitutes an attack on the prevailing values of society, resulting in the formless (*informe*). This confrontational approach can be seen in, for instance, the attitudes of the Futurist movement.

Luigi Russolo, composer and inventor of Futurist music and noise-making instruments, sets noise namely *against* musical values in his manifesto *The Art of Noises*:

From the beginning, musical art sought out and obtained purity and sweetness of sound. Afterwards, it brought together different sounds, still preoccupying itself with caressing the ear with suave harmonies. As it grows ever more complicated today, musical art seeks out combinations more dissonant, stranger, and harsher for the ear. Thus, it comes ever closer to the *noise-sound*. [...] Musical sound is too limited in its variety of timbres. [...] *We must break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds.* (Russolo, 1986, pp. 24–25)

The quote makes explicit the notion that it is the state of the then-current musical climate in relation to modernized world that *The Art of Noises* reacts to. True enough, Russolo formulates categories and classifications of various noises with a connoisseur's relish, which would suggest also an experimentalist, noise-ontological motivation for the use of noise: to utilize the "infinite variety" of hitherto unmusical sounds. Nevertheless, Russolo does not restrict his characterization of noise to loud or abrasive sounds only, but seems to include any type of "found sounds" that originate from somewhere else than established musical instrumentation. Inherent noisiness of the novel sounds is not necessary, as the act of transgression against established musical values is of primary importance for Russolo.

Here the forms under attack, and thus also the results of deforming them, are to a large degree defined by the status quo. This view can also include the idea, most recently brought forth by philosopher François J. Bonnett, that there is no access to the ontological "level" of sound as our hearing is always-already conditioned by context: "Even though the sonorous is fundamentally not a language, the listening that targets it seeks, and has always sought, to identify within it signifying information that is in part conventional and thus arbitrary" (Bonnett, 2016, p. 112). Thus what the offence of noise concerns is not "pure" sound in its supposedly ontologically raw state, but rather the violation of structures and forms that are historically contingent.

Both positions described previously, i.e. (1) noise-ontology and (2) noise-informatics, seem relevant and explain many of the motivations behind composers and musicians, contemporary and historical, whose work has been received as "merely" noise. However, what I find lacking in the two approaches is that they make possible the reduction of the experience of noise either into reactions emerging from (1) unfamiliarity with new sounds and compositional methods or (2) offence taken from transgression of current norms. While very useful, both noise-ontology and noise-informatics contain a teleology: ideally, what is now perceived as noise will become music once the audience is enlightened enough to receive it as music, and this will take place via certain historical-dialectical progress. In this teleology the actual experience of noise-as-noise is easily set aside.

Therefore, I suggest, we should try to formulate a third kind of approach to noise: “noise-aesthetics” where “noise can remain noise and bring both displeasure and pleasure.”

5. Noise-Aesthetics

This perspective considers noise as a type of aesthetic experience, as a certain *quality* in perception. Granted, the experience of the “pure” ontological materiality of sound (1) and the transgressive distortion of currently prevailing “good form” (2) can be included in the experience of noise; yet, not every sound emphasizing its materiality or transgression of convention is noise. What I suggest is that for noise to be noise, it must contain a remainder of displeasure that cannot be soothed by historical process of becoming-music.

Both ontological and transgressive perspectives on noise include, at least in implicit manner, the notion of fragility and fleetingness of noise: noise is an event that quickly fades into familiarity once its disruptive force is assimilated. A tension between disappearance and persistence then appears. In my view, what proves the existence of this tension is artistic praxis devoted to the study of the fleeting fragility of noise: as an example, I take up the genre of Noise music.

Speaking of Noise as a genre of (anti-?) music is problematic in itself. For is it not the case that noise appears in various contexts – as an event rather than structure? Marie Thompson is understandably critical of whether we should approach noise as a genre (i.e. Noise music), as the idea of noise turns up in various different musical contexts and, for her, might not form a musical genre as such (Thompson, 2017, p. 130). I would, however, claim that one can indeed talk of Noise music as genre – cultural practice, a “style” of doing – in the light of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory. There, no category is natural but is rather a network of heterogeneous actants producing said category into existence. Here, heterogeneity is the key concept: there is no single essence to define certain social situation, but entities ranging from abstract information to concrete objects take part in constructing a real network that has certain consistency over time and can

thus be given an identity.

Noise music, then, would be an amalgamation of different theoretical and practical lineages that collide and gather consistency, especially in a specific situation in late 1970's. This takes place when post-war experimental music, which had in earlier decades flourished mainly within the sphere of electronic music studios of universities or national broadcast agencies, becomes suddenly an available resource for sound and performance artists, electronics enthusiasts, countercultural extremists etc. The catalyst of this event is the punk rock movement, which brought about ideas of a democratization of music's production and distribution processes – the famous do-it-yourself and anyone-can-do-it attitude of self-produced recordings and magazines of the punk scene. This is surely a gross simplification of a complex event, but the result was a quick blooming of an international scene devoted to focusing on and cultivating the experience of noise.⁵

In terms of noise's fleeting quality, the reason of Noise music is to create works that would be able to postpone the inevitable fading of the noise-event, i.e. to enable noise to remain noise. The aesthetic value of noise would then, for me, involve the pleasure of encountering something that possesses the shock of the new – in itself a challenging experience of (1) disruptive materiality and/or (2) compositional deformity or cultural transgression. In addition to this experience of novelty or transgression, the aim would be to create noise with such force that the work is able to extend this displeasure over time, yet be interesting enough to draw the listener into it.

As a mode of experience that involves conflicting factors of pleasure

⁵ Further elaboration of Noise music's genealogy is unfortunately outside the scope of this paper. However, alongside experimental music, the cultural transgressions of avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dada and Fluxus can be mentioned here as predecessors. Similarly, the influence of 1960's Viennese Actionism and 1970's American performance and body art can be discerned in the work of late-1970's/early-1980's foundational noise artists or groups, such as Throbbing Gristle or The New Blockaders in the UK, Maurizio Bianchi and Giancarlo Toniutti in Italy, Merzbow and Incapacitants in Japan and The Haters in US, to mention only a few of the more established names. I refer the reader to Hegarty's *Noise/Music – A History* (2007) for a more extensive treatment of this subject.

and pain, noise bears similarities to the aesthetic category of the sublime. The experience of the sublime has been described as being a state where the experiencing subjects' boundaries are being transgressed and a vertigo-like feeling of loss of control ensues. In the case of the Kantian interpretation, it must be noted that the sublime does not reside in the object of attention itself but rather in the experience of it – the fearful recognition of a vast power combined with becoming conscious of the superiority of our reason over nature. This guarantees the aesthetic pleasure of the experience.

Noise, however, would require a post-Kantian willingness to succumb to the boundary-erasing complexity of information presented. Noise music's relentless focus on noise-sounds, instead of musical structures, offers this experience of complexity – and loss of control in comprehending or forming mental representations of the content. Lacking exact descriptions, one has to do with tentative, metaphorical delineations of the audio content using words such as “abrasive”, “crushing”, “caustic” etc.

As an example of such descriptions we can take up one supplied by Drew Daniel, who in his monograph study of Throbbing Gristle's now-classic album *20 Jazz Funk Greats* (1979) describes his first encounter with such material, having purchased the group's earlier album *The Second Annual Report* (1977) as an adolescent punk rock fan:

Then I put on Throbbing Gristle and my head split open. Locked on at high volume in my little prison of sound, I was utterly confounded by what I heard. This was not a punk rock record; this was not a rock record; this wasn't even music [...] by the end of side one, the piercing synthetic shrieks, ferociously overdriven fuzz bass and visceral low-end throb [...] had given me a truly punishing headache. I never made it to side two that day. I had finally found art strong enough to cause me physical pain, and I loved it. (Daniel, 2008, p. 10.)

Piercing, ferocious, visceral... Descriptions that focus on the *experience* of noise. Such experience, informed by the post-Kantian turn in the concept of the sublime, would then be akin to philosopher Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of Kant's theory of the sublime. For Deleuze, subjectivity harbours within itself a fundamental discrepancy with no possibility of a

harmonious function of the different faculties and this becomes evident in the sublime experience. As Deleuze describes it in his lecture course on Kant, the sublime initiates a series of “catastrophes” occurring upon the synthesis of perception; the series proceeding from overwhelming sensation via fragmentation of perception to inability to recognize any forms (Vanhanen, 2010, pp. 53–54).

With corresponding disorientation occurring in the reception of noise, the possibility of finding aesthetic pleasure in noise necessitates that one succumbs to it and affirms that categories of listening, sound and music can become scrambled and, in fact, constantly do so beneath the level of conscious perception. Being overwhelmed by audial texture, volume or complexity of form is – to paraphrase Deleuze speaking of the sublime – a process of “exploding” the expectancy of what music should “properly” be, and this explosion of categories, combined with the overwhelming amount of information that a complex sound provides, may allow the aesthetic pleasure of displeasurable noise.

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The Temporality of Aesthetic Entrainment: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Gadamer's Concept of Tarrying

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ABSTRACT. The influence of aesthetic experiences over the consciousness of time is a topic which has not received much philosophical attention, Hans-Georg Gadamer being one exception. However, in the last years, there has been several neuroscientific publications arguing for the capacity of aesthetic episodes to activate particular brain networks related to temporality. In order to make progress on the topic, in this paper I will follow an integrative approach combining philosophy and neurosciences. I will defend that Gadamer's concept of tarrying can be extremely useful when trying to understand the dynamic nature of aesthetic experiences and, particularly, their effects on temporality. With this end in view, I will explain the main features of the tarrying, the phenomenon of the entrainment and its importance in social, aesthetic and everyday interactions, as well as the differences between two of the main brain systems: the default mode network and the central executive network. These notions will be integrated in the suggestion that tarrying can be considered as a particular type of entrainment triggered by aesthetic experiences that activates our default mode network which, in turn leads to a distinct temporality.

1. Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to explore some aspects of how aesthetic experience affects time manifestation in human existence, that is, our temporality. It will be done through an interdisciplinary point of view that will merge, into a loose phenomenological framework, Hans-George Gadamer's concepts of tarrying and the while, and recent results on neuroscientific research. With this integrative approach my intention is the same one expressed by Dan Zahavi and Shaun Gallagher when speaking of

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naturalized phenomenology: “that the influence [should] go both ways, [...] letting phenomenology profit from –and be challenged by– empirical findings” (Gallagher 2013, p. 34). In this effort to find common ground between science and philosophy I also follow the cue of Giovanna Colombetti and Ingar Brinck. These interdisciplinary philosophers have recently explored, through their books and papers, a way to develop the path opened by Francisco Varela: dynamic systems theory (DST) as a useful conceptual tool to mediate between phenomenology and neurosciences. DST is a branch of mathematics used to study how systems maintain unity and generate patterns through reciprocal influence; that is, it seeks a flexible, time-dependent, and integrated view on processes. However, I will not offer a full mathematical model; rather, as Colombetti says, “it is possible to regard various aspects of dynamical systems (states, attractors, trajectories, etc.) as having some kind of representational status, and this may be useful” (Colombetti 2014, p. 57). This is so because DST’s focus on interactions between different systems, allows to fully acknowledge circular causation, casts light on potentially unified consequence of collective causes, and characterises phenomena in its progressive unfolding. These features are extremely useful when discussing cognitive processes from an interdisciplinary and integrated point of view that intends to leave behind aporias and dualisms. Ingar Brinck has applied these tenets to her studies on aesthetic experience, defending that: “aesthetic experience emerges when the viewer engages with the artwork in physical and material space via the processes of bodily and emotional engagement. These processes permit the viewer to move with, be moved by, or move to be moved by the artwork, all of which promote perceiving, acting and feeling with the artwork” (Brinck 2017, p. 11).

But, how does this relate to my intention of discussing aesthetic experience conditioning of temporal consciousness? I do not believe that the only thing affected during aesthetic experiences is our temporality; however, what I do believe is that aesthetic experiences are able to trigger an experience of time with some particular features that need to be taken into consideration. In order to affirm this, I follow Gadamer’s radical idea that “art’s superiority over time, is a superiority that defies all restrictions”

(Gadamer 2007, p. 200). Nonetheless, it is important to consider that these words refer to the presentness of art, that is, its ability to build bridges that reach beyond the enclosure of space and time in which it was originated. My intention here is much more humble, for it will be focused on the relation between an artwork and a subject and how the potential aesthetic experience that is born out of this interaction has, in my opinion, the capacity of expanding the reach of our usual field of presence, generating an openness of dialogic nature. I hold this change in the temporality as major responsible of the transformative capacity often attributed to aesthetic experiences. But, in order to clarify my posture, it is necessary to share what I understand by aesthetic experience. Here I follow the ideas compiled by Ingar Brinck, according to whom aesthetic experiences triggered by artworks are characterized by a qualitatively distinct high arousal, increased attention, and personal engagement both cognitive and emotional (Brinck 2017, p. 2). In addition to this, I would further add that aesthetic experiences are able to affect temporality.

2. Gadamer's Tarrying as a Form of Temporal Entrainment

From a phenomenological point of view, temporality is a fundamental constituent of human consciousness and, consequently, it has been thoroughly discussed. Particularly since Edmund Husserl judged temporality to be an exceptionally important and complex form of intentionality, involved in virtually every aspect of consciousness. However, its potential particularities during aesthetic experience have been barely analysed. Indeed, there are some philosophers who have dwelt on this subject –namely Mikel Dufrenne, Jan Patočka, Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Peter de Bolla–, but there is a general lack of concepts as well as of in-depth study on the subject.

One term which could prove to be useful to fill this gap, thanks to the increased attention which is getting, is that of entrainment. Entrainment was coined in the realm of physics to name the phenomenon by which two adjacent pendulums tend to move progressively into the same swinging rhythm. In dynamic systems theory, it refers to the progressive

synchronization between two or more systems. Therefore, broadly speaking, it can be considered the mechanism by which a rhythm of a system influences and is influenced by other rhythms from other systems in a unilateral or reciprocal way. This feature is to be found in most of the systems including biological entities such as ourselves. There are countless examples of well-known cases of entrainment. For example, as two persons walk along, they tend to fall into the same pace; sometimes we surprise ourselves involuntarily mirroring the intonation, accent and body gestures of our interlocutors. These would be examples of social entrainment (Knoblich 2008). But entrainment has been also discussed in aesthetics, particularly in music aesthetics (Nozaradan et al. 2012), for musical rhythms are more easily measurable. Entrainment, thus, would be the underlying reason why we involuntarily surprise ourselves tapping our finger while listening to certain songs, but it also is the reason behind the capacity of certain musical patterns to encompass our heartbeats, blood circulation or breathing (Merker et al. 2009). This is not surprising, cronobiologists have long known it: we are a compendium of temporal patterns which are continuously affected by the surrounding world, and for that reason we are exposed to entrainment by a myriad of different attractors and repellers. Even colours, geometrical forms and proportions have been proven to affect our biological rhythms (Vartanian 2007). However, this extreme pervasiveness of physical entrainment is a reason to believe that it is not something specific of aesthetic experience, but a by-product of every interaction between two systems. Nonetheless, since an aesthetic experience can be understood as an interaction between two systems –object and agent- we could say that physical entrainment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for us to enter into a proper dialogue with an artwork. I have introduced this phenomenon because my hypothesis is that Gadamer's concept of tarrying could be understood as a particular and powerful type of entrainment.

Gadamer discussed many different aspects of time in some of his most famous texts, however the temporal dimension of the experience of art was specifically addressed in short late writings such as 'Text and Interpretation' or 'The Artwork in Word and Image: 'So True, So Full of Being' (Gadamer 2007). It is precisely in this last one when he elaborated, from a

phenomenological point of view, on the Heideggerian concepts of ‘tarrying’ [*Verweilen*] and the ‘while’ [*Weile*]. Both of them are inextricably correlated, but the former points to the temporal disposition by which one attunes himself to an artwork and the latter to the temporal span in which the diverse senses and meanings emerging from the artwork move us and change us. This ‘temporal structure of tarrying’ would be, thus, an important affordance of artworks. It is necessary to precise that tarrying should not be mistaken with a mere passive lingering over a work, on the contrary, it requires a willingness to pay attention:

To tarry is not to lose time. Being in the mode of tarrying is like an intensive back-and-forth conversation that is not cut off but lasts until it is ended. The whole of it, is a conversation in which for a time one is completely absorbed, and this means one is completely there in it (Gadamer 2007, p. 211).

Therefore, tarrying, is as an active process in which the spectator’s increased attention grants to the artwork the possibility to come to presence stretching time and creating the ‘while’ and, as a result of that, a more complex temporality emerges: “The while in tarrying” Gadamer says “has this very special temporal structure –a structure of being moved, which one nevertheless cannot describe merely as duration, because duration means only further movement in a single direction” (Gadamer 2001, p. 77). Gadamer also defends that tarrying has a dynamic nature, for “tarrying is a growing fascination that hangs on and even hangs through temporary disruptions because the harmony with the whole grows and demands our agreement” (Gadamer 2007, p. 211).

With this in mind, when speaking about tarrying we have to be aware that we are facing a somehow paradoxical ecstatic dynamic temporality –one in which the usual flow of time is disbanded-, that allows for a kind of reciprocity, a dialogue between artwork and the subject of progressive nature, an entrainment. Gadamer’s vocabulary emphasizes the reciprocal influence, for he uses expressions like ‘back and forth’, ‘conversation’, ‘harmony that grows’, etc. The point of connection that I see

between Gadamer's ideas, dynamic systems theory, and the phenomenon of entrainment comes, on the one hand, from this circular, almost reciprocal interpretation of an aesthetic experience, and, on the other hand, from his efforts on sewing together tarrying and the while. My reading of his texts is that we are supposed to pay attention to the artwork in an active way but at the same time we have to leave room for a passive response to what it tell us. In Gadamer's words "we learn from the work how to tarry with it" (Gadamer 2001, p. 77). This 'with', in my opinion, is extremely important. The structure of tarrying is a dynamic and progressive kind of aesthetic experience because the more we tarry, the more we –hopefully- participate of the artwork and, as important as that, the more we will understand ourselves through the artwork. Because, as Gadamer says: "To understand what the work of art says to us is therefore a self-encounter" (Gadamer 2007, p. 129). The aesthetic experience caused by tarrying requires, therefore, of an entanglement between the artwork and the individual who explores it, and also from the existence of a reciprocity between them. From my perspective, thus, it could be defended that Gadamer, despite not strictly using the word, acknowledges the potential emergence of a process of entrainment between artwork and subject as a means to come in contact with the radical presentness that the artwork carries within itself; this complex entrainment –with cognitive, emotional, and bodily components reciprocally affecting each other- would be characteristic of an aesthetic experience. It would be akin to the 'growing fascination' to which Gadamer referred. The entrainment, assumed as a multilayer engagement, could be understood as an important feature of the process of an aesthetic experience. Nonetheless, Gadamer says that tarrying is a fascination that keeps growing through temporary disruptions. This leads to the following question: beyond the possibility of the entrainment, which other temporal consequences does tarrying have?

In Daniel L. Tate's paper 'In the Fullness of Time: Gadamer on the Temporal Dimension of the Work of Art', he defends that "the work thereby enacted joins past and future in a unique present that arrests our ordinary experience of time. Paradoxically, then, time is brought to a standstill within time by the distinctive temporality of the artwork" (Tate 2012, p. 113).

However, it is important to note the fact that Gadamer does not defend tarrying as a time out of time, but rather as an opposition to the utilitarian physical time, which he defends to be ‘non-primordial’ (Gadamer 1970, p. 343). The dialogical time structure of the tarrying is able to take us from undergoing time as a succession of fleeting empty moments to experiencing time as an openness full of sense. This sharp distinction is expressed by Gadamer with the following terms: “I call ‘empty time’, the kind of time in which things [...] are measurable. ‘Filled time’, on the other hand, cannot be measured, because, it seems not to last long nor pass away. And yet all kinds of things happen there” (Gadamer 2007, p. 217). Tarrying would, therefore, afford an experience of time in which an artwork increasingly fulfils every moment of its duration for as long as it lasts. Whether it be until a random thought crosses our mind, because the song ends, or because our mobile phone buzzes.

3. Gadamer’s Tarrying and the Default Mode Network

To sum up, according to my interpretation of Gadamer’s words, we could think of two opposed poles of human time-consciousness –empty time and the filled one of the while in which we tarry–, and the shift from one to the other can be triggered by an artwork through a process that entails an entrainment of a multi-layered and progressive nature. According to what have been exposed, this could be considered an incipient model of dynamic aesthetic experience. But, in relation to this, what can neurosciences offer to the discussion? Recent research shows the existence of two brain’s major networks, one of them is referred to as the central executive network (CEN), while the other has been coined as the default mode network (DMN) (Menon 2011). They act as communicating vessels: when engaged in goal-directed externally driven tasks the CEN activity is higher, when thoughts are directed internally the DMN rises. However, what seems interesting is that, on the one hand “DMN function has been linked to the recollection of past episodes and the simulations of future episodes, theory of mind and tasks involving social content” (Simony et al. 2016, p. 2), while, on the other hand, “the CEN [...] has been implicated in cognitive functions

including reasoning, attention, inhibition and working memory” (Mohan et al. 2016: 51). Therefore, succinctly, the DMN leaves us more freedom to mind wander around the past and the future without constraints, while the CEN is what gets activated when in need of attending to something specific. In my opinion this resembles in a remarkable way Gadamer’s theory about the *energeia* of the distinct temporality triggered by the tarrying. On this subject, he expresses that “Aristotle described *energeia* with the word for ‘at the same time’ (*hama*) in order to point to the immanent temporality of its duration. In other words, this is not a one-after-another sequence but an at-the-same-timeness that belongs to the temporal structure of tarrying” (Gadamer 2007, p. 210-211).

However, I have explained that the DMN is thought to decrease its activity when we are focused in externally oriented tasks. And experiencing an artwork certainly requires from us to pay attention to an external object. But the research team formed by Edward Vessel, Nava Rubin and Gabrielle Starr have made a recent discovery: the DMN registered increased activity when undergoing intense aesthetic experiences (Vessel et al. 2012). A fair question would be: how they judged that someone was having an intense aesthetic experience? The subjects who participated in the study that led to these results were shown a vast and diverse array of artworks from different cultures and epochs (from Japanese Edo stamps, to Ruben’s paintings including Bacon’s portraits and recent abstract artworks), and they were asked to evaluate how strongly each artwork moved them using a scale from 1 to 4, being ‘1’ the least moving experiences and ‘4’ the most intense. The results were surprising. Only when engaged with the works which were rated with a four, the DMN activity was statistically significant greater. In the other cases, the activity of this brain network was as low as expected when facing external stimuli. That is, only the most aesthetically moving artworks for each subject led to differential and widespread activation of regions constitutive of the Default Mode Network.

In Edward Vessel’s words: “The DMN activity therefore suggests that certain artworks, [...] obtain access to the neural substrates concerned with the self –access which other external stimuli normally do not get. This mediates a sense of being ‘moved’, or ‘touched from within’” (Vessel 2013,

p. 1). However, it could be argued that is not the artwork what obtains access, but us who grant it. In other words, it could be defended that this study presupposes the capacity of certain artworks to trigger an experience, while neglecting influential factors such as our emotional state, moods, the effect of our attention, or our willingness to connect. Because for an artwork to be felt as extremely moving, most of the times, there seems necessary to be a previous predisposition by ourselves. This and other criticisms could be made, and should be properly acknowledged when developing a full theory of dynamical aesthetic entrainment. Nonetheless, at the time being, what I would like to emphasize is the fact that their research proved the capacity of artworks to change our brain activity in a very significant way through triggering the DMN during what they classified as intense aesthetic experiences. According to Gabrielle Starr: “The involvement of the default mode network indeed suggests that aesthetic emotions make us newly aware of being ourselves and being in the world. Aesthetic experience works to produce new value in what we see and what we feel” (Starr 2013, p. 66). This is, in my opinion, a reasoning close to Gadamer, as we can verify by comparing Starr’s statement with the following words from Gadamer: “The work of art that says something confront us with ourselves. That is, it expresses something in such a way that was is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed. [...] Everything familiar is eclipsed.” (Gadamer 2007, p. 129).

4. Conclusion

To conclude, in my opinion, if we relate tarrying episodes with the activation of the DMN, we could certainly defend that some aesthetic experiences present the differential feature of being able to elicit a particular experience of time, since “default modes of cognition are characterized by a shift from perceiving the external world to internal modes of cognition that simulate worlds that are separated from the one being directly experienced” (Buckner 2006, p. 54). Furthermore, the self-related nature of the DMN supports the idea that artworks which succeed at engrossing our attention and at creating an entrainment, or what Gadamer refers to as the ‘back-and-

forth conversation' of the tarrying, not only disclose themselves, but are able to affect us intimately and change us in profound and not predictable ways. However, one of the things that I find more appealing of Gadamer's temporal structure of the tarrying is the way he relates tarrying and while. For the while to happen, the tarrying is previously needed, and for as long that dialogue in-between the two systems keeps going, there is a growing and unfolding influence between them until 'the aesthetic reservoir' is depleted or suddenly the experience comes to an end. I am not interested in what comes before, the tarrying –which would mean our attention to a particular artwork- or an invitation to the while by the artistic creation which captures our attention. There can be no tarrying without the while. By following these ideas, I think that can be defended the notion of aesthetic experiences as dynamic episodes in which an entrainment between two systems –artwork and subject- takes place. An entrainment with the capacity to provoke changes in temporality with consequences in our relation with the environment and ourselves. Further study of this aesthetic entrainment and its components will bring us closer to understand how and to what extent aesthetic experiences affect us.

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A Portrait of the Artist as a Gifted Man: What Lies in the Mind of a Genius?

