Aesthetic Experience

Edited by
Richard Shusterman and Adele Tomlin

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Though long considered the most essential of aesthetic concepts, as including but also surpassing the realm of art, aesthetic experience has in the last half-century come under increasing critique.

The aim of *Aesthetic Experience* is to re-examine the notion of aesthetic experience as well as its value. This is achieved by bringing together major voices that have directly theorized the concept of aesthetic experience or indirectly worked on topics connected to it.

With contributions from an internationally respected group of authors, this book will be useful to philosophers everywhere, particularly those working on aesthetics.

Richard Shusterman is the Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Humanities and Professor of Philosophy at Florida Atlantic University, USA.

Adele Tomlin is an independent scholar who completed an M.A. in Philosophy at Kings College, London. She is currently pursuing studies in Buddhist Philosophy in India and Nepal.

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2000, translated into twelve languages); and *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (1988). The editor of *Analytic Aesthetics* (1989), *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader* (1999), and *The Range of Pragmatism and the Limits of Philosophy* (2004), he is also co-editor of *The Interpretive Turn* (1991) and *Interpretation, Relativism, and the Metaphysics of Culture* (1999).

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Introduction

Contemplating the undefinable

Adele Tomlin

The title of this collection, *Aesthetic Experience*, on the one hand, speaks for itself in its simplicity. Indeed, if asked to describe an aesthetic experience, many people might refer to the experience of a beautiful or sublime landscape (such as the magnificent Himalayas), listening to a deeply moving piece of music, or contemplating an exquisite painting. In other words, they would generally point to an experience and engagement with art or nature. To some aesthetic experience is akin to a panacea, to others proof of man's superior mind over nature, to others an experience that has great moral and social value. What unifies these various interpretations is an understanding and agreement that aesthetic experience is precious and of fundamental value to human beings. It is an experience which is prized very highly.

On the other hand, as Wittgenstein discovered in his own philosophical investigations,[1] the concept of "aesthetic experience" is not only difficult to define or express but may in fact be impossible to do so with logical language. Despite this pessimistic (or realistic depending on how you look at it) conclusion, the concept has still been the focus of much debate and disagreement within philosophical aesthetics. It has been described as an experience that imparts knowledge, as one that does not impart knowledge, as will-less, as disinterested, as active, as passive, as cathartic, as contemplative. Some have claimed that it is an experience not essentially unlike other experiences. While others have claimed that it is a type of experience that is uniquely different from others. Finding any clear defining characteristic of it or any single feature that is shared by all the various descriptions has proved to be extremely difficult. As a result, during the twentieth century, particularly in the Anglo-American tradition, not only the value of aesthetic experience but also its very existence has been questioned.

So how has this once vital concept lost its appeal? And does it still offer anything of value? Many philosophers (particularly from Continental or Asian traditions) have pinpointed the main culprit, of the depreciation of the concept of the aesthetic in Anglo-American philosophy, on the influence of scientific method and thought, with its insistence on dualistic and essentialist concepts and categories. Although brilliant and ground-breaking, Kant's thought in particular can be seen as the precursor and founder of the

divisions in the realm of knowledge that many still cling to today. The idea that science, art, morality and spirituality are separate realms with tenuous connections owes much of its power to Kant's philosophical approach to our perception of the world and how our mind orders it. However, the distinct modalities of perception advocated by Kant, such as reason, imagination and so on, as well as the dualistic oppositions between sense and reason, disinterest and interest, which formed the basis for the creation of the divisions of the moral, natural and aesthetic realms, can no longer be presumed as valid. Buddhist and Asian philosophies, existential phenomenology, hermeneutics, deconstruction, postmodernism and philosophical pragmatism have all seriously challenged the reduction of complex wholes to simple constituents and the hegemony of scientism in the fields of cultural experience and knowledge.

From an Asian perspective, a major reason for the conceptual difficulties and obstacles in defining aesthetic experience is that the Western mind, deeply conditioned by a rational and scientific education, has a foundational belief in a law of reasoning that insists upon a categorical positive or negative answer to any question. This conditioning, which is of crucial importance in the technological world, ignores the middle ground and is a radical impediment to development of gnostic vision. However, according to Buddhist metaphysics,[2] realization of the true nature of one's self and reality is only accessible when such thought patterns have become transformed into a perception that experientially reflects reality not as *this* or *that*, nor as the negation of this or that, nor as a synthesis of this and that, and nor as an absence of this and that. Ultimately, it involves recognizing that nothing inherently exists independently from the mind or other phenomena. Reality, in fact, is indeterminable and empty of inherent existence. Or to put it in more analytic terms, the notion of autonomous entities and independent categories for the things we experience and perceive in the world, unwisely ignores or blocks out the fact that objects, perceptions and thoughts are non-essential, irreducible, interdependent and impermanent. As a result, the only sensible route open to exploring aesthetic experience seems to be via non-dualistic means; via a consideration of reality and presence which excludes any kind of dualistic metaphysics or epistemology.

The concept of aesthetic experience was recently examined by the American philosopher Richard Shusterman. In his essay, "The End of Aesthetic Experience,"[3] Shusterman gives a reasoned account of the concept's demise, and an argument for reconceiving and thus redeeming its purpose. Shusterman claims that the reason for the decline and resistance to the concept stems from a deep confusion about this concept's diverse forms and theoretical functions; as well as a "growing preoccupation with the anaesthetic thrust of this century's artistic avant-garde, itself symptomatic of much larger transformations in our basic sensibility as we move increasingly from an experiential to an informational culture."

Shusterman traces the historical and intellectual assumptions, which have shaped yet confused twentieth-century accounts of aesthetic experience, by

highlighting four features that are central to the tradition of aesthetic experience:

(a) *Its evaluative dimension* (it is essentially valuable and enjoyable);
(b) *Its phenomenological dimension* (it is something vividly felt and subjectively savored, affectively absorbing us and focusing our attention on its immediate presence and thus standing out from the ordinary flow of routine experience);
(c) *Its semantic dimension* (it is meaningful experience, not mere sensation. Its affective power and meaning together explain how aesthetic experience can be so transfigurative);
(d) *Its demarcational-definitional dimension* (it is a distinctive experience closely identified with the distinction of fine art and representing a defining aim of art).

Beginning with John Dewey's influential work on the concept of experience, Shusterman shows how Dewey's essentially evaluative, phenomenological, and transformational notion of aesthetic experience has been gradually replaced in analytic aesthetics by a purely descriptive, semantic one whose chief purpose is to explain and thus support the established demarcation of art from other human domains. These changes, according to Shusterman, generate tensions that "make the concept suspicious." Moreover, when aesthetic experience proves unable to supply such a definition, the whole concept is abandoned for one that promises to do so: interpretation. As a result, the possibility that aesthetic experience may nonetheless be fruitful for other purposes is wrongly ignored.

Shusterman's analysis in this essay, as well as his more recent work on somaesthetics and pragmatist philosophy,[4] provided me with the inspiration to organize a conference in London on the topic of "The Value of Aesthetic Experience,"[5] generously sponsored by the British Society of Aesthetics, with Shusterman as the keynote speaker. Then a postgraduate philosophy student in London, I was surprised at not only how little emphasis in the lectures there was on the evaluative and transformational aspects of aesthetic experience, but also how few academic publications dealt specifically with the topic of aesthetic experience itself.[6] There did indeed seem to be, at the worst, an unspoken hostility to the notion, or at the best, a prejudiced ignorance of it. For me, the reasons for this attitude were clearly articulated in Shusterman's essay. The success of the London conference provided the motivation to produce a new collection of essays on the subject.

One of the aims of this book, therefore, is to highlight and explore some of those "other purposes" of aesthetic experience which have been wrongly ignored. To challenge the twentieth-century theorists' exclusion of the embodied and emotionally valuable experiences of sex and gustatory taste from the concept of the aesthetic and "art"; to expose and expand our restricted cultural and intellectual pre-suppositions of what constitutes aesthetic

experience. Finally, it aims to re-explore and affirm the place of aesthetic experience—in its evaluative, phenomenological and transformational sense—not only in relation to art and artists but to our inner and spiritual lives. A world beyond museums, galleries and concert halls but one which we carry with us at all times in our bodies and minds. To re-establish the concept in a way which undoes the fetters imposed on it and sets it free to its infinite potentiality. This book also hopes to show how we can learn from the wisdom of Buddhist and Asian philosophies and their view of aesthetic experience, even if they do not call it by that name.

Major contemporary voices from both Anglo-American and Continental aesthetic traditions are represented in this collection, which seeks not only to move beyond the supposed exclusivity or independence of these approaches (which are effectively combined by some of the contributors) but also to suggest by such example that the alleged dichotomies are more a matter of intellectual prejudice and institutional power than essential unbridgeable differences of views and methods. This book should not, therefore, be seen as a rejection of the analytic tradition of aesthetics (whose leading thinkers have contributed to this volume) but rather as an invitation to open it up to greater dialogue with other ways of thinking. In any case, on the topic of aesthetic experience, there is much to learn from some diversity of approach, both within and beyond the Anglo-American framework. For example, we are very pleased that in several of the essays there is an explicit, as well as implicit, reference to Asian philosophical perspectives on aesthetic experience and art. The collection is thus roughly divided into three parts that reflect the concerns and themes of the essays, as opposed to any difference in approach or theoretical influences.

The nature of aesthetic experience

Generally, aesthetic experience, at its highest and best, is considered to be an experience of great value. So what makes an experience aesthetic as opposed to an ordinary everyday experience? Accounts of aesthetic experience seem unable to yield a characteristic or group of characteristics that can serve as the basis of a definition of aesthetic experience. It seems to have a variety and complexity that defy attempts to state its essential conditions.

In the Part I of this book, the contributors respond to the question of the nature of aesthetic experience with differing emphasis. The chapters by Malcolm Budd and Gary Iseminger, on the one hand, focus on defining the aesthetic through our experience of works of art. The chapters from Paul Crowther and Christoph Menke, on the other hand, emphasize the difficulty of reducing aesthetic experience to dualistic, objective categories or ontological entities.

In Chapter 1, "Aesthetic Essence," Malcolm Budd (a philosopher firmly rooted in the Anglo-American analytic tradition), defends his experiential theory of aesthetic value and argues that although aesthetic pleasure is a

promising definition of the aesthetic, it cannot elucidate the notion of artistic value and so must be replaced with the notion of "being intrinsically rewarding to undergo."[7] However, in "The Aesthetic: from experience to art" (Chapter 2) Paul Crowther disagrees with Budd's definition of the aesthetic as a kind of perception or judgment. Crowther argues that aesthetic experience cannot be defined as "a consumer-based perception or attitude" nor can it be reduced to a distinct category of perception, but rather should be understood as a mode of experience. Making use of key insights from Kant, Crowther offers a detailed examination of the way in which aesthetic experience is embodied in the creation of art. The aesthetic experience for Crowther is one "wherein our bonding with the world is much more intimate than in the usual subject-object relation."

In Chapter 3, "Experiential Theories of Aesthetic Value," Gary Iseminger defends the notion of aesthetic experience as appreciation. For Iseminger, "a work of art is a good work of art to the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation." Iseminger abandons a phenomenological conception of experience for one which is understood in epistemic terms, in which the concept of an experience is imbued with an awareness of the properties of the object experienced that ground the attribution of artistic value to it. For Iseminger, "The function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication." Iseminger concludes that one of the main problems with Budd's experiential theory of artistic value is that it lacks any normative force and amends his own definition to account for this problem, resorting to a Humean-influenced notion of an ideal observer.

The final essay in Part I of this collection takes a completely different and more radical approach to the question of the nature of the aesthetic by focusing on the process of aesthetic theorizing. In Chapter 4, "The Dialectic of Aesthetics: the new strife between philosophy and art," the German philosopher Christoph Menke argues that the loss of significance of philosophical aesthetics in relation to other philosophical fields is due to academic philosophers trying to secure a place for philosophical aesthetics as a producer of knowledge. However, for Menke, philosophical aesthetics does not produce knowledge, it reflects and criticizes the philosophical process itself:

> Aesthetic experience is a mode of self-reflection of ordinary practice, but so too is philosophy. There are therefore (at least) two basic forms of a (self-) reflection of ordinary practice—philosophical thought and aesthetic experience. ... Aesthetics is, rather, that exceptional place within philosophy in which the philosophical form of reflection is confronted with the structurally different form of reflection in aesthetic experience.

For Menke, this relationship of the aesthetic and the philosophical mode of reflection also forms a "dialectic" of aesthetics. However, it is a negative, not

a positive, dialectic: a dialectic that is (and remains) a conflict. Drawing an analogy between the ancient Platonic conflict between philosophy and poetry, as two different forms of knowledge, Menke claims the conflict between these two modes of reflection is one of two profoundly different images of our ordinary practice of comprehension and representation. Menke thus uses the notion of aesthetic experience to define aesthetics as a productive destabilizing of philosophy that promotes better philosophy.

All these essays, in different ways, reveal the great difficulty (and perhaps futility) of focusing on the demarcational/definitional dimension of aesthetic experience. However, rather than rejecting the concept because of this difficulty, what may be needed is less focus on a logical definition of the experience and more on the effects of the experience. In other words, an exploration of the transformative and evaluative dimensions of aesthetic experience is required. Indeed, these aspects of aesthetic experience are considered more fully in the next part of the book.

Expanding the aesthetic

The main focus and theme of the second group of essays is the exploration of the value of aesthetic experience and what has been excluded from its domain in Western thought. The contributors in Part II seek to expand the notion of the aesthetic to include that of sexual experience and activity, taste (in relation to cuisine and gustatory experiences) and experiences which encourage and promote the refining of one's emotional and mental states (in a way which leads to valuable and lasting spiritual and moral insights). In this section of the book, the influence of Asian philosophical perspectives on both experience and reality is made explicit. For example, it is an ancient idea in Asian religions and philosophies (especially the Tantric traditions still practiced today in India, Nepal and Tibet), that sexual experience and energy can be a profound and spiritually enlightening experience with significant individual and social benefit. Certainly, the Western cultural packaging of sex as reproduction or in terms of merely sensual and short-lived orgasmic pleasure has understandably led many Western philosophers to the view that sexual activity is not as worthy an experience as that of engaging with a Mozart symphony or a Dickens novel. However, this cultural and intellectual prejudice obscures the power and magic of sexual energy, which has been harnessed by some to reach profound levels of spiritual and personal awakening.[8]

The aesthetic and transformative dimension of sexual and erotic experience is taken up in Chapter 5, Richard Shusterman's essay "Aesthetic Experience: from analysis to Eros."[9] Shusterman re-affirms his contention that the analytic ideal of precise definition is not very amenable to the notion of aesthetic experience but argues that conceptual clarity can be achieved in by exploring the pluralistic ways the concept has been used for and which doesn't require such a complex and wide-ranging concept being

reduced to a single definition. Following a thorough analysis of some key terms in aesthetic theory, Shusterman argues that there is no reason why sexual experience should be excluded from the notion of the aesthetic within analytic philosophy, and concludes that, compared to the Eastern perspective on sexuality, the Western model is more medical and functional as opposed to an "ars erotica." Thus continuing his intellectual project of bringing "art back into life," as well as his more recent work on somaesthetics, Shusterman urges us to include sexual and erotic experience in aesthetic experience, not only to break the academic dogma and prejudice on the subject but also to:

> Inspire us to greater aesthetic appreciation of our sexual experience and, consequently, to more artistic and aesthetically rewarding performance in our erotic behaviour, which surely forms one important dimension in the art of living.

Chapter 6, "On the Scope of Aesthetic Experience," by the German philosopher Martin Seel, argues that aesthetic experience can provide subjects with a type of consciousness that no other mode of experience can provide. Seel claims that aesthetic experience is an intensified form of aesthetic perception and that aesthetic perception is an "attentiveness to the appearing of what is appearing." Despite most people's desire to control and determine themselves and their environment, Seel recognizes that most people also know that their life situation is enduringly indeterminate and uncontrolled. Therefore, Seel goes on to say that:

> By lingering with the appearing of things and situations, aesthetic perception acquires a specific consciousness of presence. It provides those who surrender to it with time for the moment of their lives.

Seel argues, however, that this kind of perception can be had by simply taking time to look out of the window or by putting a CD on. What transforms this kind of perception to an aesthetic experience is that is becomes an "event." This is why aesthetic experience cannot be restricted to the experience of art.[10]

Interestingly, although Seel does not make any explicit reference to Asian thought in his paper, his notion of being attentive to the "simultaneity and momentariness of sensuous appearances" bears a great deal of resemblance to the Buddhist meditation practices of Mahamudra or Dzogchen, wherein the meditator's aim is to be attentive to and aware of the ebb and flow of external and internal phenomena and perceptions in the absence of conceptualization or mental distraction. The purpose of this meditation being to bring one's consciousness back to the true nature of mind which is clear, pristine awareness[11] and away from the delusional notion of an inherently existing self and world of phenomena. The value of this realization is a

natural reduction in the experience of the mental states of self-centered grasping, anger and greed (which Buddhist teachings identify as the root causes of conflict, suffering and violence) accompanied with an increase in compassion, generosity and love for other sentient beings who are still suffering from these negative mental states. Thus Seel's conception of aesthetic experience, one where a person experiences phenomena non-conceptually (or without the projections of the delusional mind), is one which has the potential for much moral and spiritual realization contained within it.

The moral and spiritual value of aesthetic experience is explored further in Chapter 7, "Refined Emotion in Aesthetic Experience," by Kathleen Higgins. In this chapter, Higgins also explicitly acknowledges the influence of Asian philosophy and culture in her examination of the valuable and transformative dimensions of aesthetic experience. First, Higgins takes issue with the omission of emotion from most recent Western aesthetic theory, which instead focuses mainly on pleasure and affect or "garden-variety" emotions. Higgins argues, however, that this lack of rigorous analysis of the role of emotion in aesthetic experience may be because our concepts about emotions are too coarse and broad, and urges that "a psychology of refined emotions is needed to do justice to the emotions so prized in the aesthetic realm."

Making reference to the work on refined emotions by the psychologist Nico Frijda, Higgins distinguishes six ways in which emotions can be refined, by being (a) pure or unadulterated, (b) more subtle than the coarse emotions, (c) raised to a higher moral or spiritual state, (d) the appropriate feeling, (e) more cultured, (f) associated with greater maturity. Higgins then surveys the kinds of analyses of refined emotions within aesthetic contexts provided by the Indian and Japanese traditions and how these traditions contain elements of these six categorizations. First, Higgins reviews the Indian tradition's focus on the experience of the audience member of an artistic performance, using the example of *rasa* theory.[12] Second, Higgins analyses the Japanese tradition's concern with aesthetic emotion not only in connection with nature and everyday life, but also as the emotion of the artist. Higgins presents us with a way in which the notion of refined emotions can help us understand and value aesthetic experience in moral and spiritual terms. Aesthetic experience, via the cultivation and experience of refined emotions, can elevate one spiritually as well as morally, and lead us to a better understanding of ourselves and others via awareness of the unfolding processes of creation, performance, and appreciation, which are applicable to many contexts beyond art, as well as important within them.

The move away from a focus on hedonic and sensual pleasure to more refined or spiritual states is also recommended by Carolyn Korsmeyer in her essay, "Taste, Food and the Limits of Pleasure" (Chapter 8). Korsmeyer continues the theme of her thesis, presented in her recent book *Gender and Aesthetics*,[13] that the boundaries of aesthetic experience have been unduly restricted, by arguing that food and gustatory taste have been unfairly excluded. In *Gender and Aesthetics*, Korsmeyer's main focus was on the

gender discrimination and bias implicit in the conceptual language and framework of aesthetic theories, which has ultimately led to the preparation and consumption of food and drink being excluded from the aesthetic. In this essay, Korsmeyer attacks the implicit assumption that eating is exclusively pleasure-based and thus further seeks to weaken the idea that aesthetic experience is necessarily connected with the experience of pleasure. Korsmeyer then defends a variety of aesthetic cognitivism, which is not just about propositional knowledge or empathetic insight but one which includes the reflective experience of food and also one which "carries cognitive values and attention into the heart of even sensuous aesthetic experience." Thus, she concludes, if we neglect those aspects of aesthetic experience which are not pleasure-based then we neglect that which resembles what we most value in works of art.

The chapters in Part II, in different ways, all identify the restrictive boundaries that have been drawn around aesthetic experience and suggest reasons as to why these boundaries should be broken or expanded. In fact, by challenging these boundaries (with some contributors also acknowledging the influence and importance of Asian perspectives on our experience of art, music and sexuality) they also re-affirm the evaluative dimension of aesthetic experience, in its transformative and phenomenological aspects.

Aesthetic experience, art and artists

Part III concludes this volume with three essays which look at some of the issues relating to the aesthetic experience and its connection with artists and artworks. Returning to the problem identified by Shusterman in "The End of Aesthetic Experience," Chapters 9 and 10, by Noel Carroll and Jean-Pierre Cometti respectively, argue for the displacement of the demarcation problem with a focus on art's other functions. However, Chapter 11, by Alex Neill, follows Schopenhauer's thought with a change in focus from that of the observer of works of art to that of the maker of works of art, the artist.

In "Aesthetic Experience, Art and Artists," Noel Carroll argues that the dominant concept of aesthetic experience is now obsolete and that it should be replaced by an alternative conception, which he calls the "content-oriented" approach. Carroll explores the historical emergence of the standard conception of aesthetic experience and how Kant's notion of "disinterested pleasure" has been particularly influential. He goes on to say that the reason for this dominant notion of "disinterested pleasure" is mainly due to the grouping of certain activities under the banner of "fine art." According to Carroll, the demarcation problem (of art from non-art) is no longer relevant and is defunct. Carroll goes on to attack the idea that aesthetic experience is something which is "intrinsically valued itself."

Chapter 10, "Between Being and Doing: aesthetics at the crossroads," by Jean-Pierre Cometti, also seeks to divert the main focus for modern aesthetic theory from the problem of demarcation. The thrust of Cometti's paper is

that "we need aesthetics without ontology." Cometti tries to show, using Nelson Goodman's ideas, that a philosophical or critical approach to artworks should devote more attention to the conditions under which they function. This Goodmanian notion is rooted in the idea that the only convincing version of aesthetics is an aesthetics of usages in which pragmatic conditions are centrally operative.

Indeed, this is the reason why we should include the works' operating modes in our view of artworks or in the very notion of the work of art. Cometti claims that concentrating our attention on this aspect would not necessarily exclude all ontology, but it would considerably alter its meaning and reach. For Cometti, it is questionable whether it is useful to reason about art in terms of properties independent of use, since the only pertinent properties are those that remain describable in a given context of action and understanding, somewhat like what happens in Wittgenstein's language games. Cometti concludes, however, that we should not exclude the possibility of a humble ontology:

> art and artworks have their own mode of existence, although they thus interact with conditions far in excess of their restricted field of definition. In the perspective of such an appreciation, however, questions of aesthetic properties' realism or irrealism, transcendence or immanence, are utterly irrelevant. Ontology, in this perspective, is rather one with anthropology.

The final chapter of the book changes the perspective from that of the observer to that of the creator, the artist. In "Schopenhauer and the Foundations of Aesthetic Experience" (Chapter 11) the British philosopher Alex Neill argues that Schopenhauer's conception of aesthetic experience is radically different from that of his predecessors because it is based on reflection on the experience of the artist rather than the spectator. Neill claims that introspection-based accounts of aesthetic experience cannot adequately ground an account of the nature of aesthetic experience and attempts to explain in what sort(s) of thing any potentially successful account of the nature of aesthetic experience will have to be grounded. Citing the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience in support, Neill argues that introspection alone lacks the relevant kind of authority: in other words, the fact that a certain feature of my experience seems significant to me does not in itself entail that it *is* significant in the sense required.

Neill then analyses Schopenhauer's inspiring and influential account of aesthetic experience as a potential candidate for a more authoritative account. Interestingly, the Buddhist and Hindu perspective on aesthetic experience (although not explicitly mentioned by Neill) still lurks in the background of this essay. Schopenhauer was an avid reader of Indian philosophy and his account of aesthetic experience is clearly influenced by the notions of egolessness and by Hindu metaphysics. For example, Schopenhauer holds that

the kind of attention to things that gives us access to their "inner nature" is disinterested attention, which he then claims is the kind of attention that is characteristic of aesthetic experience. Neill concludes that on Schopenhauer's account, which he differentiates from that of Kant, aesthetic experience can be called "disinterested" if it is based on the experience of the artist.

Conclusion

We hope that this new collection of essays on the topic of aesthetic experience will help motivate and redirect further study of this sometimes maligned, yet also much-valued, concept. Of course, looking at the valuable aspects of aesthetic experience and the appreciation (and observation) of art does not necessarily entail a romanticization of art and aesthetic experience. Experiences can be aesthetic while being also disturbing and disagreeable. Experience of nature (sublime and beautiful), sex, relationships, all contain within them the seeds for profound and transformative experiences in life because they provide excellent opportunities to discover, express and perceive those aspects of reality which lie at the root of our existence and ultimately make life valuable and joyful (though also sometimes painful).

However, the experience of these realities depends also on our perceptual powers, discipline, and choices. We make the world with our thoughts. For example, your perception of a beautiful sunrise or a particular person may be quite different from my perception of that sunrise or person.[14] If we recognize this mental flexibility and freedom, we can then attempt to transform all perceptions into valuable and beneficial ones, no matter how harmful or averse they might initially appear to us. In this way, Kant's insistence that aesthetic judgment involves the "free play" of the mind can be fruitfully combined with the Buddhist perspective that the joy experienced from such freedom, far from being a mere matter of sensual satisfaction, reflects the joyful state of the true nature of mind; in its unadorned, pristine, brilliant awareness. Here I agree with my co-editor's earlier insistence, in "The End of Aesthetic Experience," that rather than demarcational, "the concept of aesthetic experience is directional, reminding us of what is worth seeking in art and elsewhere in life."

We, hope, therefore, that this book serves as a reminder (if nothing more) of the value and importance of aesthetic experience in both art and life, and opens up the possibility for a new way of thinking about aesthetic experience which contains within in it the potential to positively transform oneself, our fellow sentient beings and our environment.

Notes

1 In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein came to a more pessimistic conclusion on discourse about aesthetic experience, stating that "whereof one cannot

speak, one must be silent." Although it is certainly true that dualistic concepts are limiting and often inadequate to describe certain experiences and feelings, there is value in contemplating such matters even while acknowledging the limits. Wittgenstein was also clearly influenced by Schopenhauer's thought in coming to this conclusion, far more than he ever publicly acknowledged.

2 Buddhist metaphysics is particularly well documented in the Madhyamika (or Mind-Only) school of philosophy. Madhyamika (also known as "Sunyavada") is a Buddhist Mahayana tradition popularized by the Indian scholar, Nagarjuna. According to this school of thought, all phenomena are empty of "self nature" or "essence," meaning that they have no intrinsic, independent reality apart from the causes and conditions from which they arise. Madhyamika philosophy rejects the opposing views of eternalism (the view that something is eternal and unchanging) and nihilism (the assertion that all things are intrinsically already destroyed or rendered non-existent) and thus represents the "middle way" between these "two extremes."

3 *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55 (1997), 29–41.

4 For Shusterman's account of somaesthetics, see, for example "A Disciplinary Proposal," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57 (1999), 299–313; *Practicing Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), chs 4 and 6; *Performing Live* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), chs 7 and 8. For further discussions of somaesthetics, see, for example, the essays of Martin Jay, Gustavo Guerra, Kathleen Higgins, Casey Haskins, and Shusterman's response in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 36:4 (2002), 55–115; and the symposium on *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 2nd edn, with contributions by Antonia Soulez, Paul Taylor, and Thomas Leddy (and Shusterman's response) in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 16 (2002), 1–38. See also Peter Arnold, "Somaesthetics, Education, and the Art of Dance," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39 (2005), 48–64; and Eric Mullis, "Peformative Somaesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 40 (2006), 104–117.

5 Senate House, University of London, 11 June 2004. The other invited guest speaker at this conference was Dr Paul Davies from Sussex University, UK, who delivered a paper entitled "On Beautiful Art."

6 In preparing this book we discovered that this will be the first major edited collection on the topic of aesthetic experience, as well as the first which encompasses both analytic and continental approaches. Certainly, within the analytic tradition there are very few publications, if any, which specifically discuss the topic in great detail.

7 This notion, Budd elucidates in his book *Values of Art*, London: Penguin (1995). For criticism of Budd's notion of "being intrinsically rewarding to undergo," see Jerrold Levinson's review of Budd's book in "Values of Art : Pictures, Poetry and Music," *Mind*, October 1996. See also, "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art," in Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*, Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press (2006), 11–24.

8 In the Tibetan Buddhist and Hindu tantra yoga practices, dedicated spiritual practitioners engage in laborious and lengthy tantric sexual practices with a "spiritual consort or partner" in order to use sexual energy to attain spiritual enlightenment, or at the very least great mental and bodily states of bliss and spiritual revelation. For a good introduction to the content, purpose and benefit of such practices, see *Tantra: Path of Ecstasy*, George Feuerstein (Boston MA: Shambhala, 1998).

9 First published in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64:2, spring 2006. Shusterman further develops this perspective through a detailed analysis of classical Chinese and Indian texts on the erotic arts, in "Asian Ars Erotica and the Question of Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65:1 (2007).

10 Artworks being a particular type of event which Seel calls "presentation events."

11 For descriptions of the practice of Mahamudra and the benefits of this practice, see *The Mahamudra: Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance*, Ninth Karmapa

Wangchung Dorje, trans. Alexander Berzin, 5th edn, 2002; and *Pointing out the Dharmakaya*, Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2003 (Ithaca NY: Snow Lion Publications).

12 An ancient Indian aesthetic theory, which states that the aim of the arts is to enable the audience member to experience *rasa*, the essential flavor of emotion.

13 *Gender and Aesthetics (Understanding Feminist Philosophy)*, Carolyn Korsmeyer, London: Routledge (2004).

14 The same person can be seen as an enemy, a stranger or a friend by different people. There is not one defining characteristic which can be considered objectively correct.

Part I

Experience and the nature of the aesthetic

1 Aesthetic essence

Malcolm Budd

Does the aesthetic have an essence? If so, can it be captured in non-aesthetic terms or is the aesthetic an irreducible concept?

Whatever the scope of "the aesthetic" may properly be thought to be—I return to this issue in section II—three preliminary points. In the first place, "the aesthetic" ranges over items in different categories: there are aesthetic judgments, aesthetic pleasures, aesthetic values, aesthetic attitudes, aesthetic interest, aesthetic sensitivity, aesthetic properties, aesthetic character, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic responses and so on.[1] Second, aestheticians have been inclined to privilege one of these categories of the aesthetic, assigning to it a basic status and explicating the others in terms of it. Third, the various categories of the aesthetic are inter-definable, no matter which, if any, is taken as basic, how exactly they are related to one another (not everyone understanding them as being connected in the same manner), and despite disagreements about what should properly be thought of as falling within a particular category. Such disagreements arise from different requirements for membership of the category. For example, whereas some require an aesthetic judgment about an item to be one acquired through first-hand acquaintance with the item,[2] others allow a belief founded on the opinion of another to be an aesthetic judgment. Again, some of those who agree that pleasure in the perception of a single color, sound, taste or smell is an aesthetic pleasure operate with a notion of judgment, as Kant did, which is such that the mere announcement of such a pleasure in the linguistic form of a judgment—"It's pleasurable"—counts as the expression of an aesthetic judgment. Others hold that the linguistic expression of an aesthetic pleasure or response is an aesthetic judgment—is a judgment at all—only if it claims intersubjective validity, as no mere expression of pleasure, even one formulated in judgmental form, properly does: it would be an aesthetic judgment only if it claimed an item's capacity or suitability to give pleasure, or that it merits a pleasurable response. I will skirt disagreements of this kind.

Now the idea of aesthetic judgment might well be understood to include general, universal and comparative (or superlative) judgments: "Some/most/all

of the [46!] prints in Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* are wonderful"; "Hokusai's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* is a finer set than Hiroshige's *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*." To illustrate the inter-definability of the various aesthetic categories, it will simplify matters if the idea of aesthetic judgment is restricted to singular judgments and is understood to include only judgments that are solely about the aesthetic value or character[3] of a single item: on the one hand, those that are purely evaluative, restricted to expressing an assessment of the aesthetic value of an item, grading it as aesthetically good, mediocre, or bad, for example ("verdicts," as Frank Sibley called them); on the other hand, those that attribute to an item a property that is a ground of aesthetic value (positive or negative), a property in virtue of which the item may be aesthetically praised or faulted, the set of such properties constituting the item's aesthetic character.[4] If any ground of an item's aesthetic value, as realized in the item, is itself called an aesthetic value (positive or negative) of the item,[5] then with the idea of aesthetic value assigned the basic role, and exploiting the ambiguity of the notion,[6] the ideas of aesthetic judgment, pleasure, property and attitude might be defined in some such economical fashion as this:

- An aesthetic judgment is a judgment that ascribes (positive or negative) aesthetic value to an item.
- An aesthetic pleasure is a pleasure taken in the apparent perception or imaginative realization of aesthetic value.[7]
- An aesthetic property of an item is any property of it that has aesthetic value.
- An aesthetic attitude is an attitude of a kind conducive to a reliable perceptual- or imagination-based judgment of aesthetic value.

If, however, the basic status is assigned to the idea of aesthetic judgment, the other categories might be defined in terms of it just as easily:

- An aesthetic value is a value of a kind ascribed by an aesthetic judgment.
- An aesthetic pleasure is a pleasure taken in the apparent perception or imaginative realization of a value rightly or wrongly ascribed to the object of pleasure by a positive aesthetic judgment.
- An aesthetic attitude is an attitude towards an item of a kind that is conducive to an aesthetic judgment about the item being well founded.
- An aesthetic property is a property ascribed to an item by an aesthetic judgment.

And so on round the circle of aesthetic categories.

It follows that if any category can be defined in non-aesthetic terms, all can. Nevertheless, one category might still be basic if the others can be defined (in non-aesthetic terms) only in virtue of their connections with it,

whereas it can be elucidated independently of its connections with them (as with a word used paronymously).