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I look at Kant's third *Critique* and the persona of an artist that is at the heart of his account of beautiful art. My analysis shows that the genius has four-fold capacity: (i) to summon aesthetic attributes so as to give substance to otherwise ineffable aesthetic ideas, that is, rational and moral ideas and concepts derived from experience, (ii) to arrange these attributes in a formal order so as to create beautiful art and inspire aesthetic pleasure, (iii) to touch other artists by awakening their genius, so as to establish schools of style, (iv) to initiate reflection in the audience, so as to contribute to their cognitive engagements with the world.

1. The Artist and Artistic Creation

“[O]nly production through freedom, i.e., through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason, should be called art” (§43, 5: 303), claims Kant, arguing that only human beings are capable of creating art.² One sees art in everything that is so “constituted that a representation of it in its cause must have preceded its reality” (§43, 5: 303). When we judge something to be art, we have to recognize that “the cause that produced it conceived of an end” (§43, 5: 303). For reasons of clarity, I will refer to this *cause* as an *artistic vision*. My aim here is to analyse where this vision comes from and how it instigates an artist to create art. I am interested at exploring which elements of artistic creations are under artist's control, and which originate spontaneously and unconsciously within him as a result of him being endowed with genius. On Kant's view, there are two main generating

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² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. All the quotations are from 2000 Cambridge edition edited by Paul Guyer. Following Kant, I will use the noun artist in a masculine form. Unless states otherwise, I take artist to be an individual who has a talent, i.e. is embodied with a genius.

sources of artistic creation, imagination and taste, and I am interested at exploring the role of each in artistic creation.

A central claim in Kant's account is that artistic creation does not depend on artist's knowledge of how to produce something. Artistic creation is separated from activities that require knowledge of how to produce them, activities that Kant unites under the name of mechanical arts. These include the sciences, handicrafts and those arts which do not aim at pleasure.³ Art is a practical, not theoretical faculty, and as a technique it is divorced from theories, i.e. from a set of rules which specify how to create a certain product. There is only "a determinate intention to produce something" (§45, 5:306), rather than knowledge on how to do it. However, this intention cannot be the intention to produce a *determinate* object, for if it were, the resulting product would please through concept, and on Kant's view, judgments of beauty do not depend on a concept. A product of such creation would not classify as beautiful art. For something to be beautiful art, it has to be regarded as nature, regardless of audience's awareness that it is not nature but a work of art. For a product of art to appear as nature, it has to be in agreement with rules of creation, but it mustn't be obvious that these rules dominated artistic creation or "fettered [artist's] mental powers" (§45, 5:307). How then is an artist to proceed? Given that a conscious following of the rules would only make one create mechanical art, artistic creation must be such that an artist is unaware of how his art comes about, i.e. such that the process originates within the artist without him consciously initiating it. To solve this apparent paradox, Kant internalizes the rules of creation by locating them within the artist's inborn faculties, i.e. his genius.

Kant's account of a genius is multi-layered and complex, centered around two crucial points. Corresponding to the *ingenium* sense of the word genius, it represents the inborn predisposition of the mind, an integral aspect

³ Kant's account of beautiful art is primarily developed against the comparison between an artist and a scientist. His main idea, as I will discuss below, is that art is only possible if one has a natural talent for it, (genius), and if one does not proceed in one's creations by consciously following any set of rules, as such activities are only applicable in mechanical arts. Science, on the other hand, is a matter of learning from and following upon one's predecessors who can teach and instruct others on how to accumulate and expand knowledge.

of his nature, a gift “apportioned to each immediately from the hand of nature” (§47, 5:309). Consequently, the talent for artistic creation cannot be self-developed, learnt or adopted in some way, perhaps by training or practice. One is an artist due to one’s nature, not one’s choice or desire. In another sense of the word, *genius*, genius implies that the person endowed with it cannot pass it on, perhaps by verbally instructing others on which rules to follow, because he is himself ignorant regarding the origin of his art. Kant argues: “the author of a product that he owes to his genius does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him, and also does not have it in his power to think up such things at will or according to plan, and to communicate to others precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products” (§46, 5:308).

As a generative source of artistic creation, genius is not found in any other domain of human productivity. “Beautiful art is art of a genius” (§46) claims Kant, stating that it is from genius’ inspiration that original ideas stem (§46), ideas which are expressed in a work of art. In addition to giving the rules for art, genius also “provides rich material” (§47, 5:310). ‘Rich material’, I suggest, refers to the psychological state of an artist which amounts to him having an artistic vision, and to the subject matter of the work itself. Below we will see how ‘rich material’ is connected to imagination’s production of aesthetic ideas, which are crucial element in artistic creation.

Given that the rules necessary for artistic creation originate from one’s individual nature, a product of a genius is original. However, since there can be original nonsense (§46), originality doesn’t suffice for a work to be artistically relevant, i.e. relevant for the inclusion into the class of fine arts. Rather, the work has to be original in a way that renders it *exemplary*. Such works serve a double function. First, they are used as models, i.e. “as a standard or a rule for judging” (§46, 5:308) other works of art. This is because as products of genius, they embody the rules for creation which, while cannot be “couched in a formula”, can nevertheless be “abstracted from the deed” and thus serve as a model to others, “not for copying but for

imitation” (§47, 5:309).⁴ Imitating such works should enable an artist to develop his own talent, since a work of a genius embodies all the properties of a work of *fine* art, and can therefore establish criteria for judging other products which strive to that same status. Precise implications of this claim will become explicit when we turn to the role of taste in artistic creation.

A second function of original and exemplary works of art consists in *arousing* genius in another artist. Having the gift of nature doesn’t suffice for one’s artistic production to begin: the genius has to be aroused to become efficient. For this to happen, a genius needs “nothing more than an example in order to let the talent of which he is aware operate in a similar way” (§47, 5: 309). Artistic production is thus a matter of having one’s artistic vision develop spontaneously in one’s mind, provided one is endowed with a talent which had been aroused via an original exemplary model – a work of art produced by (another) genius. I will refer to this pattern of interaction between two artists, a pattern via which a work of art of one artist triggers the talent and consequently, artistic production in another artist, as *interactive patterns of exemplarity*. One artist has the capacity to influence artistic creation of another one not by directly communicating to him the rules or instructions on how to create art, but by non-verbally stimulating his talent via his own original, exemplary work. An artwork thus serves as a means of communication between two artists. Kant explains this pattern of interaction via the chain of influence mediated by ideas, stating that “ideas of the artist arouse similar ideas in his apprentice if nature has equipped him with a similar proportion of mental powers” (§47 5:309). As we will see below, the reason for such mentalistic account is Kant’s view that certain kinds of ideas originating within the genius (namely, aesthetic ideas) are expressed in (i.e. give content to) a work of art.

Up to this point in Kant’s account, artistic creation was a matter of an artist creating a work of art (i.e. communicating his artistic vision) by following his natural inclination to do so, with respect to which he is mostly in the dark. Aware only of his talent, he doesn’t know where his artistic vision comes from or how to incite it; yet this vision guides his “rational

⁴ The idea that a genius’ work embodies rules for creation and judgment motivates normative approaches to Kant’s theory. See Allison 2001, Ostarić 2012.

considerations” (§43, 5:303) with respect to the final product. William Wordsworth’s famous claim that poetry comes as naturally to the poet as leaves do to the trees illustrates such artistic creation: those endowed with the gift of nature, talent, spontaneously, out of their nature, create beautiful poetry, without knowing how they do it and lacking the capacity to instruct others on how to do it. Once the talent has been awakened, a genius’ mind becomes like a boiling spring, overwhelmed with ideas that need to be expressed.

In §47, 5:310, Kant introduces another condition necessary for the creation of fine art: academic training. Although he insists on separating beautiful art from mechanical, he nevertheless claims that “there is no beautiful art in which something mechanical, which can be grasped and followed according to rules, and thus something academically correct, does not constitute the essential condition of the art”. This has to be the case, for otherwise we couldn’t recognize an artwork as a product of deliberate artistic creation, rather than as a product of pure chance. In addition, claims Kant, “originality of the talent is only one essential element of the character of genius” (§47, 5:310), evident in the material that the genius provides. Another essential aspect is that this talent has been academically trained. This is needed in order to give “elaboration and form” to the material provided by the genius’ originality, so that “it can stand up to the power of judgment” (§47, 5:310), that is, taste. Taste, “a faculty for judging” (§48, 5:313) is required to give form to a work of art and is subject to practices and corrections “by means of various examples of art or nature” (§48, 5:312) which an artist uses as a criterion for judging his own work. This is why works which are original and exemplary serve as models for judging. The mechanical aspect of artistic creation is exhausted by paying attention to, and abstracting the rules from, the original and exemplary works of art, which help one, through practice, develop one’s own taste so as to become capable of creating original and exemplary works. Kant ultimately describes the process of artistic creation in the following way:

To give this form to the product of beautiful art, however, requires merely taste, to which the artist, after he has practiced and corrected it

by means of examples of art or nature, holds up his work, and after many, often laborious attempts to satisfy it, finds the form that contents him; hence this is not as it were a matter of inspiration or a free swing of mental powers, but a slow and painstaking improvement, in order to let it become adequate to the thought and yet not detrimental to the freedom in the play of the mental powers. (§48 5:312).

Artist's attempts to improve his work imply that, even if he doesn't know where the rules for creation come from and is in no position to consciously apply them, he is guided by them, having abstracted them from the exemplars he observed. Thus he gains control over his creation by developing taste, a capacity to judge when a certain form is the best form to impose upon the material that genius provides him with.⁵ This control extends to him making sure that a work is adequate to the thought (i.e. that the audience can conceptualize it and properly evaluate), and suitable for the freedom of the mental powers which are necessary for the feeling of pleasure crucial for an experience to count as aesthetic.

If all goes well in the process of artistic creation, the final product is a beautiful work of art. However, failures can occur at every step in the process. If a work is lacking in formal arrangement, it is inspired, but not beautiful. A work can also be such that "one finds nothing in [it] to criticize as far as taste is concerned" (§49, 5:313) and yet not be considered beautiful. This happens when it lacks *spirit*. In this sense, spirit is a property of a work, whose presence in the work elevates it to the status of beautiful art.

However, Kant employs the notion of spirit in another sense, "as the animating principle in the mind" defined as "the faculty for the presentation of aesthetic ideas" (§49, 5:313). The relevance of aesthetic ideas in artistic

⁵ Given how, in §17, Kant describes taste as "a faculty of one's own" and combines it with one's ideal of beauty, we can argue that, by accumulating experiences with works of art, an artist develops his own ideal of beauty, his own sense of appropriateness with respect to formal features, and uses it in his own work. Since every artist's taste is based on his own feeling, each work of art will for that reason also be individual.

creation is crucial, but Kant is sadly inconclusive over how exactly to understand them. In one sense, aesthetic idea is “the counterpart (pendant) of an idea of reason” that is, it seeks to “approximate a presentation of concepts of reason”, i.e. intellectual ideas” (§49, 5:314). In Kant’s overall epistemology, rational ideas include god, soul and the world-whole. Since rational ideas include moral concepts, some Kantians claim that aesthetic ideas are counterparts to moral ideas. In a third sense, aesthetic ideas are connected to empirical concepts, as evident in Kant’s claim that

The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g. death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature... (§49, 5:314).

While interpreters are still negotiating which of the three ways of conceiving of aesthetic ideas is the one Kant had in mind, I will proceed under the assumptions that aesthetic ideas are inclusive of all three of these senses (as counterparts of rational and moral ideas and empirically derived concepts).⁶

Another relevant aspect of aesthetic ideas is their connection with imagination. Aesthetic idea is “that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e. concept, to be adequate to it, which consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible.” (§49 5:314). It is also a “representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it...” (§49 5:316). Kant here explicitly links artistic creation with the imagination, one of the cognitive faculties, which has the capacity to

⁶ The most compelling argument for this interpretation of Kant was given by Samantha Matherne, see her 2013.

“create another nature out of the material which the real one gives it” (§49 5:314). This is why Kant explains genius’ activity as providing rich material: genius is the talent of imagination which makes it possible for imagination to create another nature, i.e. develop artistic vision. Consequently, the unconscious aspect of artistic creation has to do with the operation of imagination, and the talent of a genius is in fact a talent of imagination to give content to rational, moral or experience-oriented concepts. Given that these concepts can never be fully intelligible, aesthetic ideas are ineffable: they surpass a concept as well as intuition, and are thus out of reach of empirical cognition. Consequently, they can neither be fully grasped, nor can they be linguistically articulated in a manner that would capture the full extent of what they encompass.

Given that aesthetic ideas are ineffable, and cannot be linguistically captured, Kant introduces the notion of aesthetic attributes to explain how they become conceptualized. As “supplementary representations of the imagination”, aesthetic attributes express “the implications connected with [the concept]” that aesthetic ideas stand for (§49 5:315). By ‘implications’, Kant has in mind those aspects of aesthetic ideas which are not logically contained within the concept, but are nevertheless part of it and can therefore be brought to bear on it. For example, the notion of deity is highly abstract, complex and includes various aspects, such as omnipotence, benevolence, forgiveness, wisdom, love etc. How then to present deity in a work of art? William Blake, for example, in his poem *The Lamb*, arrayed together various aesthetic attributes to point to god’s benevolence, generosity, love and creative power. He refers to deity as Little Lamb and goes on to enumerate a variety of things that deity does, such as giving life, food, clothes and delight. While in no way conclusive in portraying deity, Blake manages to capture that aspect of it connected to his love and innocence.

We can now reconstruct in more details artistic creation. Artistic vision, which develops in artist’s mind as a result of the talent of a genius, i.e. imagination’s productive activity, consists of aesthetic ideas, i.e. those concepts that he expresses in a work of art, concepts designating rational ideas, moral ideas and concepts derived from experience. This vision is

ineffable, because aesthetic ideas can never be linguistically realized in their fullness. Genius's talent lies in providing and arranging the material via which to express that ineffable vision in his mind; i.e. in coming up with the most suitable aesthetic attributes that give substance to the aesthetic idea and consequently, content to a work of art. Therefore, the content of a work of art consists in a union of aesthetic attributes that should, arranged in a certain formal order that an artist, having developed his taste through practice, judges to be the best formal order for expression, bring forward the aesthetic idea. In §49, 5:317 Kant refers to this talent as spirit and explains it as a "faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept (which for that reason is original and at the same time discloses a new rule)". It is in this way that in artistic creation, as an artist acts with a certain intention – to communicate his vision, i.e. a concept behind the aesthetic idea – he does so in accordance with his very nature, i.e. with the particular way in which his imagination provides the material, rather than in accordance with any pre-established rules that do not derive from his taste. It is due to the productive force of imagination that aesthetic attributes can be found and summoned for the purpose of bringing forward aesthetic ideas, and it is due to taste that they are arranged in specific formal order. A product of such process is purposive: its elements serve to express artist's vision, but the purposiveness, as Kant insists in (§46, 5:306) "doesn't seem intentional", i.e. it is not obvious that the artist was consciously following a set of rules with the intention to produce that particular object.

Ultimately, artistic production is a matter of imagination and understanding working together, and genius

consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other hitting upon the expression for these, through which the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others.(§49 5:317).

The ‘subjective disposition of the mind’, i.e. the aesthetic ideas, is what I have been calling artistic vision: the rich, new material created by imagination. In itself disordered, it consists of a multitude of representations; to illustrate it, above I used the image of a boiling spring, and I alluded to Wordsworth’s statement regarding the leaves coming spontaneously to the trees. The poet Robert Frost vividly illustrates such a state of mind stating: “A poem is never a put-up job so to speak. It begins as a lump in the throat ... It is never a thought to begin with. It is at its best when it is a tantalizing vagueness.”⁷

In order for the ‘tantalizing vagueness’ to be communicated to the audience, it has to be given a certain form. The actual production of a work of art is thus a matter of arranging the multitude of representations, i.e. a matter of arranging aesthetic attributes in the most suitable formal order for the presentation of aesthetic ideas. This is the job for understanding, which has to bring imagination under its control by exercising the power of judgment, i.e. taste. Taste assumes a dominant role in artistic creation, as Kant claims it is the “corrective” of genius which introduces “clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts” (§50, 5:319) that comprise artistic vision. That is the final step in artistic creation, which results in art that is not only inspired, but beautiful as well, i.e. one that has spirit. Original creation is thus a matter of finding the balance between “methodological instruction according to rules” and individual “mannerism”, where the only standard for an artist is “the feeling of unity in the presentation” (§49, 5:319).

Let us pause here to point to an ambiguity that permeates Kant’s account, an ambiguity concerning taste. Based on textual evidence in the third *Critique*, it is not clear whether taste, as corrective, rather than productive faculty, is built into the notion of genius as another aspect of the talent (in addition to genius’ capacity to provide material) or is a separate capacity.⁸ Consequently, it is ambiguous whether Kant sees formal choices

⁷ Frost offers various visual images to illustrate the creation of a poem. In *A figure that a Poem Makes* he refers to a poem as a wildness, which begins in delight and inclines to the impulse.

⁸ Allison (2001) argues that taste is part of a genius.

as arising unconsciously from the genius or as resulting from practice and academic training, independently of genius. Both options are problematic.

Consider first the option on which taste is a separate faculty, not an aspect of genius. This reading is supported by Kant's comparison of those who have genius but fail to see the need for academic training (i.e. development of taste) with those who "parade around on horse with the staggers" (§47, 5:310). In addition, in §48 and §50 quoted above, Kant treats taste as a faculty that is developed, rather than 'apportioned' to each, arguing explicitly in §50, 5:319 that, in case of conflict between genius and taste, i.e. imagination and understanding, a preference must be given to taste as "*conditio sine qua non*" which is "the primary thing to which one must look in the judging of art as beautiful".⁹

What is ambiguous under this interpretation? First of all, if art is beautiful only if it exhibits taste, why do those works which lack spirit (i.e. material provided by imagination) but are not prone to criticism with respect to their formal arrangement, not fall within the category of beautiful art? Second, on this interpretation, Kant's claim regarding taste in §48, 5:313 seems at odds with his initial distinction between beautiful art and other forms of human agency (science and mechanical arts) which proceed according to rules which can be taught and consciously and intentionally applied. Here is Kant, claiming that taste is "merely a faculty for judging, not a productive faculty; and what is in accordance with it is for that very reason not a work of beautiful art, although it can be a product belonging to a useful and mechanical art or even to science." It seems then that works which are in line with taste so that no criticism is appropriate with their formal features, are not beautiful. If taste is a capacity distinct from genius, Kant's distinction between beautiful and mechanical art breaks down.

The other option, on which taste is not a separate faculty, but another aspect of the talent that is genius, is less supported by textual evidence, but it is not to be neglected. It is grounded, first of all, in Kant's very definition of beautiful art as art of a genius. Beautiful art is neither one which is

⁹ Lara Ostarić argues that it is a puzzling aspect in Kant's theory that the conflict should arise. On her view, it is Kant's inconsistent use of the word genius that gives rise to it. See Ostarić 2012.

inspired (rich in material but lacking with respect to formal order) nor one which lacks spirit (formally appropriate but lacking with respect to the material), but only art in which formal order and spirit are united. For this to happen, taste and spirit have to work together, i.e. come united prior to the acts of creation, with the development of artistic vision.

In §48, 5:313 Kant claims that judging the beauty of nature requires only taste, but “the beauty of art (which must also be taken account of in the judging of such an object) requires genius.” While in one sense this implies that non-genius is not capable of evaluating (and potentially appreciating) a work of art, it also implies that one aspect of genius relates to the way his faculty of judgment operates: in such a way as to make it possible for genius to arrange aesthetic attributes in a way which gives rise to aesthetic ideas. In this sense too, taste and spirit come united in the act of artistic creation and part of what makes an artist great is his capacity to present aesthetic attributes in a proper formal order without damaging the spirit. The conflict between the two, between taste and spirit, or understanding and imagination, on my view, emerges only in cases when an artist has not yet properly developed his own “feeling of unity in the presentation” (§49 5:319); that is, his own standard of art.¹⁰

The ambiguity I pointed to makes it hard for us to decipher how much of the artistic creation is unconscious (i.e. how far does genius’ ignorance extend) and what precisely genius’ creative capacities are. When Kant claims that artist is ignorant with respect to the origins of his art, how far does this ignorance extend and does it include an inability to explain certain of his artistic choices? On some interpretations, his ignorance relates not only to the origin of his art (i.e. the workings of the imagination in the formation of artistic vision) but also to his formal choices. Lara Ostarić’s interpretation suggests this possibility, when she claims that “the form of the work of genius does not lend itself to systematization, and hence cannot be fully exhausted by the judgment of either its creator or its receiver” (76).¹¹

¹⁰ See §32 of a third Critique for an explanation of how an artist develops his genius over time and with accumulation of experience.

¹¹ Ostarić (2012). Her interpretation is based on the third *Critique*, as well as on Kant’s essays (pre-Critical Reflexionen).

On this view, an artist, even after creating his work, remains ignorant regarding the process of creation. This strikes me at odds with our critical practices. Scholars, and artists themselves, often provide precisely those judgments that on Ostarić's view are not available to them. At the theoretical level, our highly sophisticated critical vocabulary reveals the richness of formal choices available to artists. In practice, artists and critics (and to various extents the audience) know and can explain why certain choices were made and how these choices affect artistic value of a work.¹²

On my view, the aspect of artistic creation over which genius remains ignorant and which cannot be systematized, is captured by what Peter Lamarque, in a separate discussion, refers to as the finegrainedness of poetry: roughly, the act of capturing specific development of poet's thoughts into a concrete linguistic expression.¹³ A poet is ignorant with respect to this because his judgment on whether or not his work is proper and satisfying in artistic sense is based on a feeling, not on a concept. As Kant explains in §49, 5:319, the only standard for "putting things together in a presentation" in artistic creation, i.e. in *modus aestheticus*, (as opposed to the *modus logicus*), is "the feeling of unity in the presentation". The claim is that an artist, having observed exemplars and having practiced his skills against them, feels, rather than knows, which formal arrangement of the 'manifold of thoughts', i.e. aesthetic attributes, is the most acceptable.¹⁴ Once the

¹² Ostarić might be claiming that these kinds of critical statements do not "fully exhaust" all that could be said with respect to a certain form, and this is plausible – researches into the origins of our artistic practices are still inconclusive. But so are our explanations for most of the practices we have – after all, we still do not know what is it that enables humans to be conscious, self-reflective, to create art as well as to engage with the sciences.

¹³ Lamarque 2015.

¹⁴ Consider the case of Ezra Pound. With reference to his poems collected in *A Quinzaine for This Yule, Personae, Exultations, Canzoni*, a critic claims they were "either translations or imitations of other poets" through which he "perfected his craft and developed his fine ear for the rhythmic and tonal effects of poetry. Pound experimented in this early work in a wide range of poetic modes, including the dramatic monologue ("Cino"), the troubadour love song ("Na Audiart"), the poem of Ovidian metamorphosis ("The Tree") ... the Yeatsian symbolist lyric ("The White Stag"), the sestina ("Sestina: Altaforte") the ballad ("Ballad for the Goodly Fere"), the elegy (...), the Pre-Raphaelite portrait (...) and the verse parody. As a developing poet who had spent years training himself as a scholar of comparative literature, it was only natural that Pound's first instinct

choices are made, he can explain why they were necessary for the work to assume its final form, and how each of these choices contributes to the work's purposiveness. Frost again offers a telling illustration. With reference to his own acts of creation he claims:

I have never been good at revising. I always thought I made things worse by recasting and retouching. I never knew what was meant by a choice of words. It was one word or none. When I saw more than one possible way of saying a thing I knew I was fumbling and turned away from writing. If I ever fussed a poem into shape I hated and distrusted it afterward. The great and pleasant memories are of poems that were single strokes (one stroke to the poem) carried through. I won't say I haven't learned with the years something of the thinker's art. I'm surprised to find sometimes how I have just missed the word.¹⁵

However, the fact that (some, at least of) Frost's poetry came out 'in one stroke' which, if I understand his point, wouldn't work if it were forced, decided upon or even chosen by the poet himself, did not preclude him from making exhaustive judgments regarding these strokes. And his various letters, essays and public speeches testifies, Frost was very interested in the working of language and highly aware of its prosodic features, which enabled him to develop a capacity for critical judgments regarding his (and others poets') poems. He defined his own versification „as breaking rhythm across established meter", explaining it thus:

It is as simple as this: there are very regular pre-established accent and measure of blank verse; and there are the very irregular accent and measure of speaking intonation. I am never more pleased than when I can get these into strained relation, I like to drag and break the intonation across the metre as waves first comb and then break stumbling on the shingle.¹⁶

was to try out as many different styles as possible, imitating the work of great poets from the past before embarking on his own, more personal poetic project" (Beach, 2003, 24/5).

¹⁵ Frost 1949.

¹⁶ From Faggen 2008, 29.

2. The Artist and Artistic Tradition

Ambiguity of taste aside, artistic creation cannot begin unless the genius is awakened by his predecessors' work. Kant does not say much with respect to this – a phenomena I called interactive patterns of exemplarity – but he acknowledges the potential of an artist to give rise to a “a school” (§49, 5:318). To illustrate how this might happen, I will turn to Anna Christina Soy Ribeiro's account of poetry, which I take to be strikingly similar to my understanding of Kant.¹⁷

Inspired by Jerrold Levinson's intentional-historical definition, she argues that something is a work of art if it is, via the intentions of an agent, connected to preceding art, i.e. art tradition. A certain text is an instance of poetry (1) if a text is made with the intention that it belong to the category 'poem' and (2) that intention is guided by the history of poetic art. “To count as a poetic intention”, she argues, “an agent's intention must somehow relate to [poetic] tradition. A writer's work must be intentionally connected to preceding poems in order for it to be a poem as well” (48).

Provided we can agree there is such a thing as poetic tradition, the question is how to account for the relevant kind of (poetic) intention. Stated in this form, condition (1) relates to Kant's claim (§45) that “art always has a determinate intention of producing something” which, I argued, should be read in connection to his analysis (in §43) regarding the production through freedom, i.e. rational deliberation. His claim that in the production of art, “the cause that produced it conceived of an end” captures the idea of artistic creation as originating within the artist's mind, as a kind of artistic vision, where the poet himself doesn't (yet) know how the work will be, but he knows it is going to be a poem. This awareness guides him in his creation (though not in a manner in which it would fetter his mental powers), which is why the audience can “find the final product to agree punctiliously but not painstakingly with rules in accordance with which alone the product can become what it ought to be (§45, 5:307).

¹⁷ I rely on a manuscript by Soy Ribeiro entitled *Memorable Moments: A Philosophy of Poetry*.

The same point can be expressed thus: because a poet is aware of his own talent, he knows he is going to create poetry. The “subjective disposition” of his mind, i.e. his artistic vision, gives rise to his intention to create a poem. Such intention originates from his nature, as it is in light of that very nature that artistic vision develops in his mind and induces him to express it in the first place.

With respect to Ribeiro’s condition (2), let us assume that Kant’s notion of ‘school’ is equivalent to Ribeiro’s notion of history of poetic art (though below we’ll see that Kant’s account is oversimplified in that sense). Accumulation of all the works which are (in the relevant way) original and exemplary constitutes a ‘history of the poetic art’, which not only awakens poet’s genius, but serves as a model for him on how to exercise his power of judgment. Intentions relevant for Kant are those pertaining to the features of artworks, not to the way in which these artworks were evaluated by the audience (or were intended to be evaluated by the audience). Given that genius, on Kant’s view, is awakened by a work of another poet, i.e. by the rules couched in a predecessor’s work which, by the very fact that it is a work of art, is part of art history, condition (2) is consistent with the role of intention in Kantian sense.

Two inconveniences emerge for Kant at this point. Consider first the problem of ‘the first poet’. If an artist needs an exemplar for his talent to be awoken, whose work served as a model for the very first poet? How was his talent awoken?¹⁸ The second problem concerns development of a new school. If genius is awoken by rules for creation embodied in predecessors’ work, how do various styles develop and new schools arise? How, in other words, to account for diversity of our poetic forms, given the extent to which they differ with respect to their formal properties? The answer to this will depend on how much force we give to ‘individual mannerism’ of a

¹⁸ Ribeiro faces the same problem; her solution is to first, claim that „first poems were created by means of the same features which became central to that tradition”, namely, repetition, and then to go on and explore empirical for the use of repetition. She argues that humans have natural propensity to repetition not only for the aesthetic pleasure thus produced, but more importantly, because of the cognitive benefits they had for memory. See *Memorable Moments*, and see Ribeiro 2015, 2016.

successor. For Kant's account to have sufficient explanatory power to account for the diversity of our poetic practices, we have to presuppose that patterns of exemplarity do not restrain one's individuality and originality. Once the genius is awoken, a successor is free to diverge from the exemplar, if his own mannerism instigates him to do so. In line with Kant's description of taste in §17, once that an artist develops taste, he becomes a sole authority on his own creative agency and can shift from the rules embodied in predecessor's work.

We can again turn to Ribeiro for an illustration of how such shifts might operate. She argues that the poet can participate in poetic tradition in three distinct ways: by following it, by transforming it and by rejecting it. To illustrate her account, let us consider development of sonnet as a lyrical form, taking into consideration variations in its formal properties and subject matter.

The sonnet, in its original Italian form, is a poem celebrating the beauty of one's loved one and the nobility of one's own love. Its 14 lines are divided into an octave and a sestet. The Petrarchan rhyme scheme is abbaabba for the octave and cdecde for the sestet, or alternatively cdcdcd. The octave in general introduces a certain theme (an expression of a world view, a feeling, or some kind of conflict) and the sestet offers a solution. The transition line, the first of the sestet, was known as the volta. The Petrarchan form reached England in the mid-16th century in the writings of Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard. Later poets, most famously Shakespeare, adjusted the rhyme scheme so as to accommodate the less numerous rhymes of English. The "Shakespearean sonnet" consists of three quatrains and a couplet, with the volta on the first line of the couplet. Some English poets continued to use the Petrarchan form, including Milton, Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Despite the significant transformation of form, Shakespearean sonnets are still felt to be sonnets. The Shakespearean transformation of the Petrarchan effect is one element of the aesthetic experience involved.¹⁹

¹⁹ Further transformations of the original form are visible in poems which include elements of both types of sonnets, such as Frost's *Mowing*. Many commentators credit Frost with an amazing talent for modifying established poetic forms and for introducing

Needless to say, there are poets who, ‘rejected’ the sonnet and opted instead for other forms, such as villanelles.²⁰

3. The Artist and the Audience

Kant often refers to artistic creation as a process in which an artist communicates to his audience. In this part I analyse how exactly an artist initiates a communication with the audience via his work, and I explore what such communication might be like with respect to the audience’s engagement with the artwork.

Kant’s explicit interest in the aesthetics of art is exhausted by two claims most commonly associated with his theory: his advocacy of formalism and his claim that aesthetic judgment is not cognitive. Without denying these commonplaces, I will challenge traditional formalist interpretations of Kant by claiming that audience’s aesthetic engagement with work surpasses acknowledgment of and pleasure in works’ formal features and is inclusive of work’s potential for intellectual stimulation. While the artist doesn’t communicate true propositions to the audience (in the sense in which scientists do), he gives his audience incentive to intellectually engage with his vision, as expressed in his work. The aesthetic judgment is not cognitive, but the overall aesthetic experience triggered by a work is, as it is at least potentially imbued with cognitive rewards.

novelties in poetry’s formal features. See Faggen 2008 ch. 3 for a critical analysis of formal aspects of Frost’s poetry. I am grateful to Matthew DeCoursey for a discussion of sonnet.

²⁰ I can’t go into details here, so this is just a suggestion, but it seems to me that patterns of exemplarity extend beyond formal aspects of works and include influence along the line of theme and subject, as well as narrative structure and points of view. Consider for example structural and thematic similarities between Frost’s poetry and that of Wordsworth, both of which were highly influenced by Milton. Frost’s *Wild Grapes* are modelled on Wordsworth’s poem *Michael*. Patterns of exemplarity are evident in the similarities between two poems: both poems are parables of nature’s beauty and its power, the main protagonist in both is an old person facing loss and death, there is a Biblical text underlying both poems and both are framed stories in which the narrator first addresses the reader, then tells the story, and ends by addressing the reader once again. A stimulating way in which to think of thematic patterns of exemplarity in Frost’s poetry is offered by Robert Pack, who traces patterns of influence in Frost’s poetry from Milton and Blake to G. M. Hopkins and extending to Dylan Thomas and Wallace Stevens.

Following traditional distinctions within contemporary aesthetics, I will refer to this aspect of art as its cognitive dimension. The insights we gain from elaborating on cognitivist elements of Kant's theory will throw further light on the mind of a genius.²¹

A cognitivist interpretation of Kant's theory of art is motivated by his account of aesthetic ideas and by his reasons for his hierarchical ordering of various arts. Describing the effect of aesthetic ideas, Kant claims that they "stimulate so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept", thus giving "more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in [the concept]" (§49, 5:315). Given that aesthetic ideas stand for rational, moral and experience oriented concepts, it is plausible that the 'thinking' that is stimulated relates to precisely these notions. Consequently, when Kant claims that such thinking "enlarges the concept itself" (§49, 5:315), this enlargement, I take it, relates to one's having a better, wider understanding of what is involved in a given rational, moral or experience-oriented concept.²² To understand this kind of intellectual

²¹ For reasons of space I cannot dedicate more time and examples to explaining my take on aesthetic cognitivism, but if my reader shares my experience and acknowledges that poetry rewards us intellectually, it will suffice for my overall argument to get going. In other words, for my interpretation of Kant to be on the right track, one only needs to acknowledge that poetry is often intellectually stimulating, and at least sometimes, brings about a change in one's beliefs, one's worldview, one's understanding of experiences, emotions, etc. I am aware that many would object to my claim that these are *cognitive* benefits and would argue that, for various reasons, poetry cannot substantially or justifiably impact our cognitive economy. However, theories of others who argue in favour of cognitive value of poetry (literature and art) make it at least possible that this is an option worth taking seriously.

²² For example, due to the manner in which Blake brings together images of 'giving love, food and softest clothing', a reader might develop an appreciation of deity's benevolence and concern for his creations in manner not acknowledged before. Perhaps deity's omnipotence dominates reader's idea of deity, causing her to fear it rather than to feel gratitude and take comfort in deity's benevolence. The concept of deity is enlarged in the experience of reading, in that a reader's concept is no longer one-dimensional, but appreciative of deity's various aspects. A reader might come to realize that deity is only to be feared if one denies his love and care for humans. Enlargement that Kant speaks of might again take place after the experience with Blake's poem *Tiger*, which is focused on the deity's potential to create evil. Blake's rhetorical twist in the penultimate stanza, 'Did he who made the lamb, made thee?' might open for one the possibility that deity is responsible for evil, in the same way in which it is responsible for the good. Such possibility in itself

stimulation, consider Kant's description of the relation between aesthetic ideas and aesthetic attributes. He claims that aesthetic attributes are "supplementary representations" of the imagination which do not

represent what lies in our concepts... but something else, which give the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words; and they yield an aesthetic idea, which serves that idea of reason instead of logical presentation, although really only to animate the mind by opening up for it the prospect of an immeasurable field of related representations (§49,5 315).

Given the context of this paragraph in the third *Critique*, we have to assume that this description refers to the way in which genius produces aesthetic attributes, as new material that an artist expresses in his work. However, unless we presuppose that this same description is applicable to the perspective of the audience, we cannot explain how the audience manages to grasp work's representative and expressive features (that is, how its engagement with the work extends beyond acknowledgment of works' formal arrangement). There is however one relevant difference. Due to the creative potency of imagination, artistic vision of the artist consists in his manner of presenting a given aesthetic idea. The audience however, is given aesthetic attributes and only upon contemplating on them, does it recognize the relevant aesthetic ideas captured in a work. The choice and formal arrangement of attributes, as well as audience's background beliefs and assumptions, determine how the process will go and what kind of enlargement, if any, will take place. In this way, works of art incite the audience to decipher what the artist communicated via his work, i.e. to make an effort to understand his artistic vision. An artist, then, provides us with a possible way in which to think about the concept, rather than feeding us with true propositions about evil, inviting us to consider his take on it. It is

brings about a change in reader's concept of deity. The more dimension reader takes in, the more enlarged her concept becomes.

only if we presuppose such cognitive potential of art that it makes sense for Kant to claim that poetry:

expands the mind by setting the imagination free and presenting, within the limits of a given concept and among the unbounded manifold of forms possibly agreeing with it, the one that connects its presentation with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate (§53, 5:326).

Poetry, in other words, does more for the audience than provide pleasure in the judgment of its formal aspects. It expands the mind not only in light of a free play of imagination and understanding, but in light of inviting reflection on the vision (i.e. aesthetic ideas) expressed. Kant's claim that "aesthetic ideas occasion much thinking, though without any determinate concept being adequate to it" implies that, while art does not offer true propositions regarding a specific concept, it does stimulate intellectual processes whereby one comes to reflect on that concept, guided by the artistic vision as expressed in the work. For this reason, beautiful art is, unlike agreeable, one in which "pleasure accompany reflection ... as kinds of cognition" (§44 5:305). The audience never reaches any final, conclusive understanding of what is contained within aesthetic ideas, because they are, by their nature, out of reach of empirical cognition.

Cognitivist interpretation of Kant throws light on another puzzling aspect of his theory: his refusal to accept works which lack spirit into the domain of beautiful art. We can now see that the fault with these works derives from their failure to 'animate the mind' i.e. expand it by presenting to it aesthetic attributes which should yield aesthetic idea. Given that these works lack spirit (as a property), they also lack spirit as the capacity to animate the mind, since spirit is the animating principle in the mind, i.e. faculty for the presentation of aesthetic ideas. For an art to be beautiful, it has to have cognitive impact on the audience, along the lines I described above. Beautiful art pleases in judgment (i.e. in light of its formal arrangement) and in inviting intellectual stimulation (due to the way the imagination creates new nature).

There are additional claims in the third *Critique* which add up to the conclusion that Kant's theory of art is inclusive of poetry's cognitive impact on the audience. When he states that the poet "announces merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet as much results for the understanding as if he had merely had the intention of carrying on its business" (§51, 5:321) he explicitly links poetry with the 'business' of understanding: that of grasping our world and arranging for the experience we have. Unlike other arts, poetry "leave[s] behind something for reflection" (§53 5:328), which is Kant's primary reason for giving it the highest ranking in his hierarchy (§53). Of all forms of art, poets are the most effective in animating the mind via aesthetic ideas (§49 5:314) – an activity which is imbued with cognitive potential, as I showed above – which is why their creation "owes its origin almost entirely to genius, and will be guided least by precept or example" (§53, 5: 326). This shows that genius has one more capacity: that of initiating intellectual stimulation. It also implies that cognitive value of a work, primarily its potential to incite intellectual stimulation in the audience, matters greatly to Kant, as evident in his hierarchical ordering of the arts.

However, one cannot claim that poetry is cognitively valuable and ignore an old Platonic worry: poets have no knowledge of the things they write about, so why take their word for it? I will refer to this problem as the problem of the reliability of the artist and suggest that, if my reading of Kant is correct, he was aware of the problem, and solved it by incorporating epistemic reliability into the genius itself. Consequently, his creations by default circumvent Plato's worries.

4. The Mind of a Genius

The most pressing reason to worry about the epistemic reliability of an artist is the fact that, in artistic production, his imagination is free and not restrained in its productive force. Given that aesthetic attributes are not logically contained within the concept, there is always a possibility that an artist chooses attributes which somehow misrepresent the concept.

However, Kant avoids this possibility by arguing that imagination, although free in its creativity, nevertheless remains under the guidance of understanding, and at the service of its cognitive aims. In §49 5:314, he argues that when imagination transforms the given nature, it does so in alignment to the “principles which lie higher in reason and which are every bit as natural to us as those in accordance with which understanding apprehends empirical nature”. Even in its freedom then, imagination does not turn its back on understanding’s cognitive operation, and works in accordance with reason itself. With this in mind, we can understand why Kant argues that poetry “plays with the illusion which it produces at will, yet without being deceitful...” (§53 5:327).

Naturally, we might object that Kant postulates poetry’s cognitive reliability without proving it, and certainly many instances of poetry belie Kant’s claim. But as it stands in Kant’s theory, fine art is, to the extent that it is beautiful art, i.e. the art of genius, epistemically reliable and can reliably contribute to our cognitive endeavours. This is because in genius, spirit and taste come united by definition, which means that imagination is in alignment with understanding. Much to the spirit of romantic poets, Kant’s notion of genius does come equipped with epistemic supremacy.²³

To conclude: what lies in the mind of a genius is a four-fold capacity: (i) to summon aesthetic attributes so as to give substance to otherwise ineffable aesthetic ideas, that is, rational and moral ideas and concepts derived from experience, (ii) to arrange these attributes in a formal order so as to create beautiful art and inspire aesthetic pleasure, (iii) to touch other artists by awakening their genius, so as to establish schools of style, (iv) to initiate reflection in the audience, so as to contribute to their cognitive engagements with the world.²⁴

²³ See Ostarić, who claims that „on Kant's view, a genius's imagination is receptive to something more than her individual finite being and is so instrumental for conforming this transcendent content to the laws of human understanding” (Ostarić 2012, 80).

²⁴ I am very grateful to the audience of the 2017 ESA conference for their comments and suggestions.

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Contours, Attention and Illusion

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I want to hold two theses. First, in seeing-in, the emergence of the picture's subject in the recognitional fold is basically due to how in the configurational fold attention holistically operates on the pictorial vehicle's elements. This holistic work occurs by means of the 3D figure/ground segmentation attention applies to such elements in surrounding them with appropriate contours, either objective or subjective. Second, this attentional operation produces an illusory perception of the picture's vehicle as a 3D item, whose illusory character is both recognized as such and contributes to determine the overall perceptual phenomenal character of seeing-in. As such, that operation indeed induces, in the recognitional fold, a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's subject as well.

Preliminaries

As is well known, the *sui generis* perception of *seeing-in* is for Wollheim (1980², 1987, 1998) the necessary and sufficient condition for something to have a figurative value, so as to (possibly) also be a *depiction*, i.e., a representation endowed with that value. Seeing-in has for Wollheim a proprietary character because it is a *twofold* experience. In its folds, the *configurational* and the *recognitional* fold, one is simultaneously aware, respectively, of the picture's *vehicle*, the picture's physical basis, and of the picture's *subject*, what the picture presents, i.e., a certain 3D scene. Such folds are inseparable, for neither of them coincides with the perception of its object (the vehicle and the subject respectively) taken in isolation. Besides, the second fold depends on the first one: one would not grasp the picture's subject if one did not grasp the picture's vehicle (Hopkins 2008).

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Wollheim's theory has been often criticized, basically because i) it seems unable to explain how seeing-in can properly have a *perceptual* character and ii) it is not clear how it can be a *twofold* experience, in that those folds content mobilizes incompatible determinations respectively ascribed to the picture's vehicle and to the picture's subject: ultimately, how can it simultaneously be the perception of something flat and of something threedimensional? (Hopkins 2010, 2012, Chasid 2014, Nanay 2016, Briscoe 2017)

In order to find an answer to both worries, one must explain how the recognitional fold arises out of the configurational fold, so that, as Wollheim says, the two folds are inseparable. In order to do so, one must also show how it is that in seeing-in, the perception of the picture's vehicle is no longer the same as the perception of that item taken in isolation.

With this purpose in mind, I want to hold two theses. First, in seeing-in, the emergence of the picture's subject in the recognitional fold is basically due to how in the configurational fold attention holistically operates on the pictorial vehicle's elements. This holistic work occurs by means of the 3D figure/ground segmentation attention applies to such elements in surrounding them with appropriate contours, either objective or subjective. This answers the second worry. Second, this attentional operation produces an illusory perception of the picture's vehicle as a 3D item, whose illusory character is both recognized as such and contributes to determine the overall perceptual phenomenal character of seeing-in. As such, that operation indeed induces, in the recognitional fold, a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's subject as well. This answers the first worry.

1. Contours and Attention

In order for a 2D item to count as a *pictorial* vehicle, i.e., something that is endowed with a figurative value, while perceiving it its elements *must* undergo a certain grouping operation, in particular a figure/ground segmentation in the *third* dimension. In other words, not a mere *ground – pace* Hyman (2006) – but a *background* for some of its elements, is

perceptually needed in order to let the 2D item count as a pictorial vehicle, so as to be endowed with a figurative value.

To show that this is the case, one may note that, in order to so perceive a 2D item it is not enough to group its elements in a certain 2D way; one must group them in terms of a figure-ground 3D segmentation. For instance, in the case of the Kanizsa triangle, in order for this item to count as a pictorial vehicle so as to be endowed with a figurative value, one must not merely see a 2D triangle to be nested within three other 2D triangles and three black 2D pacman-like figures. Rather, one must see a white triangular body as partially *occluding* both another such body and three pacman-like bodies that stand *behind* it. ‘Aspect dawning’ pictures vividly show this point as well. In order for a series of black and white spots to count as the vehicle of the picture of a Dalmatian, in one’s perception of it one must group such spots in a certain 3D way: in that perception, some of such spots are seen to lie in front of some others that are instead seen to recede in the background. Thus, ‘aspect dawning’ pictures *diachronically* show what wrt other pictures *synchronically* occurs in their perception; namely, this pictorially necessary sort of figure-ground 3D segmentation. Hyman’s purported main counterexample, so called stick figures, are actually no exception. In order for such a figure to count as a picture, its character must be seen as standing in front of a background that recedes from it.²

Thus, *contours* delimiting what in a picture’s vehicle is seen to lie in front and what is seen to stand behind are the elements that such a 3D figure-ground grouping operation makes perceptually salient in a *picture* perception. Yet for such purposes it is neither necessary nor sufficient that such contours materially belong to the vehicle, i.e., are actually traced marks on the picture’s surface. Such *objective* contours are indeed not sufficient, for sometimes marked 2D lines just divide a certain 2D figure from the remaining elements of the 2D item one faces, without that any pictorial organization emerges out of it. Consider e.g. the Mach figure. Even if the figure is *perceptually* ambiguous, for (depending on the way one groups its elements) by looking at it one sees either a diamond or a tilted square, it is

² Cf. Hyman (2012:116). The same can be said as to the other counterexamples Hyman proposes: Mesolithic paintings, ancient Greek decorations (2006:133–6).

not *pictorially* perceptually ambiguous, as e.g. is the case with the Rubin's vase. For unlike the latter, its objective contours lead to no 3D figure-ground segmentation. Yet objective contours are also not necessary, for sometimes such contours are *subjective* (Lopes 1996:3): they are not actually traced and yet a pictorial organization arises. This typically occurs in the case of the Kanizsa triangle. In its vehicle, a white triangular silhouette perceptually arises as lying *in front of* both another such silhouette and certain black pacman-like silhouettes, even though no contour is actually traced, in particular to distinguish between white parts of the vehicle going along with the original triangular silhouette and white parts of the vehicle going along with the *background* to which the pacman-like silhouettes belong; just a subjective contour arises. The same also occurs in the case of the picture of a Dalmatian, in whose vehicle the contours separating a canine silhouette from the background are, unlike those of its black and white spots, subjective.

As a result, something other from objective contours must enact the grouping 3D segmentation operation. This factor is *attention*, in particular when it works, as Jagnow (2011) says, in a *holistic* way, by operating on the relevant 2D item as a whole and producing a certain global 3D-based reorganization of it. To stick to the example Jagnow himself provides, consider the ways in which, in the very same pictorially perceptually ambiguous figure made of a square divided into nine cells, one sees either a X-shaped body *in front of* the remaining cells or a diamond-shaped body *in front of* the other remaining cells. If attention here worked locally, as a mere spotlight illuminating just certain adjacent parts of the figure, no such pictorially relevant Gestalt switch would arise. Rather, attention must be addressed to the picture's vehicle *as a whole*, so as to determine in this case the Gestalt switch that in its different pictorial readings captures the different properties of what turn out to respectively be that whole's different parts. Seeing *all* the figure's nine cells as oriented under a *certain* 3D figure-ground segmentation provides a *certain* pictorial reading of the figure, where certain cells count as a X-shaped body while other cells count as its background; seeing all such cells as oriented under *another* 3D figure-ground segmentation provides *another* pictorial reading of the figure, where

the latter cells count as a diamond-shaped body while the former cells count as its background. As such, holistic attention is a particular form of what Nanay (2016:24) considers to be the maximal form of *distributed* attention: an attention that is distributed both wrt objects and wrt properties.³

Once things are put this way, the second worry Wollheim's theory of pictorial perception faces is solved. Once, in virtue of the 3D grouping operation performed by holistic attention, the perception of the picture's vehicle in the configurational fold of seeing-in is taken as a perception also of 3D silhouettes in their spatial relationships, the content of that fold *matches* that of the recognitional fold of seeing-in, which includes a 3D scene as well. In other terms, when the perception of the picture's vehicle amounts to the configurational fold of seeing-in, it is no longer a perception of a mere flat item, as the perception of that vehicle in isolation, *qua* mere physical object among others, actually is, but a perception of an apparent 3D item, just as the apprehension of the picture's subject in the recognitional fold is the apprehension of something threedimensional. Let us now see how also the first worry Wollheim's theory of seeing-in must address can be solved.

2. Knowingly Illusory Perception

At this point, one might object that the apprehension of the picture's vehicle so reconfigured in the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience has no proper perceptual, but just an imaginative, character. In other terms, one may hold that the ascription of a 3D value to the 2D vehicle's elements is just a matter of mental imagery.

Yet to begin with, it is hard to understand that apprehension in merely imaginative terms. 2D figures may be structurally reconfigured by means of subjective contours both in terms of a mere 2D restructuring and

³ To be sure, for Nanay a paradigmatic case of this kind of attention is *wandering* attention: «our attention is all over the place: it is not fixated either on an object or on any given property: it wanders aimlessly» (2016:24). Yet holistic attention is not wandering, for it rather reshapes the scene it enables one to see both wrt its objects and wrt its properties, as Gestalt switches of the above kind clearly show.

in terms of a 3D restructuring, as in the above case of the Kanizsa triangle. In that case, as we saw above, by mobilizing such contours one can both see a 2D white triangle as nested within other 2D elements and a 3D triangular body as standing in front of other such bodies that it partially occludes. Now, there definitely is a phenomenal change between the mere 2D and the 3D restructuring. If both restructurings were a matter of mental imagery, it would be unclear how such a change can be accounted for; a shift in imagery seems too weak in this respect.

Moreover, the apprehension of the picture's vehicle so reconfigured definitely has a *perceptual* import, for two reasons at least. First, consider that the Gestalt switches occurring in the case of perceptually ambiguous pictures in virtue of different 3D figure-ground segmentations (e.g. the Rubin vase, or the Jagnow grid) are characterized by features that qualify any perceptual state (Block 2014): *exclusivity* (the multistable percepts in a Gestalt switch are not given simultaneously); *inevitability* (one interpretation in that switch will eventually replace another); *randomness* (the duration of one alternation in that switch is not a function of previous durations). Since the same kind of 3D figure/ground segmentation occurs also wrt the experience of ordinary pictures where just *one* such grouping operation occurs, as 'aspect dawning' pictures such as the Dalmatian paradigmatically show, the experience of such a segmentation definitely has a perceptual character in *any* pictorial perception.

Second, unlike spatial attention and focused attention in general, the *holistic* form of attention that, as we saw in the previous section, is involved in such groupings is *perceptually* relevant as well. Unlike those forms of attention, pace Pylyshyn (2003) holistic attention indeed works not under the first, but under the second of the following two models, which ascribes to attention a perceptual role (Stokes 2017):

- a) Cognitive state → Attention-shift → Perceptual experience;
- b) Cognitive state → Non-agential selective attention → Perceptual experience.