II

Any attempt to articulate the essence of the aesthetic runs up against the problematic scope of the aesthetic. For there are different conceptions of its scope, no one of which has a proper claim to be the right one. Consider purely sensory (or sensuous) pleasure. The crucial feature of purely sensory pleasure, understood as pleasure in the perception of a single undifferentiated color expanse, as such, or in the perception of a sound of a constant pitch, loudness and timbre or a taste or smell in which a single sensory quality, sweetness or acidity, for example, is detected, is that there is no variety in the object as it is perceived, just a single, structureless, homogeneous quality. Accordingly, a pleasurable series of such perceptions—successive perceptions either of coexistent items or of items that occur one after another—each of which yields pleasure, the pleasure of each being independent of the relation of its object to that of any other, affords only sensory pleasure, since no pleasure is taken in anything other than a homogeneous quality. Likewise, a single perception of a complex object yields only sensory pleasure if different elements of it delight one but not in virtue of any relations among them. Some think of purely sensory pleasure as being a species of aesthetic pleasure. But for others, aesthetic pleasure, by contrast, involves variety in its intentional object, pleasure being taken in the manner in which the various aspects are related to one another or in a property generated by the character of the aspects and the relations among them (so that the experience of a "well balanced" wine qualifies, not as purely sensory, but as aesthetic). Accordingly, it is not just that the intentional object of aesthetic pleasure must be complex: the pleasure must be due to the way in which the elements relate to one another. This conception distinguishes aesthetic from purely sensory pleasure by the requirement that aesthetic pleasure is pleasure resulting from structure (in one sense of that word).[8]

This divergence in understanding of the scope of the aesthetic is not the only one. As yet there has been no need to distinguish art from non-art or to draw a distinction between one art and another, between different works within the same art, or between different aspects of a work. But for some, not all forms of artistic appreciation are aesthetic. In the first place, there are those who, seeking to stay close to the original meaning of the term, allow into the aesthetic only those arts that address a specific sensory mode (or a number of such modes), the conduit and appeal of these arts being specifically visual or specifically auditory, for example, open only to those who possess the necessary sense and use it to take in what the art offers (or who are able to imagine the work, as someone now deaf can imagine a piece of music by means of the score), thus placing the appreciation of literature—or at least literature the specific appeal of which does not reside essentially in

the sounds or visual appearance of its constituent words—outside the aesthetic.[9] According to the simplest form of this conception, for those arts that fall within the domain of the aesthetic there is no distinction between a work's artistic and its aesthetic value, but for those that fall outside that domain, although a work possesses an artistic value it lacks an aesthetic value. Second, whereas the term "aesthetic" is often used in a wide sense to cover not only the aesthetic appreciation of nature and non-artistic artifacts but every kind of artistic appreciation, some prefer to operate with a narrower sense of the term, effecting a distinction between two kinds of properties of works of art—aesthetic and artistic properties. For those who use the term in the wide sense, artistic appreciation just is aesthetic appreciation of works of art. For those who use it in the narrower sense, although the aesthetic appreciation of a work of art is part of its artistic appreciation, it does not exhaust it, since the distinction between the aesthetic properties of a work of art and its artistic properties carries with it a distinction between its aesthetic and its artistic value. Not everyone who recognizes the distinction between the two kinds of property, each kind being relevant to the artistic evaluation of a work that possesses such a property, draws it in just the same way. But perhaps it would be agreed that artistic properties, unlike aesthetic properties, are such that they cannot be directly perceived or detected by attending exclusively to the work itself, even by someone who has the cognitive stock required to understand the work, since they are properties the work possesses only in virtue of the relations in which it stands to other things.[10] It would, of course, be possible to combine these two conceptions, both excluding from the aesthetic any art that does not address a specific sensory mode (or a number of such modes) and imposing the distinction between aesthetic and artistic properties of a work of art. This would yield the result that the idea of a work's artistic value diverges everywhere from that of its aesthetic value.

There are two reasonable responses to this proliferation of conceptions. A proposed account of the essence of the aesthetic might be intended to capture one particular conception of the scope of the aesthetic, or it might, in virtue of the generality of its formulation, be sufficiently elastic to be molded to fit a number of conceptions.

III

Two promising candidates for the status of the basic category of the aesthetic are the ideas of aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic value. Whether either is basic, or whether any category is basic, two impressive recent accounts propose definitions of aesthetic pleasure that do not presuppose a prior understanding of the aesthetic. One of them also advances a definition of aesthetic value based on the fundamental component of the idea of aesthetic pleasure.

The distinctive feature of Kendall Walton's account[11] is the crucial role assigned to the notion of pleasurable admiration. This figures in the following

way in his initial definition of aesthetic pleasure: aesthetic pleasure is "pleasure which has, as a component, pleasure taken in one's admiration or positive evaluation of something; to be pleased aesthetically is to note something's value with pleasure." Pleasure taken in the object is part of one's aesthetic pleasure if it is combined with pleasure taken in one's admiration for the object. Correlatively, an item's aesthetic value is its capacity to elicit "reasonable" or "apt" pleasurable admiration—the pleasurable admiration must be appropriate or merited. In fact, Walton confesses to the temptation to define an item's aesthetic value, not just in terms of its capacity to elicit (appropriate) pleasurable admiration for some value, but in terms of its capacity to elicit pleasurable admiration for its capacity to elicit pleasurable admiration for that value. To appreciate a work of art is to reap the benefits of the work's value, and this involves taking pleasure in admiring it (judging it to be good).

The initial definition of aesthetic pleasure is modified in two ways. First, in order to rule out "pleasure of a self-congratulatory sort in admiring something" from constituting aesthetic pleasure, Walton adds that "Aesthetic pleasure is not just pleasure in my admiration of something, but in its getting me to admire it." Second, Walton broadens the range of attitudes that are such that, if pleasure is taken in them, the pleasure is aesthetic pleasure: the attitude need not be admiration, but, for instance, awe or wonder (attitudes that are especially pertinent in the case of aesthetic pleasure in nature), or even revulsion or annoyance.

Building on the idea that a work of art has a character and a content, which can include a variety of different kinds of property, formal (such as balance and unity), aesthetic (gracefulness, garishness), expressive (melancholy, cheerfulness), representational (a woman, a landscape), semantic (the meaning of words), and symbolic (of death or the disintegration of life), all such properties not being first-order properties but second-order, properties that an item possesses only in virtue of its possessing other properties on which the second-order properties are dependent, Jerrold Levinson[12] proposes a very different account of aesthetic pleasure:

> Pleasure in an object is aesthetic when it derives from apprehension of and reflection on the object's individual character and content, both for itself and in relation to the structural base on which it rests. That is to say, to appreciate something aesthetically is to attend to its forms, qualities and meanings for their own sakes [and to their interrelations,][13] but also to attend to the way in which all such things emerge from the particular set of low-level perceptual features which define the object on a non-aesthetic plane.

And he maintains that in order for pleasure in a work's "cognitive content, moral import or political message"—aspects of a work that have traditionally been reckoned not to be aesthetic—to be aesthetic it must involve "appreciation of the manner in which—the work being viewed in its proper historical

context—these are embodied in and communicated by the work's "particular perceptual substructure," its specific elements and their structure, the work's "concrete construction."

Although this account appears to be geared more to pleasure in art than pleasure in nature, Levinson rightly requires that aesthetic pleasure in art should be related intelligibly to aesthetic pleasure in nature, which is, he asserts, "typically a multi-level affair, involving reflection not only on appearances per se, but on the constitution of such appearances and the interaction between higher-order [and lower-order][14] perceptions."

IV

Neither of these conceptions of aesthetic pleasure appears to be satisfactory, each being inadequate both to pleasure in art and pleasure in nature. But something can be learnt from each.

Walton's theory imposes no restrictions on what something is admired for: whatever something is admired for—whatever value it has that it is admired for having—if the admiration is pleasurable then it is an instance of aesthetic pleasure. But this opens the theory to counter-examples, for it is clear that the theory does not provide a sufficient condition of a pleasure's being appropriately thought of as aesthetic. Consider, for example, my pleasurable admiration of John's fortitude in finishing the race despite his bad cold, or any other pleasurable admiration taken in someone's heroic, sterling or admirable performance in the face of danger or difficulty. By deeming these aesthetic, Walton's account is unattractively idiosyncratic. And this inadequacy of Walton's account of aesthetic pleasure is starkly revealed if we leave aside the notion of admiration and consider just the notion of positive evaluation—judging something to be good—that is often substituted for it. For "noting something's value with pleasure" means nothing other than taking pleasure in something's possessing a valuable quality of some kind—pleasure in the reliability of one's car, the thickness of the walls of one's house, the speed of one's computer, the excellence of one's spectacles, the good fit of one's new shoes, the purity of the water, the power of the vacuum cleaner, the high level of one's IQ, the strength of the cable, the accuracy of the thermometer, and so on. But none of these is an aesthetic pleasure, each of them being disqualified by the fact that it is a propositional pleasure—pleasure in the fact that one's shoes fit so well, for example.

It seems clear that for pleasurable admiration of something's value to constitute aesthetic pleasure, the value must be aesthetic value and the pleasure non-propositional. Now if admiration is merely judging something to be good, then, as Walton remarks, admiration is not necessarily pleasurable, for there is such a thing as grudging respect or admiration. But to experience admiration is not just to judge something good: it is to experience an emotion. So whereas it is obvious that pleasure is not integral to judging something to be good, a pleasurable element might be integral to

the experience of admiration. Indeed, the emotion of admiration might well be construed as something like pleasurable contemplation of something's value. But suppose that pleasure is not integral to admiration, as it is not to judging something to be in some manner good. It would then, it seems, be possible for someone to take pleasure in an object, to admire it—to judge it to be good—and yet not to take pleasure in admiring it. Would this preclude the person's pleasure in the object from being aesthetic pleasure? If not—and this seems to be the right answer—then pleasurable admiration is not a necessary condition of pleasure's being aesthetic. There is an another problem for Walton's account if admiration is not necessarily pleasurable. An item's aesthetic value is said to be its capacity to elicit "reasonable" or "apt" pleasurable admiration. It follows that non-pleasurable admiration of a work of art is not a matter of judging the aesthetic value of the work favorably. But why does the addition of pleasure to admiration turn it into a judgment of aesthetic value? Furthermore, if it is possible to derive pleasure from listening to a piece of music or reading a poem or watching a movie for the sake of it without judging it to be good ("I enjoyed it but it's kitsch, sentimental ..."), then admiration itself (judging something to be good) seems to be unnecessary for a pleasure to count as aesthetic.

Now "pleasure taken in one's admiration of something" must be understood to mean that the pleasure qualifies the experience of admiration, rather than taking the admiration as its object. This is recognized implicitly by Walton in his rejection of pleasure of a self-congratulatory sort—delightedly patting oneself on the back for one's sophisticated and subtle taste in recognizing something's merit—as being aesthetic pleasure. But Walton's qualification of his initial definition of aesthetic pleasure—"Aesthetic pleasure is not just pleasure in my admiration of something, but in its getting me to admire it"—appears to conceive of pleasurable admiration, not as admiring with pleasure, but as pleasure in an item's capacity to generate admiration, and fails to bring out the most salient feature of the example. A distinguishing mark of pleasure of a self-congratulatory sort, other than its being directed at one's own admiration, is that it is a propositional pleasure—pleasure in the fact that one's aesthetic sensitivity is of a superior kind. It is this distinguishing mark that counts decisively against the pleasure's being aesthetic.

Two final points: First, it is clear that the doubling of pleasurable admiration that Walton is tempted by—defining an item's aesthetic value, not just in terms of its capacity to elicit (appropriate) pleasurable admiration for some value, but in terms of its capacity to elicit pleasurable admiration for its capacity to elicit pleasurable admiration for that value—if imposed as a condition of a pleasure's being aesthetic, would increase the implausibility of the account. Second, Walton's final account represents aesthetic pleasure as requiring that a component of a person's pleasure must be pleasure, not necessarily in the person's admiration of an item, but perhaps in some other attitude, such as awe or wonder. Accordingly, "The aesthetic value of sunsets, alpine meadows, waterfalls, and flowers may

consist (in part) in our taking pleasure in the awe or wonder we feel towards them." But although forms of awe and wonder are feelings that at least some of us often experience towards natural objects or phenomena, it appears not to be a necessary condition of someone's deriving aesthetic pleasure from such an item that the person should experience some such feeling towards it, rather than merely finding it inherently rewarding to look at. This seems clear if awe is understood as reverential fear or wonder, i.e. fear of or wonder at something held in deep respect, and wonder is an emotion excited by what is unexpected, unfamiliar or inexplicable, especially surprise mingled with admiration or curiosity. For surprise, curiosity, fear, the unexpected or unfamiliar are often lacking when people take delight in the appearance of natural items; respect is appropriate only for forms of life and even so is hardly shown towards, for example, flowers whose lives are shortened by being picked for their beauty and displayed only briefly, perhaps in a buttonhole; and much in the natural world that is experienced as being beautiful or sublime is not thought of by many of those who find them so as being inexplicable.

The crucial defect of Levinson's account is that it elides the distinction between aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic appreciation (between which he often slips). First, it is over-demanding in requiring, in the case of pleasure in a work of art, that the subject should reflect on the relation between the work's "character and content" and the vehicle of the work, the relation "between what a work expresses or signifies, and the means it uses to do so," i.e. the way in which these are realized in the work. This is perhaps a requirement on the full appreciation of a work as art, since full appreciation of a work of art involves understanding, as it were, how it works—how its aesthetic properties are realized in and determined by its non-aesthetic properties—but it is not a necessary condition of pleasure taken in the work being aesthetic pleasure. Pleasure in the mere apprehension of a work's character and content, for its own sake, is deemed not to be aesthetic by Levinson's account: for apprehension of that character and content to be aesthetic it must be accompanied by reflection on the manner in which that character and content is determined by its structural base: a person's attention must be engaged, not solely by that character and content, but also by how the second-order properties emerge from the first-order properties. But how else would it be reasonable to characterize pleasure in the mere apprehension of a work's character and content, i.e. apprehension of the work's character and content in the relevant way, by listening, looking, reading or whatever, but without reflection on the relation of this character and content to the structural base, perhaps without the kind of attention to the structural base that is necessary for such reflection to take place—the kind of pleasure that many people derive from reading a gripping novel, watching a comedy, spending the average amount of time in front of a picture in an art gallery, or listening to a melody with a certain emotional quality—if not as aesthetic? Apart from exceptional cases, there appears to be no good reason to disqualify this kind of pleasure from being aesthetic.

It is equally clear, if not more so, in the case of aesthetic pleasure in nature that the account demands too much: for being favorably impressed by a mighty waterfall, being delighted by a glittering iceberg, the flickering reflections of clouds in a river, the gracefulness of a gazelle, or the beauty of a rainbow or an alpine meadow to count as aesthetic pleasures, no reflection of the kind required by the account—which involves attention to the "perceptual and conceptual underpinnings" of nature's "manifest effects"—is necessary. Levinson claims that:

> Even to enjoy aesthetically something as simple as the luminosity of the sun's color at sunset is to enjoy such luminosity as the upshot of a particular shade and brightness of yellow, and as somehow appropriate to the heavenly body which is the source of all life.

But this seems to be too strong even as a requirement on the aesthetic appreciation of a natural phenomenon as the phenomenon it actually is, let alone on the pleasure being aesthetic.

Levinson's explanation of how pleasure in aspects of a work that have traditionally been characterized as "non-aesthetic" can be aesthetic pleasure might be thought to add plausibility to his position. But even if the claim is true, it does not follow that pleasure in any aspect of a work is aesthetic only if it involves reflection on the manner of embodiment of character and content, or attention to how higher-order properties emerge from first-order ones. Of course, to perceive or apprehend any higher-order properties of an item you need to perceive lower-order ones, and in particular those lower-order properties upon which the higher-order ones are dependent: whenever you perceive or apprehend higher-order properties you perceive or apprehend them, not in the abstract, but as they are realized in the item. But to derive pleasure—aesthetic pleasure, surely—from the graceful shape of a vase or the mournful quality of a melody, no reflection on the relation between the item's gracefulness or melancholy and its structural basis is required. Furthermore, it is one thing to claim, rightly, that "the relationship of substructure and superstructure in the total impression that an object affords is necessarily of concern when an object is approached aesthetically," or that various higher-order properties are not in themselves aesthetic virtues and constitute aesthetic merits only as they are realized in particular works, and another to claim that any pleasure taken in a work of art is aesthetic only if it involves reflection on the relation of substructure to superstructure. Here it is important to recognize that the relation of substructure to superstructure may be an essential determinant of one's pleasure in a work, and one's pleasure be pleasure in the superstructure as embodied in the substructure, in the absence of any reflection on that relation. And this, it would seem, is all that is necessary for one's pleasure to be aesthetic. In order to accommodate under the banner of the aesthetic pleasure in aspects of a work traditionally conceived of as being non-aesthetic, it is unnecessary

to insist that this pleasure must involve reflection on or appreciation (rather than mere awareness) of the manner in which they are realized in the work: it suffices that the pleasure should be pleasure in them as so realized.

V

We can bring away from our consideration of these accounts two significant features of aesthetic pleasure, whether this is aesthetic pleasure in a work of art or aesthetic pleasure in a natural item or an artifact that is not a work of art. From the consideration of Walton we take the important fact that aesthetic pleasure is a non-propositional pleasure: for the account of aesthetic pleasure as pleasure taken in the perception of aesthetic value to be adequate, pleasure in the perception of aesthetic value must not be understood as simply pleasure from that perception. From the consideration of Levinson we take a near neighbor of his conception, weakening his account in order to jettison the over-strong requirement imposed by his eliding the distinction between aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic appreciation: aesthetic pleasure, as distinguished from purely sensory pleasure, is pleasure taken in relations among the elements of the object and/or in higher-order properties of the object—by which I shall understand properties dependent on the nature of its elements and the relations among them—as they are realized in the object. But this must be qualified in order to accommodate misplaced pleasure—pleasure misplaced through the misrepresentation of an item's aesthetic character, through the experience of the item as possessing aesthetic value that it lacks.[15] A plausible definition of aesthetic pleasure in non-aesthetic terms, which takes these features on board, which straddles both art and non-art, and which is flexible enough, if it is suitably tailored, to accommodate different conceptions of the scope of the aesthetic, is as follows. First, a minimal conception of aesthetic pleasure: aesthetic pleasure is non-propositional pleasure taken in the character of an item as experienced in perception and/or imagination. Second, a conception that discriminates against purely sensory pleasure: the minimal conception bolstered by the condition that the pleasure must be taken in the apparent relations among the elements of the item—in a pattern, for example—and/or in the item's apparent higher-order properties as they are realized in the item.[16] Third, a conception that allows into the aesthetic only those arts that address a specific sensory mode (or a number of such modes): the enhanced conception reinforced by the condition that if the item is a work of art, it must be of a kind that addresses a particular sensory mode (or set of modes). Fourth, a conception that takes on board the distinction between aesthetic and artistic properties of works of art: the enhanced conception strengthened by the condition that if the higher-order properties are properties of a work of art, then they must be directly detectable as realized in the work itself.[17] If something along these lines is acceptable, then, having achieved an account of aesthetic pleasure in non-aesthetic terms, it might seem that this can be used as the basic category

and the other categories of the aesthetic defined in non-aesthetic terms by means of it, the set of definitions of the various categories encapsulating the essence of the aesthetic. Accordingly, operating with the minimal conception strengthened by the condition that discriminates against purely sensory pleasure, restricting the categories to those previously considered, and disambiguating the notion of aesthetic value:

- An aesthetic value—a positive aesthetic value—of an item is a relation among its elements, or a higher-order property as realized in the item, which is fit to yield non-propositional pleasure in the perception or imaginative realization of it.
- An item's overall aesthetic value is its fitness to yield non-propositional pleasure in the perception or imaginative realization of it in virtue of the ensemble of the relations among its elements, its higher-order properties as realized in it, and the interrelations of these.[18]
- An aesthetic judgment (one that is not a verdict) is a judgment that ascribes to an item a relation among its elements or a higher-order property and which is true if and only if the item possesses that relation or property and this is such that, as realized in the item, it is fit to yield non-propositional pleasure or displeasure in the perception or imaginative realization of it.
- An aesthetic property of an item is any relation among the elements or any higher-order property of it that, as realized in the item, is fit to yield non-propositional pleasure or displeasure in the perception of imaginative realization of it.
- An aesthetic attitude is an attitude of a kind conducive to the reliable perception or judgment of an item's fitness to yield non-propositional pleasure or displeasure in the relations among its elements or its higher-order properties as they are realized in it.

A word of explanation. There is a contentious issue I have not as yet acknowledged, and definitions of the category of aesthetic judgment in terms of pleasure will vary with the side adopted. While it is clear that an assessment of the aesthetic value of an item (a verdict) is an evaluation, there is an ongoing dispute between those who, following Sibley, regard the attribution of a property that is, from the aesthetic point of view, in itself a merit or demerit, as being purely descriptive and which does not require that the person making the judgment should regard the possession of the property as a value or disvalue,[19] and those who maintain that the attribution to an item of a ground of aesthetic value (positive or negative) should properly be understood as an expression of a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards an aspect of the item, one that indicates, perhaps, that the person making the judgment considers the experience of the aspect as being fit to yield pleasure or as being fit to yield displeasure. I intend to skirt this disagreement, although my formulation, in terms of a judgment that ascribes a property

that is fit to yield pleasure, rather than a judgment of a property's fitness to yield pleasure, expresses my belief that it is not of the essence of the attribution of a ground of aesthetic value that it carries with it an evaluative attitude.

However, although this set of definitions does perhaps capture a certain narrow conception of the aesthetic, the concept of pleasure is not a sound foundation upon which to build a broader and more usual conception of the aesthetic. For unless the idea of an experience in which we take pleasure is understood in an unnaturally wide sense, so that it is equivalent to an experience that we find inherently rewarding to undergo, it is not possible to elucidate the notion of artistic value—the value of a work of art as art—in terms of pleasure.[20] Moreover, this is not due to the distinction between a work's artistic and its aesthetic value drawn by those who distinguish artistic from aesthetic properties of works: this notion of a work's aesthetic value is itself resistant to explanation in terms of pleasure. The point is, rather, that the experience of a work of art can be intrinsically rewarding to undergo, worth undergoing for its own sake—rewarding to undergo independently of any beneficial consequences that might be anticipated to accrue to one as a result of having had the experience—for reasons other than the pleasure the experience might afford; and the right idea to use to elucidate the notion of artistic value is not that of pleasure but the more fundamental idea of the rewards intrinsic to experiencing a work of art with understanding.[21] The modifications in the above accounts of aesthetic categories necessary to accommodate this conclusion are easily made:

- An aesthetic value—a positive aesthetic value—of an item is a relation among its elements, or a higher-order property of it, which, as realized in the item, is fit to make the perception or imaginative realization of it intrinsically rewarding.
- An item's overall aesthetic value is its fitness to make the perception or imaginative realization of it intrinsically rewarding in virtue of the ensemble of the relations among its elements, its higher-order properties as realized in it, and the interrelations of these.[22]
- An aesthetic judgment (one that is not a verdict) is a judgment that ascribes to an item a relation among its elements or a higher-order property and which is true if and only if the item possesses that relation or property and this is such that, as realized in the item, it is fit to make the perception or imaginative realization of it intrinsically rewarding or unrewarding.
- An aesthetic property of an item is any relation among the elements or any higher-order property of it that, as realized in the item, is fit to make the perception or imaginative realization of it intrinsically rewarding.
- An aesthetic attitude is an attitude of a kind conducive to the reliable perception or judgment of an item's fitness to make the experience of

the relations among its elements or its higher-order properties as they are realized in it intrinsically rewarding.

It counts in favor of the approach I have suggested if these accounts of categories of the aesthetic are, as I believe, independently plausible.

Notes

1 I do not engage directly with the somewhat nebulous idea of aesthetic experience, the intended scope of which is unclear to me, preferring instead to work with what I take to be rather more precise notions, such as the idea of the perception of an aesthetic property or the idea of aesthetic pleasure or of an experience involving an aesthetic response.
2 See, for example, Frank Sibley, *Approach to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001) 34–35.
3 I take the notion of aesthetic character from Frank Sibley: see his *Approach to Aesthetics*, 123.
4 This will impose a restriction on the idea of an aesthetic judgment if an aesthetic judgment is understood, as it might well be, to be a judgment that attributes an aesthetic property to an item, an aesthetic property of an item being conceived of as any property of the item, relevant to an assessment of the item's aesthetic value, which is dependent on the lower-order properties of the item, and which the subject can experience the item as possessing. But on this more liberal conception of an aesthetic judgment (and an aesthetic property), the categories of the aesthetic remain, mutatis mutandis, inter-definable.
5 I am not assuming that someone who perceives a ground of aesthetic value recognizes it as the value it is or even as a value at all.
6 The notion of aesthetic value covers both the notion of an item's overall aesthetic value and the idea of any property that is a ground of it.
7 "Apparent" is needed to accommodate the common phenomenon of misplaced aesthetic pleasure—delight in an object, usually a work of art, that is based on an aesthetic character the object does not possess, that is, which lacks the aesthetic values that seem to be found in it. "Imaginative realization" is to be understood in a wide sense to cover every way other than perception in which aesthetic value might be experienced.
8 Another attempt to distinguish aesthetic from purely sensory pleasure insists that pleasure is aesthetic only if it involves the exercise of conceptual powers. I leave aside the question whether this criterion succeeds in effecting the desired distinction.
9 One important distinguishing feature of fiction is that the engagement of the imagination, which is an essential feature of its aesthetic appeal, does not consist in the (imaginative) perception of the imagined characteristics or scenes in the constituents or material of the work itself.
10 Jerrold Levinson provides the clearest rationale of the distinction in his "Artworks and the Future," conveniently reprinted in his *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 182–83.
11 Kendall L. Walton, "How Marvelous! Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51:3 (summer 1993).
12 "Pleasure, Aesthetic," in David Cooper (ed.) *A Companion to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) reprinted as "What is Aesthetic Pleasure?" in Levinson's *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*.
13 Added in the reprint.

14 Added in the reprint.
15 I leave aside the possibility of perverted aesthetic pleasure—pleasure taken in the perception of a property that from the aesthetic point of view is inherently a demerit (which I distinguish from pleasure taken in a work of art's badness—amusement at its remarkable crassness or vulgarity, for example).
16 Pleasure in higher-order properties as they are realized in the item can now be understood to include, but not entail, attention to and pleasure in how the higher-order properties are generated by lower-order properties.
17 I am unconvinced that many of what are taken to be artistic properties—being influential, for example, or originality (as it is often understood)—are in themselves relevant to an assessment of a work's artistic value (its value as a work of art). By far the best examination of the concept of originality in art is Frank Sibley's "Originality and Value," conveniently reprinted in his *Approach to Aesthetics*.
18 This is a simplification, for more than one reason. In the first place, it needs to be adjusted to accommodate the fact that overall aesthetic value is a matter of degree and involves the weighing of merits and demerits. But this rectification is easily made. Second, the notion of an item's overall aesthetic value—where this means its overall aesthetic value considered as the kind of thing it is (work of art, non-artistic artifact, or natural object, more specifically, cubist painting, church, or Scots pine . . .)—not only imposes requirements on the cognitive stock of the perceiver but is afflicted by a number of uncertainties. For example, the notion of the aesthetic value of a natural object, so I have argued, suffers from an indefiniteness that does not attach to the idea of the aesthetic value of a work of art. See my "The Aesthetics of Nature," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, C. 2 (2000). The starting point for reflections on the aesthetic significance of the categories to which objects belong is Kendall Walton's seminal "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review*, 79:3 (1970).
19 I simplify Sibley's position by expressing it in terms, not of the nature of words but of the attribution of properties, and by representing it as applying to all, rather than to the majority of attributions. See Sibley's incisive discussion in his "Particularity, Art and Evaluation," conveniently reprinted in his *Approach to Aesthetics*. Sibley's position is well defended in Jerrold Levinson's "Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Differences of Sensibility," in Emily Brady and Jerrold Levinson (eds) *Aesthetic Concepts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).
20 The best discussion of this issue is Jerrold Levinson's "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art," conveniently reprinted in his *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*.
21 See my *Values of Art* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1995) part I. For a general conception of an aesthetic response in terms of an experience that is found to be intrinsically rewarding (or not inherently worthwhile, even worth not having), see my *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 14–15.
22 See note 17 above.

2 The aesthetic

From experience to art

Paul Crowther

Introduction

There are some pleasurable or displeasurable responses to the world which focus on its sensible, or imaginatively-intended character.[1] Such responses presuppose one to have had direct perceptual acquaintance with the sensible item in question, or an imaginative engagement with it (rather than an exclusively linguistic and descriptive one). If we did not have a name for this kind of response, we would have to invent one. But the fact is that we do have a name—the aesthetic. It is based on our interactions with singular sensible or imaginatively-intended items.

Of course, some responses to sensible items are causally based, arising, for example, through the impact of stimuli on the senses of taste or smell. But the aesthetic seems to involve pleasure or displeasure with an important cognitive aspect—an aspect, indeed, which seems to be implicated in the grounds of the pleasure itself.

But how should we characterize this? Commonly, terms from the following two groups are used: (i) aesthetic perception, aesthetic attention, aesthetic awareness the aesthetic attitude; (ii) aesthetic judgment, aesthetic experience. Which of these is most appropriate in relation to aesthetic responses? Or does nothing of theoretical substance hang on such an issue? As it happens, at least one substantial issue is involved. For how one characterizes the aesthetic generally, will tend to shape one's understanding of its more specific character. In this respect, for example, it is fairly clear that the aforementioned characterizations emphasize the aesthetic as a receptive rather than productive phenomenon.

To determine whether this is a legitimate bias, I shall explore criteria governing these characterizations in terms of their implications for the aesthetic. My strategy will be to ask whether the criteria which govern, say, the distinction of perception into its varieties, would allow us to distinguish and thereby necessarily and sufficiently define the aesthetic as one such variety. The strategy will show, in due course, that the aesthetic should be understood specifically as a mode of experience. Making use of key insights from Kant, I shall then offer a detailed examination of the way in which aesthetic experience is embodied in the creation of art.

I

I commence with those characterizations which seem especially linked to the aesthetic's sensible grounding, namely, perception, attention, and awareness. These terms have a broad affinity. We generally use them to emphasize different aspects of the subjective dimension to cognition. The term "perception," for example, readily connotes the sensory aspect; "attention" emphasizes the possibility of prolonged and fixed cognition; "awareness" emphasizes the subjective dimension as such.

Now these various aspects of cognition can be internally distinguished on both logical and psychological grounds. For example, their modes are separable on the basis of the logically distinct nature of the sensory media involved. One talks in this respect of visual perception, attention, and awareness, as opposed, say, to their auditory or tactile modes. On the other hand, we distinguish degrees of cognition by ultimate reference to psychological states of the cognizing subject. In this respect we contrast, say, "unified and vivid" with "muddled and faint" perception; or "rapt and concentrated" with "wandering and lax" attention.

Similar considerations hold in relation to the term "attitude," for whilst it is not a variety of cognition as such, it can be differentiated into its own internal varieties on psychological grounds similar to the above. We contrast, for example, a "hard and rigid" with a "soft and flexible" attitude by reference to the way in which a subject is disposed to hold specific beliefs, or regard specific states of affairs.

These logical and psychological criteria can now be related to the problem of the aesthetic. A first point is that whilst we can differentiate modes of cognition and its cognate terms on the basis of their logically distinct sensory media, we obviously cannot, on the same basis, define the aesthetic as one such mode. Although on occasion our aesthetic engagement may be concentrated on one of the senses, it can, equally well, range over several. Indeed, the only way one might hope to differentiate the aesthetic on these terms would be to posit a uniquely aesthetic sense; but this would simply take us into the discredited and archaic realm of faculty psychology.

However, it might be objected that I am being unnecessarily parsimonious in relation to the possibilities of distinction on logical grounds. Could we not, for example, say that perception, attention, awareness, and attitude have as many varieties as there are kinds of objects of cognition; and that aesthetic perception or whatever, will be that variety which is directed towards objects which have aesthetic qualities?

This raises two related points. First, if we really wish to define the aesthetic fundamentally by reference to the nature of phenomenal objects, then to posit a distinctively aesthetic mode of cognition or attitude supervenient upon such objects will be completely irrelevant to the task of definition. Second, whilst, for example, dogs or trees are qualitatively distinct kinds of object, this in itself gives us no grounds for asserting, say, that the dog-cognitions or

tree-cognitions which embody them will thereby be qualitatively distinct qua cognition.

Rather, what we are dealing with here are more appropriately described as classes of cognitions defined by their different objects. If difference of object were the only operative difference here, then to look upon such classes of cognition as also entailing a difference in variety or kind qua cognition would be in conflict with Ockham's Razor. We would be multiplying our varieties and kinds unnecessarily.

Let me now consider the aptness of psychological grounds for differentiating the aesthetic as a variety of perception, attention, awareness, or attitude. This approach has been very influential in the twentieth century, even amongst analytic philosophers. Monroe Beardsley (amongst others)[2] for example, has on numerous occasions suggested that an at least necessary condition of our aesthetic cognition is that it should have a high degree of unity that is not simply reducible to the unity of the object or state of affairs cognized.

Now (as will be seen in a moment) unlike some commentators such as George Dickie,[3] I do not find the idea of our aesthetic engagement having a subjective unity (or for that matter vividness, or a raptness) of its own, at all implausible. What is disputable is that such degrees of unity or whatever, should play a significant role in defining the aesthetic.

If we perceive some object or state of affairs, then (transcendental issues aside) we would normally say that the unity of our perception is due to the unity of the thing perceived. However, we sometimes find that an object or state of affairs has a significance for us in excess of being simply "that sort of thing called an x or a y." It engages us in respect of some interest or range of interests.

To find something interesting means that we are disposed towards it in a certain way; specifically, it means that we are disposed to make the thing of interest a node of intentional activity. We relate it to our stock of beliefs or projects-in-hand, and perhaps find that it has a new bearing on these, through fulfilling or thwarting our expectations. In the context of interests, therefore, our cognitive activity is by definition more concentrated and comprehensive, and it is in this sense that we can regard it as having unity at the subjective as well as objective level.

It should be clear by now that whilst there is such a thing as subjectively unified cognition, it is not a sufficient condition of the aesthetic. To specify the conditions under which subjectively unified cognition takes on a distinctively aesthetic character, we must go beyond the subjective level of cognition to that public realm of objects, events, human interests and practices, which provides cognition with its contents.

However, once we locate the aesthetic at least partially in this public realm, we surely demand that the subjective aspect of aesthetic cognition—like our cognition of any phenomenon—should admit of all degrees of unity, vagueness, raptness, haziness, and so forth. To tie it to some specific degree of, say, unity or vividness would (leaving aside the problem of finding exact criteria for these) seem arbitrary to say the least.

Of course, to insist on the necessity of aesthetic cognition being subjectively unified, does not preclude the possibility of degrees of such unity; indeed the capacity of certain objects to give rise to a heightened degree of it may be the basis of just that interest which is constitutive of the aesthetic. However, we must ask what it is about aesthetic objects and states of affairs which would enable us to enjoy such subjectively unified cognition? Our commonplace assumptions would probably lead us to reply "such things as formal, and expressive qualities."

To reply in these terms, of course, is to suggest that essentially aesthetic qualities are sensible aspects of objects and states of affairs, rather than material properties of objects or states of affairs as such. Such a distinction between seeing some aspect of a thing and seeing a thing as such, can only be made intelligible through the notion of interest. For to see an aspect is to select a specific range of a thing's properties for attention, or to take note of its broader significance; it is, as Wittgenstein puts it in the *Philosophical Investigations*,[4] "subject to the will." Hence, insofar as the emergence of such aspects to cognition is willed, then it is necessarily presupposed that we find them interesting in some respect.