Now as is well known (e.g. Raftopoulos 2011), attention in general, hence

holistic attention as well, may work either *exogenously*, i.e., as prompted by external environmental factors, or *endogenously*, i.e., as prompted by cognitive internal factors. This holds also in cases of pictorial perception. Many times, both with objective and with subjective contours, holistic attention is driven by so-called *depth cues*, which have to do not only with the locations but also with the forms of the marks that are actually traced (typically but not exclusively X- and Y-crossings) on the relevant 2D item that thereby counts as a pictorial vehicle (Zeimbekis 2015). Yet other times, typically when subjective contours are at stake, holistic attention is driven by cognitive conceptual contents. They prompt the quest for perceptually salient 3D silhouettes in the relevant 2D item that thereby comes to count as a *pictorial* vehicle, i.e., as something endowed with a figurative value. Since this endogenous form of attention plays only a *causal*, but not a *constitutive*, role wrt the picture's vehicle so grouped, it amounts to a mere *weak* form of cognitive penetration (Macpherson 2012). As many people hold (Jagnow 2011, Orlandi 2011, Raftopoulos 2011), the experience at stake (the configurational fold of seeing-in, in Wollheim's terms) indeed has just a nonconceptual concept articulated in terms of the silhouettes that result out of the relevant 3D-based grouping operation. In this respect, one may see the difference between the Kanizsa triangle and the picture of a Dalmatian. Although in both cases subjective contours are at stake, in the former case they become salient along with a certain pictorial organization because attention can exploit certain depth cues located in the picture's vehicle itself (the forms and the locations of black areas in the 2D item that constitutes such a vehicle), while in the latter case the pictorial organization becomes salient after the quest for a *Dalmatian* has started.

Yet the fact that holistic attention may be prompted either exogenously or endogenously does not undermine its perceptual way of working. However it is prompted, the fact that it entirely reshapes the item one faces, i.e., the picture's vehicle, has a perceptual value. The fact that holistic attention can be prompted either exogenously or endogenously prompted simply shows why the influence that is relevant for the perceptual apprehension of the relevant can come both from *within* the visual system and *outside* of it (Teufel-Nanay 2017). Indeed, it may be lost both because

of exogenous and nonexogenous noises. An example of the first case is provided by Kanizsa (1979): once a picture of a parallelepiped is nested within a jungle of other lines, one can no longer see the parallelepipedal silhouette that was perceptually salient in that picture to arise out of the jungle. As to an example of the second case, consider a case of a reversal perceptually pictorially ambiguous picture. Once one reverses a perceptually pictorially ambiguous picture in which one can see either a Leninian character (in a top-down reading) or a Che Guevarean character (in a bottom-up reading), one tends to see just the ‘Che’ character (in a top-down reading) in it, although the spots constituting the picture’s vehicle remain the same in terms of colours, shapes, and sizes.

True enough, however, the perception of 3D groupings that occurs in picture perception is a form of *high-level* perception, as all the above Gestalt switches show. In all such cases, the low-level perceptual properties that are involved – colours, shapes, sizes – remain the same, yet the perception of the different 3-D groupings changes (Wittgenstein 2009⁴, Teufel-Nanay 2017).

At this point, let me take that the perceptual character of the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience is well established. Yet clearly enough, the perception of a certain 3D-based organization that arises once the relevant grouping operation has occurred is *illusory*: the perceiver actually faces a mere 2D, not a 3D item. This has prompted some people to talk of a merely *apparent* or relative depth as being involved in the relevant perception (Spinicci 2012, Briscoe 2016).

Yet to begin with, I hold that such a perception is more than that: it is a *knowingly* illusory perception. Clearly enough, the perception in the picture’s vehicle of 3D silhouettes that results out of the 3D figure-ground segmentation is illusory: no 3D silhouette is really in the vehicle, so even the spatial relations that hold in the third dimension between such silhouettes in the vehicle are illusory as well. Yet the perception’s bearer is definitely not deluded by her perceptual experience: she well knows that the physical item she faces is merely twodimensional. Moreover, I also want to say that unlike the cases of other perceptual illusions known as such, such as e.g. the cases of optical illusions (e.g. the Müller-Lyer illusion), that

knowledge has a *perceptual* import. In the case of an optical illusion, one's knowing that it is an illusory experience has no perceptual phenomenal import. For one still *visually* perceives the same nonveridical situation one so perceives if one is deluded by what one faces. In this case, one knows that one's perception is illusory because of testimony or because of one's experience of the relevant item in another sensory modality (e.g., a tactile perception). Yet in pictorial perception, one's knowledge that the perceptual apprehension in the picture's vehicle of 3D silhouettes in their spatial relationships is illusory depends on the fact that one is still able to perceive that vehicle as a 2D item: e.g., as a mere sheet of paper.⁴ Some paintings in conceptual art such as e.g. Giulio Paolini's *Geometric Drawing* are precisely meant to stress this point: even if we seem to see a 3D composition, in seeing a painting we still face a sheet of paper.

Yet at this point, the fact that in perceiving the picture's 2D vehicle one knowingly illusorily groups its elements also in a 3D-based way induces one to also entertain a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's subject; namely, a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's vehicle *as* the picture's subject. In other and more Wollheimian terms, on the basis of the fact that, in the configurational fold of a seeing-in experience, some 3D silhouettes have become perceptually salient in the picture's vehicle in a knowingly illusory way, the recognitional fold of that seeing-in experience arises in such a way that in it the picture's subject perceptually emerges knowingly illusorily.

Once things are put this way, also the first worry Wollheim's theory must address is solved. Seeing-in is genuinely perceptual, for both its folds are genuinely perceptual as well. Indeed, the recognitional fold is a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's vehicle as the picture's subject that is induced by the illusory elements figuring in the configurational fold, i.e., the perception of the item one faces once it is taken as a *pictorial* vehicle by means of the relevant 3D segmentation.

This point can be easily grasped if one compares pictorial perception

⁴ One might say that the enriched perception of that item as a *pictorial* vehicle has both veridical and illusory elements, as sometimes happens with ordinary perceptual experiences as well (Smith 2002).

with the perception of a *genuine trompe-l'oeil*, i.e., an item that is really *mistaken* for a certain subject, or even with a perception of a picture whose 3D-based organization is partially delusorily perceived, at least from a certain perspective, as is the case e.g. with Nikola Čuljić's drawings (<http://www.boredpanda.com/nikola-culjic-art/>). (This latter case corresponds to the nonecological perception of a picture from a peephole, Ferretti 2016). In all such cases, even if one had a background knowledge that one's perception is illusory, that knowledge would not contribute to the overall perceptual phenomenal character of one's experience. For the physical item one faces is *unperceived* (either entirely, as in the case of a *genuine trompe l'oeil*, or partially, i.e., just from one perspective, as in the case of the above drawings). Indeed, the overall perceptual phenomenal character of one's experience changes when one either realizes that one is facing a *trompe-l'oeil* or changes the perspective from which one sees the relevant drawing. In both cases, one's overall perception changes, for one starts perceiving the physical item one faces as a 2D item that one also groups also in 3D-based terms. The fact that one so perceives what amounts to a *pictorial* vehicle *eo ipso* transforms what was a merely illusory perception of an object into a knowingly illusory perception of what now amounts to that picture's subject. In a nutshell, when one realizes that one is facing a *trompe-l'oeil*, one's overall perception changes, in that it becomes a proper pictorial perception: a twofold seeing-in experience *à la* Wollheim.⁵

3. Objections, Replies and Developments

As we saw before, the answer to the second worry for Wollheim's theory of seeing-in says that, once the physical item one faces is seen as a *pictorial* vehicle, by appropriately grouping its elements in a 3-D based way, there is a matching between the content of the configurational fold and the content of the recognitional fold of the relevant seeing-in experience. Yet one may

⁵ This is the real explanation as to why picture perception is not a stereoptical perception, or it is such when it is given in extraordinary conditions that alter its pictorial status, such as the aforementioned perception of a picture from a peephole (cf. Vishwanath 2014).

wonder whether this matching between two folds is necessary, insofar as one may dispense with the second fold altogether. Indeed, one may take pictorial experience as a mere *onefold* experience in which one merely sees the picture's 2D vehicle as being arranged in the 3D way that directly shapes the picture's subject (as stressed in the so called Aspect View, Dorsch 2016) by providing the vehicle with an apparent, or even relative, depth (Briscoe 2017).

Yet I do think that in order to account for pictorial perception one must appeal to different folds whose contents match, as is shown by the fact that this situation also occurs in *sculptorial* perception. In this case, what one faces is a really 3D physical item whose elements are still grouped in a particular way, so as to match the typologically *different* particular 3D scene one also sees in it. For example, in a 3D *marble statue* suitably grouped such as *The Laocoon* one sees the 3D scene consisting of *three human beings being attacked by a sea snake*. Undoubtedly, the relevant grouping operation occurring, as I claim, in the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience, also occurs in sculptorial cases, as the fact that we also have perceptually ambiguous sculptures shows. Consider Luca Patella's *Vasa physiognomica*, a 3D version of the Rubin's vase. Depending on how we group the 3D physical item that we face, we see in it either a certain typologically different 3D scene, consisting of two 3D white faces standing in front of a black background, or another typologically different 3D scene, consisting of a black vase standing in front of a white background. Now, this kind of objectual typological difference between the vehicle and the subject, which one clearly grasps in sculptorial perception, is also grasped in any case of pictorial perception, as applied to a 2D rather than a 3D item: the 3D subject one recognizes in the perception of a picture is typologically different from the bunch of 3D silhouettes one groups in that picture's vehicle. Thus, in order to account for the grasping of such a typological difference, a recognitional fold is needed over and above the configurational fold, where typologically distinct, though matching, objects are grasped in their respective contents. Thus, pictorial perception *in general* is a twofold rather than a onefold experience, as Wollheim claimed.

Clearly enough, however, in sculptorial seeing-in wrt its

configurational fold there is no known illusoriety. In this case, one overall veridically perceives a 3D item; one does not project depth on a 2D item. If this is the case, however, how can the known illusoriety of the recognitional fold of that seeing-in experience be explained, since it is not prompted by an illusoriety wrt its configurational fold, for there is no such illusoriety?

Here I am faced with a dilemma. Either *pace* Wollheim (1987), I deny that sculptorial seeing-in is an experience of the same kind as pictorial seeing-in (Hopkins 2004), so that I may stick just to the explanation of the known illusoriety of the recognitional fold I have provided in the previous section as holding for any genuine case of seeing-in. Or I accept that there is no principled difference between 2D pictorial and sculptorial seeing-in, but I am therefore forced to say that the known illusoriety of the configurational fold of a seeing-in experience is merely a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for the known illusoriety of the recognitional fold. Since I just appealed to sculptorial seeing-in in order to justify the claim that pictorial perception is a twofold experience whose folds ultimately match in content, I opt for the second horn of the dilemma. This will prompt me elsewhere to provide another account of the known illusoriety of the recognitional fold, which primarily applies to sculptorial seeing-in.

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Kant's Mathematical Sublime and Aesthetic Estimation of Extensive Magnitude

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ABSTRACT. A prevailing reading understands Kant's mathematical sublime as a twofold experience, in which we feel both displeasure in encountering sensibility's limitation and pleasure in revealing its supersensible vocation; but this reading cannot explain how, for Kant, all estimations of extensive magnitude are ultimately aesthetic. This paper argues that Kant considers the experience to be threefold: to facilitate an aesthetic estimation in general, the imagination is to reproduce a magnitude's parts successively and unify them simultaneously, such that it undergoes an inevitable tension between two time-conditions. Since the tension both hampers and signifies our partial attainment of an aim set by theoretical reason, we feel both pleasure and displeasure. When the tension becomes so great that it hinders the imagination's further achievement, the feeling is absolutely great, that is, mathematically sublime. Moreover, the imagination's failure to fully attain the cognitive aim reveals its supersensible vocation and strengthens our moral feeling, which is purposive from a practical perspective. Hence, I declare Kant's mathematical sublime to be a threefold aesthetic experience consisting of cognitive displeasure, cognitive pleasure, and practical pleasure. Meanwhile, against Kant, I argue that the judgment of the mathematical sublime is neither universal nor necessary.

1.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant characterizes the mathematical sublime as that which we judge to be absolutely great in an aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude. For Kant, 'in the end all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is aesthetic', namely, only

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determinable by the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (2000, 5: 251)². When our imagination fails to comprehend certain magnitudes in one intuition, we estimate them as mathematically sublime through what Kant calls 'negative pleasure' (2000, 5: 245), namely, pleasure accompanied with displeasure. On such occasions, Kant maintains, sensibility's inadequacy reveals its 'vocation' for realizing ideas of reason, insofar as 'striving for them is nevertheless a law for us' (2000, 5: 257).

A prevailing reading understands Kant's notion of the experience of the mathematical sublime as *twofold*. For instance, Budd ascribes the displeasure to 'a manifest inability to cope with nature' and the pleasure to 'an aspect of ourselves that is superior to any aspect of nature' (2003, 122). In the same vein, Forsey writes: 'This incommensurability of our imagination with the totalizing demands of reason produces at first a displeasure in our experience of failure and then a subsequent pleasure that is aroused by ... our awareness of the superiority of our powers of reason.' (2007, 384)³

I think these commentators convincingly recognize that, for Kant, in judging the mathematical sublime, the mind feels displeasure in encountering our sensibility's limitation and pleasure in discovering our supersensible vocation. In spite of its merit, however, this approach is only able to explain feelings triggered by the imagination's failure. It cannot account for an aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude *in general*, which presupposes a form of pleasure and displeasure that does *not* derive from a cognitive inadequacy. Unable to reconcile the two threads in Kant's writings, Recki claims an 'equivocation' (2001, 197)⁴ in Kant's assertion that *all* estimation of magnitude is ultimately aesthetic.

To solve this difficulty, this paper argues that Kant considers the experience of the mathematical sublime to be *threefold* and involving, in

² All references to Kant will provide year of translation, followed by *Akademie Ausgabe* volume (Kant 1902) and page number.

³ Similar remarks are made by Crowther (1989, 99–100; 2010, 178), Pries (1995, 51), Abici (2008, 240), Clewis (2009, 132), Deligiori (2014, 31–32), and Smith (2015, 109).

⁴ Citations from German texts in Recki (2001), Bartuschat (1972), Pries (1995), and Park (2009) are my translation.

addition to the cognitive displeasure and the practical pleasure, a certain kind of *cognitive pleasure*. Most commentators overlook this possibility, and Matthews hastily dismisses it (1996, 172). But as I shall show, although the imagination can never exhaustively fulfill the rational demand of comprehending the infinite, its *partial* attainment, however trivial, is always pleasurable. On the other hand, even when the imagination successfully comprehends a finite magnitude in one intuition, it is still hampered by an inevitable tension between the *successive* reproduction of the magnitude's parts and the *simultaneous* unification of these parts, which is displeasurable. Therefore, I take Kant to hold that in *all* aesthetic estimation of magnitude we feel negative pleasure in relation to a *cognitive* aim.

This remaining of this paper is divided into four sections: Section 2 analyzes Kant's account of the aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude in general. Section 3 discusses the imagination's aesthetic comprehension and the tension thereof. We experience the sublime when this tension becomes so great that it hinders the imagination's further achievement. Section 4 argues that the imagination's partial attainment of a cognitive aim brings about negative pleasure. Yet, its failure to fully attain this aim reveals our supersensible vocation and strengthens our susceptibility to moral ideas, a susceptibility we are obliged to cultivate. Hence, Kant's notion of the aesthetic experience of the mathematical sublime is threefold and composed of cognitive displeasure, cognitive pleasure, and practical pleasure. Lastly, Section 5 contends that the judgment of the mathematical sublime is neither universal nor necessary.

2.

Immediately following his definition of the mathematical sublime as the '*absolutely great*', Kant distinguishes between 'to be a magnitude [*Größe*] (*quantitas*)' and 'to be great [*groß*] (*magnitudo*)' (2000, 5: 248). The Latin terms indicate his distinction between possessing a certain quantity and being superior in terms of quantity. For instance, both a mansion and a cottage are 'magnitudes' with measurable sizes, while the house is 'greater' in size.

For Kant, we cognize something to be a 'magnitude [*Größe*]' from the thing itself, insofar as we regard a magnitude as a 'unity' constituted by a 'multitude of homogeneous elements' (2000, 5: 248). I understand the magnitude in question as an *extensive* magnitude, in which 'the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole' (Kant 1998, A162/B203). In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant describes a threefold synthesis that is essential for cognition of objects: firstly, the imagination 'apprehends' the impressions of an object's parts successively in the intuition; secondly, the imagination 'reproduces' the multitude of impressions altogether as one unity, which possesses an extensive magnitude; and thirdly, the understanding 'recognizes' the unity of the reproduced impressions under a concept (2000, A98–A110). The threefold synthesis grounds the 'axioms of intuition', that is, 'all intuitions are extensive magnitudes' (Kant 1998, A161/B202).

Kant then distinguishes between two methods for estimating a magnitude 'to be great': we can estimate the magnitude *logically* by comparing it with an objective measure, namely, its own part or another magnitude. For instance, we estimate a building as five times higher than each story it contains, while the latter is two times higher than an average human being. But in this way, a greater magnitude is always possible, such that we can never obtain the mathematical sublime. And so, Kant introduces the second kind of estimation as follows:

Now if I simply say that something is great, it seems that I do not have in mind any comparison at all, at least not with any objective measure, since it is not thereby determined at all how great the object is. However, even though the standard for comparison is merely subjective, the judgment nonetheless lays claim to universal assent ... (2000, 5: 248)

A few lines later, Kant specifies the 'mere subjective' standard in question as only usable for an 'aesthetic' judging of magnitude (2000, 5: 249). In the third *Critique*, the determining ground of an 'aesthetic' judgment '*cannot be other than subjective*' (2000, 5: 203), and this subjective ground 'lies in a sensation that is immediately connected with the feeling of pleasure and

displeasure' (2000, 20: 224). Hence, by 'simply saying' Kant refers to an *aesthetic* estimation of extensive magnitude through the *feeling* of (dis)pleasure.

To estimate something logically by comparing it with some objective measure, we would determine and cognize how great it is. An objective sensation, such as the representation of something's color or sound in senses, constitutes our knowledge of this object. By contrast, Kant declares the feeling of (dis)pleasure to be 'merely subjective' sensation (2000, 20: 224), which '*cannot become an element of cognition at all*', and which only signifies an object's relation to the subject (2000, 5: 189). For instance, it is one thing that I taste the sweetness of some sugar by tongue, but quite another that I enjoy this sensation; for through the enjoyment I cognize nothing about the sugar itself. It follows Kant's statement that

in a judgment by which something is described simply [*schlechtweg*]⁵ as great it is not merely said that the object has a magnitude, but rather this is attributed to it to a superior extent than to many others of the same kind⁶, yet without this superiority being given determinately ... (2000, 5: 249)

This convoluted sentence might seem bewildering, but Kant is actually being very cautious in his phrasing. On my reading, we take three steps to estimate something simply as great: firstly, we represent the object as having an extensive magnitude (i.e., as a multitude of units) and feel some sort of (dis)pleasure thereof. Secondly, we compare the degree of this *feeling* in representing this object with something else as its measure,

⁵ Pluhar mistranslates the '*schlechtweg*' as 'absolutely'. He probably conflates it with '*schlechthin*' (i.e., 'absolutely') which repeatedly appears in the same section. This misleads Goodreau's reading (Goodreau 1998, 137).

⁶ The original text: '*sondern diese [einen Größe] ihm [dem Gegenstand] zugleich vorzugsweise vor vielen anderen gleicher Art beigelegt wird*'. Pluhar translates '*vorzugsweise*' as 'superior', i.e., 'we also imply that this magnitude is superior to that of many other objects of the same kind'. However, since '*vorzugsweise*' is an adverb rather than an adjective, it obviously modifies the verb 'attribute' rather than the noun 'magnitude'. Guyer and Matthews' translation is correct, i.e., we attribute this (magnitude) to the object *superiorly* or 'to a superior extent'. As I am to discuss, Allison adopts Pluhar's translation (Allison 2001, xiv) and might be misled.

namely the degrees of feelings in representing many other objects of the same kind. Thirdly, we represent the first object *superiorly*, that is, when we represent it as having a magnitude, we ascribe to it a *superior feeling* thereof. However, what we estimate and compare are only degrees of feelings; hence what is superior is indeed the degree of (dis)pleasure in representing the object's magnitude rather than the magnitude itself. It would be a subreption to mistake the superiority in the subject's feeling as a characteristic of the object, even though the former is related to the latter (much as my satisfaction in sugar is related to its sweetness).

The above is the key to understanding Kant's theory of the aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude. Yet many commentators fail to grasp the subtlety fully. For instance, Allison contends that when characterizing something simply as great, we are implying that 'its magnitude is greater than that of many other objects of the same kind, even though this superiority is not assigned a determinate numerical value' (2001, 312); put differently, we compare the magnitude of the *object* to that of its kindred ones but without mathematical precision. Crowther (1989, 88), Park (2009, 133), and Smith (2015, 102) hold similar readings.

However, as I see it, to follow this approach, we would estimate with objective measures (i.e., magnitudes of other objects) rather than subjective ones (i.e., feelings in representing other magnitudes). As a result, we would effectively determine whether an object's magnitude is superior or inferior to a certain measure, although the extent of this superiority would be vague or indeterminate. By contrast, on my reading, to simply say that something is great, we should not in the last cognize its magnitude.

To illustrate: when we represent the average magnitude of most buildings under normal circumstances, we feel some (dis)pleasure; then, when we represent the magnitude of the Eiffel Tower from an aircraft at high altitude, we also feel some (dis)pleasure, which might be inferior to the former in terms of degree. Now, by comparing these two degrees of feelings, we describe the tower simply (i.e., aesthetically) as small. In other words, we attribute our representation of the tower's magnitude to this magnitude inferiorly, insofar as the representation is accompanied with a feeling of an inferior degree. Yet, even a child can estimate vaguely, without

precise numerical value, that the tower is objectively much higher than most buildings. To simply call something great, we only represent its magnitude with a superior feeling; we do not determine the magnitude itself insofar as we do not directly compare it with another magnitude. The subjective superiority in the aesthetic estimation should be strictly distinguished from the objective superiority in the logical estimation.

On the other hand, I agree with Allison's interpretation of the simply-said great as a kind of 'proto- or quasi-sublime' (2001, 312). As I see it, we estimate a magnitude simply or aesthetically to be great, insofar as the feeling in its representation is superior in degree; and we estimate a magnitude aesthetically to be *absolutely* great or *sublime*, insofar as the feeling is not just superior but indeed *absolutely* superior. It is remarkable that Kant characterizes the feeling in the simply-said great with exactly the same terms when he does the mathematical sublime: 'no interest at all', 'universally communicable', and 'a consciousness of a subjective purposiveness in the use of our cognitive faculties' (2000, 5: 249; cf., 5: 247). As Pries points out, Kant 'already refers this aesthetic estimation to the sublime' and 'hereby speaks of the aesthetic estimation of magnitude *in general*' (1995, 47). The mathematical sublime, namely the simply-said *absolutely* great, is only a special case of the simply-said great in general.

Hence, we must feel some form of (dis)pleasure that facilitates all aesthetic estimation of magnitude in general, where our imagination may or may not fail in representing a magnitude. And so, this feeling cannot be explained by displeasure in encountering sensibility's inadequacy or pleasure in revealing our supersensible vocation; on the contrary, the former grounds the latter. In the next section, I shall explain the mental operation that brings about the former feeling.

3.

According to Kant, a logical estimation of magnitude presupposes an objective measure, but the estimation of the measure requires even another measure, and so on and so forth; it follows that, ultimately, the basic measure must be obtained in an aesthetic representation (2000, 5: 251). Kant

distinguishes between two actions in the aesthetic representation, namely, the imagination's '*apprehension (apprehensio)*' and its '*comprehension (comprehensio aesthetica)*' (2000, 5: 251).

The notion of 'comprehension' here, as an action of the imagination, might seem problematic; for Kant also defines comprehension as 'the synthetic unity of the consciousness of this manifold [of intuition] in the concept of an object (*apperceptio comprehensiva*)', which requires not only the imagination but also the 'understanding' (2000, 20: 220). But we should notice that Kant specifies the comprehension in the aesthetic estimation as '*comprehensio aesthetica*', while he claims that the mathematical or logical estimation of magnitude involves '*comprehensio logica*' (2000, 5: 254). As I see it, in apprehension (*Auffassung*) the mind 'seizes on' a multitude of impressions or elements of intuition, and by comprehension (*Zusammenfassung*) it further 'takes' them 'altogether'. Therefore, I interpret comprehension in general as a higher stage of synthesis than apprehension: it is either '*aesthetica*' and corresponds to the imagination's *reproduction* of apprehended elements⁷, or '*logica*' and corresponds to the understanding's *recognition* of the reproduced elements under a concept.

Kant claims that, while the imagination's apprehension may advance till infinity, its aesthetic comprehension becomes more and more difficult (2000, 5: 251–252). He elaborates this mental operation in a very dense, yet kernel text:

The measurement of a space (as apprehension) is at the same time the description of it, thus an objective movement in the imagination and a progression; by contrast, the comprehension of multiplicity in the unity not of thought but of intuition, hence the comprehension in one moment of that which is successively apprehended, is a regression, which in turn cancels the time-condition in the progression of the imagination and makes *simultaneity* intuitable. It is thus (since temporal sequence [*Zeitfolge*])⁸ is a condition of inner sense and of an

⁷ Strictly speaking, the imagination's aesthetic comprehension only refers to its reproduction *without schemata*, which I shall detail in this section later.

⁸ With my rendition of '*Zeitfolge*' as 'temporal sequence'. Guyer and Matthews translate this term as 'temporal succession', which is not wrong but might mislead the

intuition) a subjective movement of the imagination, by which it does violence to the inner sense, which must be all the more marked the greater the quantum is which the imagination comprehends in one intuition. (2000, 5: 259)

On my interpretation, Kant's reasoning consists of four steps.

Firstly, apprehension is successive.

For Kant, to apprehend a manifold of intuition, we must 'distinguish the time in the succession of impressions on one another' (1998, A99).⁹ The distinction of time is necessary not because the existence of the impressions are objectively successive, but because, to regard them as individual elements, we must apprehend them one by one in different moments. To illustrate: in observing a house, I may first take notice of the door, then the window, and lastly the roof. Even though I may eventually recognize these elements as objectively coexistent, I must apprehend them successively in the first place; otherwise I would only obtain *one* impression of the whole house rather than a *multitude* of impressions of its parts. The imagination's apprehension always relies on this temporal condition, even though the lapses between successive moments could be minimal (provided that the moments are still distinguishable).

Secondly, comprehension is regressive and successive.

Since the 'comprehension' in question concerns not 'thought' but only 'intuition', I take it as the imagination's aesthetic comprehension (*comprehensio aesthetica*) or its reproduction, which is a 'regression'.

According to the first *Critique*, a 'regressive' synthesis proceeds from the conditioned towards more and more remote conditions, while a

reader to associate it with the 'successively apprehended [*Sukzessiv-Aufgefaßten*]' in the same paragraph.

⁹ Interpretation of this sentence remains controversial. I hereby follow Longuenesse's reading that 'The temporality we are dealing with here is generated by the very act of apprehending the manifold' (1998, 37); in other words, the temporal distinction precedes and facilitates the consciousness of the manifoldness in an intuition. Allison argues differently and states that the mind distinguishes the time because 'impressions, qua modifications of inner sense, are given successively' (2015, 109); accordingly, the manifoldness would precede and condition the temporal distinction. But it is safe to say that both commentators consider the apprehension of manifoldness to be *successive*.

'progressive' synthesis proceeds in the opposite direction (Kant 1998, A411/B438). For Kant, space contains 'no difference between progress and regress', as its parts coexist and constitute an '*aggregate*' rather than a '*series*'; however, since each further spatial part is 'the *condition of the boundaries*' of previous ones, 'the *measurement* of a space is to be regarded as a synthesis of a series of conditions for a given conditioned' (1998, A412/B439). Hence, to apprehend the individual parts of an object is also to apprehend the spaces they occupy and to measure a space, which is a progression from conditions to the conditioned. For example, in measuring the space occupied by the house, our imagination apprehends the door, the window, and then the roof *progressively* in three successive moments.

On this basis, we reproduce the apprehended impressions and their corresponding spatial parts in a *reverse* order, as we always start from the impression we are now apprehending, to the one just apprehended, and then to another one apprehended even earlier, and so on and so forth. In this way, the imagination reproduces the roof, the window, and lastly the door *regressively* in three successive moments. The successiveness applies to both stages of synthesis: the longer the progressive apprehension takes, the longer the regressive reproduction or comprehension.¹⁰

Thirdly, the aesthetic comprehension, *qua* regressive and successive reproduction, is nevertheless simultaneous.

The imagination aims to comprehend the apprehended elements simultaneously as one unity. On my reading, this simultaneity does not conflict with the successive apprehension, for comprehension is a higher stage of synthesis than apprehension. But the simultaneity indeed conflicts with or 'cancels' the successive *time-condition* underlying both the progression and the regression. Put differently, we are to reproduce individual elements regressively *one after another* while comprehending them altogether *in one intuition*, which means a tension between the two time-conditions. Since all our representations ('as the modifications of the mind') belong to inner sense (Kant 1998, A98), the form of which is time (Kant 1998, A33/B49), the tension in the aesthetic comprehension does

¹⁰ Kant mentions of 'successive regress [*sukzessiven Regressus*]' several times in the first *Critique*, e.g., 1998, A486/B514, A501/B529, A506/B534.

‘violence’ to the condition of inner sense.¹¹

One might find such a ‘temporal tension’ counterintuitive, as it seems very natural for us to comprehend several elements simultaneously without perceiving any succession. For example, once we apprehend three colors in a flag, we seem to comprehend them in mind discriminately and instantly without any noticeable tension. This leads to:

Fourthly and lastly, the tension intensifies only gradually when we comprehend more and more units in one intuition.

The tension is ‘all the more marked’ when the quantum is aesthetically ‘greater’. In the flag example, in fact, the imagination must recollect the three colors in three different moments, which means a succession of events in a succession of moments. And yet, we may take them as one moment insofar as the succession is almost undiscernible. Just as we may neglect this tension when it is minimal, we are able to perceive yet tolerate it to some extent, which makes cognition possible in the first place; for otherwise we would be unable to comprehend even two elements. Nevertheless, when the imagination takes a significant time to apprehend progressively (as in apprehending ten colors), it must also take an equally significant time to reproduce regressively, which conflicts with its task of simultaneous comprehension. The analysis sheds light on Kant’s statement that

when apprehension has gone so far that the partial representations of the intuition of the senses that were apprehended first already begin to fade in the imagination as the latter proceeds on to the apprehension of further ones, then it loses on one side as much as it gains on the other, and there is in the comprehension a greatest point beyond which it

¹¹ On Smith’s reading, when the mind fails to take up the intuition ‘simultaneously’, our imagination as ‘temporally progressive’ finds itself to be ‘opened’, such that it will ‘advance towards infinity’ (2015, 114). I consider this interpretation untenable in two respects. Firstly and obviously, Kant explicitly states that there is ‘no difficulty with apprehension, because it can go on to infinity’ (2000, 5: 251–252), so the imagination’s progressive apprehension does not need to be ‘opened’ at all. Secondly, since apprehension and reproduction are two distinct stages in the ‘threefold synthesis’, the imagination’s successive progression is neither canceled nor ‘opened’ by its simultaneous (and yet successive) regression.

cannot go. (2000, 5: 252)

As discussed, the successive time-condition in the imagination's apprehension also applies to its simultaneous comprehension. Therefore, the more representations (i.e., impressions) the progressive apprehension obtains, the greater tension the regressive comprehension undergoes. Suppose the imagination already yields its maximal capacity and becomes incompetent to regress any further or to reproduce any more 'representations of the intuition', the representations 'apprehended first' must remain unreproduced and begin to 'fade'. In the first *Critique*, Kant also writes that 'if I were always to lose the preceding representations ... from thoughts and not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones, then no whole representation ... could ever arise' (1998, A102). When the imagination reaches a 'greatest point', it comprehends and 'gains' a newly apprehended impression on one side but fails to reproduce and thus 'loses' a previously apprehended impression on the other. In this case, the temporal tension is absolutely great, which presumably brings about an absolutely great feeling and an experience of the mathematical sublime. The exact nature of this feeling and this experience, however, will be discussed in the next section.

For instance, in the aesthetic comprehension of an Egyptian Pyramid, suppose the imagination is only capable of reproducing nine impressions of stone tiers, then, once the mind apprehends the tenth tier in the Pyramid, it can only reproduce regressively from the tenth to the second tier, while the tier apprehended first begins to fade in the intuition; for otherwise the mind would have to reproduce ten impressions *successively* and also *simultaneously* in one intuition, and the tension would be too great. Consequently, the imagination fails to represent the complete form of the Pyramid. Indeed, the mathematical sublime is to be found in the formlessness and 'limitlessness' of things (Kant 2000, 5: 244).¹²

¹² Against Allison (2001, 312), Park argues that the simply great cannot be a prototype of the mathematical sublime, because in judging an object simply as great 'the imagination can apprehend its form, especially its extended shape' (2009, 134). I disagree. In my view, even when the imagination comprehends an object's entire form in one intuition, we still perceive a temporal tension or 'violence to the inner sense', which, as I shall detail, brings about negative pleasure. When the imagination fails to overcome the

On the other hand, Kant considers the tension to be relieved in a *logical* comprehension, where the imagination provides schemata for the understanding's numerical concepts (2000, 5: 253). Kant defines a schema as the 'representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image' (1998, A140/B179). In accordance with a concept, a schema describes the method or rule for presenting images. The schema of magnitude is number, namely 'a representation that summarizes the successive addition of one (homogeneous) unit to another' (1998, A142/B182). For example, the schema of number ten does not refer to any particular image, such as ten dots on paper or ten people in room; it only describes the method of successive addition of homogeneous elements for ten times. The understanding's concept of ten guides the imagination to produce this schema, regardless of what particular impressions should realize the ten elements in an image.

Therefore, to comprehend the Pyramid logically, the imagination still apprehends the tiers successively but ascribes them to a numerical concept rather than intuitions. In other words, when the imagination counts the tenth tier, it comprehends it along with the *schema* of number nine (which corresponds to the *concept* of nine) and thus brings only two elements (namely the tenth tier and the schema) into a unity, which is then the schema of number ten and referred to the concept of ten. The reproduction of merely two elements is hardly challenging. Relying on schemata and concepts, the imagination is barely enlarged, whatever great number it counts. It follows Kant's claim that the logical comprehension can proceed 'unhindered to infinity' (2000, 5: 254). By contrast, the aesthetic comprehension is 'not of thought but of intuition', in which case the imagination reproduces the tenth tier and the *intuitions* of the previous nine through ten moments, yet also in one moment.

Insofar as 'all intuitions are extensive magnitudes', I propose that the

tension, then, we estimate a magnitude simply or aesthetically as sublime. As Kant puts it, in simply saying that an object is great, we feel satisfaction 'even if it is considered as formless' (2000, 5: 249), which means we do *not necessarily* consider this object as formless. Therefore, the judging of the mathematical sublime (where we are not able to represent an object's form) is a special case of the aesthetic estimation in general (where we may or may not be able to represent a form).

imagination's tension, although not always noticeable, is inevitable in all cognition of objects. Kant implies the two conflicting time-conditions in the Transcendental Deduction in the first *Critique*, as he writes, we add the units to each other 'successively' so they hover before our senses 'now', that is, simultaneously (1998, A103).¹³ The stakes involved in Kant's theory of aesthetic comprehension are high indeed, as they amount to Kant's introduction of a temporal tension into the synthesis of reproduction and his tacit development of the Transcendental Deduction in the first *Critique*.

In the next section, I shall show how a maximal tension brings about a threefold aesthetic experience that is the mathematical sublime.

4.

On the aesthetic comprehension of magnitude, Kant writes:

But now the mind hears in itself the voice of reason, which requires totality for all given magnitudes, even for those that can never be entirely apprehended although they are (in the sensible representation) judged as entirely given, hence comprehension in *one* intuition, and it demands a *presentation* for all members of a progressively increasing numerical series, and does not exempt from this requirement even the infinite (space and past time), but rather makes it unavoidable for us to think of it (in the judgment of common reason) as *given entirely* (in its totality). (2000, 5: 254)

As I see it, Kant's discussion here consists of three steps.

Firstly, reason demands the 'presentation' or aesthetic comprehension of the absolute *totality* of all given magnitudes.

For Kant, reason's ideas give the understanding's concepts 'that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension, i.e., in relation to the totality of series' (1998, A643/B671). The totality of all

¹³ This disproves Maakreel's reading, which takes the 'violence to inner sense' to be occasioned 'in an unexpected reversal' of the imagination's normal operation (1994, 73). Moreover, Maakreel's approach cannot explain Kant's assertion 'in the end all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is aesthetic' (2000, 5: 250).

appearances would have an extensive magnitude that comprises an infinite multitude of units.¹⁴ Since this multitude cannot be entirely given in our intuition, it is only an object of an idea. Nevertheless, Kant ascribes to this idea a 'necessary regulative use' in directing our understanding to a cognitive 'goal' (1998, A644/B672). The mind hears this 'voice of reason' and aims to present the idea, that is, to apprehend and then comprehend all units of this series aesthetically 'in one intuition'.

While Matthews acknowledges the idea's regulative use, she claims that 'the imagination's attempt to illustrate an idea of reason is illegitimate' (1996, 172) and that to 'apply' the idea of an absolute totality of the infinite to appearances is a 'transcendental illusion: natural, but also illegitimate' (1996, 179). In my view, what would be illegitimate is the imagination's pretension to a *complete* illustration or presentation of the infinite. But in the aesthetic comprehension we do not use this idea constitutively or 'apply' it determinatively to appearances; rather, the imagination only *strives* to illustrate the idea and advances as far as possible. Now that the idea effectively guides the imagination's endeavor, the regulation is not illusory but with indeterminative 'objective reality' (Kant 1998, A665/B693). For Kant, insofar as our cognition is directed to 'the totality of series', the 'vocation' of our imagination consists exactly in its attempt at 'adequately realizing that idea as a law' (2000, 5: 257).

Secondly, reason demands aesthetic comprehension of *any* given magnitude.

Since any finite magnitude is considered as a part of the infinite totality, the imagination's aesthetic comprehension of any given magnitude must be considered as *partial attainment* of its ultimate goal in comprehending the totality. In this endeavor, the imagination undergoes a temporal tension, which hampers its further attainment, but which also signifies how far it does attain the ultimate aim (though always partially). For Kant, 'the attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure' (2000, 5: 187); accordingly, the hampering of such attainment

¹⁴ According to Kant's resolution of the First Antinomy in the first *Critique*, whether the world is infinite or bounded is unknowable (1998, A520/B548). But I shall follow Kant's identification of 'absolute totality' with 'infinity' in the third *Critique*.

should be combined with displeasure. Therefore, the tension brings about both *pleasure* and *displeasure* in relation to a goal set by theoretical reason, namely, a form of *cognitive* negative pleasure. The more units the imagination comprehends aesthetically, the closer it approximates the full attainment of the ultimate goal, but the more 'violence' it does to the inner sense, and so, the more negative pleasure we feel. By contrast, in a logical comprehension, whatever great number is at stake, the imagination comprehends in each time merely two units in one intuition (be it ' $1 + 1 = 2$ ' or ' $99 + 1 = 100$ ') and achieves barely nothing with regard to reason's demand of the aesthetic comprehension of the infinite.

Matthews contends that since the imagination is inadequate to illustrate the infinite, 'If we were merely attempting to meet a demand of theoretical reason, this state would be simply displeasurable' (1996, 172). Her reasoning seems to be syllogistic: (1) Pleasure presupposes attainment of some aim. (2) The imagination cannot possibly attain the ultimate aim set by theoretical reason. (3) Therefore, no pleasure from the theoretical point of view. But I find the minor premise untenable. For sure, the imagination never attains the cognitive aim to the full extent, but it does so to *some* extent. Even when it fails to entirely comprehend a given magnitude (let alone the infinite), it still *succeeds* in comprehending a significant multitude of units, and this partial achievement brings about noticeable negative pleasure.

My interpretation finds more textual support in Kant's assertion that the aesthetic comprehension, as a 'kind of representation [*Vorstellungsart*]'¹⁵, is 'subjectively considered ... contrapurposive', but 'objectively, for the estimation of magnitudes ... necessary, hence purposive' (2000, 5: 259). For Kant, we call something 'purposive' insofar as we can only conceive its possibility by assuming 'as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule' (2000, 5: 220); for instance, a regular hexagon drawn in the sand in an apparently uninhabited land is purposive (2000, 5: 370). On my reading, we call the aesthetic

¹⁵ With my correction of Guyer and Matthews' erroneous translation of '*Vorstellungsart*' as 'kind of apprehension'.

comprehension of a given magnitude 'purposive' because, to explain why this kind of representation can be so compatible with the cognitive aim, we must conceive it to be 'arranged' or designed according to the concept of this aim. But the aesthetic comprehension is also 'contrapurposive' in terms of how a tension hampers the aim's realization – as if the mental operation is *not* arranged accordingly. In relation to the demand by theoretical reason, the feeling of this purposiveness accompanied with contrapurposiveness (which we may call 'negative purposiveness') is a cognitive kind of negative pleasure. This explains Kant's assertion that, when we judge something simply as great, its 'mere magnitude' brings about a satisfaction 'not ... in the object' but 'rather in the enlargement of the imagination itself' (2000, 5: 249); for what we find negatively purposive is the operation of our own sensibility.

Pries considers Kant's assertion of 'objectively, for the estimation of magnitudes ... purposive' to be 'more than unclear' and argues that this objective purposiveness cannot possibly mean the purposiveness in the sublime, which is 'in any case only subjective' (1995, 49). But I suggest we read Kant's assertion in its context. In the very same paragraph Kant describes the imagination's apprehension of a space as 'an objective movement' (2000, 5: 258), namely, a movement in relation to *objects* in space. Thus the aesthetic comprehension is 'objectively ... purposive' for the aesthetic estimation of the magnitude of *objects*. Meanwhile, the judgment of the mathematical sublime, *qua* aesthetic and *non-conceptual* judgment, represents 'subjective' purposiveness. Therefore, in both the aesthetic comprehension and the judging of the sublime, the purposiveness is 'objective' (in terms of its relation to objects) as well as 'subjective' (in terms of its non-conceptual representation). The aesthetic comprehension gives rise to negative pleasure, which facilitates the aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude in general and thus of the mathematical sublime.

My interpretation clarifies Kant's statement that 'in the end all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is aesthetic (i.e., subjectively and not objectively determined)' (2000, 5: 251). Recki considers it 'unintelligible' that a satisfaction should accompany 'each subjective determination' (2001, 196–197). And so, on Recki's reading,

Kant commits an 'equivocation' by conflating the concept of 'subjective', which refers to intuition and imagination, with the specific concept of 'aesthetic', which refers to a non-conceptual susceptibility (2001, 197). But in my view, a 'subjective' determination is no other than an 'aesthetic' estimation, by which we call something simply great or small according to a mere feeling. As I have shown, an aesthetic comprehension always attains the cognitive aim to some extent and always brings about the feeling of negative pleasure, however trivial it is. Therefore, *all* magnitudes can be estimated aesthetically, *namely*, subjectively; Kant's assertion makes perfect sense and contains no 'equivocation'.

Thirdly and lastly, when our imagination fails to comprehend a certain finite magnitude aesthetically, we 'judge' or 'think of' the infinite as 'given entirely'.

As I see it, on the one hand, we may conceive that, if the *infinite* were given in our sensibility, its aesthetic comprehension would yield a feeling of negative pleasure that is *absolutely great* in degree. On the other hand, in the aesthetic comprehension of a certain *finite* magnitude, our imagination may encounter an inadequacy or 'greatest point' due to the temporal tension, such that it cannot proceed any further; on this occasion, the tension it undergoes must be maximal, and the negative pleasure we feel must be *absolutely great*. Hence, when we compare the feeling in comprehending the finite magnitude with the supposed feeling in comprehending the infinite, we consider them equivalent in degree; and so, in an aesthetic estimation, we describe the finite magnitude to the same 'superior extent' as we would describe the infinite.

In this case, we 'think of' the infinite as entirely given, while what is actually given is only the maximal subjective feeling (i.e., the absolutely great negative pleasure) rather than the maximal objective magnitude (i.e., the infinite). In other words, while the infinite 'can never be entirely apprehended', it is 'in the sensible representation', that is, in the aesthetic comprehension of the finite magnitude, 'judged as entirely given'. Strictly speaking, what is mathematically sublime in the aesthetic comprehension is only the maximal feeling rather than the infinite (which is absolutely great but never given), let alone the finite magnitude (which is given but never

absolutely great in itself).¹⁶

In short, Kant grounds the judgment of the mathematical sublime on the aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude and the feeling of negative pleasure, which expresses the negative purposiveness in an aesthetic comprehension and in relation to a *cognitive* goal. Nevertheless, Kant also ascribes a kind of *practical* purposiveness to the judgment:

Thus the inner perception of the inadequacy of any sensible standard for the estimation of magnitude by reason corresponds with reason's laws, and is a displeasure that arouses the feeling of our supersensible vocation in us, in accordance with which it is purposive and thus a pleasure to find every standard of sensibility inadequate for the ideas of understanding. (2000, 5: 258)

The 'magnitude by reason' refers to the idea of infinity. In judging the mathematical sublime, we think of the infinite as 'given in sensible representation' and regard the imagination's failure as an unsuccessful attempt to comprehend the infinite. Since 'striving' for ideas of reason is 'a law for us', the imagination's inadequacy for presenting the idea of infinity and by extension ideas *in general* is a mental disposition that 'corresponds with reason's laws'; and so, sensibility's inadequacy reveals its 'supersensible vocation', namely, its determination by reason for 'adequately realizing' ideas (Kant 2000, 5: 257). Now that we also strive to realize practical ideas in the sensible world, Kant describes this disposition as akin or compatible with 'that which the influence of determinate (practical) ideas on feeling would produce' (2000, 5: 256). As Allison points out, the feeling of the superiority of theoretical reason to sensibility 'serves as a reminder' of a similar superiority of practical reason and thus of our moral autonomy (2001, 326).

On my reading, in view of this kinship, the disposition in judging the

¹⁶ Shaper comments: 'Perhaps Kant's struggle to locate the sublime in that which occasions the feeling *and* in the feeling itself can be seen as indicative of a deeper ambiguity.' (1992, 384) This 'ambiguity' is now clarified: Kant locates the sublime only in the feeling, for that which occasions the feeling is a *finite* magnitude; such a magnitude is not absolutely great in itself but only *aesthetically* so, that is, in terms of the absolute great *feeling* in its representation.

sublime indirectly strengthens our susceptibility to practical ideas, a capacity which Kant calls 'moral feeling' or 'the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to law of duty' (1996, 6: 399). Moreover, for Kant, it is an 'obligation' to '*cultivate*' and to 'strengthen' the moral feeling (1996, 6: 399–400). Therefore, the disposition is not just suitable but indeed 'purposive' for a practical end. Any achievement with regard to this end, however indirect, must be combined with pleasure.

Here lies an answer to Guyer's question of whether the sublime experience is 'a single but complex feeling which is both displeasurable yet pleasurable', or 'a succession of simple feelings which begins with displeasure but must end in pleasure' (1996, 211).¹⁷ I have shown that there is more to Kant's mathematical sublime than meets the eye: in the aesthetic comprehension, the imagination undergoes a temporal tension that is both displeasurable and pleasurable. This complex feeling *grounds* an aesthetic estimation in general, such that we can judge any extensive magnitude aesthetically (i.e., simply, subjectively) to be small, great, or even sublime. It is only then, another kind of pleasure *results from* a judgment of the mathematical sublime, insofar as the revelation of our supersensible vocation is purposive for the cultivation of the moral feeling, that is, for a practical end.

Hence, I declare Kant's notion of the experience of the mathematical sublime to be *threefold*: it begins with the complex feeling of *cognitive displeasure* and *cognitive pleasure*, and it ends in the simple feeling of *practical pleasure*. Kant indicates the three feelings altogether in a string of characterizations of the judging of the sublime as 'subjectively considered, contrapurposive', but 'objectively, for the estimation of magnitude ... necessary, hence purposive', and then 'purposive *for the whole vocation* of the mind' (2000, 5: 259). It is truly remarkable that we can estimate all extensive magnitudes according to mere feelings, whose degrees range from negligible to absolutely great. Highlighting the cognitive negative pleasure,

¹⁷ Guyer poses a similar question in an earlier paper, where he considers Kant's characterization of the complexity in the negative pleasure to be 'unstable' (1982, 763–764).

my approach elucidates Kant's account of the aesthetic estimation of extensive magnitude in general and fills a lacuna in the prevailing reading of his mathematical sublime.

5.

Thus far I have limited myself to an interpretation of Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime, but in this section I shall discuss a problem thereof. Kant claims that judgments of the mathematical sublime are 'necessary' and 'universally valid' (2000, 5: 247), because we find in them

a purposive relation of the cognitive faculties, which must ground the faculty of ends (the will) *a priori*, and hence is itself purposive *a priori*, which then immediately contains the deduction, i.e., the justification of the claim of such a judgment of universally necessary validity. (2000, 5: 280)¹⁸

A judgment of the mathematical sublime represents the purposiveness in the imagination's inadequacy in relation to the idea of infinity and our faculty of ideas (i.e., reason). This purposive relation, namely reason's superiority over sensibility, grounds the will *a priori*, because the will as such is to determine our power of choice *a priori*. 'Hence', the relation is purposive in an *a priori* manner.

So far so good, until Kant states that the purposive relation 'immediately contains' the deduction of the judgment of the sublime. His reasoning appears to be that insofar as the judgment represents a kind of *a priori* purposiveness, it must be based *a priori* and thus universally necessary. Nevertheless, it is one thing that the purposiveness is universal and necessary; and it is quite another that the representation of this purposiveness is also universal and necessary. A judgment of the mathematical sublime represents the *a priori* purposive relation not in thoughts but through the *feeling* of an absolutely great negative pleasure in

¹⁸ The pronoun 'which [*welches*]' appears twice and refers to the singular neutral noun 'relation [*Verhältnis*]' on both occasions.

the imagination's maximal extension. Therefore, universality and necessity of the judgment would presuppose universality and necessity of the imagination's maximal capacity, which is then problematic.

Cassirer argues that the judgment's deduction consists in its exposition because the latter 'has shown that the human mind, as possessed of imagination and Reason, is capable of relating them to each other, of becoming aware of its supersensible capacity on the presentation of a sensible object' (1938, 249–250).¹⁹ However, the problem is exactly the *aesthetic* 'becoming aware', namely, the subjective awareness of the imagination's inferiority to ideas through the *feeling* of its inadequacy in judging certain finite magnitudes. The occasioning of this feeling remains contingent.

Kant writes that the '[aesthetic] comprehension becomes ever more difficult the further apprehension advances, and soon reaches its maximum' (2000, 5: 252), but he provides no deduction for this maximum. For Kant, 'Every necessity has a transcendental condition as its ground' (1998, A106). I have shown that the aesthetic comprehension involves a tension that is grounded in two *a priori* temporal conditions of the reproductive synthesis, the exposition of which is already contained in the Transcendental Deduction in the first *Critique* and then developed in the third *Critique*. The tension is indeed necessary but can be tolerated in cognition to some extent, for otherwise no comprehension would be ever possible. The imagination reaches a maximum only *if* it is incompetent to overcome a tremendous tension, but why *must* there be a maximum in representing certain sensible objects? Why can the imagination not reproduce in one intuition more and more elements with greater and greater hindrance but still advance towards infinity?