I am suggesting, in other words, that because aesthetic qualities are aspects of things, their emergence to cognition necessarily presupposes a context of interest, i.e. subjective unity. However, if aesthetic qualities can only be cognized under conditions of subjective unity, then to actually incorporate these conditions into their definition is logically superfluous to the task of definition itself.

Similar considerations apply if, like Jerome Stolnitz and others,[5] we propose a psychological notion of "disinterestedness" as a necessary condition of the aesthetic. An attitude or act of attention or whatever, is aesthetically disinterested (so the argument goes) to the degree that it is concerned with some object or state of affairs "for its own sake." However, it is again clear that a concern for some object or state of affairs "for its own sake" has numerous non-aesthetic usages, for example the miser's concern for gold. This means that to differentiate the specifically aesthetic variety of disinterestedness, we must again have recourse to our aesthetic interest in specific aspects of objects and states of affairs.

The fact that I use the term "aesthetic interest" here suggests that as with the notion of degrees of unity, haziness, and so forth, we should expect our aesthetic engagement to be psychologically characterizable in terms of varying degrees of interest, disinterest, and even, on occasion, uninterest. Which of these will apply, will depend on both the nature of aesthetic objects, and the context in which we engage with them.

These points may seem highly surprising, given the traditional link between the aesthetic and disinterestedness. It should be emphasized, however, that I am not denying the link as such. What I am denying is the interpretation of disinterestedness as a kind of psychological attitude, which we adopt in order to perceive aesthetic qualities. Instead, I propose that disinterestedness

should be seen as an aesthetic criterion—i.e. something bound up with the logical grounds of our aesthetic responses, rather than with their psychological structure.

To explain. Most of our interactions with the world involve responses which are "interested" to the degree that they are pursued for their use-value or as sources of animal or physiological gratification. However, in contrast to this, the enjoyment of such things as the purely formal and expressive aspects of some object or states of affairs, does not logically presuppose that we take them to have use value of a practical or theoretical kind.

Of course, we may be psychologically "interested" in them (as described a little earlier) but this interest is not the logical ground of our response. Aesthetic qualities (as opposed to the broader uses to which we might put them) have no necessary connection with the means/ends nexus of our physiological, practical, or theoretical interests in the world.[6] The distinctively aesthetic sense of disinterested, in other words, is a question of logic. It is not some distinct psychological "attitude" and, in consequence, cannot be used to characterize the active cognitive dimension of our aesthetic responses.

My first stage of argument, then, converges on the following. We find that the aesthetic cannot be identified as a special variety of perception, attention, awareness, or attitude per se, insofar as it transcends the logical and psychological principles whereby we distinguish such notions into their varieties. Indeed, even if we insist upon factors such as unity or disinterestedness as a necessary condition of the aesthetic, we find that these do not allow its cognitive structure to be characterized adequately.

II

I shall now consider the aptness of "judgment" and "experience" as characterizations of the aesthetic's cognitive dimension.

The most important way in which we distinguish modes of judgment is by reference to the nature of the concepts involved, and the principles which govern their application. On these terms, for example, we might separate mathematical, scientific, and sociological judgments (amongst others) on logical grounds, insofar as each embodies distinctive concepts and criteria for their application, which are not completely analyzable in terms of the concepts and criteria of other modes of appraisal.

This leads to a crucial point. In the case of mathematics, science, and sociology, to employ the appropriate concepts in the correct way is both a necessary and sufficient condition for saying that someone is fully engaged in mathematics, science, or sociology. These disciplines, in other words, are necessarily and sufficiently defined as distinctive ways of employing concepts, i.e. just as modes of judgment.

It is true, of course, that we draw a distinction in science and sociology, between theoretical and practical research, but even here it is always presupposed that practice is in the service of theory, i.e. that it is a means to

more successful and comprehensive judgments. To put this another way, whilst mathematical, scientific, and sociological concepts can occur in judgments that furnish the motives for actions which are not themselves simply judgments (for example, setting up experiments), we do not make this possibility a logical condition of their use. A scientist, for example, could address purely theoretical issues, without us thinking this a misuse of scientific concepts.

However, in contrast to these points there are some contexts where a capacity to make the appropriate judgments is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being engaged with the world in a certain way. We would not, for example, regard a person as morally or politically engaged in an adequate sense, unless, on occasion, his or her judgment furnished motives for the appropriate sorts of moral and political action.

The order of logical priority we find in mathematics, science, and sociology is here reversed, insofar as we regard judgment as a means to practical moral and political ends. Hence it is a logical condition of the distinctively moral and political use of such terms as "fairness" and "obligation," that they can figure in judgments that provide the motives for actions that are not themselves simply judgments. If a person confined him or herself to moral and political judgments rather than moral and political deeds, we would regard them as amoral or apolitical, or even alienated. On these terms, then, our moral and political engagements with the world are aptly defined as modes of action.

Interestingly, the cases of emotional and religious engagement closely parallel these considerations. For whilst a capacity to make appraisals involving the appropriate concepts is necessarily presupposed, it is not a sufficient condition of our emotional and religious engagement. We require in addition, that on occasion our appraisals should embody some element of affective response.

For example, if one judged oneself in terms of emotional concepts, but ceased to manifest or feel those behavioral and physiological traits which constitute emotional affect (e.g. laughing, crying, animated gestures, visceral tension and release), one would be ill, or, at best, unemotional, i.e. alienated from authentic emotional engagement with the world. Again, if a person judged God to be almighty and redemptive, but without ever feeling awe before the almighty or the joy of the redemption, then we would rightly say that they had not experienced the world in a distinctively religious way. It is, in other words, analytic to the religious use of such terms as almightiness and redemption, that they should engage the heart as well as the mind.

This contrast between modes of judgment as such (e.g. mathematics, science, and sociology) and our emotional and religious engagement with the world, has a further crucial aspect. Whereas modes of judgment as such have well defined criteria of truth and validity, it seems harder to get the notion of truth going in relation to the distinctively emotional or religious realms.

Indeed, even where we can, the criteria of truth involved differ radically from those pertaining to modes of judgment as such. For example, if a man trembles and shakes uncontrollably as he pronounces an event to be

frightening, we rightly take this as evidence of the truthfulness or sincerity of his judgment. Trembling and shaking, in themselves, of course, offer no watertight guarantee of such truthfulness, but they are at least relevant. Again, if in judging that God exists a person experiences a joyful personal communion with him, this can, and indeed must, be cited as evidence for the truth of the judgment. Other evidence of a more philosophical nature may be offered to the skeptical, but from the distinctively religious viewpoint, the authority of personal revelation is the more compelling.

Now this direct relevance of the judging subject's affective experience to the truth of his or her judgment is completely inadmissible and irrelevant amongst those disciplines which are to be defined as modes of judgment as such. In mathematics, science, and sociology, for example, we are aiming, ideally, at objective understanding which is usually to be achieved in spite of our affective dispositions, rather than (at least in part) through them. Such dispositions are not necessary elements in the meaning of such judgments.

With emotional and religious engagements matters are otherwise. For whilst they necessarily involve judgment, they are not sufficiently definable as modes thereof. Rather their significance is grounded as much (if not more) on the affective dimension. This is not just a case of pleasurable or unpleasurable feeling being involved, but rather the fact that such feelings arise from, and illuminate, situations of existential import. They are expressions of those conditions of historical and physical embodiment which give meaning and value to life. They are to be defined, in other words, as modes of experience.

These considerations now enable us to logically situate the aesthetic. First, whilst we do indeed make aesthetic judgments these are a necessary but not a logically sufficient characterization of our aesthetic engagement. As in the case of emotion and religion (and for roughly the same reasons) we require that at least on occasion our aesthetic judgments embody some affective response.

For example, if a person made aesthetic judgments but without ever finding the object of their judgment pleasing at the level of feeling, we would not only have reason to deem them aesthetically insensitive or alienated, but could, with equal justification, say that they had missed the whole point of our aesthetic engagement. For whereas our interest in math, science, and sociology lies in their capacity to issue in understanding, the interest which leads us to discriminate aesthetic qualities, in contrast, is (at least in part) their capacity to issue in a particular sort of pleasure.

It is vital to reiterate that the pleasure in question here—even if it is of a mild sort—has logical connections with some of the profoundest dimensions of human being. Even the simpler forms of such pleasure have quite surprising levels of existential complexity at issue in them; and in the more complex sorts—bound up with art—the complexity is even more pronounced. The aesthetic should, accordingly, be characterized as a mode of experience.

I shall now give much more substance to this provisional conclusion.

III

As a starting point let us consider the simplest form of beauty—namely a pleasure in how things appear to the senses, or, to put it another way, structure in appearance. Some phenomena engage our senses in terms of personal preferences, e.g. liking one color, or one taste or smell, rather than another. But there is a beauty in appearance which is a function of the relation between the elements in a sensible manifold.

For reasons which will become clear, this takes us rather beyond the realm of personal preference per se. Its understanding is best pursued along broad lines indicated by Kant.[7] For him, the enjoyment of formal relations of unity and diversity in the perceptual manifold, has a special significance. It arises from the mutual stimulation of the understanding and imagination which is achieved through the experience of aesthetic form.

Of course, it may seem that the notions of "understanding" and "imagination" are mere remnants of eighteenth-century faculty psychology. This is far from being the case. It is difficult, for example, to see how any kind of knowledge, or recognition of identity is possible without the capacity to apply or connect concepts. This capacity is more or less synonymous with what Kant means by "understanding."

Likewise, it would be difficult to see how knowledge and the formation of concepts would be possible without a non-conceptual capacity to project perceptual situations which can signify sensible possibilities other than the immediately given. Again, this is more or less what Kant means by "imagination."

Now, decorative phenomenal forms—such as an intricate crustacean shell or embroidered patterns—can be described just as the kind of thing they are. We simply label them with a concept. However, to experience their beauty involves sustained cognitive exploration of those relations of unity and diversity which characterize their phenomenal fabric. In following the relation between whole and parts in the crustacean shell, for example, what may engage us is how the overall shape restrains and directs aspects of texture and color, and other elements within the manifold. We not only relate parts and whole to one another, but also explore its possibilities in relation to sub-structures within the whole.

In the case of the embroidery, matters can be more complex still. The work may set up visual rhythms which admit of continuation beyond the immediately given. We can take up cues which allow a rhapsodic continuation of the rhythm in imagination. Alternatively, through exploring how one color emphasizes or appears to negate or neutralize other colors, we might continue this as a process of formal interaction, where our momentary present perceptions of the configuration are linked to imaginings of its previous stages (or even possible future ones). The specific forms of the embroidered pattern might also be such that we can alternate between seeing them as background or as foreground elements. Each such gestalt switch opens up new perceptual possibilities in relation to the pattern.

Now when it comes to the perception of spatial objects, under normal circumstances our recognitions of what they are do not require perceptual exploration of the particular instance. However, to experience the beauty of a whorled shell or embroidered pattern, involves different considerations. Here the configuration's aesthetic unity emerges through the interplay between its phenomenal form and alternative avenues of possible cognitive exploration which open up in the very perception of it.

This means that some dimension of freedom in cognition, is partially constitutive of aesthetic unity. We do not recognize beauty through merely applying a concept; rather the understanding detects various alternative perceptual possibilities in the manifold which are, simultaneously, reciprocally enhanced through the imagination's following them up.

Of course, freedom in some cognitive contexts is a problem to be overcome. But in the aesthetic it is part of a distinctive experience. In it, the openness and cognitive fecundity of the world stimulates those capacities which are most fundamental to us as rational and sensible beings. The aesthetic experience of beauty centers on a unique embodiment of cognitive freedom.

This experience is one wherein our bonding with the world is much more intimate than in the usual subject-object relation. The world's open phenomenal richness is correlated with the depth and richness of our own cognitive capacities, and affective receptiveness. We are at home with the world, as rational, sensible, and affective beings.

There is also a further significant dimension. It is often asserted as a matter of fact that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," i.e. largely a matter of personal preference. No doubt our sense of the beautiful starts from personal preference, but the vital point is that it is not a static thing. Not only can it change over time, but these changes can arise, in part, through rational interchange and critical discussion with oneself and other people.[8]

For example, many individuals find that, as they accumulate experience, the things that satisfied them previously no longer do so to the same degree. They become able to make finer and more informed cognitive discriminations—perhaps noticing valuable features that they never noticed before. And whilst someone else simply telling us that we have not properly appreciated something is not, of itself, a compelling ground for changing one's values, it can help bring about such change—if supported by reasons and observations which are grounded on close acquaintance with the matter in question.

In the case of aesthetic experience these factors are especially to the fore. Aesthetic sensitivity has a natural basis, but it can be cultivated through experience and critical scrutiny. The fact that the aesthetic is grounded in basic cognitive factors, means that there is a shared ground around which debate can constellate. Through such debate, both oneself and society can develop its experiential range of knowledge and affective awareness.

It is in this context that "aesthetic judgment" plays its authentic role—as a facilitator of aesthetic experience's changing horizons. In the aesthetic

experience of art, more complex considerations than these are involved.[9] They center on the fact that, whilst one can enjoy art simply as a beautiful configuration, the knowledge that it is, in fact, something made by another human, opens up more complex experiential vistas.

At the heart of these, is the fact that the artwork involves working with a medium. In learning to paint, write, compose, or whatever, the artist has to learn the techniques which are basic to the medium in question. No matter how complete his or her foreconception of the work, its making involves a qualitative transformation. Working in a medium does not translate private experience into a public domain, it enables that experience to be developed into a more complete form.

The artist's stylistic interpretation of a subject means that it is necessarily changed. One does not duplicate the subject in its entirety, rather some aspects are understated or omitted, whilst other aspects are exaggerated or idealized. The artist's style of writing or whatever, means that the subject is made to exist in a new way. Through this it can become a source of aesthetic ideas. This means able not only to indicate a subject-matter, but to present it in a way that is so associationally rich for the imagination, that its meaning cannot be paraphrased adequately.

The artist's style is also significant in another important respect. Individual human experience is a continuum, but we divide it up into discrete moments, episodes, and phases, on the basis of the things we think, do, and feel. No matter how discrete and self-contained these elements may appear to be, their individual character is determined by their place in the whole, just as the nature of that whole is determined by the character of the parts.

Now this continuum of mutually dependent factors involves a vital relation of contingency and necessity. The particular elements in one's life are contingent to the degree that we chose to do them. That being said, once enacted, their status changes. To remove even a slight element from one's past, would create a wave of exponentially developing changes that would lead to a present which is different from the one that we actually occupy. However, this actual present is all that we have. All the elements in our past which lead up to it have, therefore, the character of necessity, in retrospect. Take one away, and the character of the whole would change.

This necessity is the path of our life. But it is only complete when the whole series is compete, i.e. at death, when all our experiences have been enacted. Short of this, there is only one phenomenon which allows us a symbolic expression of experiential completeness, and that is the work of art. All the moments in its creation are individually contingent, but in the context of the finished whole each is necessary. Here at least, experience is completed in a symbolic form.

Such considerations mean that even if looking at purely formal relations in an artwork, they are always something more than that, even if one cannot say exactly why. This is even more the case when it comes to following how the artist develops thematic elements and characterizations.

Through this we appreciate how he or she understands the way in which experiential textures are woven into the fabric of a coherent, progressing whole. To experience the artwork aesthetically is to enjoy a relational complex which exemplifies decisive vectors of experience itself.

If this account is right, the making of art qua aesthetic object is of the greatest metaphysical significance. This extends also to our sense of the artwork's creator. In life, people tell us who and what they are, and the various things which are important to them, or not. Such reports, however, labor under two singular disadvantages. On the one hand, they rarely qua reports do justice to the depth and affective ambiguities of the person's experience. On the other hand, in bearing witness to such reports there is always some element of psychological pressure in terms of how one responds. It is not easy to give the reporter exactly what he or she wants in terms of response. Neither is it easy to turn away, if the report is too complex, challenging, or, for that matter, too boring to negotiate.

Suppose, however, that we encounter the other's experience as embodied in a poem, painting, or piece of music. Whether or not the artist is present in person when we engage with the work, qua object it is always capable of being experienced independently of such direct presence. Indeed, with the vast majority of artworks which we negotiate, the artist is nowhere around, and in cases is long dead.

This physical discontinuity of the work from its creator is of the most positive worth. For it means that we can engage with the experience embodied in the work in much freer terms than in direct engagements with another person. The fact that the work declares the artist's conception of things through stylized interpretation in a medium, allows that which is important to him or her to be negotiated in allusive rather than explicit terms. Experience is shown rather than baldly stated, and this allows us to identify with a personal vision of things, rather than with the other's experience in its own right. Such empathy allows us to discover things about ourselves and our own values. The artist and ourselves relate on a more equal basis.

Our identification, in other words, is based on an invitation and sharing rather than prescription. We may know many things about the artist or even the circumstances under which the particular work was created. But the key point is that we can identify with it without having to take these contextual factors into account as a logical condition of our identification. By virtue of this our appreciation of the work counts as relatively disinterested. Our empathy with what it shows is an aesthetic experience.

It should also be emphasized that this engagement admits of cultivation and education even more so than with the experience of simple beauty as such. This is because artworks are—as products of human artifice—created in a comparative historical horizon. We have strong criteria for comparison and contrast which can sharpen our sense of what is of most worth (or for that matter, derivative) in this particular way of articulating the medium. The possibility of experiential cultivation and change is enhanced. It is so

because the practice of artmaking itself, is grounded on how the artist relates to and modifies traditions of creation within the medium.

This comparative horizon is not just a case of technical issues. For the way in which such issues are negotiated is deeply implicated in how the world is disclosed by a particular artwork. And in deciding on this question, mere reports of what an artist has done are not sufficient to determine value. We must see how these are embodied in the particular work.

Conclusion

It is worth considering, finally, an objection to my strategy. The objection holds that my account is hopelessly outdated because it converges so much on beauty and the making of art. Surely "beauty" and "making" have had their day. What is now to the fore are conceptual and theoretical issues rather than "experience."

In response, it must be noted first that the objection assumes that what is fundamental to art—what defines it even—are the preferences of that insidious world of curators, managers, collectors, and critics who dominate Western art, and its colonial subjects in other cultures. However, to allow this world to dictate what is appropriate to the analysis of aesthetic experience and its relation to beauty and art is wholly unacceptable. It is a kind of unconscious racism which denigrates upwards of around 30,000 years of artistic creation on a worldwide scale.

Against this, it might be claimed that since the notions of "art" and the "aesthetic" are Western social constructs, one can hardly complain if shifts in that society's values have brought a corresponding change in the meaning of art and the aesthetic. However, this invites the question of what it is that enables the West to "construct" such concepts. And here we face a decisive transcultural factor. In non-Western societies, the indigenous function of image-making, music, poetry, dancing and the like seems almost exclusively ritualistic. However, it is difficult to see how practices of this kind could be taken to have functional efficacy—to have magical effects, or whatever—unless there was something intrinsically special about the very making of them.

And there is. No matter what function artifacts of the aforementioned kinds are intended to serve, by definition they involve the artist working in a medium, and through that working, changing his or her relation to medium, self, and world. Through the making of "aesthetic ideas" in the sense described in section III, the subject-object relation in experience is changed, no matter how slightly. Through this we find the emergence of new, intrinsically valuable ways of experiencing things.

Now, whereas in many cultures this aesthetic experience is drawn back into the functional context, Western societies have come to pursue it in specialist terms, and it is for this specialist pursuit that the term "art" has been used. However, Western culture has now extended the terms the "aesthetic" and "art" to mean ideas and contexts related to theories about art, or artifacts used to illustrate such ideas. But this approach is characteristically

unable to distinguish discourse and strategies about art, from art itself. Indeed, through the devising of "institutional" and related definitions, the very nature of art is redefined so as to make the concept constellate around what are at the very best a marginal set of Western preferences. That body of practices—extending far beyond the West—which sustains the idea of art being something worth having ideas about in the first place, is transformed into a passé, secondary function of the very thing which it enables.

Interestingly, this is not only a logical and ethical problem, it also masks a massive failure of imagination on the part of philosophical aesthetics. For whilst contemporary Western idioms are often marginal to the features which make art an enduringly significant phenomenon, even these marginal modes can relate to aesthetic experience in important ways. In this respect, for example, there are important connections which can be made between installation and assemblage art and the sublime, and even between some conceptual idioms and modes of imaging.[10]

This why it is vital to clarify the importance of the aesthetic as a mode of experience, rather than some consumer-based mode of perception or attitude. Only by clarifying the aesthetic's experiential depth can any justice be done to beauty and art's transcultural and transhistorical formative significance.

Notes

1 My approach to the aesthetic has been outlined in more general terms in a number of other works, most notably *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. A more recent and critical approach to questions of value can be found in Paul Crowther, *Defining Art, Creating the Canon: Artistic Value in an Era of Doubt*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007.

2 See, for example, Monroe Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1982, especially 77—92.

3 Dickie's objections are stated most effectively in his *Art and the Aesthetic*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1974.

4 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M.Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1973, 213.

5 See, for example, Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Criticism*, Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1960, 29–65.

6 The notion of disinterestedness as a logical criterion of the aesthetic is developed more in my book *Defining Art, Creating the Canon: Artistic Value in an Era of Doubt*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. See especially chapter 2.

7 I develop Kant's position as set out in the first four Moments of the Analytic of the Beautiful in his *The Critique of Judgment*, trans.Werner J. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, 43—95.

8 Kant also gives great emphasis to the fact that the pure aesthetic judgment has validity beyond personal preference. However, his "deduction" of this universal validity is extremely difficult and unviable. See, for example, *The Critique of Judgment*, op. cit., 155—162.

9 In what follows, I significantly develop Kant's theory of art, most notably the notions of aesthetic ideas, and of artistic originality. See *The Critique of Judgment*, op. cit., 181–86 and 174–76 respectively.

10 I have made extensive connections between, for example, installation art and the sublime in chapter 10 of my *The Language of Twentieth-Century Art: A Conceptual History*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1997, and between conceptual art and imaging in the conclusion to my book *The Transhistorical Image: Philosophizing Art and Its History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

3 Experiential theories of aesthetic value

Gary Iseminger

I

Accounts of artistic value that make essential use of the concept of aesthetic experience or some related "aesthetic state of mind" have a long and controversial history and have for some time been out of favor among philosophers of art. For one thing, the concept of aesthetic experience has been notoriously difficult to pin down. George Dickie famously debunked various versions of the notion and engaged in a lengthy debate with Monroe Beardsley about the concept of aesthetic experience invoked by Beardsley in his experiential theory of artistic value.[1] More recently Noel Carroll[2] has assumed Dickie's role as the scourge of aesthetic experience.[3]

Experiential theories of artistic value, however, continue to be proposed and defended. Malcolm Budd has said that

> the value of a work of art as a work of art ... is [determined by] the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers.
>
> (Budd 1995: 4)

and in *The Aesthetic Function of Art* I argue for the following principle:

> (V') A work of art is a good work of art to the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation.[4]

which is seen to be an experiential theory of artistic value as soon as the concept of appreciation invoked is unpacked as "finding the experiencing of a state of affairs to be valuable in itself."[5] In *The Aesthetic Function of Art* I mount an argument for (V'), and I formulate the concept of appreciation in part with the aim of forestalling certain problems with experiential theories of artistic value, but there are weighty objections to such theories that I do not discuss in the book. Though I briefly recapitulate some points from the book, my main project in this chapter is to address those objections.

II

Objection: The alleged experience is bogus; no account of it that is both plausible and enlightening can be given.

Reply: Appreciation as I conceive it is in no way mysterious. It is a characterized by a slightly complicated conglomeration of relatively straightforward conceptual elements—(i) experiencing (e.g. seeing, hearing, etc.) something as having some property in the epistemic sense in which seeing that *a* has *P* entails that *a* has *P*; and (ii) believing that something is valuable even though it may or may not serve some ulterior purpose. The slight complication is that when one appreciates *a*'s having *P*, what one finds valuable in itself is not directly *a*'s having *P*, but rather one's seeing (hearing, etc.) that *a* has *P*. That someone can be in such second-order state of mind seems clear enough. It is not a state that is defined in terms of a characteristic phenomenology in the manner of most accounts of aesthetic experience, though when someone is appreciating something, there will generally be "something that it is like" to be experiencing that thing, and what it is like will typically be at least part of why the person values the experience. Whether appealing to appreciation as in (V') can provide enlightenment on the subject of artistic value is, of course, another question, for a positive answer to which I argue in *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, but the legitimacy of sometimes attributing such a state of mind to people seems secure.

III

Objection: There may *be* such an experience, but it is not the *aesthetic* experience.

Reply: It is worth noting, first, that I make no appeal to any concept of the aesthetic (or of art) in explaining the idea of appreciation, nor do I appeal to any prior concept of the aesthetic to narrow the genus appreciation to a species called aesthetic appreciation. In particular, the experience that one finds valuable in itself need not and should not be characterized as an aesthetic experience, except insofar as it is the experiential ingredient in appreciation as here conceived.

I *have*, however, identified the complex state of appreciation, if not the experience which is ingredient in it, as the "aesthetic state of mind."[6] The term "aesthetic" appears in the titles of the four articles and the book that I have devoted to these topics, as well as in the titles of six of the nine major sections of that book. I called the view advanced in it, culminating in the experiential theory of artistic value expressed in (V'), a "New Aestheticism.'

Questions have been raised about the appropriateness of identifying appreciation as the aesthetic state of mind[7] Appreciation is certainly broader than aesthetic experience is on traditional accounts. While including states of affairs traditionally allowed as objects of the aesthetic experience, it encompasses in addition the appreciation of many states of affairs that Frank Sibley would not say required aesthetic concepts to characterize them and even more that Clive Bell would not be inclined to view as arousing the aesthetic emotion. Nonetheless, I think it can be defended as a legitimate heir to the aestheticist tradition.[8] The point for now, however, is that, though it would do no harm to *call* the value something has as affording appreciation aesthetic value, (V') is a principle of artistic value—the value of works of art as works of art, not aesthetic value, and no prior understanding of what, if anything, might make an experience aesthetic is needed to understand (V'), which is clearly an experiential theory of artistic value. In what follows I will do my best to avoid the term "aesthetic."[9]

IV

Objection: On this view the way in which works of art have value becomes indistinguishable from the way in which certain drugs have value.

Reply: Robert Sharpe[10] presses this objection against Budd, who, however, makes it clear that his conception of "the experience the work offers" is not subject to these strictures:

> I mean by "the experience a work of art offers" an experience of the work in which it is understood. ... For you to experience a work with (full) understanding, your experience must be imbued with an awareness of (all) the ... properties that ground the attribution of artistic value [to it]. ... The experience the work offers is an experience *of* the work itself; it does not have a nature specifiable independently of the nature of the work.[11]

What might be called a "phenomenological" conception of experience—of experience as something whose "nature" *is* specifiable "independently of the nature of the work of art itself" in terms of "what it is like" to undergo it—might well be subject to objections of this kind, for if the work of art is thought of as a kind of "experience machine," then it does seem as if the causal history of the experience would be irrelevant and the work only contingently and externally connected to it. But if "the experience a work of art offers" is understood in epistemic terms, as a kind of direct (but not infallible) way of getting in contact with what is experienced, then the relation between the work of art experienced in this sense and the experiencing of the viewer (listener, etc.) is very different from the relation between a drug and a tripper. In the same way, the concept of experience embedded in the account of appreciation, as contrasted with the phenomenological concept of experience, is

the concept of an experience imbued with an awareness of the properties of the object experienced that ground the attribution of artistic value to it.[12]

V

> *Objection*: The properties of works of art that can be experienced in the epistemic sense do not include all the properties that contribute to artistic value.
>
> *Reply*: The epistemic concept of experience invoked in the account of appreciation may make it broader than traditional accounts of the aesthetic state of mind, but a contrasting worry persists that it is still too narrow to fill the role assigned to it by (V').

Consider some types of properties that are candidates for being "artistically relevant" in the sense that their presence or absence might figure in our judgment that a particular work of art is or is not to some extent a good work of art: formal (being unified), expressive (being anguished), representational (depicting a crucifixion), semantic (saying that women are fickle), genetic (being inspired by a love affair), causal (igniting a riot in Paris in 1914), art-historical (being original), stylistic (being mannerist), generic (being a classical symphony), ideological (being Christian). Which of these properties, as exemplified by works of art, can be experienced in the relevant sense (seen, heard, etc.), so that someone might appreciate the work as having them?

Epistemic concepts of experience can be "thick" or "thin" in varying degrees, according to how extensive a range of properties is taken to be accessible to experience. David Davies, for example, has in mind a thin concept of experience when he says that

> he distinctive feature of an empiricist epistemology of art ... is the claim that the work's artistic properties are identical to, or intimately related to, what is "manifest" to receivers who engage in a direct experiential encounter with an instance of the work.[13]

Robert Hopkins spells out the view that "the aesthetically relevant properties of a work [of art] are manifest to the sense, or senses, appropriate to it,"[14] a view he dubs "Manifestationism," in the following two principles,

> (P1) Aesthetically significant features of an object must figure in experience of it. ... (P2) A feature ... figures in experience only if the subject can discriminate cases in which the figure is present or not,[15]

the first of which expresses a fundamental presupposition of any experiential theory of artistic value, and the second of which spells out a thin conception of the experience involved.

Both Davies and Hopkins recognize that requiring properties that contribute to the value of works of art as works of art to be manifest to the naked eye (ear, understanding, etc.) is indeed, as the objection currently under consideration would have it, too restrictive. Something like that requirement lies behind the formalism that often seems to come along with experiential theories of artistic value, and it is vulnerable to obvious objections, such as, for example, those based on Danto's gallery of indiscernibles. It also has the apparent consequence that, for example, originality, not being discriminable in Hopkins' sense, is not an "aesthetically significant feature" of a work of art in the sense that it is not something that contributes to the value of a work of art as a work of art. What, then, are the prospects of an experiential theory of artistic value under these circumstances?

Here Davies and Hopkins differ. Davies considers the question to be whethe an "antiempiricist epistemology of art" can be reconciled with an "empiricist axiology of art,"[16] and concludes that it cannot, while Hopkins recommends not so much an antiempiricist epistemology of art as a thicker empiricist epistemology of art which, he claims, can be reconciled with an empiricist axiology of art.

Hopkins' strategy is to save the empiricist axiology implicit in (P1) by denying (P2), "uncoupling" experience and discrimination, so that there can be differences in our experiences of works where the differences between the works are not "manifest" to us, as, for example, when, lacking knowledge of a work's provenance, we cannot discern whether it is original or not. Adapting examples from Kendall Walton,[17] he defends a thick conception of experience according to which, despite its not being manifest, originality *can* "figure" in experience:

> There is a distinctive experience of the work before one that depends on placing it against a background of contrast and comparison classes that reflect the thought that it is original.[18]

Furthermore, having rejected the account of experience that requires the capacity to discriminate as a necessary condition, he advances, as an alternative to (P2),

> ($P2^{H)}$ A feature figures in S's experience of O only if O possesses that feature,[19]

thereby making it clear that the concept of experience he employs is epistemic in the sense in which the concept of experience I have invoked in characterizing appreciation is. On both Hopkins' view and mine, experiencing something's having a property requires that the thing have that property. As Hopkins remarks, it remains to be seen how applying a notion like this works out in particular cases, but a sufficiently thick epistemic concept of experience promises to extend the range of properties well beyond those that are "manifest."

Davies recognizes that what he calls an "enlightened empiricism" can thus extend the range of artistically valuable properties beyond the manifest, but he argues that however successfully it may do this, it still fails to capture what he calls the "achievement properties" of works.

> The object of critical appreciation is not merely the ... properties of the product of the artist's endeavors per se, but rather the artist's *achievement* in producing such a product. ... Provenance bears upon the appreciation of works not only because it partly determines salient properties of a specified object or structure, but also because knowledge of provenance is essential if we are to grasp *what the artist has done* in bringing such an object or structure into existence. [In at least some cases] in appreciating a work, we appreciate a particular performance or doing on the part of an agent. Differences in elicited experiences, in such cases, are the result of acknowledged differences in ascribed achievements.[20]

Certainly, we admire the achievements of artists,[21] but "achieve" is presumably what Ryle would call an achievement verb, so that the admirable achievements of artists as artists are typically embodied in their works. The greater part of *The Aesthetic Function of Art* constitutes an argument for the following principle:

> (F') The function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication,[22]

where, to repeat, aesthetic communication is characterized as someone designing and making something with the aim and effect that someone else appreciates it, and appreciating something as finding experiencing its properties to be valuable in itself. From this it is a fairly straightforward conclusion that our admiration as members of an audience of those achieved works as works of art appropriately consists in our finding it valuable in itself to experience their properties.[23]

Davies, however, insists that this is not all there is to it. We may also admire actions of artists as artists that are not exhibited in works, or, if they are, that are not objects of experience found valuable in itself. Davies cites the following example:

> Certain early twentieth-century "experiments" in performance, such as the "bruitism" of Marinnetti and Russolo possess neither cultural value ... nor obvious merits through directly enriching human experience. Yet what was done by the artists at this time has genuine artistic interest of the same sort as the interest we take in those doings that do have experiential value.[24]

Certainly we take an "artistic interest" in these "doings" because they are

undoubtedly the doings of members of the artworld acting in their capacity as artists, but it does not follow that we are committed to finding the resulting works to have artistic value.

In general, then, an experiential theory of artistic value seems to have the resources to accommodate our intuitions about what properties of works of art beyond those manifest in experience contribute to their being good as works of art. It can honor many of these intuitions by embracing a thick epistemic conception of experience. It can tweak some of them by suggesting that the properties in question are not necessarily properties of the work. Finally, in the search for reflective equilibrium it might even reject a few of them. (But does anyone really think that an adequate theory of artistic value must honor an *intuition* that early twentieth-century "bruitist" performances and their contemporary analogues are good as works of art?)

VI

Objection: It is a metaphysical mistake, akin to the attempt to reduce physical objects to collections of sense-data, to reduce the value of a work of art to the mental states of members of an audience rather than locating it in the work itself.

Reply: Sharpe, in the course of his attack on experiential theories of artistic value proposes the analogy to sense-datum theory:

> What I elect to call "The Empiricist Theory of Artistic Value" is analogous ... to the program of replacing claims about entities by claims about the ideas, perceptions, sensations, or sense-data of the perceivers ... for it "reduces" talk of the value of works of art to talk of the value of our experiences of it.[25]

The analogy with sense-datum theories does not seem to be apt. There is no "reductionist" motivation at work in experiential theories of artistic value, no attempt to say that works of art or their properties can be dispensed with in favor of experiences, no attempt to seek anything like the foundational certainties that sense-datum theorists supposed to be the grounds of knowledge. The thought that the value of a work of art is a function of the experiences it affords is not a ploy to meet the skeptical challenge posed by a quest for certainty, nor is it a misguided application of Ockham's Razor. It is, as I suggested above, rather a natural extension of the thought that the function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication.