For sure, if the infinite were given in the intuition, we would universally and necessarily fail to comprehend it aesthetically. However, we encounter the mathematical sublime in representing *finite* magnitudes such

¹⁹ Similarly, Bartuschat argues that the judgment of the sublime does not require a deduction because it 'exhibits the judging subject and his faculty which is not limitable by nature, so that the feeling of the sublime is only an expression of the subject's disposition' (1972, 134).

as the Pyramids. While the imagination's inferiority to reason and its inability for presenting ideas are indeed *a priori*, its inadequacy for measuring certain sensible objects is only *a posteriori* and, therefore, neither universal nor necessary.²⁰ Paradoxically, it is exactly by means of a private and contingent experience of the mathematical sublime that one reveals the necessary and universal supersensible vocation in humanity.²¹

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²⁰ As De Man points out: 'The [mathematical] sublime cannot be grounded as a philosophical (transcendental or metaphysical) principle, but only as a linguistic principle.' (1984, 130) Meanwhile, I maintain that the negative pleasure in the aesthetic comprehension is necessary as it is conditioned on the transcendental operation of the imagination.

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'Atmosphere' as a Core Concept of Weather Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. The development of weather aesthetics is based on the reflection of the art-centered aesthetic tradition and of the human-nature relationship under contemporary conditions. Starting from a fundamental understanding of aesthetics as a theory of general perception which was first expounded in the 18th century by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the focus of weather aesthetics is not on the formal properties of weather-related objects, but rather on the interaction between perceiving individuals and perceived weather phenomena as well as the wide-ranging sensuous experiences generated from this interaction. This article aims to clarify how the aesthetic concept *atmosphere* developed by contemporary German philosophers provides a vital contribution to a better understanding of the complexity of weather's spatial-temporal structure and rhythm as well as the corresponding perceptual properties.

1.

Weather plays a significant part in our daily life. When people meet each other, they often exchange information about weather conditions: it is warm or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm... Weather is “a subject that shapes the script of everyday life ... a subject that touches everyone” (May, 2003, p. 22). Usually, weather research is considered as a branch of natural science. We obtain the information about weather from daily weather forecast which, by means of quantitative and/or experimental methods, concentrates on the factual existence of weather events. Weather conditions are thus preordained by various parameters before we experience them with our own bodies. Consequently, our immediate, tactile sensation is relegated to a symbolic level through various weather data and weather signs.

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As a recently developed topic of aesthetic of nature, weather aesthetics is dedicated to exploring weather-related conditions from an aesthetic point of view and thus provides an alternative approach to the science-oriented weather research. Starting from a fundamental understanding of aesthetics as a theory of general perception which was first expounded in the 18th century by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, here, special attention is paid to the wide-ranging human sensual experiences of weather events and processes. The development of weather aesthetics can be attributed to the reflection of the art-centered aesthetic tradition. In the modern Western context, aesthetic experience is mostly identified with art appreciation. In this case, little attention was paid to the wider range of non-artistic experiences². The art-centered approach led to a narrowing of the aesthetic field of vision and is subject to wide-spread criticism from contemporary aestheticians. As Arnold Berleant pointed out explicitly, different areas of the living world are interconnected. Our ultimate freedom lies not in underestimating or denying certain areas in order to favor others, but in acknowledging and understanding all of them. This does not mean that all areas have equal value, but means that all activities, processes and participants constituting nature are equally important and should be taken seriously (Berleant, 1992, p. 9). Against this backdrop, non-artistic experiences which cannot be categorized as aesthetic objects in the sense of traditional aesthetics of art, including the experience of weather, gradually attracted the attention of aestheticians.

In the ground-breaking article *The Aesthetics of Weather*, Yuriko Saito discusses the unique properties of weather as an aesthetic object as well as the corresponding aesthetic experience. In her point of view, as an object that everyone has to perceive and experience, weather is not a stationary object, but a constantly changing process which surrounds and interacts with our whole body. Correspondingly, the perception of weather is essentially a multi-sensorial experience, along with various practical

² Contrary to the modern Western aesthetics focusing on art-related objects and activities, the aesthetics in East Asia has long regarded the non-art practices as an integral part. For example, in the traditional Chinese and Japanese discourses, the objects and activities of everyday life occupy a significant position.

interests (Saito, 2005, p. 156). From this it can be deduced that weather aesthetics concentrates on the embedding of man into weather-related natural processes and is primarily concerned with the interaction between perceiving individuals and perceived weather conditions. The focus is thereby not on the formal properties of weather-related objects, but rather on the sensuous experience generated from this interaction.

In the following, I will argue that the concept *atmosphere* (Atmosphäre) developed by contemporary German philosophers is of crucial relevance for deepening the understanding of the above-mentioned issue. With this concept, weather aesthetics can provide a better explanation as to how to improve human sensitivity of weather's spatial-temporal structure and rhythm.

The first step is to give an overview of its development and then clarify three representative research approaches.

2.

Etymologically speaking, the term *atmosphere* referred to “gaseous mass emanating from celestial bodies and surrounding them” (Schultz, 1996, p. 454) Later it designated “the air layer around a planet, the gases enveloping a planet or a star, and especially the aerial envelope of the earth” (Schultz, 1996, p. 454) Since the middle of the 18th century, this concept went beyond the physio-meteorological scope to describe the smell from someone or something (Schultz, 1996, p. 454) In the past decades, the subject of atmosphere has been attracting more interest among aestheticians. This transformation is based on the fact that since the second half of the 20th century, social scientists and humanists have turned attention to vague, ambiguous and invisible phenomena. Moreover, — perhaps more significant for the aesthetic investigation in this field — bodily sensuousness, which is considered as an essential prerequisite for atmospheric experience, has been placed in the foreground of the contemporary philosophical aesthetics.

The German psychiatrist Hubert Tellenbach is a pioneer in the socio-scientific research of atmosphere. The focus of his study is on the role of oral senses in treating psychopathological diseases. According to

Tellenbach, oral sensual perception is essentially a kind of cognitive process which contributes to revealing the essence of the world (Hauskeller, 2014, p. 50). The meaning obtained from this process is atmospheric. An atmospheric attunement is crucial for developing harmonious interpersonal relationship. Otherwise, people may face the risk of suffering mental illness. The pioneering position of Tellenbach's investigation is mainly characterized by the tentative exploration of the following aspects:

- a) Atmosphere is fundamental for developing the communication between man and the surroundings;
- b) Atmosphere cannot be objectified. On the contrary, it exists exclusively in bodily perception;
- c) Atmosphere is inexpressible and hence an atmospheric communication is essentially non-verbal.

Hermann Schmitz, the founder of the New Phenomenology, has been dedicating himself to integrating the exploration of atmosphere into his philosophical considerations of emotions. Contrary to conventional thoughts which considered emotions as private psychological states, emotions in Schmitz's context transcend the subjective boundary and manifest themselves as spatially outpouring atmospheres (Schmitz, 2009, p. 79) which are characterized by the following points:

- a) Emotions are atmospheres which can be objectively perceived, without necessarily being internalized;
- b) As atmospheric ambiances, emotions are corporeally poignant forces.

According to Schmitz, although subjective correlation is a necessary precondition for atmospheric emotions, the focus is laid on their objective quality. In this respect, atmospheres manifest themselves as free-floating phenomena having a high degree of independence (Böhme, 2013, pp. 30). However, Schmitz ignores the fact that the so-called objectively existing emotions are also the results of the sensual experience from the external

surroundings. The way of their existence actually depends on how experiencers perceive them.

Gernot Böhme's studies are recognized as the most influential contribution to the integration of atmosphere into aesthetics. According to Böhme, atmospheres are ubiquitous phenomena which exert far-reaching influence on our lives. Starting from this point, he dedicates himself to studying the relation between objective properties (everyday objects, artworks, elements of nature) and atmospheres they radiate (Böhme, 2013, p. 35). Special emphasis is placed on atmospheric reception and production in various situations. Böhme never gave a single definition of atmosphere. Instead, he describes the features of this phenomenon from several dimensions:

- a) Atmosphere is an indefinitely diffused, emotionally poignant power whose ontological status is vague and inexpressible;
- b) Atmosphere is a tuned space affecting and even modifying human moods;
- c) Atmosphere is neither a purely subjective state, nor an objective thing, but essentially a quasi-object constructed by both perceiving subject and perceived object.

Based on the current discussions, the meaning of atmosphere can be interpreted as follows:

As a sensuous reality constructed by perceiving subject and perceived object, atmosphere is neither a purely subjective state, nor an objective thing, but essentially a quasi-object pervaded by a specific emotional quality. In this manner, human situation and external conditions are corporeally brought together.

In this connection, particular attention should be given to the following aspects:

- a) Atmosphere is the first object that is perceived. In other words, what is primarily given or experienced, is not thing-in-itself, but

atmosphere. The experience of atmosphere is usually characterized by synaesthetic effects arising from the interaction of different senses;

- b) As sensuous reality, atmosphere is primarily corporeally experienced. In this aspect, the role of lived body (Leib) moves to the foreground. As the access to atmosphere, lived body contributes to a situation where on the one hand the meaning of atmosphere is conveyed in a sensuously ascertainable, holistic manner, and on the other atmospheric manifestations are variable, unpredictable and uncontrollable;
- c) Despite the diversity of atmospheric phenomena under different circumstances, a specific atmosphere radiates a single emotional quality pervading the whole space. Furthermore, this single quality is not constant and unchangeable, but finds itself in a dynamic process composed of different phases – emergence, strengthening, weakening, disappearance.
- d) Although the existence of atmosphere is based on individual corporeal experience, it may have the same meaning for several perceivers in the same situation because of the quasi-objective qualities of atmosphere, as well as the common biophysiological, sociocultural and psychological structures of perceivers. In this case, atmosphere is communicable.

3.

The introduction of the concept *atmosphere* in the field of weather aesthetics makes it possible for us to rethink the aesthetic relation between man and weather-related events in a widely cultivated, humanized world. Here, I try to scrutinize this issue through three aspects.

First, the concept of atmosphere offers a multidimensional approach towards the aesthetic human-weather relationship. As previously described, the prerequisite for experiencing atmosphere is the full-body immersion into the environment, or the corporal integration into the whole situation. In this regard, there is a connection to the concept of aesthetic engagement

developed by Berleant. As an alternative to the Kantian aesthetic notion *disinterestedness* which focused on a contemplative, distancing attitude towards aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic engagement concentrates on active participation in the appreciative process which concerns the contextuality of aesthetic experience, the complete perceptual involvement and the interplay of different sense modalities. In this sense, aesthetic engagement prioritizes a holistic, participatory approach to understanding aesthetic appreciation which is essentially “perceptually active, direct, and intimate.”(Berleant 2013). Both the concepts of atmosphere and aesthetic engagement emphasize that man is primarily not an extra-worldly, rational being, but an inner-worldly corporeal being. As the intersection between the self-experience and the experience of the surroundings, the body - primarily the lived body - forms an immediate, sensual connection between man and his environment, which basically determines the state of Being-in-the-world.

So in atmospheric experiences, we meet weather sensually. The natural scenes which we experience, such as sunshine, wind, rain, thunder or lightning, are not purely objective reality, but atmospheric phenomena which can only be grasped through a co-present body-being. In atmospheric experiences, the body embeds man, together with his multifarious ways of perception and sense experiences, into weather processes so that perceiving individuals and perceived weather conditions are interrelated with each other and merged into a unified whole. Correspondingly, an infinite range of perceptual possibilities, such as cheerful, inspiring, serious, melancholic, oppressive, awesome will enter into the field of weather aesthetics.

Particularly to be highlighted here is the affective dimension. The concept *affective involvement* (affektive Betroffenheit) has become a hot topic in relation to the aesthetic research of atmosphere. Affective involvement concerns an emotional state which is simultaneously linked with the experience of the existence of space and substance and of the awareness of the presence of our own body. If the perception is always connected with the feeling of a particular environment, this is largely characterized by an emotional association with this environment. For example, weather changes usually exert impact on the rhythm and the preservation of our life. In the process of observing weather phenomena, the

emotional factors can be integrated into the observing behaviors as well. Therefore, in describing weather conditions, we often use expressions which also show our corresponding emotional states, such as brilliant sunshine, gentle wind and bitter cold. Moreover, we can even perceive our emotional fluctuations resulting from weather changes. In this regard, a specific correlation between emotions and weather phenomena develops.

Second, with the concept of atmosphere, weather aesthetics can effectively transform the aesthetic approach based on the thing-ontology (Ding-Ontologie). The thing-ontology has dominated the European philosophy since ancient Greek times (Böhme, 2001, p. 55). On this basis, "the actual being" (Böhme, 2001, p. 55) was defined as "a thing, a substance or something between the substances" (Böhme, 2001, p. 55). The differences between things are characterized by various objective qualities such as size, shape, weight, temperature, texture, color, etc. For instance, Kant's aesthetics was dedicated to the study of the forms of things. In his studies, he often used the examples of flowers, insects and birds essentially belonging to the collection of things (Böhme, 2001, p. 55). The domination of the thing-ontology led to a situation in which little attention was paid to the interaction between feelings and environmental factors.

Currently, there are still some aestheticians trying to integrate scientific knowledge into the analysis of aesthetic experience of nature and concentrating on objective qualities of natural objects. Such research ignores the fact that the so-called purely objective world is an abstract entity which contains countless spatiotemporal possibilities for its manifestation. Actually, our relationship with the environment in a certain place and at a particular time primarily exists in a sensually perceptible way, and this existence is essentially atmospheric. Correspondingly, the emphasis of the weather-related aesthetic research should be laid upon the immediate sensual experience of a certain weather phenomenon in the here and now. Take a rainbow as an example. From the perspective of the natural sciences, the rainbow is undoubtedly a material object whose information is passively absorbed by human organs. However, this point of view neglects the interaction between the objective qualities and the subjective conditions. In order to appropriately perceive the rainbow, there should be a corresponding

relationship between the angle of the sun-drop-observer and of the drop-observer-antisolar point. In this case, the manifestation of the rainbow cannot be independent of the position of the observer. Furthermore, the same rainbow may manifest itself differently for several adjacent observers due to their biophysical, psychological and spiritual disparities.

Third, the concept of atmosphere contributes to promoting transcultural studies in the field of weather aesthetics. As mentioned above, the atmospheric experience is not solely limited to the individual sphere. Instead, it is often influenced by sociocultural conditions. The sensory impressions can thus be intensified by a specific historical and cultural framework. The actions of perceiving individuals in the same socio-cultural context can correspond to each other and eventually form a common style. In this sense, Thibaud points out that each atmosphere is related to a certain action style which can be found in all perceivers under the same conditions (Thibaud, 2003, p. 289).

Likewise, the atmospheric experience of weather phenomena is not in an unmediated way. Rather, it is influenced by the particular cultural context in which we live. The atmospheric experience of weather in the traditional Chinese culture is cited here as just one example among many others. In China, the close correlation between man and weather conditions relied on its longstanding cultural tradition which, to a large extent, was shaped by the agricultural lifestyle. On the one hand, weather phenomena affected the formation of the Chinese sociocultural lifestyle, on the other hand, the Chinese sociocultural factors influenced the way of perceiving weather events. In this context, traditional Chinese artists showed the high regard for the interaction between weather phenomena and bodily perception and were devoted to depicting various weather-related atmospheres, primarily through landscape paintings. In this regard, negative weather was a particularly popular topic among Chinese artists. Negative weather events, such as rain, snow, fog, haze, smoke and mist, obscure the clarity of the sky, reduce the visibility of the surroundings and convey the impression of blurring and uncertainty. This enables perceiving individuals to participate more actively in atmospheric-aesthetic experiences.

In his representative monograph "The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams", the Chinese landscape painter Guo Xi (ca.1020–1090) wrote the following words, "The clouds and vapors of real landscapes are not the same at the four seasons. In spring, they are light and diffused, in summer rich and dense, in autumn scattered and thin, in winter dark and solitary." Guo intended to describe the interaction of clouds and water with the four seasons. The cycle of the seasons causes the regular changes of clouds and vapors and, in turn, the changes of clouds and vapors endow the four seasons with different atmospheric properties (spring: light and diffused, summer: rich and dense, autumn: scattered and thin, winter: dark and solitary). Based on this analysis, Guo made a short summary, "When such effects can be seen in pictures, the clouds and vapors have an air of life." On this basis, what is crucial for a landscape painter is not to exactly imitate the natural world, but to create an atmospheric effect which is related to a resonance space resulting from the perception of the interplay between mountains, rivers, vegetation and weather events.

Conclusion

Currently, weather aesthetics is still in its infancy. But, as a subject area of aesthetics of nature, it has considerable potential. The development of hi-technology has led to the situation that the sphere of cultivated nature is being incessantly expanded. In this connection, weather can be considered as an exception among natural objects and phenomena, for the reason that today it is still difficult for human beings to accurately predict weather conditions and effectively influence weather processes. Weather therefore displays the limits of human possibilities and reminds us that not every aspect of the natural world is subject to our control and can be changed at our will. In this regard, weather aesthetics plays a significant role in deepening our understanding of the human-nature-relationship under contemporary conditions. As Saito points out, "Accepting and submitting ourselves to a natural force that cannot be tamed by humans does not necessarily have to be a disappointing or frustrating experience. It can be a source of aesthetic pleasure, if we learn to humble ourselves to gratefully

receive and celebrate the positive aspects of its gift to us" (Saito, 2005, p. 172).

In the weather-related aesthetic research, special attention should be given to the concept of atmosphere. In fact, at least in the European cultural world, the aesthetic investigation of weather phenomena has largely evolved out of the aesthetic research of atmospheres. In a sense, the former constitutes an essential part of the latter. The concept of atmosphere reminds us that at different times, in different places, a thing may manifest itself differently. This manifestation is connected with the wholeness of what is being experienced at this moment, at this location. A decisive factor is not what we perceive, but how we perceive something. With this concept, we know that different ways of perceiving weather conditions may produce different forms of atmospheres. "Our experience of weather is thus thoroughly intertwined with and entrenched in our particular circumstances and activities, affecting and being affected by where we are and what we do" (Saito, 2005, p. 160). In this sense, the concept of atmosphere provides a vital contribution to the development of further perspectives of the sensual relationship with weather conditions.

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The Book and its Cover
**— *On the Recognition of Subject and Object in Arthur Danto's
Theory of Art and Axel Honneth's Recognition Theory***

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ABSTRACT. This paper investigates the social and political implications of Arthur Danto's theory of art by relating it to Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. It analyses Danto's notion of style and transfiguration in order to show that these concepts provide a basis for thinking of art in terms of a tripartite form of recognition, which involves not only subjects but also the object. Thereby the complementary question of what role the object can play within recognition theory is raised, highlighting the relevance of art in this regard.

1. Introduction

This paper offers a reading of Arthur Danto's theory of art that emphasizes its political implications by relating it to Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. In particular, it develops an interpretation of Danto's notions of style and transfiguration that makes it possible to think of his concept of art in terms of a form of recognition that involves both subjects and objects. In providing such a reading of Danto's theory, I also raise the question of what role art — and, by extension the object — can play within the intersubjective approach of Honneth's recognition theory. Because both Danto's and Honneth's theories are influenced by Hegel, I will also attempt to reconstruct some of their common points of reference in his philosophy, as well as their shared criticism of his approach.

Honneth's writing has — with few exceptions, as for example his article on Bob Dylan² — not been focused on art, as opposed to earlier

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² Honneth, Axel (2007), 'Verwirklichung von Freiheit - Bob Dylan und seine Zeit', in: A. Honneth, P. Kemper & R. Klein (eds.), *Bob Dylan — Ein Kongress*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, S.15f.

approaches to Critical Theory, such as those of Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin.³ Unlike these approaches, Honneth's recognition theory is not explicitly concerned with the relationship between art and the social realm. Nevertheless, I will try to show that, following Danto, art can be conceived in terms of recognition. This requires, however, that the object be conceived within the intersubjective relationship, an idea that is also pursued by Honneth⁴ and others,⁵ and which will be discussed more thoroughly in the second section of this paper.

If in art a tripartite form of recognition can be realized, the object must not only mediate the recognition of subjects, but also be recognized itself. This necessitates a concept of art which links the art object to the subjectivities of the artist and the beholder, but does not at the same time reduce it to those subjectivities. In other words, it must consider the object not simply as identical to the subject, but also in its difference from it. The practice of the artist is then not only relevant for the recognition of the beholder, but also for the recognition of the object, and the same would conversely pertain for the beholder. Arthur Danto's theory of art, as I will show in the first section of this paper, provides a concept of art that emphasizes the subjective qualities of the artwork, but, through a distinctive notion of style, also shows that it cannot be reduced to this subjectivity — and hence meets the aforementioned demand.

The following argument thus develops in three steps. First, it will delineate Danto's concept of art as presented in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, carving out its points of contact with recognition theory, which I mainly locate in his notion of style and transfiguration. Thereby I

³ See for example Adorno, Theodor W. (1970), *Ästhetische Theorie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. See also Adorno, Theodor W. (1971), *Noten zur Literatur I-III*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. And see furthermore Benjamin, Walter (2007), *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; Benjamin, Walter (1990), *Ursprung des Deutschen Trauerspiels*, in: Tiedemann, R. (ed.), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; and Benjamin, Walter (1977), *Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften*, in: *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften 1*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp (to name just a few.)

⁴ Honneth, Axel (2005), *Verdinglichung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

⁵ Quadflieg, Dirk (2011), 'Zur Dialektik von Verdinglichung und Freiheit Von Lukács zu Honneth – und zurück zu Hegel', *DZPhil*, vol. 59 (5), pp.701-715.

will show how, in Danto's theory, subjective and objective aspects of the artwork are mediated, in order to raise the question of whether the relationship to the artwork can be considered in terms of a tripartite form of recognition, which can itself be conceived in relation to a struggle for recognition (1). Then, Axel Honneth's recognition theory will be described, emphasizing the role of the object within his concept of intersubjectivity (2), in order to finally discuss how the two theories can be brought together (3). In doing so, I will also try to ascertain whether Danto's theory of art provides persuasive arguments for considering art in terms of a tripartite form of recognition.

2. Art, According to Danto

The starting point for the following considerations about Danto's theory of art is the cover of one of Danto's books,⁶ which can be understood as a metaphorical portrayal of some of his central ideas about art. The painting by Russell Connor⁷ printed on the book cover is a reinterpretation of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* from 1632.⁸ The original painting shows a group of scientists watching Dr. Nicolaes Tulp deliver a lecture standing next to a corpse, pointing with a pair of scissors at its dissected hand. In the image on the book cover, however, the corpse is replaced by what looks exactly like a commonplace brillo box: a white cube, with red and blue letters and graphical elements in the shape of a wave. One cannot actually discern from the mere visual appearance of the object whether what it depicts is a commonplace brillo box or Warhol's *Brillo Box*.

And this is exactly the starting point for Danto's analysis. His encounter with the works of Andy Warhol made him realize that a definition of art cannot be based upon mere appearance, because works of art can be

⁶ Danto, Arthur C. (1992), *Beyond the Brillo Box: The visual Arts in Post-historical Perspective*, New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux.

⁷ Connor, Russell (1991), *The Pundits and the Whatsit*, courtesy of the artist. See Appendix, image 1.

⁸ van Rijn, Rembrandt H. (1632), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, [Oil on canvas]. At: The Hague: Mauritshuis, viewed 12.11.17, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Anatomy_Lesson_of_Dr._Nicolaes_Tulp#/media/File:Rembrandt_Harmensz._van_Rijn_007.jpg. See Appendix, image 2.

indiscernible from their commonplace counterparts.⁹ They may look the same, but still have radically different ontological affiliations. Former definitions that were solely based on the appearance of artworks thus relied on criteria that the *Brillo Box* renders irrelevant.¹⁰ The replacement of the corpse by this new kind of object indicates that a certain way of philosophizing about art, which, according to Danto, had dominated art, finally ended with the *Brillo Box*.¹¹ Warhol's work thus poses a problem to classical philosophical conceptions of art, and therefore requires a new approach to aesthetic theory. In the following I will explain how Danto tries to solve this problem.

If a definition of art as a philosophical concept cannot solely be based upon appearance because of the indistinguishability of artworks from commonplace objects, then, according to Danto, the difference between art and mere things must be that art is *about* something.¹² To understand an artwork it is thus not sufficient to merely be concerned with how it looks; one also needs to grasp its meaning — and not simply judge a book by its cover, as the saying goes.

But because there are many representations that are not art, but that are still about something, the „aboutness“, as Danto calls it, cannot be a sufficient condition for art. Therefore a work of art cannot simply be reduced to its content. So the artwork's "cover," as it were, does matter after all. The difference between a work of art and a common representation is that art does not only represent a content, but does so in a particular way. This particular way of representing a content is the *style* of the artwork. It conveys meaning, but does so in a different way than the content alone.¹³ For Danto art thus has three aspects, namely its aboutness, its style and how

⁹ Danto, Arthur C. (1981), *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, preface.

¹⁰ When Danto speaks about art, he mainly refers to visual art (see Goehr, Lydia, (2008), *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 100), but often also to literature (see for example Danto, Arthur C. (1993), *Die philosophische Entmündigung der Kunst*, Trans. Lauer, Karen, München: Fink, 165ff.)

¹¹ See *ibid.*

¹² See *ibid.*, 3.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 148.

they are integrated within the work as embodied meaning — as meaning that is expressed not only through the content but also through the way this is embodied in the style of the work.¹⁴

The concept of style is significant for Danto's theory of art; in the following I will therefore portray it in more detail. Style, as Danto notes, is etymologically derived from the Latin word *stilus*, which denoted an instrument for writing.¹⁵ This instrument has the property of impressing something of its own character onto the surface it scores, so that the representation produced with it, in addition to representing whatever it represents, also represents how it was represented, namely through a particular *stilus*. Danto refers here to „[...] the palpable qualities of differing lines made with differing orders of stiluses: The toothed quality of pencil against paper, the granular quality of crayon against stone, the furred line thrown up as the drypoint needle leaves its wake of metal shavings, the varigated lines left by brushes, the churned lines made by sticks through viscous pigment [...]“.¹⁶ In light of this description, we can infer that the particular quality of the style is a result of the interaction between the *stilus* and the material it works on.

But the *stilus* does more than this; it not only impresses its own character in its interaction with the material, but is also influenced by the hand of the author who uses it. Therefore style, according to Danto, becomes to some extent a matter of autography — „Rembrandt's line, becoming his signature“.¹⁷ This observation leads Danto to Buffon's conclusion that „style is the man himself“.¹⁸ Danto's idea that through her style the artist externalizes herself in the artwork recalls Hegel's notion of „turning-oneself-into-a-thing“ (Sich zum Ding machen) which he develops in the *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, and which, as Dirk Quadflieg claims, is central for a tripartite concept of recognition — a thought I will return to in

¹⁴ See Danto, Arthur C. (2005), *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap Between Art and Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, p 10.

¹⁵ See *ibid.* Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 197.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198 (and again on page 201).

the second part of this paper.¹⁹

However, the man himself who is tangible in the style is, for Danto, not identical with his skills or his knowledge. This is because style, as he conceives it, is something that cannot be learned through training and discipline.²⁰ Style is, as it were, not simply a manner of doing art. In order to realize the style in an artwork the artist needs the appropriate skills, but these skills are not identical with the style. If someone learned to paint like Rembrandt, for example, her paintings would be just an imitation of Rembrandt's style, not his style itself. The style is something that is expressed spontaneously, and thus, to some degree, escapes the control of the subject.²¹ If self-control and self-determination are constituents of the modern conception to the subject,²² then the style introduces into the subject that which is not identical to it. Danto exemplifies this idea with the case of Ion, an interpretative artist who excels in reciting Homer, but who cannot, because of his particular style, recite any other poet convincingly. Ion has acquired the skill necessary to be an excellent interpretative artist. But if the excellence of his performance depended solely on this skill, then he would be able to recite anything equally well. Since this is not the case, obviously something else is needed and this, for Danto, is his particular style.

Although for Danto style is not under the subjective control of the artist, it is nevertheless (or perhaps precisely because of this) intimately bound to her. Therefore he supposes that what is important to us in art is the same as what is important for us in each other, "as if to appreciate the work is to see the world through the artist's sensibility [...]".²³ If the artwork, through its style, embodies the sensibility of the artist in this particular way, then a relationship to the artwork would resemble an interpersonal relationship, which could be construed in terms of recognition. What would be recognized in this relationship would not merely be the capacities or

¹⁹ See Quadflieg, Dirk (2011), 'Zur Dialektik von Verdinglichung und Freiheit Von Lukács zu Honneth – und zurück zu Hegel', *DZPhil*, vol. 59 (5), pp. 701-715.

²⁰ See *ibid.* Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 200ff.

²¹ See *ibid.*, 207.

²² See Menke, Christoph (2008), *Kraft - ein Grundbegriff philosophischer Anthropologie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 25ff.

²³ *Ibid.*, Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 160.

skills of the artist, but that which is not identical to her as a subject: namely, her style.

Danto further notes that style does not only refer to the individual artist, but also to the general style of a period. This for him is not a contradiction, because he sees the structure of an epoch not just as objective but as analogous to the structure of subjectivity: they both seem to have an inside and an outside. Accordingly, artworks enable us not only to see the world through the artist's sensibility, but also to experience the interior of a cultural period.²⁴ Although Danto at this point doesn't pursue this thought further, his closing remarks of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* emphasize the relationship between art and its epoch. An artwork is a form of „externalizing a way of viewing the world, expressing the interior of a cultural period, offering itself as a mirror to catch the conscience of our kings.“²⁵ So the artwork, for him does not only externalize the individual style of the artist, but also expresses something about the cultural period.

Although Danto does not explicate this idea more fully, it is clear that the particular subjectivity of the artist and the general world view of a cultural period must be somehow mediated within the style of the artwork. This mediation could be explained if one looks at the *stilus* in terms of Hegel's concept of the tool, which does not only reflect the individual will of its particular user, but, as a lasting cultural good, also the needs of many others, and the tradition of its use, as I will elucidate further in the last section of this paper. In this way, the style of a period would be mediated with the style of the artist through the first aspect of the style mentioned, namely the *stilus*, the tool in interaction with the material.

So although Danto emphasizes the closeness of the artist to the artwork, it is important to note that the artwork for him is not entirely identical with the artist as a subject. On one hand, the style is shaped by the

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 205.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

This last sentence actually refers to the play within a play, staged by Hamlet to generate evidence for the crimes committed by the king against Hamlet's father. This is a hint at the underlying political implications of Danto's theory of art, because what he seems to be saying is that art can disclose truth about the interior of a cultural period, namely about its hidden structures of power and dominion and the suffering caused by it.

stilus, the instrument itself and its interaction with the material, and through this also by the general world view of a historical period. And on the other hand, the style is also that which in the subject is not identical to it. What impresses itself in the artwork is therefore partially something that resists the particular subjectivity of its author. In the artwork the artist turns herself into a thing, as Hegel would call it, but she doesn't make the thing identical to her subjectivity; rather, she partially renounces her subjectivity in it. Although the interaction with the artwork does resemble an interpersonal exchange, it thus also differs from it. And this two-sidedness of the artwork is precisely what makes all interaction with it so unique.

Danto further describes style as having *metaphoric* properties. Just as a metaphor transforms its content, so too artworks, through their style, enable a metaphorical transformation of their content. The structure of such a transformation is that *a* is represented as *b*, which means that the subject retains its identity, and at the same time turns into something else.²⁶ *The Anatomy Lesson* (a) for example, is presented as a lesson on the *Brillo Box* (b), but is still recognizable as *The Anatomy Lesson*. Its transformation is therefore only metaphorical — a phenomenon that Danto calls transfiguration.

But how does this transfiguration actually occur? How can we, for example, understand a depiction of the *Brillo Box* being looked at by some antiquated scientists as the shattering of a paradigm? In other words, how is it possible to understand a metaphor? As Danto explains, in order for *a*, to be metaphorically transformed into *b*, a middle term *t* is needed, which can mediate between the two.²⁷ The corpse in *The Anatomy Lesson* and the *Brillo Box* on the book cover stand in the same position to the research praxis of the scientists, but the *Brillo Box* reveals the inadequacy of this relationship and therefore shows that the research paradigm embodied by the scientists must come to an end.

What this consideration about the metaphoric structure of the artwork shows, for Danto, is that it can be understood as a syllogism with a missing term; more precisely, as an enthymematic syllogism, described by

²⁶ See *ibid.*, Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 167.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 171.

Aristotle as lacking either a premise or the conclusion, which therefore needs to be filled in by the reader herself.²⁸ The reason Danto refers to this enthymematic structure is not to say that all artworks are enthymemes in a narrow sense, but rather that they have an open structure like enthymemes. An enthymeme, as Danto further notes, is not only a rhetorical form, but also a form of social interaction between the framer and the reader of the enthymeme.²⁹ So the artwork, because of its enthymematic structure, enables something similar to a social interaction to occur.

Through this interaction the artwork becomes a metaphor for the life of the beholder, and she becomes transfigured. Accordingly the transfiguration of the commonplace must be understood as a metaphorical transformation of the subjectivity of the viewer, or of the reader respectively.³⁰ The greatest such metaphors for Danto are those in which the beholder can see herself in terms of the life depicted, which for Danto entails „[...] the not unfamiliar experience of being taken out of oneself by art“.³¹ This description of the experience of seeing oneself in another and thereby being taken out of oneself resembles, as I will show later in more detail, Hegel’s description of the recognition of the natural self in the interpersonal relationship of love — which according to Honneth is the basis for all other forms of recognition.³² The interaction with the artwork thus seems to produce something similar, although not identical, to an intersubjective form of recognition

The experience of transfiguration is only a metaphorical transformation; but, for Danto, this does not mean that it cannot change the spectator. On the contrary, artistic metaphors are in some way true: „To see oneself as Anna [Karenina], is in some way to *be* Anna, and to see one’s life as her life, so as to be changed by experience of being her.“³³ This suggests that art, albeit not immediately, can have effects on a social or political

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 170.

²⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 173.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Honneth, Axel (1992), *Kampf um Anerkennung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 172.

³³ *Ibid.*, Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 173.

praxis. Therefore Danto's theory bears political implications related to Honneth's idea of a struggle for recognition. Peter Weiss's novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, for example, makes these political implications of Danto's concept tangible: In the opening scene we find the transfiguration and its political meaning described, when the narrator meets with his friends in the *Pergamon Museum* in Berlin, in 1937, to discuss their perceptions of the Pergamum frieze. They see themselves embodied by the giants, who are crushed by the Olympian Gods, and realize that the oppression depicted reflects the repression of the slaves who built it, subsequently recognizing themselves and their political struggle in the slaves who might have looked at the frieze hundreds of years ago with the same urge for liberation.³⁴

Another example of such a transfiguration is provided by Danto's book itself: *The Transfiguration of The Commonplace* is actually the title of a book by Sandy Stranger, a character from Muriel Spark's novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. By adapting the title of Sandy's book for his own, Danto is, as it were, transfigured into Sandy. Through the course of the novel Sandy liberates herself from the authoritarian influence of her teacher Miss Brodie and finally puts an end to her teachings, which attempted to indoctrinate the pupils with the ideology of fascism.³⁵ Similarly, Danto's theory of art, developed in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, also aims at a liberation, namely at the liberation of art from a philosophical paradigm which it had been disenfranchised by.³⁶ Accordingly he writes that while the great metaphysical systems „designed the universe as a kind of prison for art“³⁷ he instead intended to set art free from this philosophical oppression and turn the „Bildungsroman of art history“ into „a Freiheitsroman — the story of freedom gained or regained.“³⁸ One could say, then, that Danto's attempted liberation of art was inspired by being

³⁴ See Weiss, Peter (2005), *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 9ff.

³⁵ See Spark, Muriel (2000), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, London: Penguin Books.

³⁶ See Goehr, Lydia (2008), *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press. 85ff.

³⁷ Danto, Arthur C. (1998), 'The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense', *History and Theory*, vol. 37 (4), 135.

³⁸ Ibid.

transfigured into Sandy.

Danto regarded his theory as liberationist because it brought a philosophical narrative, according to which art progressively converges with knowledge until it steps over into the sphere of philosophy, to a decisive end. He interprets the knowledge that is progressively achieved in this model as the self-knowledge of art history, which ends in its own fulfillment, namely in the knowledge of what art is.³⁹ Once this knowledge is achieved — a knowledge Danto tried to articulate in his theoretical writings⁴⁰ — art as interpreted by the old paradigm ends. This, though, is not the end of art as such, but rather the end of art's domination by that paradigm. So actually art is then set free.⁴¹

If art is, however, both subjective and objective, and enables a tripartite form of recognition (as suggested by the analysis above), this liberation of art must actually be directed toward subject and object alike, or rather to the transformation of their relationship. Accordingly, Danto criticizes Hegel's concept of absolute spirit, in which art steps over into the sphere of philosophy and the object is after all reduced to subjectivity⁴². Not unlike Honneth,⁴³ Danto sees this notion of absolute spirit, or absolute knowledge, as fatally flawed.⁴⁴ But he nevertheless notes that contemporary art is drifting, in line with Hegel's assumption, toward a condition in which art is to such an extent permeated by theoretical consciousness that within it

³⁹ See Danto, Arthur C. (1993), *Die philosophische Entmündigung der Kunst*, Trans. Lauer, Karen, München: Fink, 137.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, Goehr, Lydia (2008).

According to Goehr, Danto does not claim that he alone provided the concept of what art is, but rather that the concept of art was finally realized by the works themselves, which was made explicit through his philosophical interpretation. And this again is reflected in Danto's gesture of adapting the title of Sandy's book for his own: *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* as a book within a book would have been, according to Mrs. Spark, about art as she practices it (see, Danto, Arthur C. (1981), p1). Sandy's book thus contains a poetological reflection about its own making; it is a subtle piece of self-reflexivity within the novel. By adapting the title of Sandy's book Danto turns this self-reflection into a theory of art. His theory therefore seems to have emerged, as it were, from within a work of art.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 89.

⁴² See Danto, Arthur C. (1993), 143.

⁴³ See Honneth, Axel (1992), S. 31, 32 and 67.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, Danto, Arthur C. (1993), 143.

the object has almost become identical with the subject, and the difference between art and philosophy has nearly disappeared.⁴⁵ So it seems, when Danto was trying to liberate art from its “metaphysical prison” in philosophy, he was also aiming at a reconfiguration of this relationship between subject and object.

The problem posed by the schism of subject and object, which is actualized in art and in its relationship to philosophy, can, according to Danto, be resolved neither by entirely subjectifying the object and turning art into philosophy, nor by thinking of art and philosophy in antithetical terms, and thereby treating art as a mere object. In his essays on the relationship between philosophy and literature he demonstrates how, starting with Plato, philosophy, throughout history, came to define itself through the debasement and the oppression of poetry.⁴⁶ For him, this disregard of poetry expresses itself as much in the view that denies any difference between them,⁴⁷ as in the false assumption that philosophy and literature are simply opposed and must be strictly separated.⁴⁸ Therefore he argues that philosophy must restore poetry's — or more generally speaking, literature's — dignity by ceasing to treat it as a mere object and at the same time acknowledge its difference from philosophy.⁴⁹ It is worthwhile noticing here that Danto's description of the relationship between philosophy and art, and by extension between subject and object, makes use of a vocabulary otherwise applied to describe relationships of recognition (i.e., to save the dignity of literature) and misrecognition (i.e., the debasement and the oppression and of poetry). This brings me to the next stage of my argument, in which I will delineate some of the main ideas of Axel Honneth's recognition theory, in order to discuss whether and how they can be connected to Danto's theory of art, as this has been portrayed throughout the previous section.

⁴⁵ Danto probably refers here to art which was considered „contemporary” in the 80ies, when *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* was published.

⁴⁶ See Danto, Arthur C (1993), *Die philosophische Entmündigung der Kunst*, Trans. Lauer, Karen, München: Fink. 199.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 195.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 198ff.

Before I do so, however, allow me to briefly sum up my argument. So far, I have pointed out that Danto's concepts of style and transfiguration can be construed in a way which provides arguments for thinking about art in terms of a tripartite form of recognition, in which the relationship between subject and object is transformed. What is recognized in this relationship is not only the subjectivity of the artist or the beholder, because what is externalized in the artwork is also that which is not identical with these subjectivities. Furthermore, the recognition is not limited to the relationship of the artist and the beholder, but is also given to the art object which is neither identical to an externalization of the artist nor of the beholder.

The enthymematic structure of the artwork enables something similar to a social interaction, but not identical with it. This is because the externalization of the artist within the art object is, on the one hand, not identical with her subjectivity; but, on the other hand, through the artist's style the character of the tool in interaction with a material remainder also impresses itself on the artwork. These components of the style are mediated with the aboutness of the artwork in such a way that it becomes what Danto calls „embodied meaning“. Furthermore, the enthymematic structure of the artwork allows the viewer to be taken out of herself and behold herself in another, in other words, i.e., to be transfigured — an experience which, in Hegel's terms, resembles the experience of love as a recognition of the natural self. Although the viewer's subjectivity thereby enters the artwork through the enthymematic gap, she does not make the object identical to herself.

In the artwork the object thus becomes neither identical to the subjectivity of the artist nor to that of the viewer, but remains different from both. Therefore it is possible to speak of a tripartite interaction, in which the object doesn't only mediate intersubjective recognition, but is recognized itself. If art engages subject and object in the way described, then a struggle for recognition must take this into account. A liberation of the subject implies, as it were, a transformation of subject and object. And a liberation of art, as attempted by Danto, aims at such a transformation as well.

3. Recognition, According to Honneth

In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Axel Honneth has, based on the *Jenaer Realphilosophie* of the young Hegel, developed a normative social theory in which intersubjective recognition is the driving force for a social development, which leads at the same time to an increase in individual freedom and to a universalization of equality claims across different social groups. It aims at a concept of ethical life which can integrate social equality and individual freedom, a task which, according to Honneth, Hegel, against his own intention, failed to fulfill.⁵⁰

According to Honneth, recognition is rooted in intersubjective relationships of love and friendship, in legally institutionalized relationships, and in social networks of solidarity.⁵¹ However, these relationships are not a given. Throughout history members of marginalized groups have been denied recognition. And this means that they had, and still have, to endure the non-recognition of the inviolability of their physical integrity, the dignity of their status as persons, and the worth of their way of life.⁵² The aforementioned relationships thus had and still have to be established on an individual level, as well as on a societal level — which is what Honneth describes as the social struggle for recognition.

A denial of recognition manifests itself in different kinds of impairments of the relation to the self, which according to Honneth are usually described in terms of metaphors that refer to states of deterioration of the human body.⁵³ He mentions, for example, psychological death, scars, injuries and physical illness. Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson* can be regarded as a metaphor for such misrecognition, as W.G. Sebald suggests in his book *The Rings of Saturn*. According to him, it shows the dissection of the body of Adriaan Adriaanszoon, who had previously been executed for a burglary. Sebald perceives this not as a purely scientific procedure, but as an archaic ritual, the torture of the flesh, which, according to him, was then still part of

⁵⁰ See Honneth, Axel (1992), *Kampf um Anerkennung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 97ff.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 148ff.

⁵² See *ibid.*, 212ff.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, 218.

the legal code for punishing crimes such as thievery. Sebald further notes that the depiction of the hand in Rembrandt's painting looks like a depiction from an anatomy atlas, which according to him corresponds to the Cartesian view that strives to see through the inscrutable flesh of the human into the machine, which is entirely comprehensible and can be exploited for work, repaired if necessary, or thrown away as useless, if not needed anymore.⁵⁴

In Sebald's interpretation, the image thus shows two forms of misrecognition: the violation of the physical integrity of Adrianzoon's body, and the impairment of the dignity of his status as a person. Sebald associates this misrecognition with a philosophical paradigm, namely the Cartesian worldview, which divides the world into a strict dichotomy of spirit and matter, subject and object. The strict separation of subject and object leads to a conception of subjectivity which denies the recognition of everything that is not identical with the subject, and thereby gives way to reification of subjects and objects alike.

The antithesis of subject and object in the Cartesian worldview, according to Adorno, impedes —just like the undifferentiated identity of subject and object in Hegel's idealist philosophy, which Danto, too, has criticized — a reconciliation of subject and object; this would instead be imagined as a communication of the differenced (*Kommunikation des Unterschiedenen*) whereby the concept of communication would come into place as objective communication.⁵⁵ So it seems that the misrecognition Sebald describes in his interpretation of Rembrandt's painting will only end if we change our conception of the relationship between subject and object and develop a notion in which both are reciprocally mediated through each other. These considerations lead to the thought that a struggle for recognition can only succeed if our conception of the relationship between subject and object is transformed.

In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Axel Honneth reconstructs Hegel's concept of recognition mainly in terms of intersubjectivity, although he does

⁵⁴ See Sebald, W.G. (1997), *Die Ringe des Saturn*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 22ff.

⁵⁵ Adorno, T.W (1977), 'Zu Subjekt und Objekt', in: Adorno, T.W., *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, collected works, vol.10.2, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 744 (§2).

mention the relevance of objects when, in his description of love as interpersonal recognition, he refers to Donald W. Winnicott's theory of the transitional object (Theorie des Übergangsobjekts) and its meaning within the development of a relationship of recognition between caregiver and child.⁵⁶ According to this reconstruction the transitional object belongs to an intermediary space in which the contradictory experiences of a fusion and a separation of an inner subjective and an outer objective reality is mediated. And the child's play with these objects is considered a prototype for all complex forms of such mediation, as for example in art or religion. In Honneth's account, however, transitional objects are neither recognized, nor do they mediate recognition between child and caregiver. It is rather the other way around: the experience of mutual recognition, according to him, is a condition for the child to engage in the play with the transitional object.

The idea that objects are relevant for intersubjective recognition becomes more explicit in Honneth's later essay on the notion of reification *Verdinglichung - eine anerkennungstheoretische Studie*, where he suggests that recognition of objects is indeed possible.⁵⁷ Drawing from Adorno's writings, he argues that the perspective of the caregiver is remembered by the child as an aspect of the object. This leads, as it were, to the transference of libidinal cathexis from the caregiver to the object, whereby meaning which the caregiver perceived in the object is attributed to the object itself. This means that, "The recognition of the individuality of other persons demands of us, to perceive objects in the distinctiveness of all their aspects, which the people in their particular perspective associate with them."⁵⁸ Hence, recognition must be given to objects, insofar as within them the perspectives of other persons are respected. A misrecognition of the object would then be tantamount to a misrecognition of the people who associate meaning with them.

This argument is embedded in an overarching line of thought, which

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, Honneth, Axel (1992), 153ff.

⁵⁷ See Honneth, Axel (2005), *Verdinglichung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 77.

⁵⁸ Honneth, Axel (2005) *Reification: a Recognition-Theoretical View*, The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at University of California, Berkeley, March 14–16 2005, 133.

reinterprets Lukács' notion of reification as an epistemological concept, namely as oblivion of recognition (Anerkennungsvergessenheit). According to this idea, recognition (Anerkennung) has a primacy as compared to cognition (Erkennen). When the primary recognition is forgotten, then the interaction-partner is reified and perceived merely as an object without any subjective qualities.⁵⁹ This idea can also be applied to objects, which become reified when their recognition is forgotten. Reification of objects would then mean that they are regarded as mere objects without any subjective qualities.

With regard to the question of a tripartite form of recognition, however, this idea doesn't reach far enough. After all, to perceive objects in the distinctiveness of all the aspects that people in their particular perspectives associate with them mainly aims at the recognition of the perspectives of these people, which is indeed something that should be recognized; but the object in this constellation seems to be recognized only for its subjective qualities, as a carrier of the meaning that has been attributed to it — its aboutness, in Danto's terms— but not for those qualities which are not identical with this meaning. So in the end what seems to be recognized in the object is only the subject. This means, as Dirk Quadflieg notes, that the reinterpretation of reification as an oblivion of recognition comes at the expense of a notion of reification of outer nature — which, for Horkheimer and Adorno, was the actual cause of reification.⁶⁰

Quadflieg instead wants to pursue a notion of reification that follows Adorno's idea of a „precedence of the object“ (Vorrang des Objekts), which acknowledges that while both the subject and the object are reciprocally mediated through each other, the subject, because of its own „thingness“ (Dinghaftigkeit), is asymmetrically bound to the object. The „thingness“ of the subject for Adorno (and Quadflieg) then does not coincide with its „reification“. Reification rather comes to denote a rigid separation of subject and object, which, as Quadflieg notes, is the foundation of the modern conception of the autonomous subject. It's a conception which is internally flawed because, at the origin of autonomy, as Quadflieg writes, there is a

⁵⁹ See, *ibid.*, Honneth, Axel (2005), *Verdinglichung*.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, Quadflieg, Dirk (2011), 708.

spontaneity which relies on an irrational impulse, on a mimetic behavior as Adorno would call it, or, in Danto's terms, on the style.

Because the thingness of the subject for Quadflieg is not equivalent to the reification of the subject and the object alike, he suggests reintroducing the object into the intersubjective relationship, by emphasizing Hegel's concept of „turning oneself into a thing” („sich zum Ding Machen”).⁶¹ This is a concept that Quadflieg claims is a precondition for recognition in the *Jenaer Realphilosophie*. Recognition here depends, according to Quadflieg, on a partial renunciation of the absoluteness of the self, which can only be realized if the self, through labour, turns itself into an object and exchanges it with other subjects. In this exchange, Quadflieg argues, against the backdrop of Marcel Mauss's study on the gift exchange, the self actually doesn't just give an object, but itself, and thereby renounces its absoluteness in the interaction with the other. Intersubjective recognition, according to Quadflieg, is thus mediated through the exchange of objects.⁶²

Besides the fact that the predominant mode of exchange today seems to leave almost no space for the mediation of recognition through objects, this conception also might run a certain risk of again reducing the tripartite recognition to an intersubjective relationship. The risk depends on how the process of turning oneself into a thing is understood. If turning oneself into a thing means that the thing becomes subjective without remainder, then the object in the exchange seems to function solely as an externalization of the subject, but not of that which in the object (and in the subject) is not identical with the subject. The renunciation of the subject would then lie in the act of giving a piece of itself in the exchange with other subjects — which means, indeed, that in the exchange, a form of intersubjective recognition could potentially be realized; but it does not imply an abnegation of the absoluteness of the subject with regard to the object. It therefore seems as though in this relationship the object mediates intersubjective recognition, but once again isn't recognized itself.

A recognition of the object would, on the contrary, require that the object is not only recognized in its subjectiveness but also in its

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 709.

⁶² See *ibid.*

objectiveness, and that the subject does not simply externalize itself in the object but also renounces its subjectivity in the interaction with it, and not just through its exchange. Artworks, as I have argued on the basis of Danto's concept of art, correspond to these demands. They seem to possess certain qualities which could, despite their commodity form, enable the realization of a tripartite form of recognition. This recognition implies a transformation of the relationship between subject and object in such a way that the object is no longer subjugated by the subject; which means that this recognition is opposed to the cause of reification. The realization of a three relational form of recognition in the artwork thus counteracts its commodity form. — I do however want to acknowledge that there is no guarantee of a tripartite recognition being realized by any particular work of art. On the contrary, artworks can also imply misrecognition of both subject and object alike; for example, if the artist or the spectator subjugates the object entirely to her subjectivity by using it to glorify a concept, or if the artwork is used to manipulate the spectators, or if it is reduced to a mere commodity. In those cases the tripartite recognition would be impaired. Furthermore the prohibition and destruction of artworks, as for example executed by the Nazis with their policy of “degenerate art” (entartete Kunst), can also be understood as a form of misrecognition of viewers, artists and art objects alike.