Furthermore, the properties of the work are the *source* of artistic value, since it is the experience of those very qualities as instantiated in the work that is found to be valuable in itself. Budd puts the point as follows:

> It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers, and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience.[26]

Davies, however, has a further objection.

> Most important, even if it be granted that the artistic value that resides in what an artist does or achieves is always ultimately accountable to the ways in which artworks can "enrich human experience" ... this will not save [the experiential theory of artistic value]. For the artistic value ascribable to a work in virtue of what an artist has done ... is in no way a function of the experiences elicited in encounters with instances of that particular work. ... The dependence, if any, in such cases runs in the opposite direction: it is through our recognition of the artistic value of what was done that we come to experience the work differently.[27]

Consider the following case. The typical classical sonata form composition of Haydn or Mozart begins by firmly establishing the tonic chord of the key in which the movement is to proceed. By contrast, the slow introduction to the first movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1* begins on C7, the dominant seventh chord that resolves to F, thence via G7, Am, and D7, to G, which turns out to be the dominant of C, the tonic key in which the movement finally takes off. Let it be granted that it is only when we know, by means that go beyond hearing, how unusual this is in the time and style of the composer that we can *hear* the (non-manifest) originality of this beginning.[28] It does not follow that we must recognize the *value* of this originality by these means. It remains perfectly possible, and I think it is often true, that knowing that a passage is original in virtue of our knowledge of its provenance we hear that originality and find that hearing to be valuable in itself. It seems to me, then, that Davies has not mounted a decisive counter-example against a full-fledged experiential theory of artistic value.

As Davies notes, however, Jerrold Levinson, a prominent defender of an experiential theory of artistic value, has expressed some doubts:

> Artworks may be valuable to us artistically in ways that go beyond their value in experience to us, strictly speaking. Part of an artwork's value might reside in its art-historical relations to other artworks, e.g., ones of anticipation, or originality, or influence, independent of the value of experiencing the work in an appropriate manner.[29]

I think there is more to be said about examples of this kind, however, than simply trading dueling intuitions and that some insight may be gained by reflecting on them in the light of the particular argument mounted in *The Aesthetic Function of Art* for the principle that a work of art is a good work of

art to the extent that it affords appreciation. That argument depends on the other main thesis of the book, that the function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication, and it proceeds by way of reflections on what the responsibilities of voluntary participants in an informal institution or practice are and how their actions in their roles in that institution and the products of those actions are to be evaluated. Further reflection on these matters might well support doubts like Levinson's, but that is a story for another time.

VII

Objection: The appeal to the capacities of a work of art to affect members of an audience as an explanation of its value as a work of art, even if it is not metaphysically suspect, fails to do justice to the normative force of the claim that a work of art is good as a work of art.

Reply: Budd states the objection thus:

> A[n] ... analysis of the concept of the artistic value of a work in terms of its power to induce intrinsically rewarding experiences in subjects fails to do justice to the evaluative component of the concept, as do other dispositional accounts of value that omit reference to a merited response.[30]

Robert Stecker puts the point this way:

> Why should we regard the judgement that an object is beautiful or poignant as normative if it merely reports a disposition ... [31]

Note that Budd's own view, that the value of a work of art as a work of art is the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers, is apparently a "dispositional account of artistic value"; presumably the work "offers" the experience in question in virtue of properties it has whether or not it is being experienced. Furthermore the dispositions in question are dispositions to "induce experience in subjects." The objection must then be specifically to accounts of artistic value in terms of dispositions to induce responses or experiences *that omit reference to merited response.*

The issue, then, is a version of the issue of value naturalism in something like the Moorean sense. Accordingly, on Budd's view the fact that an experience is intrinsically rewarding (to someone) does *not* entail that finding it so is a *merited* response, while evidently the fact that an experience is intrinsically *valuable* (not just found intrinsically rewarding by someone) *does* entail that someone's finding it so *is* a merited response. As Budd puts it,

> If you find the work intrinsically rewarding [to experience] and you are right to do so, then the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable.[32]

The best way to understand this, I think, is to note that being rewarding (intrinsically or otherwise) is a relational property and that, in the absence of further specification, an existential quantifier is implicit in the claim that something is intrinsically rewarding. If it is intrinsically rewarding, then there is someone to whom it is intrinsically rewarding, but in general there is no reason to suppose that what is intrinsically rewarding to one person will be intrinsically rewarding to another. If qualities that make for good works of art are understood only as ones that have a disposition to afford experiences found intrinsically rewarding by *somebody or other*, why should that fact have any normative force for others?

The version of an experiential theory of artistic value expressed by (V') raises exactly this issue. The capacity to afford appreciation unpacks into having the capacity to afford appreciation *to someone* in the same way that the power to induce intrinsically rewarding experiences unpacks into the power to induce intrinsically rewarding experiences *in someone*. But the fact that something is appreciated (experiencing it is *believed* to be valuable in itself) by someone does not entail that it is worthy of being appreciated (experiencing it *is* valuable in itself).

Consequently, (V') is at best incomplete as an account of artistic value. It may still be (and, if my argument for it in Iseminger 2004 is sound, is) true, and it is still significant as ruling out properties ingredient in unappreciable states of affairs involving works of art as properties that count towards those works being good as works of art. Now, however, I propose to make the quantifier explicit in (V') as follows:

> (V'e) A work of art is a good work of art to the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation to someone.

and address the question raised by this way of putting it, namely, "Just who might that someone be?"[33]

Given that the aim is to answer this question in such a way as to make clear how the right-hand side of this account captures the normative force of the left-hand side, the question becomes "Whose appreciation of something might have some tendency to suggest that others *ought* to appreciate it?" Here the possibility of an adaptation of a Humean ideal observer theory immediately comes to mind. Alan Goldman, for instance, having characterized an ideal art critic as, at a first approximation, one who is "knowledgeable, unbiased, sensitive, and of developed taste (if this involves more than knowledge and sensitivity)," goes on to say "that critics with these characteristics would react positively to a work suggests that others ought to as well."[34]

I do not propose at this point to pursue this suggestion in full detail, but I think there are reasons to think that, with a few tweakings, it is promising. One change has to do with the fact that we do not in general need to talk about mere observers (in this case, critics), ideal or otherwise. I have suggested that works of art necessarily presuppose an institutional setting in which standardly

they are designed and made for an audience. If this is so, we might be able to get whatever mileage there is to be got from a move of the Humean kind, and perhaps more, by invoking an ideal audience member rather than an ideal observer/critic. The unnaturalness of explicating the normative character of at least some thoughts of the form "This is a good *x*" by reference to what somebody would think about it or how somebody would react to it disappears when the thing in question is something of a sort which is *made* for someone to think about and react to. So let us see how the following principle might fare:

> (V") A work of art is a good work of art to that the extent that it has the capacity to afford appreciation to an ideal audience member.

This is a dispositional account of artistic value; it remains to be seen how it might have normative force. Stecker suggests that the reactions and judgments of an ideal critic would be normative if they implicitly *prescribed* something (Stecker 2003: 320–21), a thought that seems readily extendable to ideal audience members.

Even ideal critics, however, can have different tastes,[35] leading Stecker to ask

> Why should I alter the pattern of my reactions, or even my evaluations, to conform to those of a taste-relative ideal critic?[36]

The beginning of an answer is that I might well have reason to alter the "pattern of my reactions" (if coming to appreciate something that I formerly did not or ceasing to appreciate something that I formerly did counts as such), if I share the taste of the ideal critic or audience member in question. It is a commonplace that, in deciding what "normative force" to accord to claims of artistic value, one calibrates one's own taste with that of those making the claims. So the judgment of an ideal critic or audience member whose taste I share might at least be prescriptive for me in this way.

What of my "evaluations"? That a work of art has the capacity to afford appreciation to knowledgeable people who share my taste does not yet license any claim that it is, to that extent, good without qualification; at most, it entails that, to that extent, it is good *for me and people like me*. Here I think it is plausible to suggest that an ideal audience member for a given work, as distinct from an ideal critic, has a specific taste for "that sort of thing." Artists typically create works for audience members who are not only equipped to understand them but predisposed to appreciate them as well. If a work of art has the capacity to afford appreciation to people of *that* sort, then the artist has, to that extent, succeeded in his or her task, and it is not implausible to conclude that, to the extent that a work has the capacity to afford appreciation to such people, it is good, full stop, and not just good for members of that audience. Of course, I might not appreciate it if my taste differs from that of ideal audience members, but it is also a commonplace that we can recognize that a work of art is good without ourselves appreciating it. (Recall the *New Yorker* cartoon in which an irritated

man says to his equally irritated wife as they leave a theater, "I never said it wasn't good. I merely said I hated it.")[37]

VIII

I conclude that there is still hope for an experiential theory of artistic value, an account that appeals centrally to the concept of an "aesthetic state of mind" that either consists in, or essentially includes, an experience of the work of art being evaluated.

Notes

1 See Iseminger 2003 for discussion.
2 "The Aesthetic State of Mind," In Matthew Kieran (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 98–110.
3 See Iseminger 2006 for a response.
4 Iseminger 2004: 23.
5 Iseminger 2004: 28.
6 Iseminger 2006: 99.
7 Carroll 2002; S. Davies 2006.
8 Iseminger 2006.
9 In *The Aesthetic Function of Art* the only "official" role of the concept of the aesthetic is in the phrase "aesthetic communication," and even here, where aesthetic communication is undoubtedly being treated as a species of the genus communication, no independent understanding of the concept of the aesthetic needs to be invoked, since aesthetic communication is explained paradigmatically as "someone designing and making an artifact with the aim and effect that someone else appreciates it" (Iseminger 2004: 25–26).
10 Sharpe 2000: 323.
11 Budd 1995: 4.
12 Richard Shusterman argues against an assumption I endorse in Iseminger 2003 that "aesthetic experience should be sharply distinguished from experiences of sex (and drugs)" (Shusterman 2006: 224). He makes a convincing case for the claim that certain kinds of sexual experiences exhibit "all the key elements emphasized by the major conceptions of aesthetic experience" (2006: 226), and the point seems to apply to my concept of appreciation. But he does not argue the case for drug experiences, and it does not seem that such an argument would go through. Further, he traces my reluctance to recognize the aesthetic character of at least some sexual experiences to the assumption that "only works of art can form the object of aesthetic experience" (ibid.). However, I would deny that only works of art can be appreciated, both because of such obvious counter-examples as the appreciation of nature (Iseminger 2003: 100) and because appreciation, even of things made to be appreciated, can occur prior to and independent of the institutional context which, on my view, must exist for there to be works of art (Iseminger 2004: 127). What I would still claim is that a sexual experience is typically not an instance of what I have called aesthetic *communication*—someone making something with the aim and effect that someone else should appreciate it.
13 D. Davies 2006: 23.
14 Hopkins 2005: 120.
15 Hopkins 2005: 119. Hopkins casts the issue in terms of aesthetic properties, but nothing in the argument hinges on any particular account of the aesthetic. It is

clear that what he is interested in are properties that are relevant to the appreciation and evaluation of works of art.

16 D. Davies 2006: 23.
17 Walton 1970.
18 Hopkins 2005: 126.
19 Hopkins 2005: 125.
20 D. Davies 2006: 30.
21 I remember, upon hearing the first performance of *Black Pentecost*, by yet another Davies, the composer Peter Maxwell Davies, feeling a kind of awe that a human being could have conceived such a thing.
22 Iseminger 2004: 117–18. Budd claims that art cannot be a form of communication because in communication the connection between vehicle and message is an extrinsic one, whereas what is valuable in art, insofar as it has a message, is the message *as realized in the experience of the work* (Budd 1995: 15). I take it to be sufficient for communication that someone makes something with the aim and effect that someone else understands it, even if the sort of communication involved requires experiencing what is made and does not consist only (or even at all) in extracting a detachable message (Iseminger 2004: 32).
23 Iseminger 2004: 127–28.
24 D. Davies 2006: 31–32.
25 Sharpe 2000: 321.
26 Budd 1995: 5.
27 D. Davies 2006: 32.
28 Calling hearing the originality of a passage an example of experience in an epistemic sense does not imply that we must be able to come to know that it is original through that experience. What it does imply is just that a necessary condition of such an experience counting as one of hearing the originality of the passage is that the passage be original.
29 Levinson 1996: 12.
30 Budd 1995: n. 54, 183.
31 Stecker 2003: 320.
32 Budd 1995: 12–13; see also n. 12, 175.
33 See Iseminger 2004: 132.
34 Goldman 1995: 21–22.
35 Goldman 1995: 38.
36 Stecker 2003: 321.
37 Here I draw a moral from this cartoon that is rather different from the one I did earlier (see Iseminger 2004: 41).

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4 The dialectic of aesthetics

The new strife between philosophy and art

Christoph Menke

For at least a decade now, and probably longer, philosophical aesthetics has been afflicted by the malaise of academicism—in stark contrast to the artistic objects to which it relates and the art-related theories with which it competes. For the reader of recent publications and the visitor of increasingly small conferences, it must appear that philosophical aesthetics finds itself everywhere in the same corner that Richard Rorty describes with regard to Anglo-Saxon philosophy departments:

> in the US and Great Britain [. . .] aesthetics is the most isolated and least respected branch of that which we call "philosophy." Fifty years ago, before the second phase of feminism, American women who wanted to become philosophy professors were often told by their supervisors that it would be best for them to work on a problem in the area of aesthetics. Standing behind this was the thought that the inferior analytical capacities of women would be compensated for by their superior feeling for beauty.

Accordingly, as Rorty further claims, "the philosophical discipline that goes by the name of 'aesthetics' has neither influenced the rest of philosophy nor is it influenced by it"[1]—at least, Rorty adds, presumably out of politeness (the quoted text was first presented before a German-speaking public), "in America and Great Britain," but increasingly, I would add, also in the so-called "continental" philosophical milieu. I want to claim that in both philosophical contexts, the Anglo-Saxon and the continental, this loss of significance is the paradoxical but direct consequence of the attempt to secure for aesthetics a safe place: as a philosophical discipline that should concern itself, like all other disciplines, with a well defined field of human practice, namely, that which deals with the arts, or more generally with the beautiful (or ugly) and the sublime (or banal). Philosophical aesthetics tries to secure legitimacy for itself by safeguarding its own restricted area. It thus behaves, in George Bataille's sense, "slavishly" (as opposed to "sovereign"[2]): it promises not to stride out into anybody else's field and thereby hopes to have protected itself from everybody else's interference. In this self-assurance and self-protection, however, aesthetics misunderstands its history, its object and its form. It

misunderstands the characteristic—and characteristically *negative*—dialectic in the unfolding of which consists the logic and meaning of philosophical aesthetics. For the logic and meaning of philosophical aesthetics cannot consist only or even primarily in the production of knowledge concerning its objects—whether these be only the arts or all "sensual" knowledge and representation. With regard to the theory of art or art-criticism, to the philosophy or psychology of perception, to semantic or rhetoric theories of speech, etc., philosophical aesthetics has no superior knowledge concerning its objects. Philosophical aesthetics does not produce knowledge; rather, it reflects or criticizes. What it reflects or criticizes is, in the first place, itself: philosophy. In philosophical aesthetics takes place a self-reflection or self-critique of philosophy. For in aesthetics, philosophy enters into a conflict with itself concerning its most fundamental idea of human practice.

Between general and particular

At the beginning of aesthetics, that is, in the first paragraph of the first book with this title, Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* from 1750, we read the following: "Aesthetics (as theory of the free arts, as doctrine of inferior knowledge, as art of beautiful thought and as art of thought analogous to reason) is the science of sensuous knowledge."[3] In the main proposition, aesthetics is defined as the "science of sensuous knowledge." In the inserted parenthesis, this "science" (*scientia*) is divided into two forms, each of which is then said to have two fields of application. Aesthetics is, first, at the same time *theoria* and *ars*, theory and technique, that is, practical guidance. I leave this aside here. Aesthetics applies, second, in both approaches, as theory or technique, to two fields: to the field of "inferior" or "sensuous" and to the field of "free" or "beautiful" comprehension (and representation). Otherwise expressed, aesthetics is directed at sensuous comprehension and representation in general, in its ordinary and familiar form *and* at its specific, amongst other things beautiful, enactments in the field of the "free arts." Aesthetics brings together, in *one* operation, theory of art and epistemology, *theoria liberalium artium* and *gnoseologia inferior*.

This connection of two different undertakings is fundamental for the concept of philosophical aesthetics; the logic of discourse of aesthetics *consists* in this bringing together. Negatively, this means that aesthetics cannot be reduced to a special theory of the arts—even when we speak of the arts, as Baumgarten does, in the wide sense of being not just beautiful but "free." The meaning and legitimacy of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline is not exhausted by its being the theory of a specific and restricted area of human practice that exists alongside so many others. Aesthetics was not invented by Baumgarten, nor was it ever conducted by him, in order to just "supplement" traditional, rationalistic philosophy by a theory of this area. The interest that philosophy takes in the particularly artistic modes of sensuous comprehension and representation—the interest, that is, that leads philosophy

to aesthetics—is itself, in its objective, general: it is an interest which, by means of the understanding of the particularly artistic modes of sensuous comprehension and representation, wants better to understand sensuous comprehension and representation in general, and in its ordinary form.[4] This is the "dialectic" of general and particular that defines aesthetics; defines it as a philosophical discipline. Aesthetics can certainly at times tend more towards the one or the other; it can want to be, above all, either a specific theory of artistic forms or a general theory of the sensuous. It can only be one of the two, however, because it is both at the same time.

This is already hinted at in the text that has frequently been seen as the germ of the later development of philosophical aesthetics, Leibniz's *Reflections on Knowledge, Truth and the Ideas* from 1684. In this text, Leibniz wants, amongst other things, to confer upon sensuous representations—of "colors, smells, feelings of taste"—the character of "clear" ideas. For although our sensuous representations of colors, smells and feelings of taste are "confused" (we cannot define them), they are nevertheless not "obscure," because from them we "can recognize the represented thing."[5] The field of the sensuous in general first becomes here an epistemologically investigable object; Baumgarten's dissertation on the poem (*Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, 1735) follows immediately from this. What is more decisive for the very idea of philosophical aesthetics, however, is the instance, indeed, the evidence, that Leibniz invokes in favor of this new determination of the sensuous. He writes:

> in a similar manner we see painters and other artists adequately recognise [*probe cognoscere*] what is rightly and wrongly done, often without their being able to give the reason for their judgment, and we see them say to the questioner that they missed something in the object, I don't know what [*nescio quid*], that displeases them.[6]

The practice of the artist is significant for Leibniz here because it shows, exemplarily so to speak, that there is a mode of sensuous understanding and judgment that can be termed "adequate" without being clear and distinct, that is, without our being able to define the criteria with which such understanding and judgment operates. The artist and his practice offer for Leibniz the example of a specific kind of sensuous ability—an ability to comprehend and judge which can never become definable knowledge, but which nevertheless leads to accurate results. It is by means of an aesthetic reflection then, *in nuce*, a reflection upon the practice of the arts and artist, that Leibniz arrives (as against Descartes) at a fundamentally new insight (or at the irrefutable evidence for this new insight): namely, the insight that sensuous comprehension can be analyzed not only as a causal event, but as an enactment with a normativity of its own.

That which is hinted at by the example of Leibniz is carried to its conclusion in the work of Baumgarten. In this work, it becomes apparent that

the new view of sensuous enactments, one that compels that their artistic forms be taken seriously, requires nothing less than a rethinking of the basic concepts of philosophy. The rationalistic tradition with which Baumgarten is concerned had analyzed sensuous perception as being composed of external causal influences (of the world upon our senses) and inner processes in which our imagination turns this sensual input into images and fantasies. The idea that we can comprehend the world as it is by means of our senses is thereby rendered entirely incomprehensible. By contrast, Baumgarten draws attention—once again using, like Leibniz, the example of artistic practices—to the fact that we can cultivate our senses. By means of "aesthetic exercises" (*exercitationes*) on an object or theme, for example, we can learn to reliably distinguish their properties and qualities. That we can learn or cultivate this means that in such sensuous comprehension of differences we are not merely causally determined or arbitrarily projecting, but that instead we carry out an activity of understanding and differentiation that is related to the object. Sensuous comprehension is our own activity. Reflection upon a (at first wholly inconspicuous) characteristic of the aesthetic activity of sensuous comprehension, namely that it can be exercised, has far-reaching consequences, then, for the understanding of human sensuousness and activity in general—all of which are drawn by Baumgarten. From aesthetic reflection upon the phenomenon of artistic exercise, it follows, for example—as Baumgarten argues for the first time—that we have to understand ourselves as "subjects." Thus is born, as the great accounts of Cassirer, Eagleton and Foucault alike have shown, the modern idea of "man" and his "culture."

I am not concerned here with the details of these accounts.[7] What concerns me, rather, is the fact that this truly revolutionary rethinking of the semantics of the central concepts of cultural self-understanding—subjectivity, reason, knowledge, representation, etc.—is internally linked with the systematic reference to the specific activity of artistic perception and representation. This is decisive with regard to the idea and form of what "philosophical aesthetics" means. It is of no consequence for the moment that "artistic" does not yet exclusively relate here to the so-called "beautiful arts." (In the first paragraphs of the *Aesthetica* quoted above Baumgarten speaks of the "free arts" [*artes liberales*] and the "art of beautiful thought" [*ars pulchre cogitandi*].) What is decisive is that the "aesthetic" reflection upon artistic activity here possesses the meaning and power to transform the basic elements of the philosophically articulated, cultural self-understanding of the epoch. Without this meaning and power Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* would be meaningless and powerless; nobody would talk about it anymore. What aesthetics drives toward here, at the moment of its christening by Baumgarten, is cultural critique—a critique of the prevailing cultural self-understanding as it expresses itself in its dominant philosophical forms of articulation.[8] Baumgarten practiced and defined aesthetics as a critique of culture carried out *by means of* a reflection upon the arts.

The reflectivity of aesthetic experience

Against such a "dialectical" determination of aesthetics—of the place of aesthetics in philosophy—the objection might be raised not that it is false but, on the contrary, that it is trivial: because it applies to every branch of philosophy that is dedicated to a specific area of human practice. This objection is appropriate: every philosophical reflection upon a particular field of human practice takes place with a view towards the fundamental determination of that which constitutes in general practice and its conditions. It is this that marks this reflection as a philosophical one and that differentiates a genuinely philosophical examination of law, science or art, for example, from those theories that are developed out of these areas themselves. Giving a different slant to an expression of John Rawls, we can speak of a "reflective equilibrium" in philosophy between each of its particular and general determinations: philosophical reflection consists in a discursive movement that, by means of reciprocal correction and adjustment, brings both sides into an "equilibrium." Accordingly, there cannot be in philosophy any specialists who only concern themselves with the discovery of the correct theory of justice, knowledge or the beautiful; because these specialists would not see how their specific theories make presuppositions and have consequences with regard to our understanding of society, language, and representation in general. However, there also cannot be in philosophy any mere generalists, any specialists in the general; for every general determination of human practice is grounded in and must thus lead to determinations, of its particular forms and characters.

It is precisely because the dialectic of general and particular applies to philosophy and its spheres as such that one cannot adequately comprehend by means of it alone the specific position of the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, and of its reflection upon the arts or the beautiful and sublime. Aesthetics is not a branch of philosophy like all or, more precisely, many others. For aesthetics is concerned with an object that is itself not merely an additional field of human practice, but that takes up within human practice—and, at the same time, in opposition to it—an exceptional position. Aesthetics breaks apart the philosophical equilibrium between the general and the particular because the particular with which aesthetics is concerned is of another kind; the object of aesthetics is not a particular instance of a general kind. The aesthetic is, rather, a particular in which the general as such is exhibited or presented in a radically different way. The aesthetic is a particular that does not fall under a general but, rather, presents the general by stepping out of it; it is an exception from the philosophically general that, precisely by means of its exceptionality, draws up a new and alternative idea of it.

This is already hinted at in Baumgarten, when he distinguishes, in the broad field of philosophical aesthetics—that he defines as the field of sensuous comprehension and representation—between perfect and imperfect

forms; the imperfect form being the ordinary practice of sensuous comprehension and representation and the perfect form its skillful, artistic practice.[9] Baumgarten certainly understands this distinction as merely a difference in degree. At the same time, however, he distinguishes the perfect from the imperfect by means of the fact that, while the imperfect conceals its essence, the perfect or beautiful brings its essence to appearance. For a particular to be perfect thus means, according to Baumgarten, that it not only is an instance of something general but presents it (because it is its fully adequate presence). With this argument, Baumgarten identifies the artistic mode of sensuous comprehension and representation as that specific form in which the "essence" of sensuous comprehension and representation in general is represented.

The aesthetics that follows Baumgarten takes up this thought and reformulates it, above all since Kant, as the insight that the difference of aesthetic experience is not just a difference in degree but rather a fundamental one. With this move, the expression "aesthetic" acquires the narrow meaning that is familiar today. "Aesthetic" does not refer any longer to the wide field of sensuous knowledge (whose dualistic distinction from "rational" knowledge is questioned by Kant anyway). "Aesthetic," as in "aesthetic experience," rather refers to the functional specification of the artistic as the perfect in Baumgarten: aesthetic experience is that specific mode of comprehension, in which what comprehension is in general, is experienced.[10] The relation between the specifically aesthetic form (of experience, of representation) and the general form (of comprehension, of representation) is structurally asymmetrical, for it is defined by the fact that the aesthetic form *relates* or *refers* to the general form. In the language of Kant and romanticism: the aesthetic form is a *reflection* of the general form. Furthermore: the specifically aesthetic is nothing other than the reflective form *of* the general; the specifically aesthetic is the medium of a *self*-reflection of the general, in which that which it conceals in its ordinary, non-aesthetic enactments becomes apparent. Following (and radicalizing) Baumgarten's functional specification of the artistic as the perfect, philosophical aesthetics since Kant describes the relation of the specifically aesthetic experience to the general forms of comprehension and representation in two related and interchangeable ways: The specifically aesthetic experience is reflective in being an experience *of* the general form of comprehension or representation. This, however, is nothing else than the *self*-experience or -reflection of the general form of comprehension or representation.[11]

In order to see what the content of this aesthetic (self-) reflection of comprehension and representation in general is, we have to go back once more to Baumgarten. A crucial point of Baumgarten's innovative, namely "aesthetic" understanding of the processes of sensuous comprehension and representation consists in his insight that they too have the character of activities, which are to be comprehended in terms of a self-unfolding and working of "forces." In the usual enactment of such processes we do not

experience, however, our forces as such. The forces work directly here in the production of determinate products: perceptions that identify an object, gestures that communicate an intention, expressions that articulate a thought, etc. Forces serve for such productions, and in the ordinary enactment they disappear into or behind their productions. In aesthetic experience, however, the forces become apparent as such. It is in this that its reflectivity consists; in aesthetic experience there occurs a tuning back to the concealed presuppositions of visible productions, namely, to the activities and working of forces. This turning back to the ordinarily concealed forces and activities that constitute processes of comprehension and representation does not take place aesthetically, however, in the form of knowledge. The fact that in aesthetic experience occurs a (self-) reflection of ordinary processes of comprehension and representation does not mean that an insight concerning these ordinary processes is gained or, indeed, formulated. Aesthetic experience as (self-) reflection is, rather, of a practical kind: by changing and transforming the ordinary process of comprehension and representation, it allows the forces that are concealed in this process to become apparent. Aesthetic experience as (self-) reflection takes place as aesthetic *activity*: by means of another mode of enactment of processes of comprehension and representation.

Conversely, the aesthetic mode of enactment is "different" to the ordinary mode of enactment because (and only because) it allows the latter's concealed forces and activities to become apparent as such. For in becoming apparent, the forces change the mode of their working. In aesthetic experience as aesthetic re-enactment, the forces work (as Kant says) "freely" or "playfully." The usual enactments of comprehension or representation are determined from the perspective of their product (and its validity); this—to succeed in making a product—is the aim that gives the forces their meaning and telos. The elucidation of aesthetic reflectivity, however—of the fact that we aesthetically experience these acts in their enactment and this enactment in the working of forces—should imply that we experience here the enactments and the working of forces in them as such, set free in their own energetics and dynamics. It is this that characterizes the freedom of an aesthetically self-reflective enactment; and it is this freedom that constitutes our pleasure in this practice.

The view of aesthetic experience as a self-reflection that is an enactment, or as an enactment that is self-reflective, can be called a specifically modern conception; for it describes the unity of modern aesthetics from Kant to Theodor W. Adorno, Niklas Luhmann and Paul de Man. The claim that this conception of the aesthetic is "modern," however, has less a temporal than a structural sense: it is "modern" in that (and in the way in which) it holds fast to the idea of aesthetic autonomy. This distinguishes the reflective conception of aesthetic experience from a conception that understands aesthetic experience as perception, or "aisthesis". An "aisthesis"-conception of aesthetic experience sees it as nothing more than a variant of those forms of

sensuousness—of sensuous perception or representation—that we ordinarily enact. There is accordingly, at best, a difference in degree, not of kind, between the ordinary and the aesthetic forms. The reflective conception of aesthetic experience also does not merely claim a "difference" between aesthetic and ordinary forms of comprehension or representation—even if that be a structural difference or of kind. It claims, rather, that the aesthetic is different from the ordinary by making apparent a difference *in* the ordinary: the other of the ordinary in the ordinary. In aesthetic experience we enact the same processes of comprehension or representation as we do ordinarily—but we enact them in a different way, that is, so that the forces of our comprehension and representation "playfully" unfold themselves as such, and so that we feel a specific pleasure in the playful unfolding of these forces. This simultaneity of sameness and difference—it is the *same* forces of sensuous comprehension and representation that we enact in aesthetic experience in a *different* way—should explain the concept of aesthetic reflection, of aesthetic experience *as* (self-) reflection: processes of comprehension and representation are "aesthetic" when we enact or experience them in such a way that their ordinarily concealed forces and potentials, their "energetics," become apparent. The aesthetically self-reflective re-enactment of sensuous comprehension and representation shows what is hidden in them. It is this that constitutes the particularity, or difference, of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is not, as the "aisthesis"-conception claims, structurally the same as the ordinary enactments, and only different from them in degree; it is, rather, structurally different from the ordinary enactments because it playfully unfolds the forces in the ordinary against the ordinary.

The conflict of reflection: philosophical thought and aesthetic experience

With the transition from an "aisthesis"-conception to a reflective conception of aesthetic experience the dialectical determination of philosophical aesthetics—which I have derived from Baumgarten's definition (in the first section above)—has to be understood differently. An aesthetics that understands aesthetic experience as internally reflective breaks apart the dialectic of general and particular that defines every field in philosophy. In place of this dialectic of levels of reflection—of the particular and the general—there emerges instead a dialectic of different, indeed, in their consequences opposing, *forms* or *modes* of reflection. Aesthetic experience is a mode of self-reflection of ordinary practice, but so too is philosophy. There are therefore (at least) two basic forms of a (self-) reflection of ordinary practice—philosophical thought and aesthetic experience. It is the ("dialectical") tension between these two modes of self-reflection that aesthetics unfolds. Aesthetics—the philosophical thinking on aesthetic experience—is more than just a further particular area of philosophy, then, not only because it

has, like every such particular area, "general" consequences. Aesthetics is, rather, that exceptional place within philosophy in which the philosophical form of reflection is confronted with the structurally different form of reflection in aesthetic experience.

Aesthetics thus stands inside and outside philosophy at the same time. It stands inside philosophy because it is a philosophical reflection *upon* aesthetic reflection: upon that form of reflection that constitutes aesthetic experience. In aesthetics, the reflection that takes place in aesthetic experience becomes the object of philosophical reflection. At the same time, however, aesthetic experience cannot be confined to this role of a mere object about or upon which philosophy reflects. As an object of philosophical reflection, aesthetic experience is, rather, at the same time, an opponent, indeed, an antithesis and adversary, of this reflection: because aesthetic experience is itself the medium of a peculiar mode of reflection, there simultaneously takes place in aesthetics—which reflects upon aesthetic experience—a confrontation of philosophical reflection *with* aesthetic reflection. If aesthetic experience is no longer understood in terms of a conception of *aisthesis*, but instead reflectively, then it cannot simply be the object of philosophical reflection; instead, it enters into a relationship of competition, confrontation and conflict *with* this philosophical reflection upon it.

This relationship of the aesthetic and the philosophical mode of reflection also forms a "dialectic" of aesthetics. In contrast to the relationship of general and particular levels of reflection, however, it does not form a dialectic that can lead to an "equilibrium." It is a negative, not a positive, dialectic: a dialectic that is (and remains) a conflict. Aesthetics is the scene of this strife between the aesthetic and the philosophical mode of reflection of ordinary practice.

In the *Politeia*, Plato speaks of a "conflict [or strife] between philosophy and poetry" (607b). Indeed, already Plato calls this conflict an "ancient" one. Philosophical aesthetics, which is one of the most recent disciplines of philosophy, carries on this ancient conflict. At the same time that aesthetics defines itself as the scene of this conflict, however, it grants to this conflict another content and another place. The ancient conflict between philosophy and poetry of which Plato speaks was a conflict concerning the custodianship of the practical knowledge that guarantees culture and community; before, in, and still long after Plato, philosophy and poetry struggle about the seat of wisdom.[12] Both sides lay claim to the ability to lead to practical knowledge, more precisely, the knowledge that serves or, indeed, is necessary to, the good life; and both dispute the other side's ability to redeem this claim by its own means. Philosophy disputes the fact that poetry even disposes of knowledge; and poetry disputes the fact that philosophical knowledge is practically useful. Aesthetics, however, no longer understands the conflict between philosophy and poetry as one that concerns knowledge or wisdom. It instead understands this conflict as one between two modes of reflection, the philosophical and the aesthetic. Both modes of reflection are

directed at the same: they are reflections upon our ordinary practice of comprehension and representation. Yet both modes of reflection, the philosophical and the aesthetic, draw up different and, indeed, in consequence opposing, *images* of our ordinary practice of comprehension and representation. The revision, the reinterpretation and reenactment, of the ancient conflict between philosophy and poetry by aesthetics consists, thus, in the following: aesthetics no longer understands this conflict as one that is concerned with the question of who disposes over the best or highest form of knowledge with regard to the success of our practice—the question of which of the two is more useful as regards the success of our practice. It is, instead, a conflict that concerns two opposed ways of (self-) reflection of our ordinary practice. Thereby, the Platonic conflict between philosophy and poetry, as two different forms of knowledge, turns into the conflict between philosophical thought and aesthetic experience. This conflict—of which aesthetics understands itself as the scene and venue—is a conflict between the two profoundly different images of our ordinary practice of comprehension and representation that the philosophical and the aesthetic form of reflection draw up.

In what way do these images conflict with one another? Not in such a way that they contradict each other. For both sides of this conflict possess a different form. Philosophy operates in the medium of discursive knowledge and speech: it raises claims about ordinary practice and argues for their truth. Aesthetic experience, however, is only reflective by means of the mode of its enactment: because it enacts processes of sensuous comprehension and representation in a manner different to the ordinary, such that their forces unfold their free play. The conflict between philosophy and aesthetic experience is not, then, a relationship between statements that contradict one another, for aesthetic experience does not state anything. Their relationship of conflict is of another, more indirect kind. It is a struggle that only becomes apparent when philosophical argumentation is compelled to make a presupposition that cannot itself be argumentatively redeemed, and when aesthetic experience, by its peculiar reflection on the ordinary, contains and arouses a "feeling"—as Friedrich Schlegel said about Socratic irony—that puts in question this (non-argumentative) presupposition of all philosophical argumentation. For this aesthetically aroused feeling, as Schlegel further claims, is "a feeling of the indissoluble conflict between the conditioned and the unconditioned."[13] In the self-reflective enactment of the ordinary practice of sensuous comprehension and representation—an enactment that takes place in aesthetic experience—the "feeling" of an inner conflict *within* the ordinary practice emerges. And this aesthetically aroused feeling of conflict conflicts, on its part, with the image of our ordinary practice that is presupposed by philosophical argumentation. In order to see why, a short and preliminary determination of philosophical thought is necessary.

Philosophical reflection upon ordinary practice is concerned with making the normative success [*Gelingen*] of this practice comprehensible. Philosophy

wants to explain how it is to be understood that we can dispose of true knowledge, that we can give compelling reasons, that we can make just decisions, that we can perform good actions. Philosophy is interested in ability: in the fact that, and in the manner in which, we can carry out processes in such a way that they succeed. Such succeeding is rendered comprehensible by the philosophical analysis of our capacities or abilities[14]—by its investigation of what we must be able to do, what capacities and abilities we must have acquired and realized, in order for our practices to succeed. Philosophical argumentation here runs up, however, against a limit that it cannot go beyond. Philosophy can certainly go a step further and attempt to describe how such capacities and abilities can be acquired. What it cannot show, however, is that we actually possess those capacities and abilities the exercise of which signifies the success of practical enactments—the exercise of which is able to guarantee, that is, the success of practical enactments. If such correspondence of (subjective) capacities and (practical) success is the presupposition of all further philosophical argumentation, this presupposition of philosophical argumentation is itself, however, not argumentatively demonstrable. The content of the image of our practices—which philosophy draws up—is that we can make them succeed. But this remains only an image, one that guides philosophical argumentation without being able to be made good on. This situation of being dependent on an image (or a "belief") that cannot be argumentatively demonstrated characterizes modern philosophy—if this concept has any comprehensible meaning at all—as "post-metaphysical." Philosophy can analyze the capacities that represent the conditions of possibility of successful practice. It cannot explain, however, the reality of this success on the basis of the existence and exercise of these capacities. For the fact that we actually possess this ability is not an argumentatively redeemable claim of philosophy; it is, rather, the optimistic image, or idea, that it draws up.

In this situation, in which philosophy finds itself since Kant, aesthetic experience seems to be able to come to its assistance. For aesthetic experience, it seems possible to encounter and, indeed, attain certainty about, precisely that which can only be presupposed or assumed in philosophy. Philosophical reflection upon the capacities that make success possible runs up against the problem that it can certainly describe and analyze these abilities as the conditions of successful enactments; but it can never show that we actually *have* these capacities *as* capacities that make success possible. Aesthetic experience, however, should assure us of our actual possession of such capacities which make success possible. For aesthetic experience—according to the determination given above—is reflective precisely because it is an experience of those capacities and abilities, those forces, which are at work in our ordinary practices. Aesthetically, we should experience with pleasure the fact that we actually have these forces.[15] Aesthetic practice would here play for philosophy the role of a guarantor. In this practice, we would experience as a positive content that which

philosophy can only presuppose, and never prove: we would experience the fact that we possess the capacities by means of which our practice can succeed.

The claim that the modern form of aesthetics restages the ancient conflict between philosophy and poetry in a new form stands in contrast to this utilization of aesthetic experience by philosophy. The conflict between aesthetic and philosophical reflection that aesthetics unfolds does not have here the form of the pros and cons of claims and arguments. This conflict takes place, rather, because philosophy draws up its idea of capacities that make success possible and appeals to aesthetic experience for its confirmation; and because philosophical aesthetics shows against this that (and the way in which) aesthetic experience, by its own peculiar reflection, does not lead to this idea of ordinary practice that philosophy has drawn up, but instead to an entirely different and, indeed, contrasting one.

The decisive reason for this contrast is the opposition between the philosophical concept of capacities (that guarantee success) and the aesthetic experience of "forces" and their enactment, described in the second section above. The aesthetic activity is a self-reflection of ordinary practice because it allows the concealed forces of the latter to become apparent and experienciable. In this becoming apparent, however, the mode of enactment of the forces at the same time changes. Kant's metaphor for this is that they work "playfully." Friedrich Schlegel has explained this further by claiming that the effect of a playful unfolding of forces is irony. Irony in Schlegel refers to the double movement, the "constant change between self-creation and self-annihilation."[16] The aesthetic release of forces to their free play thus is at once productive or creative: it effects certain textual structures, images, forms. At the same time, however, the aesthetic release of forces to their free play dissolves again what it creates in one and the same movement. Forces only exist in order to work or produce works. This is the implicit teleology of force, as capacity or ability. But aesthetically released forces do not just produce works; in their aesthetic enactment, rather, the forces enter into conflict with the works that they produce. In its aesthetic free play, forces turn against their own teleological orientation to the producing of works and always dissolve anew that which they have produced.

This is the counter-image that aesthetics derives from aesthetic experience and counterpoises to the image drawn up by philosophy. Philosophy draws up an image of our practice in which capacities guarantee success. Aesthetics takes from aesthetically reflective experience the counter-image according to which forces only produce works to then again, in one and the same movement, dissolve them. This is the new or modern form to which philosophical aesthetics transforms the ancient conflict between philosophy and poetry—as a conflict between two irreconcilable images of ordinary practice.

The argument that I have outlined can be summed up by four sentences on philosophical aesthetics:

(i) Philosophical reflection draws up an idea of practice in which ability and success correspond with one another; aesthetic experiences reflects practice in such a way that forces and their works conflict with one another.
(ii) Philosophy views ability as the ground of success; aesthetic experience reflects forces as the abyss of their work.
(iii) Philosophy articulates the reason of practice (for reason is the totality of capacities that allow for normative success); aesthetic experience unleashes the frenzy of forces (for frenzy is the condition of the free play of forces).
(iv) Philosophical aesthetics is the scene upon which these two images of practice with unforeseeable consequences play out their strife.

Postscriptum: aesthetic experience and normative critique

The ancient strife between philosophy and poetry about which Plato speaks concerns the very heart of philosophy—for it concerns its self-understanding. At the same time, however, it should not define it: the conflict with poetry should serve philosophy in the gaining of its self-understanding. But it should then, according to the hope of Plato that is expressed in the idea of the expulsion of resistant poetry from the polis, be able to be concluded; philosophy should not *consist* in striving with poetry. By contrast, the modern discipline of aesthetics declares philosophy's relationship to aesthetic experience as constitutive to philosophy itself. For, philosophical aesthetics interiorizes aesthetic experience in philosophy. One has described this move of interiorization by saying that aesthetic experience has become thereby one of philosophy's worthy objects of investigation. It is precisely in this familiar observation of the strife that is made by the modern invention of aesthetics, however, that the significance and, above all, the consequences of aesthetics are underestimated. For aesthetic experience cannot become a mere *object* of philosophy.

As we have seen, this is already true, in a first sense, because, at every point of its history, the philosophical investigation of aesthetic experience has presented a challenge to the prevailing philosophical conceptuality. The investigation of the forms of aesthetic experience by philosophical aesthetics has always been directed at a calling into question of what philosophy has thought in general about the forms and conditions of human practice. The fact that aesthetic experience cannot be a mere object of philosophy is true in a manner that exceeds this, however, and in a more radical sense, when philosophical aesthetics sets off aesthetic experience in its reflectivity. For it follows from the reflective determination of aesthetic experience that it, as an object that philosophy reflects upon, enters into conflict *with* the philosophical mode of reflection that is directed at it. Like every consequence, this one too can be denied or acknowledged.[17] When philosophical aesthetics acknowledges this consequence (and is thus consistent with the

reflectivity of aesthetic experience), it understands itself—exceeding the mere investigation of the particularity of aesthetic experience—as the place within philosophy in which the conflict between aesthetic experience and philosophy takes place. The interiorization of aesthetic experience in philosophy which philosophical aesthetics brings about cannot mean to subjugate aesthetic experience to philosophical reflection as an additional object that is adequate to it. The interiorization of aesthetic experience in philosophy means, rather, to carry the conflict with aesthetic experience into philosophy.

By this means aesthetics becomes a critical instance of a peculiar kind. "Critique" is, in the first place, the operation of normative differentiation that we carry out, for example, when we distinguish between the right and wrong use of a word, between a suitable and an unsuitable means, between a reliable and a fragile reason, between a good and evil treatment of another person, between a good and bad form of life. Critique is not a specific philosophical idea or, indeed, method; it is, rather, an operation that is fundamental for every normative orientation, that is, for every orientation towards the difference between (normative) success and failure. There is no practice, then, of whatever kind, which could even exist without critique. The radius of critique can simply be narrower or broader: critique can concern individual enactments, regional standards or, indeed, fundamental norms. What is decisive for the understanding of aesthetic experience, however, is that the self-reflection of ordinary practices that it carries out is *not* such a critique; aesthetic experience reflects ordinary practice, but it does not criticize it in the normative sense just described.

Aesthetic experience *would* be "critical," in the familiar, normative sense of the word, if it made a contribution to our being able to do something better: use better words, find more suitable means, give more tenable reasons, treat others better, find a good life. Sometimes aesthetic experience might be of some use here. But this is at best an indirect use: As we have seen in the case of Baumgarten who practiced philosophical aesthetics as a contribution to the critique of rationalist philosophy and culture (see the first section above), philosophy can use aesthetic experience in order to improve its understanding of ordinary practices. But if the reflective conception of aesthetic experience is correct, aesthetic experience cannot contribute to the success of our practices. Plato was right: in itself, poetry knows nothing that might help our non-aesthetic, ordinary practice to succeed. But poetry does (or should) not even want this. In its reflective constitution, rather, aesthetic reflection allows us to experience, with regard to precisely those forms of our ordinary practice which we judge as the successful exercise of certain capacities, that they are products or works which are produced, and in the same move dissolved, by means of the playful release of forces. The aesthetic reflection of ordinary practice is not carried out according to the normative orientation that determines this practice in its ordinary enactment; instead, it transforms this practice in such a way

that its enactments appear not as normatively grounded and judgeable, but as the playful unfolding of forces. By means of its reflectivity, aesthetic experience thus undermines the very normative perspective that operates in all forms of critique.

What emerges here is one aspect of the conflict between aesthetic experience and philosophical thought that aesthetics plays through and unfolds within philosophy. Philosophy analyses practices from the perspective of their possible success; it asks about the conditions of possibility of success and is thus always a theory of critique, as the capacity for normative differentiation and decision. As a part of philosophy, aesthetics applies this philosophical mode of reflection—the question concerning the conditions of possibility of success—to aesthetic experience and its objects.[18] At the same time, however, aesthetic experience itself contains a reflective perspective that conflicts with the philosophical mode of reflection upon aesthetic experience. This also affects the operation of critique; for in undermining the normative orientation towards success, aesthetic reflection at the same time undermines the possibility of critique. Because aesthetics unfolds the conflict between aesthetic experience and philosophical thought, it turns into a critique of critique. A critique of critique that no longer is one: the critique of critique that aesthetics formulates with regard to aesthetic experience is a meta-critique—a critique of critique that includes, even if always momentarily, a freedom *from* critique. Since critique is the operation of normative differentiation that is constitutive to any practice oriented in success, the aesthetic freedom from critique amounts to nothing less than a freedom from normativity. By leading the conflict between philosophy and aesthetic experience within philosophy itself, aesthetics thus ends with a question: how can normative, that is, critical engagement for the success of a practice and its aesthetically self-reflective enactment be combined in their conflict? That is: how can normative engagement and the aesthetic freedom from it be held together?

Translated by Howard Rouse

Notes

1 Richard Rorty, "Der Roman als Mittel zur Erlösung aus der Selbstbezogenheit," in Joachim Küpper and Christoph Menke (eds) *Dimensionen ästhetischer Erfahrung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, 54.

2 See Christoph Menke, *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1998.

3 "Aesthetica (theoria liberalium artium, gnoseologia inferior, ars pulchre cogitandi, ars analogi rationis) est scientia cognitionis sensitivae." Quoted from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Theoretische Ästhetik. Die grundlegenden Abschnitte aus der "Aesthetica" (1750/58)*, ed. H. R. Schweizer, Hamburg: Meiner, 1988, 3.

4 In this first section, I will take over the concept of "sensuous" comprehension (and "sensuous" representation) from Baumgarten without questioning it. The Kantian criticism of the rationalist dualism between "sensuous" and "rational" knowledge, which Baumgarten's aesthetics reiterates, is, although convincing, not

relevant to the general logic of philosophical aesthetics that I am interested in here. This criticism, however, will become relevant when I try to determine the "reflective" character of aesthetic processes in the second section. From this section on, the term "aesthetic experience"—that can be understood as a direct consequence of the Kantian criticism—will replace the Baumgartian terminology of the aesthetic as the "sensuous."

5 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis," in *Leibniz, Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Hans Heinz Holz, Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965, vol. I, 32.

6 Op. cit.: 34. Cf. Erich Köhler, "'Je ne sais quoi.' Ein Kapitel aus der Begriffsgeschichte des Unbegreiflichen" (1955), in *Köhler, Esprit und arkadische Freiheit: Aufsätze aus der Welt der Romania*, Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1966, 230–86.

7 For some of those details see Christoph Menke, "Modernity and Subjectivity: From an Aesthetic Point of View," in Peter Osborne (ed.) *From an Aesthetic Point of View*, London: Serpent's Tail, 2000, 35–55; "Subjekt, Subjektivität," in Karlheinz Barck, Martin Fontius, Dieter Schlenstedt, Burkhart Steinwachs and Friedrich Wolfzettel (eds) *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2003, 734–87.

8 Cf. Howard Caygill, *The Art of Judgment*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

9 See, for example, the distinction between "general rhetoric" and "general poetics" in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus: Philosophische Betrachtungen über einige Bedingungen des Gedichtes*, ed. and trans. Heinz Paetzold, Hamburg: Meiner, 1983, 117. I thank Eberhard Ortland for critical comments on this point.

10 In a parallel formulation one could say: Aesthetic representation is that specific mode of representation, in which what representation is in general is represented. Aesthetic experience and aesthetic representation have the same basic structure: that of a specific kind of reflexivity (which will be outlined in this section).

11 Both ways of speaking aim at the same thing but describe it from different sides: aesthetic experience *emerges* out of ordinary enactments by means of their self-reflection; and aesthetic experience *exists* as a reflection upon ordinary enactments.

12 Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, Cambridge MA and London: Belknap Press, 1963, above all chs I and II; Heinz Schlaffer, *Poesie und Wissen: Die Entstehung des ästhetischen Bewußtseins und der philologischen Erkenntnis*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990, part I.

13 Friedrich Schlegel, "Kritische Fragmente [aus dem *Lyceum*]," no. 108, in *Studienausgabe*, eds Ernst Behler and Hans Eichner, Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 1988, vol. 1, 248.

14 This only applies with regard to a philosophy of immanence. What I claim about philosophy here—without being able to argue in favor of it here—therefore assumes a model that is oriented towards Kant.

15 That aesthetic pleasure should be explained in this way is Andrea Kern's central argument in her reconstruction of the interrelation between (transcendental-) philosophical analysis and aesthetic experience; cf. Andrea Kern, *Schöne Lust: Eine Theorie der ästhetischen Erfahrung nach Kant*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000, 296 ff.

16 Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenäums-Fragmente," no. 51, in *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente: Studienausgabe in sechs Bänden*, eds Ernst Behler and Hans Eichner, Paderborn, Germany: Schöningh, 1988, vol. 2.

17 This indicates the way in which the reflective determination of aesthetics contains a normative moment. It claims that aesthetic experience *should* be understood and enacted in *this* way—for there are other understandings of experience called

"aesthetic." One reason that speaks for a reflective understanding of aesthetic experience, are the consequences that are bound up with it: it allows for the "negative-dialectical" determination of aesthetics that I have sketched.

18 As Richard Shusterman has indicated to me, this needs some further clarification: Aesthetic enactment is a re-enactment of the constitutive force of ordinary practice in such a (playful) way that their teleology of success is cut off: in the aesthetic play there are no longer any capacities that can enable normative success (or, capacities have turned into "forces"). However, this aesthetically playful re-enactment that undermines the very normative orientation of ordinary practice, its orientation towards success, has a normativity of its own: it can succeed—or fail. Aesthetic success thus consists precisely in making the success of ordinary practice impossible (by turning the conditions of success of ordinary practice, namely capacities, into conditions of its impossibility, namely forces). This leads to the following difference between the success of aesthetic enactments and of ordinary practice: While we think of the success of ordinary practices as being made possible by capacities, there are no such conditions by which aesthetic success is made possible, because aesthetic success is not *made*.

Part II

The value and scope of aesthetic experience

5 Aesthetic experience

From analysis to Eros

Richard Shusterman

I

Despite its technical and relatively modern coinage by a rationalist philosopher in the mid-eighteenth century, the concept of the aesthetic has proven so very vague, variable, and contested that theorists working in the field it supposedly defines have often expressed distinct frustration and sometimes even skepticism concerning this concept and its cognates (such as aesthetic attitude, aesthetic judgment). One source of the concept's blurriness is that the aesthetic ambiguously refers not only to distinctive but diverse objects of perception (whether these be artworks, other artifacts, natural things, or even simply to distinctive qualities such beauty, grace, etc. that can be found in these and other objects). It also refers to a distinctive mode of consciousness that grasps such objects—the very term "aesthetic" being derived from the Greek word for sensory perception and used by Baumgarten, its inventor, to characterize what he regarded as our lower or more sensory faculties of cognition. To complicate things further, "aesthetic" also applies to the distinctive discourse used to discuss those objects and modes of perception.

Even more elusively vague, problematically polysemic, and confusingly controversial than the aesthetic, while also being older, more central, and more influential in philosophical inquiry, is the concept of experience. Already a contested notion in Ancient Greece where it was often pejoratively contrasted with the certainty of absolute knowledge, experience has subsequently been interpreted and deployed in so many different and conflicting ways that, despite its everyday familiarity, Gadamer could rightly describe this concept as "one of the most obscure we have."[1] Others less tolerant of its ambiguities and vagueness could argue for its extirpation from philosophical theorizing.[2]

Experience displays the same double-barreled objective-subjective character we noted in the aesthetic. It can denote both the object of experience (what is experienced) and the way (or "the how") that object is experienced by a subject. Besides these objective and subjective dimensions, experience is both a noun and a verb. It can refer to a completed event (or product) but also to a continuing process of experiencing; and that process can be

interpreted either as something actively generated by the subject or something that happens to her. Experience includes the general flow of conscious life, but it also denotes that which stands out from this general flow as a particularly heightened moment of living that is reflectively appreciated as such—what is sometimes described as a real experience or "*an* experience."

A term of very varied political deployment, experience, in the hands of conservative theorists, represents the past's accumulated wisdom that needs to be preserved to guide us through the future; but for progressives it represents the openness of change and experiment (a term which shares the same root as experience and which in French is conveyed by the same word *expérience*). Experience can suggest the reassuring familiarity and continuity of a coherently assimilated past (Walter Benjamin's notion of *Erfahrung*), but it can also mean the shock of the new (what Benjamin called *Erlebnis*).[3] The very etymology of experience conveys a sense of trial and peril. Though experience connotes empirical evidence and the experimental methods of science—the Greek word for experience, *empeiria* (ἐμπειριά) is the source of our term empirical—experience is also invoked by religious, aesthetic, psychological, and somatic theorists to argue for meanings and knowledge not captured by ordinary scientific discourse or even by any conceptual language at all. These points only begin to suggest the vast array of variant ways of understanding experience.[4]

Combining two such ambiguous and contested terms in the notion of aesthetic experience, we should expect that conceptual precision and uniformity will not emerge as the principal product. Analytic philosophy, whose ideal of clarity is often construed in terms of precise definition, has therefore not been particularly friendly to the notion of aesthetic experience, questioning its theoretical value and sometimes even challenging its very existence. But vague terms still signify, and their rich and varied uses can compensate for their lack of a precise univocal meaning. Conceptual clarity can be achieved in other ways than reducing a complexly wide-ranging and contested concept to a single definition. By tracing the variant conceptions that are embedded in that concept and distinguishing the logics that underlie them, we can gain a greater appreciation of its multiplicity of meaning and value. This other analytic strategy of pluralistic clarification (so fruitfully deployed by Austin and Wittgenstein) has guided my approach.

Examining both the Anglo-American and Continental critique of aesthetic experience, my paper "The End of Aesthetic Experience" showed that this critique largely derived from presuming that aesthetic experience, if it were to be a valid or useful concept, should be definable in a univocal way (and a way that also can define our concept of art), and thus from failing to distinguish the variety of different conceptions and theoretical roles that aesthetic experience has actually assumed in philosophical and art critical discourse.[5] We can indeed identify a historically influential and traditionally paradigmatic conception of aesthetic experience that encourages this

presumption—an experience that is valuably pleasurable, vividly felt, subjectively savored but also objectively meaningful in being directed at some object of perception, an experience, moreover, whose character as a distinctive experience is closely connected with the distinction of fine art and whose production was seen as part of art's defining aim.

Though this notion of aesthetic experience remains very valuable (partly because it is hard to understand the extraordinary power and history of art without it), a proper understanding of aesthetic experience requires recognizing that its plural modes, meanings, and theoretical functions cannot be reduced to this familiar paradigm. I therefore mapped some of the contrasting conceptions of aesthetic experience in terms of three different vectors of analysis that together capture the hedonic, evaluative, phenomenological, semantic, and definitional features of the traditional model.

Critical responses now prompt me to clarify further these vectors of analysis and to supplement them with important additional criteria in terms of which various conceptions of aesthetic experience can be assessed for their different functions and values.[6] Addressing these matters will provide a better analytic framework for considering in the final part of this chapter, one important kind of experience—sexual experience—that philosophers tend to insistently exclude from aesthetic experience. By critically surveying the reasons motivating such exclusion (which are most often not explicitly formulated in arguments), we can explore in what ways sexual experience (or what I prefer to call erotic experience) can be usefully described and valued as aesthetic. Though we may be impatient for sex, I hope you'll bear with me through the analytic foreplay.

II

1 Pleasure and value

Many philosophers (Clive Bell, John Dewey, and Monroe Beardsley among the most prominent) have construed the concept of aesthetic experience as essentially valuable and pleasurable. Though I emphasize the hedonic dimension of art and life, it would be wrong to conflate the value of aesthetic experience with pleasure. Not only can other values be importantly present in aesthetic experience, but pleasure (at least in its familiar forms) can be clearly absent from an experience without this precluding that that experience is aesthetically valuable and valued. Experiences of disturbing shock, fragmentation, disorientation, puzzlement, horror, protest, or even revulsion that contemporary artworks often aim to arouse can be valued for the novel feelings and thoughts they provide, whose provocative power can enrich our vision of the world beyond the artwork. Cognitively appraising and psychologically overcoming such unpleasant feelings in an aesthetic encounter can give rise, at a higher level, to a distinctive, perhaps more difficult form of

pleasure (that has traditionally been associated with the experience of the sublime). But not all valuable aesthetic experience of unpleasant reactions need be pleasurable, even at this higher level. We can still appreciate the value of a certain shock, without having been able to transform its disturbing character into some other or higher pleasure.

Defenders of aesthetic experience, even when admitting that it need not be pleasurable, tend to insist that it is necessarily valuable. Though deeply committed to the value of aesthetic experience, I would deny that the concept is entirely honorific in the strong sense of entailing the value of all the experiences to which it can be applied. Of course, because the most common and historically dominant conception of aesthetic experience does imply a valued experience, when someone describes something as an aesthetic experience, there is the prima facie suggestion, that it is very likely to be valuable. But though the concept is evaluative in this general way, we need to remember that experiences can be validly characterized as in some way aesthetic (because they relate to artworks or aesthetic judgments) but yet be aesthetically indifferent or valueless. There can even be distinctively bad aesthetic experiences (of unredeemed dissonance, pretentious dullness, or bombastic bathos) that seem worse than simply lacking positive value. In order to handle all such cases, Nelson Goodman defined aesthetic experience in an entirely value-neutral way. The value-neutral conception has a legitimate use in accounting for such problematic cases, but it does not do justice to the positive flavor that generally pervades the notion of aesthetic experience and that provides the prima facie presumption that to call something an aesthetic experience is to indicate value. Though we can make sense of the notions of bad or indifferent aesthetic experiences, their meaning as aesthetic seems in some way derivative from valuable aesthetic experiences (especially those of artworks), whose dominant value is what made the concept of aesthetic so central to our dealings with art and beauty.

2 Phenomenological character

This is another feature that has been central to the traditional notion of aesthetic experience, but the complex, twofold nature of phenomenological character is often misunderstood. Aesthetic experience is phenomenological first in the sense that it is distinctly felt (and, when positive, appreciatively savored) by the experiencing subject rather than simply being registered in an unconscious, inattentive way. This subject-related aspect has made some philosophers shun phenomenological definitions of aesthetic for being too subjective.[7] But the phenomenological character of aesthetic experience (like experience in general) also implies some object of experience (the "what" of experience) that is its focus and that it experiences in its particular way (the specific "how" or "feel" of that experience). Aesthetic experience is not a mere empty subjective state, it always has an intentional object of some kind,

even if that object is only imaginary: a mirage, a silent narrative of thoughts, an unperformed melody.[8] In having an intentional object and thus being "about" something, aesthetic experience always has some dimension of meaning. It is not a blind sensation devoid of signification, but rather a meaningful perception. Our eyes and skin may sense the sudden appearance of warm sunlight through a clearing of clouds and may unconsciously generate a positive feeling, but unless (or until) we really consciously notice and attend to that warm sunlight, we would not really say we are experiencing it aesthetically. Subliminal *aisthesis* surely affects aesthetic experience, but it does not itself constitute an aesthetic experience in the strict sense of intentionality and direct appreciative awareness.

Some philosophers who are critical of phenomenological conceptions of aesthetic experience because of its link to subjective feeling prefer instead to define aesthetic experience in terms of a special mental state of perceiving and appreciating certain features of an object for their own sake but without any need for subjective affect to be present or felt. Gary Iseminger, an advocate of this approach, characterizes it as a structural or epistemic definition of aesthetic experience in contrast to the phenomenological account; but a subject's state of mind nonetheless remains central.[9]

Nelson Goodman, however, more radically challenges the role of the subject by defining aesthetic experience purely in terms of the dominant symbolic features of what is experienced without making any reference at all to an experiencing subject. Aesthetic experience, for Goodman, is simply "cognitive experience distinguished [from all other domains] by the dominance of certain symbolic characteristics" that he describes as distinctively symptomatic of the aesthetic and that he deploys to try to define art. These distinctive features are syntactic and semantic density, "relative repleteness," "exemplification," and "multiple and complex reference," and they are themselves defined by Goodman in a way that purports to be independent of the mental states of the users of such symbols.[10] But Goodman's approach, I have argued, implicitly implies and requires a subject, because an object does not wear its symbolic functioning on its sleeve. To take one of Goodman's own examples, the same drawn line can function as a simple profits chart or instead as a line drawing of a mountain that is semantically dense, replete, and saturated with aesthetic meanings. But this different functioning will depend on whether a conscious subject construes the text as a mere chart or a work of painting.

In any case, if aesthetic experience is purely a function of symbolic features with no necessary reference to a subject's intentionality, consciousness, or affect, then an unconscious machine programmed to detect and process the symbolic features of a work could have an aesthetic experience just as much as a sensitive human. Despite my pluralist inclinations, I am not yet confident in expanding the notion of aesthetic experience beyond the realm of conscious experience (which need not be limited to human experience), even though the natural sciences have long recognized unconscious instruments

(which Bruno Latour dubs "the testimony of nonhumans") as providing the decisive testimony of what is experienced. "A world of qualities without man has arisen, of experiences without the person who experiences them," wrote Robert Musil, already in the 1930s.[11] Besides the conceptual costs of construing aesthetic experience as unconscious (which would allow our having such powerful, meaningful experience without ever knowing that we have it or with a mechanical gauge knowing our aesthetic experience better than we do), there are also cultural costs. Emphasis on the importantly conscious character and heightened consciousness of aesthetic experience provides the stimulus to develop greater aesthetic consciousness and heightened reflective attention to aesthetic experience. This in turn fosters keener aesthetic appreciation and consequently greater aesthetic rewards.

When we consider the creating artist's aesthetic experience, this value of intentional, phenomenological consciousness seems especially clear. We do not expect or want our artists to be unfeeling, unconscious machines. Even radical claims for the impersonality of art, such as T. S. Eliot's famous impersonal theory of poetic creation, recognized the role of sensitively feeling intentional consciousness. An important part of a good artist's creative process is sensitive critical feedback to what she is in the midst of creating. Any adequate general account of aesthetic experience should accommodate the importance of the artist's aesthetic experience. Many traditional theories that highlight disinterested, distanced contemplation suffer, as Nietzsche suggested, from being one-sidedly modeled on the experience of a detached, philosophical, critical observer rather than considering the experiences of passionately engaged creators. Of course, there is a continuity, not a dichotomy, of perspectives here. As a good creative artist is a critically engaged observer of her work, so an attentive audience is actively (including somatically) engaged in imaginative production of aesthetic experience. But philosophical accounts of aesthetic experience would be enriched by more attention to artists' experience.

3 Demarcation versus transformation

Theories of aesthetic experience differ significantly as to their purpose. Failure to appreciate these variant aims and the differing conceptions they involve creates confusions that tend to discredit the concept.[12] Often the dominant theoretical function is not really to explain the nature, varieties, and values of aesthetic experience but instead to deploy this concept to define some other, related concept such as art or aesthetic evaluation. We can usefully distinguish what I call *transformational* theories of aesthetic experience (which use this concept to expand the aesthetic field beyond its established objects, practices, and events) from *demarcational* theories whose aim is instead to precisely define, explain, or justify the already established classifications that separate between the sorts of things and practices that are conventionally considered art (or aesthetic) and those that are beyond those

limits. In making a case for the artistry of rap music and the aesthetic value of bodily disciplines that are not typically regarded as art, I invoked aesthetic experience in a transformational mode, seeking to expand our notions of art and the aesthetic, while building on Dewey's use of aesthetic experience as a transformational concept.[13] In contrast, when Beardsley defines art as a function-class whose members are those objects that are best at producing aesthetic experience, he is offering a clearly demarcational theory. As such, his theory (which, paradoxically, is also inspired by Dewey) must worry about being too wide or too narrow in mapping our status quo classifications about what counts as art or aesthetic.

If transformational accounts of aesthetic experience seek to enlarge the aesthetic field to enhance our aesthetic possibilities, demarcational approaches are vigilant at policing the current borders, fearing any account going "wider than the tradition standardly permits" and insisting that "an account of aesthetic experience that better approximates traditional usage should be preferred, lest we run the danger of changing the subject altogether."[14] My attempt to theorize aesthetic experience in a way that could include sex (a practice conventionally contrasted with art and the aesthetic) is obviously transformational in purpose. It aims to improve our appreciation of the artistry, beauty, and meaning that sexual experience can offer, and through such appreciation also to enhance these appreciated qualities themselves and the sexual practices that generate them. But before considering sex, I need to note four more analytic axes of contrast.

4 Perception and knowledge

If aesthetic experience is always directed at and structured by the object experienced, then the particular experiences of reading a Shakespeare sonnet or hearing a Beethoven sonata or viewing a Rothko painting cannot be had by other means than perceiving these specific objects; no pill or injection of mind-altering chemicals can provide the specific aesthetic experiences of appreciating these works.[15] This argument may establish that artworks have irreplaceable value as the objects of the aesthetic experience they generate and structure. But does it also follow that aesthetic experience must provide true perception or direct knowledge of its object (as so-called epistemic theories of aesthetic experience contend), or can an experience be genuinely aesthetic but misconstrue the object it claims to be about?

I think we must allow the latter option—aesthetic experience that is genuine but inaccurate in its perception. Only on the basis of such possibility can we make sense of Plato's famous critiques (in the *Ion*, *Apology*, and *Republic*) that artists, rhapsodes, and art audiences have powerful aesthetic experiences while misunderstanding what they experience. When I consult my own experience, I have had aesthetic responses in listening to poetry in foreign languages I do not fully understand, and in seeing illusionist tree and rock sculptures in China that I mistook for natural objects. The intentionality of

aesthetic experience does not entail flawless knowledge of the intentional object. Fear and anger also require objects, but we can err about these objects and still have experiences of fear and anger. Thinking I see a snake in the grass, I may recoil in fear, before realizing that it is only a hose. Even if one denies that I really experienced fear of a snake, insisting instead that I only feared the idea of a snake, it is undeniable that I had an experience of fear. In the same way, we can have an aesthetic experience that is generated by and directed at an artwork but misunderstands it in some way. Otherwise all aesthetic experiences of an artwork would issue in similar interpretive or evaluative verdicts. There would be no grounds of variance to explain critical debate and error. Aesthetic experiences range from veridical perceptions to gross misunderstandings, but also extend to encounters or "graspings" that precede the explicit formulation of a judgment that could be true or false. There is more to experience than the knowledge of experience.

5 Varieties of unity

A commonly admired and enjoyed quality of artworks, unity is central to the influential theories of aesthetic experience advanced by Dewey and Beardsley, theories that are also honorific and hedonic. But is unity really necessary to aesthetic experience, even valuable aesthetic experience, and if so what kind of unity is required? Beardsley and Dewey describe this unity in terms of both coherence and completeness; the phases of experience fit agreeably together (coherence) *and* they give a satisfying sense of fulfillment. For Beardsley, coherence was required for all aesthetic experience (even for experiencing fragments of artworks rather than entire works), though only the further unity of completeness or consummation could then turn such aesthetic experience into what Dewey and he call "an experience" in the sense of a distinctively fulfilling consummation. Once we give up the presumptions that aesthetic experience must be pleasurable and valuable, is there still reason to require that it be unified in either of these senses?

Aesthetic experience can certainly be fragmented, dissonant, disrupted, and incomplete. This is obvious for bad aesthetic experience (a category that Beardsley and Dewey do not recognize) whose badness is often the result of such qualities of disunion. Experiences of fragmentation, dissonance, and breaking off can, however, also be positively appreciated aesthetically (for example, if they have certain qualities of novelty, complexity, meaning, and interest), even if such value cannot always be explained in terms of pleasure in feeling these qualities or in overcoming them. We may experientially value the aesthetic power of performance art we do not really enjoy (the sort that Beardsley described as "sensuous masochism" and that Danto dubbed "disturbational art"[16]). We can appreciate such art because it disturbs our sense of order and gives us a feeling of shock and disruption that we find somehow valuable (e.g. interesting, challenging, therapeutic, refreshing, etc.) to experience and that we do not get from our typical dealings with life and

art. Such experiences, though not coherent or complete, display at least the integrity of standing out as a distinctly singular experience in contrast to the stream of ordinary experience.