4. On the Recognition of Subject and Object in Art

The *Brillo Box* does not deny that art has become reified; on the contrary, it openly presents itself as a supermarket-commodity. Nevertheless, it remains, as Danto has shown, in some way different from such commodities; something in the artwork thus seems to resist its reification. What can resist the reification from within the artwork is, as I will try to show in the following, a tripartite form of recognition.

The key to this tripartite form of recognition is Danto's notion of style. The style is intimately bound to the artist, which is why Danto claims, as I have noted earlier, that what is important to us in art is the same as what

is important for us in each other.⁶³ Our relationship to the artwork hence resembles an interpersonal relationship. And like our interpersonal relationships, our relationship to art can be construed in terms of recognition.

The style is, however, not identical to the subjectivity of the artist — understood in terms of a modern concept of the subject, which gains its autonomy through the subjugation of the object to its own mental activity — because the spontaneity of the style seems to be an unintentional moment, similar to what Adorno has called the mimetic component of the artwork, which cannot be integrated into such a conception of the subject.⁶⁴ This unintentional aspect of the style is important in Danto's concept of art, but the artwork is not exclusively defined by it, because the style is mediated with the aboutness of the work, its meaning, or its expressive side, in which the subject articulates itself as a self-conscious being.

Besides this, the style also has further aspects; it is not only an expression of the artist (or rather of that which is not identical to her as a subject), but also of the *stilus*, or more generally speaking the tool with which it is produced in interaction with the material. It thus comprises a material remainder which is not subjectified. Furthermore the style also expresses the interior of a cultural period, as Danto argues. Although he doesn't elaborate this idea fully, he implies that through the artwork we can relate to the interior of a cultural period in much the same way that we relate to the interior of the artist — so that, when we look at an artwork, the spirit of the age (*der Zeitgeist*) virtually looks back at us.

Danto provides no explanation of how both the general *Zeitgeist* of the period and the interior of the artist can be mediated within the artwork. I have therefore suggested that this mediation could be provided by the third aspect of the style, namely the *stilus*. To further elaborate this thought, I suggested that we draw on Hegel's remarks about "the tool" in the *Jenaer*

⁶³ Ibid., Danto, Arthur C. (1981), 160.

⁶⁴ For a similar reading of this parallel in Danto and Adorno see Lydia Goehr's essay *For the Birds/Against the Birds: Modernist Narratives on the End of Art* in: Goehr, Lydia (2008), *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 79-135; with regard to the mimetic component of the artwork see especially p 99-100.

Realphilosophie, a thought which I will now explicate further: Danto's idea that the artist externalizes herself in the artwork by making use of the *stilus* corresponds to Hegel's thought that the movement of „turning oneself into a thing” depends crucially on the use of tools, which mediate between the self and the object. The tool, however, does not only reflect the individual will of its particular user, but, as a lasting cultural good, also the tradition of its use and the needs of many others.⁶⁵ The self thus possesses the content of its desire in the use of the tool, and the cultivated land processed with it, not as an individual end, but as a universal, as Hegel writes („In dem Werkzeuge oder in dem bebauten fruchtbar gemachten Acker, besitze ich [...] den Inhalt als einen allgemeinen [...]“⁶⁶). Accordingly one could argue that the *stilus* as a tool mediates the imprint of the artist's style through the tradition of its use and the wants of the many others engraved in it. This would mean that the spontaneous expression of the artist is mediated by the use of the tool through this universality. Therefore the style of the artwork is not exclusively defined by the spontaneous self-expression of the artist.

In Quadflieg's reinterpretation of Hegel's text, the use of the tool can be conceived as one of the first forms of mediating an intersubjective relationship through the thing, although the wants of the subjects are present in the tool only in an abstract manner. As opposed to this, one could argue with Danto that in the case of art, the *stilus* comes to mediate not only subjectivities but also that which is not identical to the subject. The relationship mediated thereby would thus not be identical with an intersubjective relationship. In the artwork the artist turns herself into a thing, as Hegel and Quadflieg would call it, but she doesn't make the thing identical to her subjectivity. The partial renunciation of her subjectivity implied by this is therefore different from the renunciation achieved through exchanging an object that is an externalization of the subject. In the latter case the renunciation concerns the relationship between subjects, while in

⁶⁵ For a similar reading see Quadflieg, Dirk (2011), 'Zur Dialektik von Verdinglichung und Freiheit Von Lukács zu Honneth – und zurück zu Hegel', *DZPhil*, vol. 59 (5), 710.

⁶⁶ Hegel, Georg.W.F. (1987), *Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes*, in: Horstmann, R.-P. (ed.), Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 189.

the former case, the subject also desists from exerting absolute power over the object. This difference allows a tripartite interaction that could generate a form of recognition in which the object does not only mediate, but is recognized itself.

Like the artist, the spectator also renounces herself in the artwork. The style of the artwork introduces what was earlier described as an enthymematic gap or an open structure, through which the subjectivity of the spectator can be transfigured when she interacts with it. When she fills this structural gap, she turns the artwork, like the artist, partially into herself. However, she thereby does not make the artwork entirely identical to herself, because when she is transfigured she also beholds herself in the other and is thus „taken out of herself“.

The experience of transfiguration so described by Danto is, as I have already indicated, again reminiscent of Hegel's *Jenaer Realphilosophie*— in particular to his description of the recognition of the natural self in the experience of love. When the self beholds itself in the other („...wie es im Andern sich anschaut“⁶⁷), it becomes, according to Hegel, being for the other, and is then outside of itself („... es ist außer sich.“⁶⁸). So, just like in the spectator's transfiguration, the self, in the experience of love, beholds itself in the other and is thereby taken out of itself. The experience of transfiguration is thus similar to Hegel's account of the experience of love, which Axel Honneth in *The Struggle for Recognition* refers to as the most basic form of recognition, the core, as it were, of all other forms of recognition.⁶⁹

Furthermore, love, as Quadflieg mentions, implies for Hegel the necessity of an objectification.⁷⁰ Therefore it seems to have — like art — a tripartite structure. According to Hegel the lovers need to see their love externalized in the family property, which like the tool is considered a universal (ein Allgemeines).⁷¹ The object is thereby turned into a mental

⁶⁷ Ibid., 192.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 193.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, Honneth, Axel (1992), 172.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, Quadflieg, Dirk (2011), 710.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, Hegel, G.F.W. (1987), 195.

property (geistiger Besitz), as Hegel calls it. This mental property, however, is somewhat deficient, because it is not self-conscious and therefore it cannot realize that it is recognition.⁷² So the love that is externalized in it is only realized by the lovers, but not by itself. It is only in the child — another subjectivity — that the externalized love comes to realize itself. For Hegel it is thus in the child that love as intersubjective recognition is fully realized, because in it the self-conscious unity of the lovers (namely love) becomes itself self-conscious („in ihm schauen sie ihre Liebe an, ihre selbstbewusste Einheit, als selbstbewusste“).⁷³ So it seems that for Hegel, love understood as recognition aspires to be resolved in a relationship that is purely intersubjective (a self-conscious unity of self-consciousnesses).

The tripartite structure of the artwork, as it involves the object, is thus not identical to the tripartite structure of love as envisioned by Hegel. It nevertheless resembles it, because the artwork does to some degree externalize the subjectivities of the artist and the spectator; it externalizes them, but it does so neither like the child nor like the family property, because it is not self-conscious like a child, and is distinguished from mere property by its embodied meaning — its aboutness mediated by the style. Through the aboutness, a subjective aspect is introduced into the artwork, while through the style something else is introduced: namely, something which is an externalization of the subject, but is at the same time not identical to it; and which, as noted before, resembles what Adorno has called the mimetic component of the artwork (a component which in turn might also be involved in love). Furthermore it involves the *stilus* and its interaction with the material. In the style of the artwork there is thus something that resists the subjectivities of the artist and the spectator. Therefore the tripartite relationship realized in the artwork is not exclusively intersubjective, but comprises an objective moment, and accordingly the recognition provided in such a relationship is not purely intersubjective. The object is involved in this not just as a mediator, or in its identity with the subject, but also in its difference. This, then, is how in art, a tripartite form of recognition can be realized.

⁷² See Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

A tripartite form of recognition implies a transformation of the relationship between subject and object; and such transformation is necessary, because as we have seen, conceiving of the relationship between subject and object in a way which either opposes them antithetically and denies their reciprocal mediation, or makes the object identical to the subject, leads to reification and misrecognition. This relationship of misrecognition hence must be transformed into a „communication of the differenced,” as Adorno has called it. If art can provide a tripartite form of recognition as I have suggested, this transformation could be realized — a transformation, which would not only be a liberation of the object from the subjugation by the subject, but subsequently also of the subject itself, or more precisely of that which in it is not identical to it. Accordingly, Danto, like Honneth, criticizes Hegel’s concept of absolute knowledge in which the object is reduced to subjectivity, and tries to liberate art from the philosophical paradigm based on this assumption. Danto’s attempt to liberate art, one can infer from this, was thus also directed toward a transformation of the relationship between subject and object.

This once more brings to mind the book cover of Danto’s book: The dissection of Adrianzoon’s body — which, following Sebald’s interpretation, shows a form of misrecognition based on a misconstrual of the relationship between subject and object — also reflects the misrecognition of art by the paradigm which Danto wanted to bring to an end. This paradigm ultimately leads to the transmutation of art in philosophy and a denial of its objective side, which can be conceived, according to the argument developed throughout this paper, as a denial of a tripartite form of recognition, and therefore as an expression of the subjugation of the object; and this then leads to the reification of outer nature, expressed for example in the perception of the body as a mere a machine. The replacement of the corpse by the Brillo Box on Danto’s book cover can thus be conceived as an invocation of the necessity of a transformation of this paradigm. This is an impression further corroborated by the observation that the book — which in Rembrandt’s painting prominently lies on the right side in the foreground, and seems to be the focus of the scientific audience in the painting — has disappeared. The liberation of art, which Danto was trying to achieve,

therefore seems to go hand in hand with liberation from a paradigm that denies a tripartite form of recognition.

Appendix



image 1: Russell Connor (1991), *The Pundits and the Whatsit*, courtesy of the artist



image 2: Rembrandt H. van Rijn (1632), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, Oil on canvas, at: The Hague: Mauritshuis

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Pictorial Understanding

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ABSTRACT. It is often said that when we appraise the epistemic value of images, we must accord a special status to photographs, since photographs bear an indexical relation to the objects that they depict. In this paper, I shall argue that this does not capture all the ways in which pictorial representations can be epistemically valuable. Images can also have value as an independent source of understanding by providing insightful ways of modelling the world and the relations we bear to it. This way, handmade images may allow us to grasp general truths about the things depicted even if such images do not possess the indexical quality which makes photographs epistemically valuable.

1.

Many philosophers argue that when we appraise the epistemic value of images, we must accord a special status to photographs, since photographs can guarantee their own truthfulness in a way that handmade pictures cannot. Although there are many accurate drawings and paintings, such pictures cannot guarantee that they are truthful just by virtue of being drawings or paintings, since they are not produced in the same mechanically reliable way as photographs.

Different authors proffer different explanations as to why photography has a special evidentiary status. According to Kendall Walton (1984), photographs are special, because they provide an indirect means of seeing the very scene that they depict. According to Robert Hopkins (2012), photographs are special not because they provide an indirect means of seeing the depicted object, but because they allow us to perceive that certain facts obtained at a certain point in time. They enable propositional seeing, so to say. According to Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskin (2004), photographs have special value as evidence (which paintings and drawings

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lack), since they bear an objective probabilistic relation to the visually accessible properties of the represented objects.

My objective here is not to decide which of these proposals is correct. Instead, I am interested in whether epistemic value is medium specific in the sense that these authors would seem to suggest. If it is, then we must make a sharp division between what roles we allow various kinds of pictures to play in scientific and forensic work. While drawings and other handmade pictures may be excellent as illustrations that transmit knowledge which we have already acquired, we cannot rely on them to acquire new knowledge in the same way as we can rely on photographs to acquire new knowledge.

In many ways, this is a natural view to take. In a court room, a photo of the accused at the crime scene will, all things considered, be more incriminating than a drawing with the same content. The former counts as weightier evidence precisely because the photograph provides a more reliable indication that the accused was present at the scene. By contrast, the drawing carries little if any evidentiary weight, since its production is not counterfactually dependent on anyone's presence at the scene.

All the same, it is worth asking if this is the only way that a picture can have epistemic value. In the following, I shall argue that it is not, since being good evidence is not the only way that a picture may be epistemically valuable. Even if drawings and paintings lack the evidentiary standing of photography, they can still have significant value as representations which support inferences that enable us to grasp general truths about what is represented (§2).

I shall consider three ways of accounting for why pictures have this quality: that they support inferences about what they depict, because they resemble what they depict; that they support such inferences, because they exemplify properties of what they depict; and the deflationary view that this simply is part of what it is for something to be a picture (§3). I shall argue that whichever of these accounts is right, pictures can have epistemic value as long as they enable us to make correct inferences about the depicted object. To have this value, pictures need not also guarantee that the inference is to a true conclusion (§4).

2.

It is worth noting that all the views that I have considered so far give the same type of explanation as to why photography is superior to manual ways of picture-making. According to this type of explanation, photography has special value as evidence, because it puts us in some kind of perceptual contact with a particular object or scene. According to Walton, photographs allow us to literally see into the past. According to Hopkins, photographs allow us to see facts which obtained in the past. According to Cohen and Meskin, photographs allow us to perceive properties which bear an objective probabilistic relation to the visually accessible properties of the represented objects. By contrast, drawings presumably cannot secure the same kind of perceptual contact with the things they depict, since they are not the result of any tracing process that is comparable to the photographic process.

I agree that this marks a genuine contrast between photographs and handmade pictures. The question that remains, however, is whether this contrast also captures the only way that an image may be epistemically valuable. I think that we should answer this question in the negative. Images do not only have epistemic value because they extend our means of perception. They can also have intrinsic value as an independent source of understanding. In so arguing, I follow a similar path to Gottfried Boehm (1994) and Horst Bredekamp (2005, 2015) both of whom try to explain how images can facilitate a distinct kind of understanding which cannot be expressed in non-pictorial form.

In short, I wish to claim that image-making can be a source of understanding by allowing us to infer what kind of object a thing is based on how it is depicted regardless of whether the picture in question puts us in any perceptual contact with the depicted object.² This way, an image may allow us to grasp general truths about the depicted object even if the image

² My proposal here is similar to Timothy Williamson's view of how we acquire knowledge through imagination. Just as Williamson (2016) argues that the imagination can tell us what would happen in a hypothetical scenario, so I wish to argue that image-making can provide an indirect means of exploring the depicted object even if that object does not have any particular counterpart in the world.

does not bear the perceptual relationship to a particular object that Walton, Hopkins, Cohen and Meskin describe.³

There are good reasons for thinking that pictures (whether manual or not) are particularly useful for this kind of reasoning by proxy. Unlike linguistic descriptions, pictures are informationally rich by nature. Whereas language lets us ascribe a single property to an object (e.g. the car is red) without saying anything else about that object, it is difficult to depict an object as having one property without also depicting it as having various other properties. As a result, pictures usually provide a richer source for inferences than linguistic descriptions just by virtue of the kind of representation that they are.

A toy example may be helpful here. Compare the time honoured sentence “the cat is on the mat” with a picture of the same state of affairs. No matter how simple the picture, we cannot easily depict the cat as being on the mat without also conveying something about what kind of cat it is and how it is on the mat. Is the cat big or small? Is it sitting on the mat, or is it lying down? Is it to the side or the middle of the mat? And so on. For the same reason, it becomes apt to draw many more inferences from the picture than from the sentence “the cat is on the mat”. If the cat is pictured as sleeping on the mat, we can (albeit with some uncertainty) infer that it has been there for a while. If the cat is pictured as pacing across the mat, we can infer (again with some uncertainty) that it will not be there for long. None of these inferences are as apt if all we have is the sentence “the cat is on the mat”.

The above example is deliberately simple. There are, however, many case studies which suggest that it is precisely this quality that makes pictures valuable in scientific contexts. This is especially the case when we are aware that some phenomenon requires explanation, but we do not yet know to which facts our explanation must appeal. In such contexts, pictures are particularly valuable not just because they preserve more information than linguistic descriptions, but also because they may help us see how that

³ This does not contradict what Walton, Hopkins, Cohen and Meskin say. They may well agree that images can also be valuable in this other sense.

information can help us explain a certain phenomenon. As John Kulvicki puts it, pictures “make information about perceptible features of things extractable across levels of abstraction in much the way that ordinary perception does” (2014: 144).

Julia Voss provides a particularly illuminating example in her book *Darwins Bilder: Ansichten der Evolutionstheorie 1837-1874*. There she argues that although Charles Darwin was aware that the finches he observed on the Galapagos Islands exhibited a remarkable biological diversity, he was not in a position to formulate the mechanism behind this diversity, until he was in the possession of a comparative sequence of drawings and lithographs that made their evolutionary change manifest (2007: 80-1). If Voss is right, it was not observation alone that enabled Darwin to make the abductive inference that his finches had a common ancestor. Rather, what made that inference apt was the way in which the image sequence made the shared heredity of Darwin’s finches visible. What is more, Voss’s study seems to show that we can use images to extract knowledge about an object even if we do not yet have all the conceptual resources to describe what a picture depicts.

3.

This only says so much, however. What is it about pictures that allows us to make inferences about their contents? A natural suggestion is that we can make such inferences, since pictures resemble their contents. Indeed, many philosophers of science suggest that this is true not just for images, but for scientific representation in general. For example, Ronald Giere suggests that perhaps the most important way that scientific models allow us to reason about what they represent “is by exploiting similarities between a model and that aspect of the world it is being used to represent” (2004: 747). If this is right, we reason about representations much in the way that we reason about the objects they represent. As long as we recognise the relevant respects in which the picture of the cat on the mat resembles what it represents, we can reason about the picture in the same way as we would reason about an actual cat on an actual mat.

Not everyone will agree with this. Many philosophers or art and science deny that resemblance alone is sufficient for representation. For the same reason, they will also deny that resemblance alone can explain how pictorial representations enable us to draw inferences about their contents. For example, Catherine Elgin denies that “representations are intentional surrogates for, or replicas of, their objects” (2010: 1). Likewise, Mauricio Suárez denies that we can reduce representation to similarity or isomorphism (2003). Both appeal, in part, to Nelson Goodman’s well known arguments against resemblance theories of representation.

As Goodman pointed out, representation has certain logical properties which seem to set it apart from resemblance (1976: 3–10). First, representation is non-symmetrical whereas similarity is symmetrical. When A represents B, B typically does not represent A in return. By contrast, if A resembles B, then B also resembles A. Second, representation is non-reflexive whereas resemblance is reflexive. All things are maximally similar to themselves, but this does not mean that they thereby represent themselves. If mere resemblance were all there is to representation, it would also be mysterious why pictures should be particularly well suited for reasoning by proxy. As Goodman points out, everything resembles everything else in some respect to some extent. Hence, mere resemblance should enable us to employ anything to reason about anything else.

A natural reply to Goodman’s objection is to argue that mere resemblance is not the mark of representation. Rather, we must look for some other deeper feature in respect of which representations resemble their contents. According to Suárez, however, this is a mistake. The best that we can hope for is to give a deflationary account of representation “seeking no deeper features to representation other than its surface features” (2004: 771). Representation is simply too disparate a notion to admit of any substantive theory which articulates universal necessary and sufficient conditions for what it is to be a representation.

According to Suárez, there are only two necessary surface features that all representations share. The first is the directionality or representational force that they have towards the target being represented. The second is their capacity to allow for surrogate reasoning. Suárez calls

this the inferential conception of scientific representation:

[Inf]. *A* represents *B* only if (i) the representational force of *A* points towards *B*, and (ii) *A* allows competent and informed agents to draw specific inferences regarding *B* (*Ibid.*: 773).

Not any kind of sign will provide a good representation for scientific purposes, however:

Scientific representations have cognitive value because they aim to provide us with specific information regarding their targets. The information they provide is specific in the sense that it could not equally be conveyed by any other arbitrarily chosen sign (*Ibid.*: 772).

Yet, Suárez denies that we can appeal to similarity or isomorphism to explain why scientific representations have more cognitive value than arbitrarily chosen signs. Nor can we claim that such representations have cognitive value because they are true or accurate, since “most scientific representations are neither” (*Ibid.*). All we can say is that such representations enable competent users to draw informative inferences about the target of the representation, but:

any type of reasoning - inductive, analogical, abductive - is in principle allowed, and *A* may be anything as long as it is the vehicle of the reasoning that leads an agent to draw inferences regarding *B* (*Ibid.*: 773).

If this deflationary approach is right, it is a mistake to look for any deeper explanation as to why images and other representations enable us to reason by proxy. Rather, the explanation will vary from context to context depending on pragmatic factors such as the representation’s intended use and the skill with which it is used for that purpose.

Elgin takes a different approach. She argues that what sets a representation apart from an arbitrary symbol is that it is a telling instance which, in Goodman’s terminology, exemplifies some property or cluster of

properties of the thing that it denotes:⁴

A symbol that is a telling instance of a property exemplifies that property. It points up, highlights, displays or conveys the property. Since it both refers to and instantiates the property, it affords epistemic access to the property (2010: 5-6).

Such telling instances are non-arbitrary, since stipulation alone cannot determine what they represent. “Because exemplification requires instantiation as well as reference, it cannot be achieved by stipulation. Only something that is colored dusky rose can exemplify that shade” (Ibid.: 6). In this sense, the representation and its target do resemble one another, since “for x to exemplify a property of y, x must share that property with y” (Ibid.: 11). The two are alike with respect to the property that the representation exemplifies. Yet, mere resemblance is not sufficient for effective representation, since a representation must also make the resemblance manifest by exemplifying it. Even if x resembles y in terms of property z, x will not exemplify z and so represent y as z unless it also highlights that property in a way that draws our attention to it.

This gives us an attractive explanation for why images are well suited for reasoning by proxy. They allow us to draw a wide range of inferences about what they represent, because they exemplify the very features that they represent. By contrast, linguistic representations do not support as many inferences, since they do not exemplify what they represent. Indeed, handmade pictures may be especially valuable in this respect. They distinguish themselves from photographic pictures precisely in the freedom they afford us to select and highlight the features that we want the picture to exemplify. Consider again the finch illustrations which Julia Voss argues were crucial to the discovery of Darwin’s theory of natural selection. They do not merely resemble the finches that they depict. The illustrations also exemplify the birds’ most characteristic features in a way that manifests not only the differences between them, but also their

⁴ I am grateful to Teresa Hadravová for suggesting that exemplification rather than resemblance may be what makes some pictures epistemically valuable.

shared finchiness. No wonder, then, that it becomes apt to infer that the birds share a common ancestor.

4.

I have tried to argue that pictorial representation has intrinsic epistemic value because pictures enable us to reason about their contents in a way that linguistic representations do not. Not everyone will agree that there is anything especially valuable about this. Skeptics will object that although some pictures are more informative than others, pictorial representation as such does not have any epistemic value. Instead, such skeptics will argue that whether a given picture is epistemically valuable depends on how sure we can be that the picture provides a true or accurate representation of what it purports to depict.

This is something that must be decided on a case by case basis depending on the relation that the picture bears to what it depicts. In the case of mechanically produced pictures, how valuable a picture is will depend on how reliably the technology tracks the depicted object. In the case of manually produced pictures – as for testimony, more generally – how valuable the picture is will also depend on the trustworthiness of the person producing the picture. In either case, we have an externalist account of value, since the epistemic value of the picture is fixed by how truthfully it depicts the world.

I think we should resist this externalist account of epistemic value. In its stead, we should embrace a broader account that acknowledges more ways in which an image might be epistemically valuable. On such an account, the epistemic value of an image is not always fixed by how truthfully it depicts the world. Instead, pictures can also have epistemic worth because they enable us to infer what the objects they depict are like regardless of whether those objects exist in actual life.⁵

⁵ Here I am in agreement with Suárez. He asks us to note that “correctly drawing inferences” is not equivalent to “drawing inferences to true conclusions.” A photograph showing me enthusiastically waving the Union Jack in a crowd at the Queen’s parade may lead an informed and competent inquirer to infer the false conclusion that I am British. The

To illustrate this point, it is useful to observe a comparable point about logic. Few would deny that logic is epistemically valuable. Yet, logic is not epistemically valuable because it ensures that our beliefs always align with how the world is. Instead, the rules of logic are valuable because they allow us to make inferences which extract information contained in the premises to which the rules are applied. As such, logic is a source of understanding, since it allows us to grasp this information more clearly. The fact that we can use logic to draw all kinds of false conclusions does not change this observation. If we do draw a false conclusion because one of our premises is false, this does not tell against the rules of logic, but against the false premise.

The same applies to pictorial representation, I wish to suggest. At the most fundamental level, pictures are epistemically valuable not because they reveal how the world as a matter of fact is, but because they enable us to make inferences about what kind of world the depicted world is. Most obviously, such inferences can be about an object's shape, colour, and size, but we can also make complex, novel inferences such as the one that Voss describes Darwin as having made. If some of these inferences turn out to be faulty, this does not tell against the rules of depiction anymore than an inference to a false conclusion tells against the rules of logic. The fault is not with the rules themselves, but with our use of them.⁶

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normative standards of correctness required by [inf] are inferential merely, and do not depend on the truth or otherwise of premises or conclusions" (2004: 775, fn. 8).

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