This suggests a more fundamental notion of unity that may be necessary for any valid notion of an aesthetic experience: the basic integrity or cohesiveness needed for being identified as a recognizably distinct unit of experience. Even to characterize an experience as fragmented or discordant is to posit that there is something that hangs together enough to be grasped as belonging to the same experience and standing out from the flow of other experience. Dewey therefore argues that some basic and felt qualitative unity is the necessary germ of any and every experience, because it is needed to cement the constellation of elements that any experience comprises into a whole that can be grasped as an individuated unit, as *one* experience. Dewey describes this basic unity as aesthetic because he held it was a *felt* unity.[17] Moreover, maintaining that this crucial unifying quality of experience is most powerfully highlighted in aesthetic experience, he argues that aesthetics thus holds the key to understanding experience more generally. "To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is."[18] Though one can challenge Dewey's claim that felt unity is required of any experience whatsoever,[19] aesthetic experience does seem to require the minimal unity (which we might distinguish by the term "unicity") needed to be identified as a distinct experience that stands out from the general, often unattended flow of humdrum experience.

6 Intensities of feeling

A large part of art's value is often said to reside in its power to provide intensely moving experience by intensifying our feelings through attractively expressive forms and intelligent meanings. Emotion has therefore played a key role in modern theories of art as different as Tolstoy's moralistic expressionism and Clive Bell's significant formalism (whose criterion is the evocation of aesthetic emotion). Other influential conceptions of aesthetic experience (such as Dewey's and Beardsley's) have also often highlighted its intensity of feeling. To speak of a profound or powerful aesthetic experience does suggest the presence of a fairly strong degree of affect. But Dickie, Goodman, and others have rightly argued that not all of our experience of artworks is especially emotional. Even if we are appreciating the aesthetic merit of a work, our experience may be one of calmly acknowledging excellence rather than ecstatic exultation. The dispassionate "Rien ne me choque" was said to be Chopin's strongest expression of musical praise.[20] Although aesthetic experience need not be emotional in the robust sense of the term, it is hard to see that it can be altogether devoid of feeling or affect. Conscious experience, as neuroscientists remind us, always seems to involve some feeling, including the basic feelings of being conscious, and these feelings have some affective tone, even when they approximate total indifference.[21] If feeling is always implied

in phenomenological experience, and aesthetic experience is always phenomenological, then such experience also involves some degree of feeling.[22]

In an attempt to avoid an essential role for feeling (because of its allegedly problematical subjective character), Gary Iseminger tries to define aesthetic experience in what he calls a purely "structural" way, in terms of his key notion of appreciation. Aesthetic experience, he argues, is simply an appreciative "state of mind" toward "a state of affairs" in which one "is *valuing for its own sake the experiencing of that state of affairs.*"[23] But we can hardly make concrete sense of the very idea of appreciating the value of "the experiencing," if one cannot *feel* that experiencing or its value in some way, even if that feeling is relatively low key. Feeling of some kind, just as explicit consciousness and intentionality, seems crucial to aesthetic experience.

7 The contrast of self-possessed assessment versus self-surrendering absorption

Presents yet another axis for comparing conceptions of aesthetic experience. Contemporary analytic accounts tend more toward the former view, affirming the aesthetic subject's dynamic, determining role as directing the appreciative process and rationally assessing the artwork's meaning and value. The model of experience here—self-assured, reflective, rational evaluation—is that of the judgmental connoisseur. Other conceptions of aesthetic experience try to be more balanced in emphasizing also its passive, self-overwhelming dimension. Dewey stresses that aesthetic experience, like all experience, is both a doing and an undergoing; Gadamer notes that in the experience of play, the player is also played by what he plays. Aesthetic experience, for T. S. Eliot and T. W. Adorno, requires an initial stage of imaginative surrender of oneself to the world and rules of the artwork, though they insist that the experience of true aesthetic understanding always goes beyond this passive submission to a stage of more active self-consciousness through which the work and its experience are submitted to criticism.[24]

Some theorists go even further toward the side of experiential self-surrender. Rather than the subject actively pursuing a special experience of an object to which he momentarily surrenders while still sustaining an evaluative attitude of assessing the value of that object and experience, some Indian thinkers claim that in the highest aesthetic experience of *rasa* (i.e. *santa rasa*), the subject/object duality is entirely overcome in an experiential oneness that brings true enlightenment.[25] Similarly, in the West, Martin Buber argues that the most profound experiences are not ones that we have but rather those that have us, overwhelming the experiencer to the point where one cannot properly talk about appreciative knowledge of the experience. Anyone who deliberately seeks experience for its own sake, Buber argues, reveals that

> "he does not 'experience' with his whole being, but only with that part of him which registers the effects, while the other part of him, the one

> that seeks the experience, remains perforce the detached observer separated from his experience by his very knowledge that he is having it."[26]

This contrast between the self-possessed, rationally controlled pleasure of form and the more passionate delight of an experience that overwhelms the subject finds clear expression in Nietzsche's famous contrast between Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic experience.[27] But it also reflects the older historical contrast of the beautiful and the sublime. Edmund Burke explained the sublime as a more intense and powerful feeling than the beautiful because it involves some (albeit muted) sense of menacing self-destruction, which links the feeling of the sublime to our strongest instinct, that of self-preservation. While the sublime is connected with terror, power, vastness, infinity, magnitude, and darkness that threaten to overwhelm the self, Burke sees beauty in things "small," "smooth," "delicate" and "without any remarkable appearance of strength," things whose diverse parts are not jarringly angular but instead smoothly "melted … into each other," and whose colors are "clear and bright but not very strong or glaring"—in short, things that reassure the powerful self by the agreeable sense of masterful ease and with which it perceives them.[28] Though beauty is hardly the dominant character of most contemporary art, the dominant Anglo-American accounts of aesthetic experience tend to favor the kind of self-assured cognition of pleasurably valued experience that one would associate with experiencing the beautiful rather than the intensity of the sublime.

The same contrast of actively self-possessed experience and a more passive self-surrender also recalls the historical opposition of Aristotelian and Platonic views of pleasure. If Plato charged that our strongest pleasures (typically those of bodily sensations) imply a lack, passivity, or loss of control in the subject, Aristotle offered an account of pleasure that stressed the active, complete, and self-strengthening dimension of enjoyment.[29] Enjoying a game of chess is an activity that we can fully enjoy throughout the game and not only when it is over; and our enjoyment does not imply that we initially lacked something and that we are passively carried away by the feelings we get from playing; instead enjoying chess promotes the subject's ability to stay focused and concentrate on the game. In attempting to defend the pleasure of aesthetic experience, I have often emphasized the Aristotelian account and stressed the activity of the subject in all sensory perception. But the Platonic view of pleasure as captivating sensations that overcome the subject and take her out of herself (*ekstasis*) also needs recognition. There are pleasures of self-abandonment to sensations as well as self-affirming enjoyment of activity. Intense self-absorption in an activity can also yield its own sense of self-abandonment in which one is no longer conscious of the acting self but only of the activity.

Aesthetic experience, on my view, can embrace these different moments. Enjoying a sad movie means appreciating the poignancy of the film, but it

can also include appreciating our feelings of emotion that result from appreciating its poignancy, even if those turbulent sensations (perhaps of tears or even weeping) may disturb for a moment our self-composure and our self-controlled cognitive attention to the movie. An experiential model of learning that appreciates receptivity as well as self-assertive grasping should convince us that there can be cognitive lessons learned through self-abandonment that cannot be obtained through vigilant self-control. Transformative knowledge through passionate and intensely pleasurable self-surrender is the cognitive claim of mystical fusion, but it is also suggested in our most earthy sense of coupling that forms the ancient biblical paradigm of experiential knowledge—the carnal knowledge of sex.

III

Can sexual experience, then, provide aesthetic experience? No, is the standard reply of analytic aesthetics. Despite our culture's increasing interest and gains in sexual freedom, expression, and creativity, Anglo-American philosophers typically presume that aesthetic experience should be sharply distinguished from experiences of sex (and drugs). Gary Iseminger, for example, in his lucid and well informed article for the *Oxford Companion to Aesthetics*, argues that one of four key desiderata for a theory of aesthetic experience is a definition that will clearly distinguish this experience from sexual experience and drug-induced experience, thus ensuring that also the notion of aesthetic pleasure "does not apply to the pleasures of sex and drugs." Iseminger's concern echoes Roger Scruton's anxiety that aesthetic experience not be reduced to emotional intoxication characteristic of "certain drugs" and "pornography." Similarly, Monroe Beardsley, when faced with the criticism that his earlier definitions of aesthetic experience could logically include sexual experience, felt compelled once again to revise his theory so as to affirm their difference rather than recognizing that sex can be aesthetic.[30] Moreover, these stark rejections of aesthetic sexuality never seem to be based on substantive analyses or detailed argumentation about the nature of erotic experience.[31]

Why should this worry about sex and drugs be so prominently insistent? Are we so prone to grant them undeserved aesthetic status and what great harm would arise from recognizing that some erotic or drug-induced experience could be aesthetic? Why is there no similarly urgent worry about distinguishing aesthetic experience from experiences of bird watching, wine tasting, sun bathing, window shopping, flânerie, or of observing sports such as diving or gymnastics? The answer, I believe, is a combination of old prejudices and repressive fears that have recently been intensified by new cultural developments and demons. Without trying here to define sexual experience, we can at least note that it seems structurally different from most drug-induced experience in ways that approximate the experience of art. While one's sexual partner is the intentional object that structures one's

experience of sex, the pill one takes to initiate a drug experience does not typically form the object of that experience (though the joint that one rolls and smokes may sometimes form part of it).

The contemporary academic presumption that sexual experience should be excluded from the realm of aesthetic experience has deep historical roots in enduring platonistic and religious sentiments that underlie much of the idealism of modern aesthetics. Defining aesthetic pleasure as disinterested and intellectual in order to distinguish it sharply from the agreeable sensations of sensual experience and the satisfactions of appetite, Kant could build on Shaftesbury's earlier insistence on the disinterestedness contemplation of beauty as explicitly contrasted to sexual desire. Still earlier, in the founding text that gave aesthetics its disciplinary name, Alexander Baumgarten warns against sex as something that corrupts aesthetic sensibility. As Kant and Baumgarten express the German pietism of their times, so Shaftesbury was deeply influenced by neoplatonist idealism that traditionally disdained and feared the body.[32] If Nietzsche is right that the dramatic arts emerged from the sexually charged Dionysian rituals, then aesthetic experience has a distinctly erotic past and perhaps some residual sexual energies that would be uncomfortable to acknowledge in trying to develop aesthetics into a rigorous, rationalistic philosophical form of knowledge.[33] If Marcuse is right that "the erotic quality of the Beautiful" challenges "the prevailing reality principle of domination" with the emancipatory power of the pleasure principle, then philosophers devoted to the hegemony of established cultural realities should have further reason to be wary of accepting the erotic within the aesthetic domain.[34]

Because aesthetics is considered a rather soft discipline that has trouble matching the scientific rigor and explanatory power of other academic fields (including other fields of philosophy), it is understandable that contemporary aestheticians would be especially worried about the challenges to aesthetic rationality that sex and drugs seem to introduce. In Anglo-American theory, the need to exclude sex and drugs from the aesthetic domain may have been rendered even more pressing by the fact that extremely influential French philosophers such as Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault have emphasized radical practices of sex and drugs as means of achieving limit experiences whose overwhelming aesthetic power is alleged to challenge the boundaries of conventional thinking and thus transform our philosophical perspective and even our very sense of self (which is both a product and a reproducer of established social institutions, practices, and ideologies).

Of course, the aesthetic neglect of sex is not primarily the fault of today's philosophers, whose thinking largely reflects the entrenched presuppositions of our intellectual heritage and our enduring cultural traditions. Western modernity, as Foucault argues, has tended to treat sex on a distinctly medical rather than aesthetic model, developing a massive *scientia sexualis* but still very little in the way of the elaborate *ars erotica* that is found in

Asian culture.[35] One contemporary expression of this bias is the mammoth wave of incessantly advertised drugs for improving sex in terms of chemically induced physical instrumentalities (i.e. longer and harder erections and better lubrication), while comparatively nothing is offered to improve sexual experience through greater erotic artistry and heightened aesthetic sensibility. Foucault's advocacy of consensual S/M and homosexual eroticism expresses his aim of expanding the creative palette of sexual options, which—because sexuality forms a central part of one's identity—would in turn expand our possible modes of aesthetic self-fashioning in what he calls "the aesthetics of existence."[36] We need not share Foucault's specific preferences to appreciate his point about the aesthetic dimension of erotics.[37]

The genealogy of aesthetics' neglect of sex deserves much more attention; so does the analysis of what constitutes sexual or erotic experience. But given our ordinary understanding of the erotic, and using our extended analysis of the concept of aesthetic experience, we can conclude with a tentative assessment of whether sex can provide such experience. In one sense of this ambiguous question, that of the imaginative contemplation of sex, there seems excellent reason to answer affirmatively, because the visual and verbal representations of erotic desire and activity clearly form an important part of many artworks that move us aesthetically rather than pornographically or voyeuristically. In such works, the representation of sexuality is depicted, structured, and deployed in ways governed by certain distinctively formal aims or aesthetic criteria and meanings. We can likewise imagine live or filmed erotic theatre which would be scripted and directed toward realizing such formal or aesthetic qualities, even if the vast majority of such sexual dramatizations ignore or subordinate such aims to the pursuit of primarily prurient intentions, and even if it may be very difficult for most observers to take the detached, distanced, disinterested attitude to watching sex that some theorists demand of aesthetic experience. The demand for disinterested, distanced detachment (a vague and controversial demand that pragmatist aesthetics, like Nietzschean aesthetics, contests[38]) would suggest that the hardest case to make for sexual experience as aesthetic would be our actual engagement in erotic activity rather than our imaginatively perceiving it done by others. But rather than entangling ourselves in polemics about distance, let us consider consensual sexual experience in terms of the features we identified as central to the more dominant conceptions of aesthetic experience.

Sex can certainly be pursued, enjoyed, and highly valued for its own sake rather than for its role in producing children, in acquiring material or social gains, or for forging psychological bonds of intimacy. (In this sense of being appreciated for itself rather than for its instrumentality in serving other interests or ulterior motives, sex could even be said to involve disinterested albeit desiring enjoyment.) Sex can be enjoyed both in terms of its Aristotelian sense of fulfilling, absorbing, undistracted activity and in terms of the attendant pleasurable sensations it gives; it powerfully displays the phenomenological

dimension of being subjectively savored but also intentionally directed at an object (typically another human subject) that structures the experience, shapes its quality, and gives it important dimensions of meaning commensurate with the properties and significance of that object.[39] A cognitive experience providing knowledge of one's own body and mind and also those of one's sexual partners, the sexual act typically displays a distinctive unity both of coherence and completion, a sense of thing developing consistently and powerfully toward a fulfilling consummation. It also stands out distinctively from the flow of ordinary humdrum experience. Sexual experience involves a wide range of affect, some of which is unrivalled in its intensity, and it displays both moments of active self-assertive grasping and self-surrendering absorption.

Can sexual experience, then, be aesthetic? It seems to capture all the key elements emphasized by the major conceptions of aesthetic experience. In order to exclude sex from aesthetic experience, Iseminger argues that "sexual partners ... are not works of art" and that "the incorporation of thought into the imaginative experience" also "distinguishes aesthetic experience from sexual experience."[40] These arguments, however, wrongly presume that only works of art can form the object of aesthetic experience and that our sexual experience does not involve imaginative thought and discriminating sensibility. If the most blind and primitive sexual encounters require no cognitive sensitivity (which is also absent in blind encounters with artworks), good lovemaking calls for an imaginative, perceptive "thinking desire."

Of course, whether we allow sexual experience to count as aesthetic experience depends ultimately on the conceptions of aesthetic experience and sexual experience we adopt. But I am convinced that unless we limit aesthetic experience narrowly to the experience of artworks and conversely confine sexual experience to unimaginative, thoughtlessly mechanical, and insensitive copulation, we should clearly recognize that sexual experience can be aesthetic, even though current academic *doxa* and much traditional aesthetic dogma insistently deny it. Such a conclusion has more than theoretical consequences. It can inspire us to greater aesthetic appreciation of our sexual experience and consequently to more artistic and aesthetically rewarding performance in our erotic behavior, which surely forms one important dimension of the art of living.[41]

Notes

1 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 310.

2 Richard Rorty is one obvious example; see his "Dewey's Metaphysics," reprinted in his *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); "Dewey Between Darwin and Hegel," reprinted in his *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Vol. 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also his "Afterword: Intellectual Historians and Pragmatism," in John Pettegrew (ed.) *A Pragmatist's Progress?* (Lanham MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 209, where he states: "Cutting out the intermediary—experience—between the causal

impact of the environment and our linguistic response to the environment is an idea whose time has come." I defend the the concept of experience against Rorty's critique in my book *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997) ch. 6. For his critical response, which includes an attack on my idea of somaesthetics, see Richard Rorty, "Response to Richard Shusterman," in Matthew Festenstein and Simon Thompson (eds) *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 153–57.

3 See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969).

4 For an impressively wide-ranging and instructive study of this concept's modern history, see Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

5 *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55 (1997) 29–41; reprinted in Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

6 See, for example, Alexander Nehamas, "Richard Shusterman on Aesthetic Experience and Pleasure," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998) 49–51; Wolfgang Welsch, "Rettung durch Halbierung? Zu Richard Shustermans Rehabilitierung ästhetischer Erfahrung," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 47 (1999) 111–26; Paul Taylor, "The Two Dewey Thesis, Continued: Shusterman's Pragmatist Aesthetics," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 16 (2002) 17–25; and Gary Iseminger, "Aesthetic Experience," in Jerrold Levinson (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 99–116. I provide an initial reply to Nehamas in "Interpretation, Pleasure, and Value in Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56 (1998) 49–51, to Welsch in "Provokation und Errinerung," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 47 (1999) 127–37, and to Taylor in "Pragmatism and Criticism: A Response to Three Critics of Pragmatist Aesthetics," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 16 (2002) 26–38.

7 Gary Iseminger, for example, worries that phenomenological accounts are too subjectively "introspective" and that by failing to connect essentially to an object they depend entirely on challengeable dubious inner subjective states, what he calls "mythical states of the mind that are peculiarly aesthetic." See Iseminger, "Aesthetic Experience," 115.

8 One should further note that aesthetic experience, as essentially embodied, always involves objective physiological aspects. In some aesthetic experiences, notably those with strong emotions (evoking noticeable bodily reactions) or vivid proprioception, these bodily responses can be conspicuously present to consciousness and can form a significant part of the content of the aesthetic experience.

9 Iseminger, "Aesthetic Experience," 100, 107–11; Gary Iseminger, "The Aesthetic State of Mind," in Matthew Kieran (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) 98–112.

10 Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1978) 67–68. For a more detailed critical account of Goodman's view of aesthetic experience, see Shusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience."

11 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 22. Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities* (New York: Random House, 1996) vol. 1, 158 (first published in 1930 but set in the Vienna of 1913). Theories that describe intense aesthetic experience in terms of a fusing unity that overcomes a clear distinction between subject and object might possibly suggest the idea of experience without a clear sense of substantive subjecthood (allegedly dissolved in the fusion), as might T. W. Adorno's and Benjamin's notion of *Erlebnis*—which they criticize as sensational experience that is lived through and registered as shock or fleeting fragments of information and feeling rather than fully integrated by the subject into a meaningfully and coherently organized experience (*Erfahrung*). Yet these theories of fusion and of *Erlebnis* still maintain the phenomenological character of subjective-feeling and object-direc-

ted intentionality of aesthetic experience. I therefore think that recognition of phenomenological character is crucial for any adequate conception of aesthetic experience, as long as we understand this experience as human experience.

12 Noting that the concept is deployed as honorific to argue for art's value but that it is contrastingly conceived as value-neutral to provide a definition of art that allows for both bad art and bad aesthetic experience, one can worry that the concept is too conflicted to have any value, since anything follows from a contradiction.

13 See Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) ch. 8; "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57 (1999) 299–313; *Performing Live*, chs 7–8.

14 Noel Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 42 (2002) 163.

15 Thus Malcolm Budd argues that the experience of a work of art "does not have a nature specifiable independently of the nature of the work" in *Values of Art* (London: Penguin, 1995) 4.

16 Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience Regained," in *The Aesthetic Point of View* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1982) 90; Danto, "Art as Disturbation," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press) 121.

17 See, for example, John Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," in John Dewey, *The Later Works*, vol. 5 (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984) 2345–253; and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986) 73–74.

18 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987) 278.

19 For my criticism of Dewey on this point, see *Practicing Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997) ch. 6.

20 See William James, *Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) 1085.

21 Antonio Demasio, *Descartes' Error* (New York: Avon, 1994) 150–55.

22 Conceptions of aesthetic experience can legitimately differ in terms of how much affect they require. One might distinguish a mere perception of beauty from an aesthetic experience of beauty by the fact that only the latter involved an emotion strong enough to stir up all the noticeable bodily changes and feelings that we associate with robust emotion. But one could also sustain a conception that merely to perceive beauty, no matter how unemotionally, is to have an aesthetic experience, and perhaps indeed a purer one than when one is moved in a full-bodied way. But even this unemotional experience involves feeling—the feeling (however subtle) of perceiving beauty and appreciating it.

23 Iseminger, "The Aesthetic State of Mind," 99. Iseminger's strategy is more plausible than Goodman's because it recognizes an experiencing subject.

24 See my discussion of their two-stage theories in my *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); *Surface and Depth* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and *T. S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

25 See, for example, G. B. Mohan Thampi, "'Rasa' as Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24:1 (1965); and Privas Jivan Chaudhury, "The Theory of Rasa," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24:1 (1965) 145–49. In response to a commentary by Ranjan Ghosh linking my theory of art as dramatization to rasa theory, I have briefly tried to compare the pragmatist view of aesthetic experience to the notion of rasa. See Ghosh's "Art as Dramatization and the Indian Tradition," and my reply "Definition, Drama, and Rasa," in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 61 (2003), 293–98.

26 Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays*, ed. Maurice Friedman (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965) p.44.

27 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in Francis Golffing (trans.) *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).
28 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 1998) 151.
29 See Plato, *Philebus* 47a–b, where he speaks of the strongest (as opposed to the best) pleasures as making a person feel "that he is almost dying" and driving "the person totally out of his mind, so that he shouts aloud like a madman"; and 63d where he condemns pleasures as "a tremendous impediment to us, since they infect the souls in which they dwell with madness or even prevent our own development altogether." Citations are from *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1997) 436, 453. Aristotle's views on pleasure are chiefly found in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 11–14, and X, 1–5 (which give different but largely complementary accounts of it). The views of Aristotle and Plato on pleasure are, of course, more complex and nuanced than the rough contrast I offer here. For useful discussions of these theories, see J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and J. O. Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).
30 See Iseminger, "Aesthetic Experience," 99, 106, 109; Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1974) 82; and Monroe Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, 296.
31 Roger Scruton, however, in subsequent writings, has given a great deal more careful attention to sexuality, and the result has been a greater recognition of commonality between the erotic and the aesthetic. See Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire* (New York: Free Press, 1986) 250, where he claims that human erotic desire, like aesthetic interest, is intentionally tied to its object in an "attitude that is attentive, non-transferable and immediate" as well as "essentially evaluative." See also his more recent *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 130, where he continues to argue for the intentionality of erotic desire as directed at "the irreplaceable incarnate subjectivity of the other" person.
32 I should note that the aesthetic appreciation of sex could claim an exemplary precedent in eighteenth-century British philosophy. Edmund Burke recognized that we had a sexually driven appreciation of human beauty that involved a mixture of love and lust, wisely realizing that desire was not inconsistent with aesthetic experience. See Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 89, 97, 128. Burke's view here is part and parcel of his deeply embodied approach to the aesthetic. For a detailed analysis of the body's role in his theory, see Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and Burke's Sublime," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 45:4 (2005).
33 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956). In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche highlights the erotic in his critique of Kantian and Schopenhauerian ideas of aesthetic disinterestedness.

> When our estheticians tirelessly rehearse, in support of Kant's view, that the spell of beauty enables us to view even *nude* female statues "disinterestedly" we may be allowed to laugh a little at their expense. The experiences of artists in this delicate matter are rather more "interesting"; certainly Pygmalion was not entirely devoid of esthetic feeling.

Nietzsche, however, held (with apparently very little sexual experience) that lack of "sexual continence" impaired philosophical and artistic creativity, and thus he never affirmed the aesthetic quality of actual sexual activity. Though "the emergence of the esthetic condition does not suspend sensuality," that condition, he

argued, "transmutes it in such a way that it is no longer experienced as a sexual incentive" (ibid.: 238–39, 246–47).

34 See Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston MA: Beacon, 1977) 62–63.

35 See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980) 57–72; and Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in Paul Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) 347–48.

36 See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986) 89–93.

37 For a critical discussion of Foucault's erotic project in terms of his own professed aims of multiplying pleasures, see my "Somaesthetics and Care of the Self: The Case of Foucault," *Monist*, 83 (2000) 530–51. For a critique of some of his misunderstandings of Asian erotic arts, see my "Asian *Ars Erotica* and the Question of Sexual Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65 (2007). I should also note that the Anglo-American philosopher Ronald de Sousa boldly affirms that sex, including "'casual,' 'uncommitted,' or even commercial sex," can be "an aesthetic experience" in terms of what he calls the staging of a "*theater of love*," aimed at "pleasure" and "an *aesthetic* creation, or recreation" of some aspects of love "inside a kind of frame isolated from the rest of [the partners'] lives and expectations." See Ronald de Sousa, "Love as Theater," in Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (eds) *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love* (Lawrence KS: University of Kansas Press, 1991) 478, 483, 485. His views are also critically discussed in my "Asian *Ars Erotica* and the Question of Sexual Aesthetics."

38 Nietzsche claims the aesthetic involves "precisely the excitement of the will, of 'interest.'" See *The Genealogy of Morals*, 240.

39 In some erotic experience, the intentional object might be more accurately defined not as simply the person (or thing) with which one is erotically engaged but rather (the more inclusive structure of) the erotic episode, drama, or interactive relationship that is being shaped through one's intentional activity and in which the "particularized" object of desire (e.g. the sexual partner or part or implement) is embedded. In such cases where this sense of developing drama is very much present to consciousness and influences our activity and enjoyment, the aesthetic character of erotic experience is more likely to be clearly exhibited and appreciated.

40 Iseminger, "Aesthetic Experience," 106, 111.

41 A more detailed argument for the notion and methodologies of lovemaking as artistic performance (based on a study of ancient Chinese and Indian erotic theory) can be found in "Asian *Ars Erotica* and the Question of Sexual Aesthetics."

6 On the scope of aesthetic experience

Martin Seel

Probably no one would dispute that aesthetic experience is a beautiful thing, even if some of those who would not dispute it would dispute that it is always a thing of beauty. But beauty is not the issue here. I will attempt to say something about the meaning and value of aesthetic experience without going into detail about the various forms this value assumes. Rather, I will reflect on the place of aesthetic experience in the context of human practices, and thus also on the scope attributed to this type of experience in relation to other types of experience. After all, even among those who agree that we are concerned here with a beautiful thing, it is anything but clear how we are to locate aesthetic experience within the sphere of human orientations. To many who clearly do not want to do without aesthetic experience, its process appears to be only a kind of supplement or enrichment of acts—be it of contemplation, production, or reproduction—that can be executed independently of it, though somewhat less gracefully. I will not, however, embrace this aesthetic defeatism because I believe that aesthetic experience can provide subjects with a type of consciousness that no other mode of experience can provide.I develop my reflections in five steps, beginning with a thesis on the concept of aesthetic perception, from which I demarcate, in a second step, a concept of aesthetic experience. Then I turn to the distinctiveness of art experience, about which I claim in a fourth step that it has to be understood as an interaction of art forms. I conclude with a thesis on the scope of aesthetic experience, an experience which is restricted neither to the arts nor to any of the other traditional domains of aesthetic experience.

I

It will benefit a discerning concept of aesthetic experience if it is understood not as the superordinate concept for aesthetic reactions of all kinds but as a term for an intensification of aesthetic perception. Following this proposal, aesthetic perception is not already aesthetic experience, but aesthetic experience is always an intensified form of aesthetic perception. Of course this proposal makes sense only if we succeed in fleshing out the

concept of aesthetic perception. I will take a shortcut here by introducing the conception I developed and explained in debate with modern aesthetics in my book *Aesthetics of Appearing*.[1] Accordingly, aesthetic perception consists in *attentiveness to the appearing of what is appearing*.This is an attentiveness to how something is present to our senses here and now. It relates not primarily to how something is but to how it is there, how it is present in the repleteness of its aspects and relations. This attentiveness can be connected in many ways to the phenomena of semblance and imagination. Its basic concept, however, accentuates synesthetically sensing the simultaneity and momentariness of sensuous appearances, a sensing that accompanies all other and all more complex aesthetic acts. It brings about a transformation of other modes of perception as well as a metamorphosis of the objects to which it is attentive. We could therefore say that basic aesthetic perception lets its object be for the duration of its intuition, that is, it lets it appear. These are acts of perception that can come about anytime and anyplace—in the countryside, the city, in an art gallery or a launderette. Aesthetic perception presupposes neither higher education nor reflection, but is a basic capacity of the consciousness of beings who can make something present in determinacy *or* in its indeterminacy. It is a basic capacity of individuals who know that despite all the possibilities of determination and control their life situation is enduringly indeterminate and uncontrolled. Aesthetic intuition enables them to take *pleasure* in this situation, for it opens the possibility of sensing something not in the determinacy of its being-so but in the distinctiveness of its appearing—in the manner in which it is present here and now (and frequently only here and now) in our bodily surroundings. By lingering with the appearing of things and situations, aesthetic perception acquires a specific consciousness of presence. It provides those who surrender to it with *time for the moment* of their lives.This is no small achievement for beings who in their thinking and imaging reach expansively into space and time (and, in so doing, can easily get lost in the past or future). The capacity for aesthetic perception grounds their consciousness (which is so receptive to abstractions, anticipations, and retrospectives) through periods of a vivid recourse to presence, as can occur at any time by looking out the window or listening to the sounds of the world.

II

These episodes of aesthetic perception, which are everywhere possible and usual, differ from aesthetic *experience* in that the latter becomes an *event* for those who enjoy it. In brief, *aesthetic experience is aesthetic perception with event character*. I speak here of events in a historical-cultural sense in which an occurrence is an event by virtue of the fact that it *becomes* an event for someone, be it one or many individuals. It is to be distinguished from an understanding of the concept in which almost everything can be grasped as

an event, including the twitching of the material without which there is neither existence nor passing away. By contrast, events in the narrower sense are intended when a particular occurrence acquires significance in a particular way at a particular biographical or historical moment: something that until now was or seemed impossible is all of a sudden possible (little Jonas can now tie his shoelaces, two passenger aircraft reduce the twin towers of the World Trade Center to rubble). Events in this sense interrupt the continuum of biographical and historical time. They are incidents that do not fit in, but they cannot be ignored either; they generate fissures in the interpreted world. They draw attention to themselves by altering the attention drawn to them. They are incidents that cannot be grasped at the time of their occurrence. By suddenly and unavoidably moving something to the center of attention, they are a revolt of the present against the rest of time. Historical presences in which such uprisings happen, present near and remote, familiar and unfamiliar, prepared and unprepared, anticipated and unanticipated possibilities for action and thought, experience and desire, which in the various spheres constitute the culture and form of a society. Small or big events of varying power and force intervene in this constellation of open and closed possibilities. They make what was previously impossible possible, and what was possible impossible. At the same time they make it evident that there are impossibilities lurking in the known possibilities, and possibilities in the impossibilities, and that this latent state *is constitutive of* presence. Aesthetic events—those that put us in a process of aesthetic experience because they outstrip what is aesthetically expectable—also participate in a dynamic of this kind. They are aesthetic because in their presence we lose our "way [*irre werden*] amidst the cognitive forms of appearance," as Nietzsche put in his discussion of Schopenhauer in *The Birth of Tragedy*.[2] Their starting point is not just an improbable appearing but an appearing considered impossible, be it an overwhelming landscape or cityscape, a crazy game of soccer, an erotic intermezzo, a wild party, an artistic revelation, or a series of images such as the TV pictures of 9/11, which were not at first identifiable as a movie or as a presentation of real occurrences. Aesthetic experience in general is thus by no means restricted to the experience of art. Like aesthetic perception, aesthetic experience can be had anywhere and anytime, though we partake of it much less frequently than the former. It cannot be generated in a manner similar to less spectacular forms of aesthetic perception, which can be entered into by glancing out the window or by putting on a CD or DVD. Aesthetic experience has to happen and can happen only if subjects become involved with the sensuous making present of phenomena and situations that alter in an entirely unforeseen manner the subjects' sense of what is real and what is possible (as can sometimes happen with a CD or DVD, and sometimes with a very familiar one). Plain lingering in the movement of a moment, which is characteristic of simple aesthetic perception, intensifies here to a moving intuition of moved presence.

III

If aesthetic experience can be had just as easily outside as inside art, there is need for an even narrower concept of aesthetic perception in order to characterize the distinctiveness of the experience of art. As is the case with all aesthetic phenomena, the form of perception must not be separated here from what is perceived through this form. Objects of art do not exist independently of the possibilities of *perceiving* them as objects of art. One of the expectations we have when encountering artworks—at least today—is that they allow us not only to *perceive* differently but to *experience* differently—that artworks may become an *event* for our sensuous and mental disposition.

The experience of artworks differs from the perception events discussed so far in that it is triggered not by any arbitrary event but by *presentation* events. By "presentation" I mean not primarily representation, whereby *something as something* is presented, but a demonstration in which a *presentation* is performed. Performances of this kind are not specialized in the latest art form bearing this name; a poem or a novel also demonstrates to its readers the particular—graphic, phonetic, rhythmic, gestural, or narrative—arrangement of its words. This presentational sense of artistic action takes clear primacy over the representative sense; artistic objects are objects in which whatever is presented results from the individual mode of presentation. The path to world presentation, should the latter be available, leads through the self-presentation of the work, its material, its internal configurations, its perspectives, and so forth. *Works of art are perception events of a particular kind precisely because they are presentation events of a particular kind.*

By "presentation events" I mean processes of presentation in which the meaning of the presentation as well as the meaning of what is presented are uncertain—not in the sense of an illegible examination answer sheet, but in such a way that unforeseen possibilities of presentation and possibilities of what is presented become evident. It is individual presentations that contain in their determinacy an untranslatable articulation potential. In confrontation with such *presentations* there also occurs a change both in the process of attending to something and in what is attended to: we get to know something *as* presentation by learning to understand a new *form* of presentation. We are dealing with events whose presentation character is often as uncertain as what is presented in their unfolding, but are for that very reason comprehended and experienced as outstanding presentations.

Thus, at least since Duchamp, art beholders have been familiar with the question of what kind of object it is that presents itself as an art object and, moreover, what is it about the object that makes it an art object. The dovetailing of the questions of what the artistic presentation is, how it is, and what it is a presentation of, can be recognized not only when encountering readymades; it can be sensed in one way or another when beholding any interesting work of art. "What kind of texts are these?" readers of the literary works of Alexander Kluge will ask themselves, "And how do they

relate to the compendium of texts which has made up his oeuvre since the publication of *Neue Geschichten* in 1977?" "What kind of film is this?" a critic asks herself after viewing Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, and answers the question herself with the observation that here, on an empty stage, film is being redefined. Similarly, audiences of productions by Christoph Schlingensief will frequently ask themselves what they are actually seeing here: a stage production, a performance, a political act, or some kind of installation. The situation is not basically any different in less spectacular cases in which an established art form is realized in an unprecedented manner—be it a sonnet, a fugue, a photographic portrait, or an action movie. Artistic presentations are by nature *variations* on modes of presentations, with there always being the possibility of the question arising as to what actually the presentation is here.

Art is an instance of presentations in which this question is not trivial. Because here we see ourselves faced with the question of what the presentation is and how it is, artistic *presentation* events are always conspicuous as significant events of *perception*. The treatment of space and time, the movement of bodies and signs, the relation of materials and media—these are elements from which the constellation of an artistic presentation develops. From the sensing and tracing of this constellation—and of the appearing it engenders—there follows the presentational occurrence of the artistic object. This is an event that challenges our perception capacity by also provoking—as a presentation event—our epistemological capacity. It is an event that not only generates a revolt of the present but also—by virtue of *its* presence—enables a *presentation* of presence. This presentation can refer to the experience of the presence of the artwork itself or to any of the presences imagined by the work. In minimalist sculptures it is the former that is to the fore, in detective novels it is the latter. As a rule, however, both occur: in *its* presentation, the work enables the intuition of *a* presence, as is the case in the novels of Hammett or Chandler, no less than in those of Musil or Coetzee. In the experience of art, therefore, we are concerned not just with a doubling of the *event* character of aesthetic experience but also with a doubling of the latter's recourse to *presence*. In art we encounter objects that, by virtue of their improbable presence, enable the experience of past or future, remembered or imagined presentness.

This event character is attributable both to modern and to ancient works of art. An artistic object does not have to be new or new to the beholder in order to produce, through its presence, a rupture in the continuum of its self-understanding. It is characteristic of the *potential* of significant artworks that an encounter with them provides a new look at presence. Classical or canonical objects of art are those that are always in a position to develop such potential, and redevelop it against the background of subsequent developments in art.

This would then mean that art presents presence by producing presence.[3] In that event generated by its works, art confounds those constellations of

the possible and the impossible, of what is present and what is absent, that we usually experience as the reality of our time. By thus breaking with the continuous flow of reality it tells and shows how much the real is a possibility, and the possible a reality. This consciousness of the real in the possible, and of the possible in the real, is consciousness of presence—consciousness of how open the course of time and the order of things really are.

IV

However, the event character of art and of the experience of art has been described only inadequately so far, for it cannot be grasped as long as nothing is said about the relation obtaining between the arts. What it means to say that artworks are presentation events is not at all comprehensible without considering the inherent interlacing of the arts. In every art form, and even more so in every work of art, the interwovenness of the arts is represented differently. Good objects of art are an event of aesthetic presentation and perception for the very reason that the constellation of arts changes with them, with each individual one of them.

After all, what is discussed today under the rubric "dissolving the borders between art forms" (*Entgrenzung der Künste*) is just the reverse side of a long-lived and sustainable interlacing that is taken literally, so to speak, and made public in the border-dissolving operations of modern art. What is evident in these operations is the fact that there are no clear borders between the arts, and there never have been. Some arts have always cropped up in others. And it is this kind of occurrence in one another that constitutes the identity of one art form *vis-à-vis* others. Literature has different relations to music than, say, drama; different relations to cinema than for example dance; different relations to the image than for instance architecture; and it has only peripheral relations to spatial and olfactory distinctions, which play a more important role in other arts. And this is the case for the other arts, too. The procedures of presentation, through which the handling of certain materials and media becomes an *artistic* performance, are so divergent even in purist and reductive versions that they intercommunicate from the outset with procedural modes that find central application in other art forms. Right down to the level of each individual artwork, all art forms have relations with numerous other ones. My fourth thesis thus runs: *the special character of the experience of individual art forms arises from their special connection to other art forms.*

Of course this statement is rather circular. Nonetheless, this does not seem to me to be a disadvantage here, for what constitutes the special character of the arts is above all their position *among* the other arts. All external distinctions—such as between spatial and temporal arts, or according to the various materials employed in each particular art—have proved to be superficial. All art forms are spatial and temporal arts, though not to the same degree; no single art form has exclusive rights to a material

that is important and necessary for it. Art forms are historically variable design possibilities in which for a period certain materials and media are a *conditio sine qua non* that can be relativized sooner or later. Furthermore, they are connected internally, through their principal material and medium, with numerous other art forms and *their* materials and media, so much so that it is only via this communication with the other forms that they are what they are.[4]

It is precisely this communication between the arts that becomes an event within the presentation event of individual works of art. The rupture in the continuum of what can be expected, which is characteristic of cultural events of all kinds, involves here the relation of the individual work to its genre, and the latter's relation to other genres. It is this rupture that essentially constitutes the productive uncertainty that distinguishes artistic presentations from illegible answer sheets, confusing talks, and instruction manuals that are only too clear. The constellation of this work changes the constellation of the genres to which it belongs. The novels of the last century that made use of the "cinematic" techniques of cutting and montage are responded to decades later by films in which literary techniques are employed, in some cases even techniques that were formerly conspicuous as "*cinematic*" ones and are now, on account of their literary quality, making a cinematic difference (the narrative style of *Pulp Fiction* [Quentin Tarantino, USA, 1994] or *Mulholland Drive* [David Lynch, USA, 2001] comes to mind). To participate in such shifts in the relations of presentation is essential to the experience of art, and not least because here this experience is again subjected to a shift in the possibilities for presentation and perception, and thus a shift in the possibilities for a sense of presence.[5]

V

The experience of the intermediality of the arts, which we have just addressed, is of course tied to the assumption of a trained capacity for perception. Whoever does not understand that films are essentially music for the eyes; whoever does not see that the difference between substantive and verbal style in poetry and prose also makes a graphic difference; whoever does not sense that music and painting are also spatial arts; whoever does not notice that, for instance, installations have their roots in the spatiality of images and sounds, he or she will not grasp enough of the event of art forms to be able to have an experience here at all.

I would like to go a step further, however, and say that whoever has his or her aesthetic experiences only in the sphere of art will not grasp enough to have the experience that can be executed only in this sphere. Whoever is untouched by the events of the world—including its aesthetic events—will not be able to recognize in the appearing of art an event of the presentation of being in the world. The experience of art lives off experience outside art—and, concerning the latter, off *aesthetic* experiences in the spaces of the

city and the countryside, these being experiences in which the coordinates of savoir-vivre and trust in the world are jumbled. Thus, when it is a question of the scope of aesthetic experience, its reach, we cannot stop at the arts, as if they were the true fulfillment of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience knows no true, canonical fulfillment. It finds fulfillment in being drawn into possibilities for perception and understanding both inside and outside art, and it discovers that these possibilities cannot be exhausted, controlled, or determined. Here lies the special scope of aesthetic experience (this being my fifth and final thesis): *aesthetic experience allows what is indeterminate in the determinate, what is unrealized in the realized, and what is incomprehensible in the comprehensible, to become evident, and it thereby generates consciousness for the openness of presence.* It reaches into the heart of presence and at the same time goes beyond all the certainties of the particular self-understanding present.

Notes

1 Martin Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, trans. John Farrell (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, ed. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1993) 16.
3 My view here coincides with those of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
4 I have discussed this in greater detail in my *Aesthetics of Appearing*, 106–10.
5 This should not be misleadingly associated with progress ideology. The continuous change in the constellation of the arts brought about by individual works has primarily no goal other than to allow such changes to occur. Moreover, these changes are brought about not just by new artworks but also by numerous old ones; and the latter achieve this through the manner in which they now appear to perceivers in the changed situation, in contrast to or comparison with recent works.

7 Refined emotion in aesthetic experience

A cross-cultural comparison

Kathleen Higgins

Whatever aesthetic experience might be, it certainly involves emotion. But recent Western aesthetic discussions of such experience rarely elaborate on the emotion(s) involved, if they take emotion as a matter of serious concern at all. Noel Carroll offers a taxonomy of four recent approaches to aesthetic experience, one of which he terms the affect-oriented approach. But the affect that he takes to be most emphasized in this approach is pleasure; and when he refers to other affects, he refers to unspecified feelings, affective tone, and qualia, rather than full-fledged emotion.[1] Perhaps one reason that emotion is little analyzed in connection with aesthetic experience is that most ordinary emotion names seem insufficient for the range of emotions undergone within aesthetic experience. The "garden variety emotions" (as Peter Kivy refers to them) seem much more straightforward and uncomplicated than the emotional stream one navigates when in an aesthetic state.

Recent psychology has reinforced the tendency to think of emotions in "garden variety" terms, and to consider them as short-lived events. Psychology standardly treats emotions as episodic. Although much debate ensues over what emotions actually are—whether, for example, they are events in the brain, the feelings accompanying these, a cognitive interpretation of one's feelings, or some combination—most psychologists consider them to be relatively brief events. As a consequence, emotional experiences with more extended trajectories are at best treated as strings of emotional atoms. But an aesthetic experience typically involves a temporally extended course of emotion, often with shifting affective tone. The episodic model of emotion is ill suited to describe what occurs in aesthetic states.

Psychologist Nico Frijda takes his own field to task for concentrating on the coarse emotions at the expense of the refined ones.[2] Yet this emphasis is almost guaranteed by the episodic emotional model. Refined emotions typically undergo development over time, while coarse emotions can appear quite rapidly, seemingly full-force.[3] A psychology of refined emotions is needed to do justice to the emotions so prized in the aesthetic realm. Philosophical aesthetics, too, should consider the nature and structure of refined emotion if it is to illuminate experiences that are aesthetically valued.

Certain non-Western traditions are ahead of the West in this respect. Both Indian and Japanese aesthetics offer analyses of the emotions involved in aesthetic experience that acknowledge their refinements and differentiate them from "garden variety" species. In this chapter, I will consider some of the ways the Indian and Japanese traditions have approached refined emotions in aesthetic experience. The term "refined," however, has various meanings. I will begin my discussion with some possible senses in which aesthetic emotions can be refined, and go on to consider how these senses play roles in Indian and Japanese aesthetics. I will conclude with a brief consideration of the reasons why Western aesthetics, like Western psychology, has underemphasized refined emotion.

Varieties of refinement

To stimulate my thinking about ways emotions can be refined, I consulted *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. It gives the following definitions of "refine" as a transitive verb.

> I. *v. t.* 1. Purify (a metal) by removing oxides, gas, etc. ... 2a. Clear (the spirits, mind, etc.) from dullness; make clearer or more subtle ... b. Purify morally, raise to a higher spiritual state. ... 3. Free from impurities; purify, cleanse; *spec*. purify (oil, sugar, etc.) by a series of special processes. ... 4. Free from imperfections or defects; *spec*. make (a language, compositon, etc.) more elegant or cultured. ... 5. Free from rudeness or vulgarity; make more polished, elegant, or cultured. ... 6a. Bring *into* or raise *to* a certain state by refining. ... b. Purify or cleanse from something. ... c. Clear *away* or *out of* by refining. [4]

Refinement in connection with the emotions can take virtually all of these forms. At least six types can be distinguished. First, emotions might be refined in being *pure or unadulterated*. One kind of achievement in the arts is to inspire emotion that is not diluted or dissipated by other, perhaps inimical emotions. Aristotle, for example, argues for the superiority of a tragic plot having a single outcome (a change of a basically good hero's fortunes "from happiness to misery"), not a double outcome (that is, a plot having "the opposite issue for the good and the bad personages"), seemingly because the former has a clearer emotional focus.[5]

Second, emotions might be refined in being *more subtle* than the coarse emotions. This kind of refinement might involve mixing emotions into a blend that is piquant or savoring such a mixture.[6] Bharata, author of the *Nātyaśāstra,* the classical compendium of aesthetic theory from the first century CE, claims that poetry requires such a blend of emotion when he states that "in practice, there is never poetry born of a single *rasa*."[7]

David Hume's "calm emotions" (e.g. benevolence, love of life, and "general appetite to good and aversion to evil considered as such")[8] might be considered

more subtle than the violent ones, suggesting an additional sense in which subtlety might be displayed. Not only are these calm passions more controlled in their display than the violent passions (one sense of "subtle"), but their etiology is also a more extended and controlled procedure (a second sense[9]). A calm passion has become "a settled principle of action, and is the predominant inclination of the soul," with the consequence that "it commonly produces no longer any sensible agitation."[10] Moreover, a passion can have both a violent and a calm version.[11]

> Both these kinds of passions pursue good, and avoid evil; and both of them are encreas'd or diminish'd by the encrease or diminution of the good or evil. But herein lies the difference betwixt them: The same good, when near, will cause a violent passion, which, when remote, produces only a calm one.[12]

An appreciation of a good at a distance is a more subtle mental operation than appreciation of one that is present, in that the imagination must be involved in a way that it need not be for the violent passions. The necessity of involving imagination or virtuality is a further sense of subtlety that might apply to refined emotions. It is worth noting that the first two kinds of emotional refinement (purity and subtlety) can be in tension with each other. The first involves a pure emotional effect, while the second may involve a blend or other combination.

A third refined species is emotion *raised to a higher moral or spiritual state*. The notion of such a transformation of emotion is central to Indian aesthetic theory, as we shall see. Unlike the previous two senses, this sense of refinement is focused on the perceiver more than on the aesthetic object.

Fourth, refinement might be understood as *feeling appropriately*. This immediately raises the question of how appropriateness is determined. Specific cultural norms may establish certain standards of propriety, but these may underdetermine the nature of appropriateness and allow for disputes. As we shall see, in the West the issue of appropriate response is central to David Hume and Immanuel Kant's account of taste.

Appropriate feeling may also be a matter of nuance and attention to the particularities of the aesthetic object or situation. Sei Shônagon (965?–*c.*1020 CE), lady in waiting to the Japanese Empress around the turn of the eleventh century, has this sense of refined response in the following vignette.

> It was a clear, moonlit night a little after the tenth of the Eighth Month. Her Majesty, who was residing in the Empress's Office, sat by the edge of the veranda while Ukon no Naishi played the flute for her. The other ladies in attendance sat together, talking and laughing; but I stayed by myself, leaning against one of the pillars between the main hall and the veranda.

> "Why so silent?" said Her Majesty. "Say something. It is sad when you do not speak."
> "I am gazing into the autumn moon," I replied.
> "Ah, yes," she remarked. "That is just what you should have said."[13]

Fifth, refined emotion might be considered to be emotion that is *more cultured*. "Being more cultured," however, is ambiguous. It may be associated with social class. Tom Leddy suggests that sparkling surfaces are widely appreciated, and that matte surfaces are considered more cultured because of their elitist association with the wealthy class.[14] The "freedom from vulgarity" that the dictionary entry cites is ambiguous between freedom from what is crude and freedom from association with the common people. Becoming more cultured may, on the other hand, be a matter of having undergone training or cultivation of some sort. In this sense, the Buddhist eightfold path might be thought of as a method for refining one's emotions.[15]

Sixth, refined emotions might be associated with greater *maturity*. Maturity might be necessary for a perceiver to appreciate or appreciate fully an aesthetic object. The kind of maturity that might be associated with aesthetic experience is often understood in terms of what psychologists call "emotional regulation," i.e. subjecting one's emotions to control. The emotions at issue here could occur at different points within aesthetic experience or artistic activity. Emotional control might also be a necessary prerequisite to aesthetic experience. Detachment from personal interests as a precondition for full aesthetic experience is a recurring theme in Indian, Japanese, and Western aesthetic traditions, as we shall see. The capacity for delayed gratification might also be a prerequisite for enjoying the entire trajectory of an aesthetic experience, including the build-up of tension as well as its resolution. Leonard B. Meyer describes this capacity as essential for the enjoyment of Western art music.[16]

Emotional display can also be subject to regulation, and this is demanded of audiences in the case of some of the arts. One is free to emote in a classical concert of Western classical music, but the display is limited by the stricture that one must sit quietly in one's seat while the music is being performed.

Although thus far I have taken aesthetic emotions to be those that are involved in the perceiver's aesthetic experience, the artist, too, might experience refined emotions, either as a precondition for making art or as a consequence of doing so. Refined emotions might be thought to have an impact on his or her artistic decisions. A "restrained" style is admired in Japan, and presumably this requires restraint in emotional display as well as technical control. Artists in general might need to regulate emotion in order to create worthwhile art. John Dewey contends that artmaking requires sufficient control that one is able to give shape to the emotion that the artwork expresses.[17] In this chapter I will be concentrating on the refined emotion of the aesthetic perceiver. Nevertheless, refined aesthetic emotion can and often is involved in the creation and performance of art as well.

The category of refined emotion is not, I am convinced, restricted to "witness emotions" (i.e. emotions experienced when witnessing emotionally charged circumstances at a distance).[18]

Each of the senses of refinement I have considered has sometimes been associated with aesthetic emotions (emotions experienced in conjunction with art, beauty, or some other savored sensory enjoyment). However, cultures have not emphasized these various kinds of refinement in the same way. Nor have cultures converged in feeling the need to develop a theory of aesthetic emotion. Certain non-Western cultures have elaborated a theory of aesthetic emotion to a greater extent than has the West. I will proceed to consider prominent aesthetic theories from India and Japan, noting some of their similarities and differences. I will emphasize the Indian tradition's focus on the experience of the audience member of an artistic performance, while noting the Japanese tradition's concern with aesthetic emotion also in connection with nature and everyday life, as well as the emotion of the artist. I will go on to consider possible reasons why the West has not emphasized refined emotion—or any kind of emotion—to the same degree as these Asian cultures.

Indian *rasa* theory

According to Indian aesthetic theory, the aim of the arts is to enable the audience member to experience *rasa*, the essential flavor of emotion.[19] Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* (200–500 CE) is the oldest source for the theory of *rasa*. This text focuses on the means by which the emotions can be aroused by the performing arts, particularly drama, which is assumed to include music and dance as well as action and dialogue. The *Nātyaśāstra* offers a detailed psychology of the emotions, or *bhāvas*,[20] in an effort to explain how drama achieves emotional impact. A dramatic performance, according to the *Nātyaśāstra*, seeks to arouse one of eight basic durable emotions, or *sthāyibhāvas*: erotic love (*rati*), mirth (*hāsya*), sorrow (*śoka*), anger (*krodha*), energy (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*), and astonishment (*vismaya*). In order to produce a *bhāva*, or basic emotional quality, a performance utilizes the objects and "other exciting circumstances"[21] that cause the emotional state;[22] the gestures and other means of expressing emotional states (some of them involuntary);[23] and some of the thirty-three transient emotions[24] that help to bring about the basic emotional condition. The transient emotions include "discouragement, weakness, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, anxiety, distraction, recollection, contentment, shame, inconstancy, joy, agitation, stupor, arrogance, despair, impatience, sleep, epilepsy, dreaming, awakening, indignation, dissimulation, cruelty, assurance, sickness, insanity, death, fright and deliberation."[25]

The ultimate emotional effect that drama seeks to provoke is not a *bhāva*, however, but *rasa*. *Rasa*, which literally means "flavor" or "taste," is the emotional savor that a performance ideally arouses in the audience member.[26] Arindam Chakrabarti observes,

> The original use of that term *rasa* ranges over a variety of interconnected meanings: a fluid that tends to spill, a taste such as sour, sweet or salty, the soul or quintessence of something, a desire, a power, a chemical agent used in changing one metal into another, the life-giving sap in plants, and even poison! Almost all these distinct meanings are exploited at different junctures of the complex Aesthetic Phenomenology centering on the concept *rasa*.[27]

There are eight or nine basic *rasas*, corresponding to the eight basic emotion types: the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), the comic (*hāsya*), the pathetic (in the sense of sorrowful) (*karuna*), the furious (*raudra*), the heroic (*vīra*), the terrible (*bhayānaka*), the odious (*bībhatsa*), and the marvelous (*adbhuta*).[28] A ninth *rasa*, tranquility or quiescence (*śānta*), is sometimes included in the list of *rasas* by later theorists, although Bharata did not include it. Whether a *bhāva* becomes transformed into a *rasa* depends to a large extent on the perceiver.

Kashmiri Śaivite philosopher Abhinavagupta (*c.*975–1025) offered a particularly influential account of *rasa*, which conjoins it with spiritual evolution. According to Abhinava, the *bhāvas* are worldly emotions that anyone with normal awareness of other people's emotional expression can recognize and feel empathetically. A *rasa*, however, is a universal emotion, and to experience it requires overcoming attachment to one's personal outlook. There may be internal obstacles to doing this, such as being absorbed with one's own feelings or identifying too personally with the emotions conveyed. The audience member must therefore have sufficient spiritual preparation to overcome such obstacles in order to fully taste the emotional flavor of a performance. The emotional taste is not perceived as one's individual feeling of a specific emotion (e.g. sorrow), but a universalized emotional state (e.g. the sorrowful).[29]

B. N. Goswamy, summarizing various commentators' views, notes that the sufficiently prepared person, called the *rasika*, brings to the experience of the artwork mental preparation, "singleness of heart," and "energy (*utsaha*)", adding, "The faculty of imagination and wonder is greatly emphasized."[30] Given these preconditions, Goswamy describes the experience of *rasa* as follows:

> If the circumstances have been right, if the performance is of the proper order, and if the viewer is cultured and sensitive enough (a *rasika*) a spark would leap from the performance to the viewer, resulting in an experience that would suffuse the entire being of the *rasika*. The experience might possess the suddenness of a flash of lightning, leaving the viewer unprepared for the moment and unaware of the swiftness with which it comes, deeply moved by it. This is the moment when, as a later writer put it, "magical flowers would blossom" in his awareness: *rasa* would be tasted.[31]

Abhinavagupta proposes that all the other *rasa*s emerge from and return to a ninth *rasa*, *śāntarasa*.[32] This is in accord with the view of some commentators

that *rasa* is ultimately one, with the specific *rasas* being to it like the various colors emerging from a prism are to the light that strikes it.[33] According to Abhinava, *śāntarasa* is both the ground from which other *rasas* arise and the destination toward which they return.[34] *Śāntarasa* is akin to spiritual liberation (or *moksa*), which Indian tradition holds to be the human being's ultimate aim. According to Abhinava, spiritual liberation is the recognition that one's true self is the universal Self, the sole reality, which he identifies with the consciousness of Śiva.

Abhinava explicates the connection between *śāntarasa* and liberation, and *śāntarasa*'s relation to the other *rasa*s, in his answer to one of the arguments against the legitimacy of *śānta* as a *rasa*. Each of the other *rasas* is linked to a stable emotional basis, or *bhāva*. But *śāntarasa* does not seem to have a related *bhāva*. If *śānta* is in fact a *rasa*, what is the *bhāva* on which it is based? Abhinava's answer is that the *bhāva* is "knowledge of the Self," which is characterized by mental repose.

> Its "stableness" is not to be argued in terms of the "stableness" [of the other emotive states]. . . . Knowledge of the truth . . . represents the wall itself [on which are displayed] all the other emotions . . . and is [thus], among all the stable [emotive states], the most stable.[35]

All aesthetic experience, then, points toward this blissful state.

The Indian ideal of artistic achievement is a matter of inspiring refined emotional experience. Several senses of refined emotion figure in this account. First, the notion of emotional refinement as purity figures in Indian theory, though in a complicated way. The emotions experienced in their "universal" form are rendered pure in the sense that personal interests are eliminated. The achievement of *śāntarasa* is an experience that is even more purified than the experience of the other *rasas*, for it involves a particularly steady detachment from one's everyday emotional experience and its characteristic self-interestedness.

Second, experiencing a *rasa* is more subtle than experiencing the ordinary emotion with which it is related, in that it requires more active imagination and several layers of reflection. Abhinava describes the experience of *rasa* as involving rumination on the emotion conveyed by the drama, a feeling response informed by a sense of sharing the emotion with the character(s), and relishing one's continuing rumination on the emotion and the response.[36] *Rasa* aroused in connection with most great works of art is also subtle in necessitating appreciation of emotional nuance, for these works typically involve combinations of more than one *rasa*.

Third, *rasa* is refined in the sense of being a matter of transformation of an emotion to a higher spiritual level. Goswamy remarks that "In its final and subtlest sense . . . *rasa* comes to signify a state of heightened delight, in the sense of *ananda*, the kind of bliss that can be experienced only by the spirit."[37] Even the relatively secular account of emotion in *Nātyaśāstra*

analyzes *rasa* as requiring the transcendence of personal self-absorption.[38] And Abhinavagupta's account treats *rasa* as directed toward realizing one's identity with the Absolute, in opposition to the more worldly *bhāva*.

Fourth, *rasa* theory considers refined emotion in the sense of appropriate feeling. The sense of appropriateness pertains more to the performers' display than to the perceiver's feeling, however, and refinement here is primarily a matter of emotional display. Besides absorption in one's own feelings and overly personal identification, Abhinava cites several other obstacles to the experience of *rasa*, such as failing to find the drama convincing, lack of means for perceiving it, lack of clarity, lack of any predominant emotion in the drama, and doubt about what emotion is being expressed.[39] Many of these are faults of the play, rather than faults of the observer.

Indeed, focus on the emotional appropriateness of the actor's performance is a primary theme in Indian aesthetic thought already in the *Nātyaśāstra*. Bharata elaborates at great length on the means of conveying various emotions, suggesting that if the performers convey them well, the audience will experience at least the represented *bhāva*. This suggests that for Bharata, appropriateness is more a matter of concern for the actor than the audience. Indian thinkers debate over whether or not the performer can experience *rasa*.[40] Although many thinkers think the performer can have aesthetic experience of his or her own performance, Goswamy points out that *rasa* can only "be experienced by the maker or the performer only when and if he puts himself in the position of a viewer of himself and his work."[41]

Fifth, *rasa* requires emotional sensitivity on the part of the observer, and this in turn requires cultivation. This sense of emotional refinement is closely linked to the sixth, maturity. In that transformation of *bhāva* to *rasa* requires as its precondition a state of preparedness in the perceiver, "refined" emotion here has the connotations of being a matter of development or maturity. Hence, *rasa* is refined emotion in the sense of being the experience of the cultured viewer. Interestingly, Abhinavagupta's account of *rasa* is elitist in demanding connoisseurship; but connoisseurship here is a function not so much of artistic as spiritual experience.

One might question whether the sort of disinterestedness, or detachment, that *rasa* requires is really compatible with emotional experience. Immanuel Kant, for example, understands disinterestedness primarily in terms of the absence of certain kinds of interested emotions. While he acknowledges that emotion is provoked by aesthetic experience, he considers this to be a distraction from what is aesthetic in the experience (namely, the free play of the mental faculties with the form of the object), although it may be a function of the sense of interpersonal connection occasioned by sharing aesthetic satisfaction.

In Indian aesthetic theory, however, disinterestedness and emotion are certainly conjoined. Disinterestedness is compatible with engagement. In fact, it makes possible greater engagement with the object because the per-

ceiver is less self-absorbed than in the interested state.[42] One's personal interests themselves are seen in Indian thought as obstacles to really engaging with an object. Hence, becoming disinterested is a matter of surmounting an obstruction to real emotional connection with the object. In discussing *rasa* in its relation to poetry, Masson and Patwardhan remark that "*rasa* is no less than the reader's reaction to, his personal involvement with literature."[43]

In Indian theory, moreover, a joyous emotional state attends the experience of all the *rasas*. Even experience of *bībhatsarasa*, the disgusting, involves in its most delicate state what Chakrabarti calls the "thrill of sensing every fold of embodied existence."[44] According to Abhinavagupta, moreover, joy is not separate from perception; and Chari describes *rasa* as "a type of emotional perception, not accounted for by other modes of knowledge, but implicit in them."[45]

The term "depersonalized" is sometimes used as an English term for certain Indian characterizations of aesthetic emotion, and this can be misleading. One is personally quite engaged with the object in aesthetic experience, in that one is absorbed by it. However, one's sense of self, or one's sense of what is personal, is enlarged by the experience. One has moved beyond personal interests in an everyday sense, in part because one becomes able to appreciate the concerns of human beings in general as affecting and as personally relevant.

Japanese aesthetic theory

Japanese aesthetic theory focuses on certain uniquely aesthetic affective states that are ideally aroused in the aesthetic perceiver. These affective states, although prompted by perception of a particular object, gravitate toward more generalized moods than object-focused emotions. They are atmospheric and suggest attitudes toward life in general. This is in keeping with the fact that the Japanese tradition emphasizes aesthetic experiences in everyday life and in connection with nature as well as in the context of appreciating art. I will not argue here for a position regarding the relationship of emotions and moods, but instead I will simply note that I am inclined to accept the view that emotions and moods are ends of a continuum, not entirely distinct categories. The aesthetic responses valued in Japan are reflected in an aesthetic vocabulary that is laden with refined emotion. Among the terms for affective aesthetic responses are the following: *mono no aware*, *okashi*, *yūgen*, *sabi*, *miyabi*, and *wabi*. I will consider each of these in turn, and then comment on the senses of refinement that are suggested by this cluster of concepts.

Aware is an emotion term that figures frequently in discussion of Japanese aesthetics. Theodore de Bary points out that in early texts it refers to surprise or delight ("what an early Western critic of Japanese literature called the 'ahness' of things"), but that the term eventually became "tinged with

sadness," a tendency that deepened over time, to the point that the modern sense of the term is "wretched."[46] Perhaps the most influential interpretation of *aware* as an aesthetic emotion is that of Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801).

> *Aware* is the voice of sorrow that comes out when the heart feels after seeing, hearing, or touching something. Today we would use the exclamations "Ah!" [*aa*] and "oh!" [*hare*]. . . . The word "*aware*" is the combination of "*aa*" and "*hare*." . . . Later on, *aware* was given the character meaing "sorrow," making us believe that the word simply meant grief. But *aware* is not limited to the expression of sorrow. It also applies to the state of being happy, interesting, pleasant, and funny. . . . Whenever we meet with a situation in which we should be feeling something, the feeling of knowing that the heart should be moved by that something is called "to know *mono no aware*." Of course, the fact that the heart is not moved on occasions when it should actually be feeling something, such an inability to feel is called "ignorance of *mono no aware*" and such a person is known as "a heartless man."[47]

Mono no aware combines the terms *mono*, meaning "things," and *aware*, meaning "pathos, sorrow, grief." Hence, it is the "pathos of things" or "sensitivity of things." Yuriko Saito descries it as "the essential experience of sympathetic identification with natural objects or situations."[48] She observes that such identification can occur through intuiting "the *kokoro* (essence, spirit) of the object or situation and sympathize with it" or coloring the experience of natural objects with our own strong emotions. For example, cherry blossoms (especially when they are falling) are often associated with sorrow in classical Japanese literature because they epitomize the transience of beauty. The autumn evening is a favorite symbol among medieval poets for expressing desolation and loneliness.[49]

Mono no aware frequently has the connotation of "gentle sorrow" or "pleasing melancholy,"[50] often over the transience of all objects. This is linked with the high aesthetic value that the Japanese place on what Donald Keene calls "perishability." He notes the strong cultural belief of the Japanese that mortality and beauty go hand-in-hand. "Their favorite flower is of course the cherry blossom, precisely because the period of blossoming is so poignantly brief and the danger that the flowers may scatter even before one has properly seen them is so terribly great."[51] Keene quotes Yoshida Kenkô (*c.*1283–*c.*1350): "The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty."[52]

Appreciation of perishability is linked to the high value placed on the particular thing in Japan, as opposed to the Western and Indian preference for universalizing the aesthetic object. The preference for the imperfect is another noteworthy characteristic of Japanese aesthetics, and one of its bases is this appreciation of the particular as such, with all its characteristic idiosyncracies.[53] This interest in particularity is in keeping with Zen Buddhism, which first became popular in Japan after the Heian dynasty, during the

shogunate. Zen doctrine denies the existence of substantial things. The only reality is the metaphysical substrate of all things, the Buddha nature; thus all individual things are only relatively real. Although this might appear to undermine the status of the particular object, the omnipresence of the Buddha nature as the only reality supporting all apparent things can be viewed as rendering every particular object valuable. This is the Zen interpretation. Enlightenment comes from recognizing the Buddha nature within particulars, even in the most banal of things.[54]

Okashi, a term used in texts of the Heian dynasty (794–1185), means "charming" or "delightful." De Bary observes that *okashi* and *aware* occupy opposite ends of the emotional palette. *Okashi* was not applied to the serious or sad things of life except ironically and thus, as one Japanese critic has pointed out, in making light of the tragic was just the opposite of the attitude of *aware* which sought to impart to the otherwise meaningless cries of a bird or the fall of a flower a profound and moving meaning.[55] Garret Sokoloff characterizes *okashi* as particularly associated with occurrences shared between individuals, in which they experience "a sort of intuitive understanding" and "a pregnant sense of occasion that can fill a scene or situation with tension."[56] As illustrations he cites several passages from Sei Shônagon, including the one we considered above and the following:

> Once in the Fifth Month during the long spell of rainy weather Captain Tadanobu came and stood next to the bamboo screen by the door leading to the Empress's apartments. He used a most delightful scent, which it was impossible to identify. The air was very damp. Even though nothing note worthy took place, there was something peculiarly elegant about the entire scene, which makes me feel bound to mention it. The Captain's scent permeated the screen and lingered there till the following day. Small wonder that the younger ladies-in-waiting should have felt this was something unique.[57]

Because of the predominance of emotionally toned aesthetic terms, changes in usage within Japanese aesthetics track certain attitudinal shifts. De Bary points out that *aware* and *okashi* are of a piece with the lifestyle of the Heian court, "an aristocratic society of great refinement."[58] Another term associated with the Heian court is *miyabi*, which literally means "courtliness" and is often translated as "refinement."[59] The manner of those within the Heian court contrasted greatly from the larger society, leading Lewis Rowell to describe *miyabi* as "the quiet pleasure of the connoisseur in Heian court society, isolated form the harsh facts of external reality."[60] De Bary thinks that *miyabi* had certain disadvantageous results for aesthetic emotion. "*Miyabi* led poets to shun the crude, the rustic, and the unseemly, but in so doing, it tended to remove or dilute real feeling."[61]

Eventually, Heian society collapsed, and the shoguns, military men, took control of Japan. The period that followed was filled with wars and disasters.

The emotionally lighter ideals of *aware* and *okashi* went out of vogue, for they were less suited to the times. *Yūgen* became the dominant ideal of many arts of the post-Heian era, including gardens and the tea ceremony. According to de Bary, it involves darker emotions than *aware*.[62] *Yūgen,* which means literally "shadows and darkness,"[63] is sometimes translated as "mystery." It is associated with art, rather than nature, and it is used as a criterion of artistic success. Although difficult to define, *yūgen* involves suggestion, indirection, and the mysterious. Its meanings are not evident on the surface, and it can involve considerable compression.[64] Yuriko Saito defines *yūgen* as "suggestion of lingering emotion through understatement."[65] The sounds used in *Nô* theater serve Keene as an example of *yūgen*'s suggestive character.

The groans, the harsh music that precedes the entrance of the actors, may irritate a contemporary spectator, but they may also make him sense in a way impossible with words alone the distance separating the world of the dead from the world of the living, the terrible attachment to this world that causes ghosts to return again to suffer the past, or the pain of being born.[66]

More somber still in its overtones is the term *sabi*. *Sabi* originally meant "to be desolate," and later was used to refer to growing old or to rust. As an aesthetic term, it has the connotations of desolation, shabbiness, loneliness, and age. Keene links pleasure in *sabi* (rusty, shabby), again, to the high valuation of an object's perishability.[67] In a move reminiscent of *rasa* theory, Makoto Ueda characterizes the implied loneliness of *sabi* as devoid of personal emotion; indeed, personal grief or sorrow are overcome by depersonalizing them. "*sabi* ... dissolves, rather than withdraws from, ordinary human emotions."[68] This conforms with the view of the poet Bashô, who believed, according to Ueda, that human beings "can escape from sorrow only when they transform it into a impersonal atmosphere, loneliness."[69] The notion of disinterestedness figures pervasively in Japanese aesthetics, but significantly, aesthetic experience is understood to be a disinterested experience *of emotions*, not their absence. Odin points out,

> Traditional aesthetic ideals in the Japanese canons of taste—such as *aware* (melancholy beauty) *miyabi* (gracefulness), *yūgen* (profound mystery), *ma* (negative space), *wabi* (rustic beauty), *sabi* (simplicity) fûryû (windblown elegance), *iki* (chic), and *shibumi* (elegant restraint)—all contain an element of detached resignation.[70]

Wabi is a term for aestheticized poverty, as the tea ceremony came to demonstrate. Although not from an elite background like the Heian aristocracy, the shoguns who subsequently ruled Japan deliberately sought to emulate the high cultural achievements of the Heian era and patronized many of the arts. In this context during the sixteenth century, the tea ceremony developed. The tea ceremony is noted for its use of intentionally rustic huts and tea bowls. Saito notes that "many tea wares were cherished precisely because

of . . . [their] seeming defects."[71] Not uncommonly, a cracked bowl will be considered particularly satisfying. Sometimes cracks are mended in gold, drawing attention to the consequences of long use and the value that is placed on it.

The satisfaction in what is impoverished confers an ethical dimension to the tea ceremony, according to Saito. Often the tea masters were advisers to shoguns. They recommended the aesthetics of insufficiency to counteract the tendency of the shoguns to lavish displays of wealth and power. Saito notes the essay of statesman Ii Naosuke (1815–60) on the social value of the tea ceremony, which he claimed encouraged satisfaction with one's lot.[72] Perhaps ironically, however, the aesthetic of *wabi* presupposes wealth and privilege, of deliberate refusal of luxury.[73]

Having considered this collecdtion of emotion-drenched aesthetic terms, we can recognize several senses of refined emotion that are prominent in Japanese aesthetics. First, we find both a sense of emotional purity here, but in a different sense than that which is found in Indian aesthetics. The idea of affectively intuiting the essence of a natural thing reflects an objective ideal of purity. Other features of Japanese aesthetic values and practice reflect appreciation of the natural state. The Japanese devaluation of ornament, which stands in contrast to the dominant tendencies in Western and Indian aesthetics, reflects this aim. So does the principle of "respect for the material," which figures prominently in the Japanese garden, in which gardeners are encouraged to heed the "request" of the rocks themselves to be placed in particular positions.[74]

Second, refined emotions understood as subtle are manifest in the ideal of *mono no aware*, which blends delight with sadness or sorrow over the fragility of things. Odin also observes that the terms *aware* and *yūgen* "are derivatives from the fundamental value of *yojô*: 'overtones of feeling,' 'overflow of feeling,' or 'surplus feeling.'"[75] The notion of overtones of feeling suggests the idea of emotions fused into a single impression. Saito notes the characteristic Japanese design sense that "the unity of the whole is designed to emerge spontaneously from the contribution of each element, rather than each part subsumed under a preconceived overall plan." The aim, she suggests in connection with haiku, is "to give rise to an ineffable atmosphere which would color the whole verse."[76] Presumably this atmosphere is ineffable because the impact emergent from the juxtaposition of elements is appreciated through subtle blends of feeling that are specific to the individual thing.

The Zen Buddhist perspective that the Buddha nature can potentially be recognized in even the most banal of things suggests receptive perception raised to a heightened moral or spiritual state, a third sense of refined emotion evident in Japanese aesthetics. This receptiveness is not exclusively intellectual. The perceiver intuits the nature of what is perceived with the heart/mind (*kokoro*), an organ conceived as emotional as well as intellectual. This idea of an intuitive response of the heart/mind to what is beautiful, presupposes a cognitive dimension of emotion, as well as an emotional

aspect of thought. Thus the Zen aim of direct intuitive knowledge of the essence of things; this knowledge is emotional as well as intellectual.

This elaborate vocabulary of aesthetic emotions offers nuanced standards for our fourth sense of refined emotion, feeling appropriately. These terms provide a cultural repertoire of feelings and criteria for proper response. Japanese aestheticsensibility is applied to everyday life as well as to art and nature, and perhaps these aesthetic terms serve to prime people to have everyday aesthetic experiences.

The Japanese aesthetic vocabulary also reflects concern with our fifth sense of emotional refinement, that of being cultured. Japanese aesthetic thought has long involved a kind of social elitism. The term *miyabi* directly refers back to the characteristic decorum of the Heian aristocracy. The ideal of refusing easily available luxury is also a straightforwardly aristocratic ideal, in that the aristocrats were the only ones for whom luxury was easily available. But Japanese aesthetics is concerned with a less superficial sense of being cultured emotion as well. Cultured emotion in the sense of being the outcome of training is evident in the Zen cultivation of a detached attitude. Odin contends that

> what is distinctive about Zen aestheticism is its emphasis on enlightenment through detached contemplation of beauty in nature and art. The cultivation (*shugyô*) of a tranquil, clear, selfless, and detached state of contemplative awareness, leading to an insight into the mysterious beauty of insubstantial phenomena in their emptiness/suchness, is itself the characteristic feature of Zen Buddhism.[77]

The Western aesthetic tradition

By contrast with the detailed account of aesthetic and emotion provided by the Indian and Japanese traditions, Western aesthetics has undertaken fairly limited analyses of aesthetic emotions. Even theorists who, like Aristotle, take a favorable view of art's emotional impact restrict their discussion, although perhaps this is because the only art form that Aristotle considers from an aesthetic standpoint is Greek tragedy. Granted, there are exceptions; Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and other Romantics, for example, consider emotional experience in connection with art at length. But the Western tradition has developed nothing comparable to *rasa* theory or the Japanese affective aesthetic vocabulary as a basis for aesthetic analysis that is commonly presupposed by aesthetic theorists.

In my opinion, Western aesthetics has tended to under-analyze refined emotion in connection with art for four reasons. First, since Plato, the overall tendency of the philosophical tradition has been to denigrate emotion. Plato considers emotional displays slavish and womanish, and although he acknowledges that the arts can arouse emotion and imitate emotional behavior, he considers this as in the main undesirable.

Second, many Western philosophers commenting on art supposed that art's main purpose is to reveal reality, as opposed to having an impact on the emotions of the perceiver. This was a common assumption of Plato and Aristotle. The notion that the arts were primarily aimed at provoking a certain kind of experience became common only in the eighteenth century, and even then, many theorists emphasized the intellectual side of the experience over the more straightforwardly affective aspect. Kant, for example, analyzes aesthetic experience in terms of the reciprocal interplay of the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding in the case of the beautiful, and imagination and reason in the case of the sublime). As we have already noted, he considers emotion to be foreign to properly aesthetic experience. Hegel, although a nineteenth-century thinker, contends that art's purpose is to reveal our own nature, and he goes so far as to say that art's highest vocation is historically behind us, since our self-awareness has become so articulate that the sensuous character of art is inadequate to convey it.

David Hume may appear to be a relevant exception. He contends that in experiences of the beautiful, a specifically aesthetic emotion is aroused. Moreover, he emphasizes the delicacy of aesthetic emotion and the related refinement of the sensibility that is required in order for a person to properly experience it.

> Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operations of the whole machine. ... A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty.[78]

This mention of "universal beauty," however, reveals Hume's primary concern, which is to reconcile differences of taste among individuals. Like other Western thinkers who do consider emotion to be the basis of aesthetic experience, he is mainly concerned with establishing what audience members have in common. This is the third reason why Western aesthetics has not elaborated a theory of refined aesthetic emotion that is comparable to Indian or Japanese theory. For Hume, not only are there "general principles of approbation or blame"[79] applicable to art that stem from the nature of the general operations of the mind. There is common agreement as to who has sufficient delicacy of taste to be a good judge of artistic merit for the benefit of the rest. Hume speaks of "just sentiment,"[80] suggesting that while aesthetic experience is subjectively experienced, sound taste is intersubjective, and people can check their own reactions against those of good judges, whom everyone can recognize. Hume's emphasis on emotion gives way to standardizable judgment, which he analyzes in considerably more detail than the emotion itself.

A fourth reason why the West's analysis of refined aesthetic emotion is relatively impoverished is that the West tends to emphasize the artistic product over process, whether the creative process or the unfolding of the experience of savoring. Even in aesthetic discussions of music, quite clearly a temporal art, Western philosophers tend to emphasize the score and the work—enduring structures as opposed to the performed and transient phenomenon of music itself. To the extent that attention is placed on the aesthetic object, there is relatively little emphasis on the character of experience of it, whether emotional or not. Analysis of the psychological processes involving in making art and experiencing art or other phenomena aesthetically lends itself to articulating the emotional activity involved.

By largely ignoring the temporally unfolding processes involved in the creation, performance, and appreciation of art, the West overlooks one of the dimensions through which refined emotion might come about, and ways in which it might be obstructed. Consider Eugen Herrigel's account of his interaction with his Zen archery master, who concludes that his student's emotional attitude is interfering with his ability to hit the target. Herrigel first reports his own remark to the master:

> When I have drawn the bow, the moment comes when I feel: unless the shot comes at once I shan't be able to endure the tension. And what happens then? Merely that I get out of breath. So I must loose the shot whether I want to or not, because I can't wait for it any longer.
>
> "You have described only too well," replied the Master, "where the difficulty lies. Do you know why you cannot wait for the shot and why you get out of breath before it has come? The right shot at the right moment does not come because you do not let go of yourself. You do not wait for fulfillment, but brace yourself for failure. So long as that is so, you have no choice but to call forth something yourself that ought to happen independently of you, and so long as you call it forth your hand will not open in the right way—like the hand of a child. Your hand does not burst open like the skin of a ripe fruit."[81]

This passage, I think, draws attention to one of the reasons that the relative inattention to refined emotion is a loss for Western aesthetics. Awareness of the unfolding processes of creation, performance, and appreciation are applicable to many contexts beyond art, as well as important within them. In light of growing attention to comparative philosophy and the prominence of aesthetic thought in many Asian traditions, one can hope that the Western tradition's omission will soon be rectified.

Conclusion

Emotions within aesthetic experience can be refined in various ways. As Nico Frijda observes, "'Refined emotions' is not a well-circumscribed category."[82]

The emotions involved in aesthetic appreciation, however, are certainly among them, and we have considered many justifications for this classification. We have also surveyed the kinds of analyses of refined emotions within aesthetic contexts provided by the Indian and Japanese traditions. It behooves the West, I conclude, to develop its own accounts of the distinctive emotional processes involved when we experience aesthetically.

Notes

1 See Noel Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience: A Question of Content," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 71–76.
2 For his analysis of refined emotions, see Nico H. Frijda, "Refined Emotions," presented at the general meeting of the International Society for Research on the Emotions, University of Bari, 12 July 2005.
3 This point is also made by Frijda. See Frijda, "Refined Emotions."
4 Lesley Brown (ed.) *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, On Historical Principles*, in vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 2521.
5 Aristotle, *De Poetica (Poetics)*, trans. Ingram Bywater, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941) l. 1453a, 1467.
6 Louise Sundararajan emphasizes this type of refinement in "Harmony: A Confucian Model of Emotional Refinement," presented at the general meeting of the International Society for Research on the Emotions, University of Bari, 12 July 2005.
7 *Nātyaśāstra*, VII, 126; as cited by Arindam Chakrabarti, "Disgust and the Ugly in Indian Aesthetics," *La Pluralità Estetica: Lasciti e irradiazioni oltre il Novecento, Associazione Italiana Studi di Estetica, Annali 2000–2001* (Turin, Italy: Trauben, 2002) 351. Althought modern scholars believe that the *Nātyaśāstra* was written by multiple authors over several centuries, I will follow the convention of referring to claims made in the *Nātyaśāstra* as Bharata's.
8 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Biggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888) 417.
9 This may collapse into another way emotion can be refined, i.e. by being more mature. I will discuss this sense of refinement below.
10 Hume, op. cit.: 419.
11 Frijda similarly suggests that standard emotions can be coarser versions of refined ones. See Frijda, "Refined Emotions."
12 Op. cit.: 419.
13 Sei Shônagon, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shônagon*, trans. and ed. Ivan Morris (London: Penguin, 1967) section 66, 125.
14 See Thomas Leddy, "Sparkle and Shine," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 37:3 (July 1997) 260.
15 Nico Frijda mentions the Buddhist cultivation of mindfulness in this connection. See Nico Frijda, "Refined Emotions," presented at the general meeting of the International Society for Research on the Emotions, University of Bari, 12 July 2005.
16 See Leonard B. Meyer, "Some Remarks on Value and Greatness in Music," in *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 22–41.
17 Of course, not everyone agrees that emotion is involved in the making of art, but that debate is beyond the scope of this paper.
18 For reference to "witness emotions" as a species of refined emotions, see Frijda, "Refined Emotions."

19 Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* is concerned with theater, which is presumed to include dance and music as part of it. Other arts have sometimes been analyzed in terms of this *rasa* theory, in an extension similar to that by which Aristotle's canons for a successful tragic play have sometimes been extended to all the arts. See, for example, V. K. Chari, "*Rasa*, Poetry and the Emotions," *Sanskrit Criticism*, 13–15.
20 Shweder and Haidt point out that the word *bhāva* means both "existence" and "mental state," and that there is disagreement as to whether it should be translated as "mental state," "emotion," or "feeling." See Richard A. Shweder and Jonathan Haidt, "The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions: Ancient and New," in *Handbook of the Emotions*, eds Michael Lewis and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, 2nd edn (New York: Guilford Press, 2000) 399.
21 See and V. K. Chari, "*Rasa*, Poetry and the Emotions," *Sanskrit Criticism*, 17.
22 These are called *vibhāvas*, which Manomohan Ghosh translates as "determinants."
23 These are called *anubhāvas*, which Manomohan Ghosh translates as "consequents," and Edwin Gerow translates as "resultant manifestations." (See Gerow, "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm," 194n.)
24 These are called *vyabhichāribhāvas*, which Manomohan Ghosh translates as "complementary psychological states."
25 *The Nātyaśāstra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics,* ascribed to Bharata-Muni, vol. I (chs I–XXVII) trans. Manomohan Ghosh, revised 2nd edn (Calcutta: Granthalaya, 1967) VI. 18, p. 102.
26 Shweder and Haidt describe *rasa* as a meta-emotion. See "The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions," 400.
27 Chakrabarti, "Disgust and the Ugly in Indian Aesthetics," 352.
28 These are the translations given in the translation of the *Nātyaśāstra* by Manomohan Ghosh. See N.S. VI. 15, p. 102.
29 This description bears considerable similarity to Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic experience, particularly aesthetic experience of music. Or more aptly, Schopenhauer's account bears considerable resemblance to Indian aesthetic theory. Schopenhauer, after all, was greatly influenced by Indian thought. See, for example, his discussion of emotion expressed in music. Music, he claims,

> does not . . . express this or that particular or definite joy, this or that sorrow, or pain, or horror, or delight, or merriment, or peace of mind; but joy, sorrow, pain, horror, delight, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without accessories and therefore without their motives. Yet we completely understand them in this extracted quintessence. Hence it arises that our imagination is so easily excited by music, and now seeks to give form to that invisible yet actively moved spirit-world which speaks to us directly, and cloth it with flesh and blood, i.e., to embody it in an analogous example.
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> (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, vol. I (London: Trubner, 1883) 338)

30 B. N. Goswamy, "*Rasa*: Delight of the Reason," in *Essence of Indian Art* (San Francisco CA: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1986) 24.
31 Goswamy, "*Rasa*: Delight of the Reason," 23.
32 See Edwin Gerow "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm" (including a new translation of Abhinava's commentary on the *rasa* sutra in the *Nātyaśāstra*), *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114:2 (1994) 206.
33 See Goswamy, "*Rasa*: Delight of the Reason," 26.
34 See Gerow "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm," 199.
35 Op. cit.: 200.

36 See Abhinavagupta, Locana, in *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, trans. Daniel Ingalls, Jeffrey Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, ed. Daniel Ingalls (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990) 1.5, 115.
37 Goswamy, "Rasa: Delight of the Reason," 19.
38 *Nātyaśāstra*, XXVII 50–58, pp. 523–24.
39 . See J. M. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona, India: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969) 47–48.
40 See Masson and Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa*, 84; and Gerow, "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm," 188. See Rūpagisvāmin, *Bahktarasāmrta*, trans. José Pereira, in José Pereira (ed.) *Hindu Theology: A Reader* (Garden City NY: Image Books, 1976) 339; and David L. Habermas, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: a Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 7–11 and 30–39.
41 Goswamy, "*Rasa*: Delight of the Reason," 25.
42 Nico Frijda makes a similar point in "Refined Emotions" when he discusses savoring and enjoyment and the "acceptance wriggles" that result. Acceptance wriggles are "the actions that aim at maximizing sensory and affective contact with the object." In the case of refined emotions, which he takes to be linked to the attitude of detachment and receptive observation, these involve "stillness, turning away from distractions, seeking to let imagination flow, relaxing the body so that it allows virtual participation in movements seen." Frijda thinks that detachment is especially essential in the case of refined emotions in an aesthetic context. He comments that "one of the major components of the process sketched is the extension of event or object meanings toward more general and impersonal or supra-personal meanings."
43 See J. L. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, vol. I, 25.
44 Chakrabarti, "Disgust and the Ugly in Indian Aesthetics," 361.
45 Chari, "*Rasa*: Poetry and the Emotions," 25.
46 Theodore de Bary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Nancy Hume (Albany NY: State University of New York, 1995) 44.
47 *Genji Monogatari Tama no Ogushi*, roll 2. See Ishikawa Jun (ed.) *Motoori Norinage*, Nihon no Meicho 21 (Tokyo Chûô Kôron Sha, 1984), 406–8. Cited in Ônishi Yoshinori, *Aware, in Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader*, ed. Michele Marra (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1999) 127.
48 See Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 25:3 (summer 1985) 243.
49 Saito, "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," 244.
50 These are translations that Lewis Rowell gives for *aware*. See Lewis Rowell, *Thinking about Music: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985) 199.
51 Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," 305.
52 Kenkô, *Essays in Idleness: the Tsurezuregusa of Kenkô*, trans. Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) 7.
53 See Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55:4 (1997) 377–85.
54 Yuriko Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics: Historical Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, in 4 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) vol. II, 546–47. See also Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," 381.
55 De Bary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I," 45.
56 Garret Sokoloff, "By Pausing before a Kicho," in *Aesthetics in Perspective*, ed. Kathleen M. Higgins (Fort Worth TX: Harcourt Brace, 1996) 623.

57 Sei Shônagon, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shônagon*, section 60, 113–14.
58 De Bary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I," 45. Barbara Sandrisser points out in connection with *miyabi* that "refinement of decorum, of costume, of virtually all aspects of daily life, including love-making, permeated the Heian Court." Barbara Sandriesser, "On Elegance in Japan," in *Aesthetics in Perspective*, ed. Kathleen M. Higgins (Fort Worth TX: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 632.
59 Odin translates *miyabi* as "gracefulness." See Odin, *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West*, 19.
60 Lewis Rowell, *Thinking about Music*, 201.
61 De Bary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I," 46.
62 De Bary, "The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, II," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, ed. Hume, 51.
63 Steve Odin, *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West: Psychic Distance in Comparative Aesthetics* (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001) 104.
64 See Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," 295. See also Leonard Cabell Pronko, *Theater East and West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967) 86.
65 Yuriko Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics: Historical Overview," 547–48. Saito sees evidence for a cultural preference for "implied or hidden things" in the Japanese aesthetics of packaging, which often provides a multi-sensory and temporally elaborated experience for the recipient. See Yuriko Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics of Packaging," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57:2 (1999) 257–65.
66 Donald Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," 297.
67 See Donald Keene, "Japanese Aesthetics," *Philosophy East and West*, 19 (1969).
68 Ueda, "Bashô on the Art of the Haiku: Impersonality in Poetry," 158. Again, cf. Frijda, "Refined Emotions." Frijda stresses the tendency of refined emotions to be extended beyond personal meanings to "virtual action readiness bearing on 'life as a whole.'"
69 Makoto Ueda, "Bashô on the Art of the Haiku: Impersonality in Poetry," in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, ed. Nancy Hume, 154–55.
70 Odin, *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West*, 19. Odin links this aesthetic detachment to various Buddhist ideas that "liberation from suffering is attained through "attention" (*sati*), the detached observation of impermanent non-substantial phenomena with "equanimity" (*upekkha*), or meditative equipoise between craving and aversion" (20).
71 Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," 378.
72 Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," 381.
73 See Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics: Historical Overview," 549–50.
74 See Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics: Historical Overview," 550. This principle, Saito reports, was established by Tachibana no Tsunayoshi (1028–94) in his *Sakuteiki* (*The Book of the Garden*).
75 Odin, *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West*, 99.
76 Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," 378–79.
77 Odin, *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West*, 100. Saito notes that this distinterested attitude is a requirement for effective art-making as well as aesthetic experience.

> This highest stage of "no intent" or "no self," which is attained through rigorous training, facilitates an approach to the subject matter or material with a humble, open attitude, allowing the object to evoke its inner essence to which the artists listen and submit themselves. All this will in turn be reflected in the "effortless," "spontaneous," "natural," or "unconstrained" appearance of the resultant object or performance.
>
> (Saito, "Japanese Aesthetics: Historical Overview," 551)

78 David Hume, "On the Standard of Taste," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) 237.
79 Op. cit.: 238.
80 Op. cit.: 249.
81 Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Vintage Books, 1981) 30.
82 Frijda, "Refined Emotions."

8 Taste, food and the limits of pleasure

Carolyn Korsmeyer

> The fine arts are contrived to give pleasure to the eye and ear, disregarding the inferior senses.
>
> (Henry Home, Lord Kames, 1782)

> Gasteria is the tenth muse: she presides over all the pleasures of taste.
>
> (Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, 1826)

The fact that aesthetic experience is often pleasurable may seem to imply that its value is also best analyzed as a type of pleasure. The expanded reasoning would proceed: if aesthetic experience is valuable, and if it is pleasurable, and if pleasure is a value, then it follows that the value of aesthetic experience lies in its particular brand of pleasure. Nowhere would this reasoning appear more appropriate than with activities whose pleasures seem obvious success criteria—such as tasting, eating, and drinking. The *aesthetic* standing of gustatory activity is debatable, of course; but *if* eating affords aesthetic experience, then it would seem that it should be evaluated by hedonic criteria.

Hedonic approaches to aesthetic value can be challenged by philosophers who subscribe to some variety of cognitivism, the view that aesthetic experience is better understood as an encounter that yields special understanding or insight.[1] Philosophical approaches to the endemically vague notion of aesthetic experience are not limited to these two, but here I shall focus on what may at first appear to be a rivalry between hedonism and cognitivism. I shall approach the issue by the same historical route that underwrites aesthetic hedonism: by considering the traditional comparisons and contrasts invoked in the development of those philosophies of taste that paved the way for modern aesthetic theory. The kind of "taste" I shall emphasize refers to its literal reference: the gustatory sense.

The eighteenth century is sometimes called the "century of taste" because of the number of philosophies that explored the nature of beauty, that cardinal aesthetic value, both by analyzing beauty as a type of pleasure and also by investigating the apprehension of aesthetic qualities on the model of the perception of literal taste qualities.[2] Although most philosophers of the time distinguished the "sensuous" pleasure of eating from the "aesthetic" pleasure that constitutes beauty, considering the appreciation of art in terms

of discriminating taste encouraged the acceptance of hedonic scales for both gustatory and aesthetic values.

Despite the fact that eating (especially fine dining) stands as a venerable exemplar of pleasurable activity, I intend to argue that it is a mistake to focus exclusively on pleasure even in this domain. The weakness of aesthetic hedonism is revealed when we find that it is not adequate to capture the value even of gustatory experience, where it would seem to be most apt. I shall argue that the aesthetic qualities of food that are most like the aesthetic qualities of undisputed artworks are not those that have to do with pleasure-production. Rather, they are the "meaning-bearing" bearing qualities that give food its cognitive significance. The case for cognitivism is considerably harder to make for food than it is for art, and by taking this oblique route I dispute hedonism at a particularly challenging site. In the course of this discussion, I shall also try to clarify the notion of aesthetic cognitivism and defend the claim that an aesthetic encounter engages insight and understanding.

Taste: a brief history

Most philosophers would exclude eating from aesthetic consideration from the start, so part of my argument must be devoted to establishing the legitimacy of the grounds for my approach. Indeed, the Western philosophical tradition almost unanimously assumes that experiences of the literal sense of taste do not count as genuinely aesthetic. This history is too well known to rehearse in great detail, but let me note a few of the reasons why during that famous century of taste philosophers both embraced the taste metaphor for aesthetic judgments and held literal taste at arms length in the development of their theories.[3]

The field that came to be called "aesthetics" developed within a program of empiricist philosophy that was strongly inclined to analyze beauty as a species of pleasure rather than as an objective quality. Already the taste metaphor fits, for it is hard to taste something and remain utterly neutral as to whether or not one likes it. Indeed, tasting, eating, drinking are activities whose success is pretheoretically evaluated by two measures: the instrumental value of nutrition for the subject engaging in those activities, and the bonus value of pleasure taken in the activity of tasting, chewing, and swallowing—including the olfactory, haptic, visual, and even aural experiences that accompany all of this. When food is scarce the former may be all that matters, but particularly in circumstances of abundance or privilege, the success of a fine meal is typically measured in terms of the pleasure it furnishes. If beauty is another type of pleasure, then one point of comparison between aesthetic and gustatory taste is established—they both register their successful production on hedonic scales.

What is more, taste serves as a model for the ability to perceive the aesthetic qualities of an object of appreciation.[4] The discriminating palate can

be developed to discern traces and nuances of flavor, rather like aesthetic sensibility can be developed in a sophisticated critic who becomes a good judge of art. Hume makes this point by means of his famous comparison between good critics of art and good judges of wine, borrowing a story of Don Quixote's companion, Sancho Panza, who reports:

> Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it; considers it, and after mature reflection pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.[5]

Hume's use of the taste metaphor focuses less on beauty than on the ability to perceive the qualities that ground the evaluation of the object under consideration. Thus the second major point of comparison between the two kinds of taste concerns the capacity of perception to be educated to a high point of refinement. For taste admits of degrees: one can have a delicate and practiced palate as well as a refined aesthetic sensibility, but one can also have tastes that are less exacting and still yield satisfaction. Only those whose sensibilities are honed to high discriminative capacity, however, are in a position to receive the maximum amount of appropriate pleasure from the experience and to judge the quality of the object, whether wine or poetry.

In at least two respects, therefore, the operation of aesthetic perception and the exercise of the gustatory sense appear to be similar, so similar that one might wonder whether gustatory taste is not simply a variety of aesthetic taste. However, most traditional theorists restrict taste to metaphorical status and consider eating merely a physical event producing sensuous but not aesthetic pleasure.

Objective and subjective senses

When philosophers deal with the senses, by far most of their attention is devoted to sight, with hearing a close second. These are the so-called distance senses which, unlike the "bodily" senses, direct attention to the object of perception and do not register a felt sensation at the site of the receptive organ. As a consequence of the distance between organ and object of perception, sight and hearing draw attention away from the body of the perceiving subject to the external object of attention. Therefore, they are sometimes labeled "objective" senses, and the more reflexively directed bodily senses are called "subjective."

Pleasures of the subjective, bodily senses are considered likely to lead to indulgence in physical sensation—sexual and gustatory experiences being the typical exemplars of this temptation. This helps to disqualify taste pleasures as genuinely aesthetic; rather, tasting (eating, drinking) yields sensual, bodily pleasures that supposedly represent the enjoyments of our animal nature, as is to be expected from a sense that delivers little by way of information but focuses attention on the physical.

The modifier "subjective" also indicates epistemic inferiority. Sight and hearing are means of discovery about objects, events, people, and states of affairs external to the perceiver. In contrast, the proximal or bodily senses turn our attention inward to ourselves and the states of our bodies. Touch occupies an ambiguous position. As a source of physical pleasure, it shares the low rank of taste and smell; but it also registers some of the same qualities of objects that can be seen, such as shape, size, or quantity. As a consequence, Kant classed touch along with vision and hearing among the three senses that are

> more objective than subjective, that is, they contribute ... more to the cognition of the exterior object, than they arouse the consciousness of the affected organ. Two, however, are more subjective than objective, that is, the idea obtained from them is more an idea of enjoyment, rather than the cognition of the external object. Consequently, we can easily agree with others in respect to the three objective senses. But with respect to the other two, the manner in which the subject responds can be quite different.[6]

Kant's statement makes three related claims about the gustatory sense: taste is among the senses that fail to prompt cognition (of an exterior object), taste therefore directs attention inward to the sensuous state of pleasure (or its opposite), and (therefore) taste experiences refer only to states of oneself. (It is the latter claim, incidentally, that confirms the adage, "there is no disputing about taste." Reports of taste supposedly concern one's own responses, available to no other.)

All of these aspects of subjectivity culminate with the most profound limitation of taste, the one that most dramatically truncates its aesthetic dimensions: taste supposedly isn't *about* anything. This cognitive vacuity demotes the enjoyment of eating far below the experiences of vision or hearing, which while potentially pleasurable, are also informative and full of "content." This presumption is eminently challengeable, and I shall return to it in detail later. But first, let us consider some defenses of gustatory taste that accept the hedonic approach but argue on behalf of the aesthetic status of taste pleasures.

Eating, pleasure, and aesthetic value

Although most philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tended to downgrade or ignore gustatory experience, among their contemporaries

was an emerging band of gastronomers who developed a genre of writing devoted to the refinements of eating and to a newly burgeoning restaurant culture in France and England.[7] They saw the progress of cuisine in their times as elevating cooking to an art form, and they summoned the reasoning of philosophers to make their case. Well aware of the bad reputation of the joys of eating, they carefully distinguished between the satisfaction of appetite, a necessity shared with animals, and the refined and discriminating enjoyments of the true gourmet. "Animals feed themselves; men eat; but only wise men know the art of eating," declared Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, one of the earliest and most influential of the gastronomic writers.[8]

Promoting aesthetic standing for gustatory activities meant confronting some well established philosophical barriers. A contemporary scholar of this genre, Denise Gigante, points out that the criterion of disinterestedness stressed so often in modern aesthetics to distinguish aesthetic pleasure from other sorts of enjoyment was achieved by gastronomers who separated eating from the satisfaction of appetite.[9] Brillat-Savarin, for instance, differentiates between the "pleasure of eating" and the "pleasure of the table."

- The pleasure of eating is the actual and direct sensation of satisfying a need.
- The pleasures of the table are a reflective sensation which is born from the various circumstances of place, time, things, and people who make up the surroundings of the meal.
- The pleasure of eating is one we share with animals; it depends solely on hunger and on what is needed to satisfy it.
- The pleasures of the table are known only to the human race; they depend on careful preparations for the serving of the meal, on the choice of place, and on the thoughtful assembling of the guests.
- The pleasure of eating demands appetite, if not actual hunger; the pleasures of the table are most often independent of either one or the other.[10]

Such a defense of eating would establish its aesthetic bona fides by elevating two of the classic metaphoric uses of taste to literal status: discerning perception, which is sensitive to the qualities of foods; and the pleasure that marks the success of the experience, which while sensuously based still constitutes a refined, contemplative savoring. When food is appreciated by means of refined and educated senses, it yields a wholly gratuitous pleasure.

There is a growing list of contemporary philosophers who similarly defend an aesthetic dimension for eating and tasting.[11] They agree that the sense of taste has been given short shrift, and that there is more worth to eating than either consumption of necessary fuel or indulgence in gluttonous appetite. Their briefs on behalf of the aesthetic qualifications of the taste experience are sometimes mingled with arguments to the effect that cuisine is a neglected art form that ought to be considered alongside the fine arts. Hedonic grounds are usually invoked to support both conclusions.

Rarely do philosophers who undertake a defense of taste dispute all of the points that Kant advanced to describe the subjectivity of taste. Rather, despite those features, taste and its objects are defended because they do indeed provide a brand of aesthetic pleasure. Elizabeth Telfer, for example, argues that carefully planned and presented meals organize eating sequentially, harmonizing the flavors and textures to be experienced. This kind of cooking, she believes, creates meals that are to be appreciated through what she calls aesthetic eating: "eating with attention and discernment food which repays attention and discernment."[12] The grounds for this conclusion are hedonic: If fine meals are the product of artistry and the cook is to qualify as an artist, the measure of success is pleasure: "Such a cook aims to produce a particular kind of pleasure, one which depends upon a discerning appreciation of the flavours and how they combine and succeed one another."[13]

However, she adds, the formal arrangements and expressive range possible in food are far more restricted than what may be produced in the fine art media. The kind of art that food represents is simple and relatively minor. For unlike other arts, foods do not have meaning, and here we return to the most far-reaching claim about gustatory subjectivity: The artistic scope available to food is constrained by an absence of representative and expressive potential in the culinary repertoire.[14] Literature, music, painting, dance, and the other arts often represent and express; food just tastes good. In addition, as Frank Sibley asserts, food cannot move us emotionally in the way that the major arts often do: "Perfumes, and flavours, natural or artificial, are necessarily limited: unlike the major arts, they have no expressive connections with emotions, love or hate, death, grief, joy, terror, suffering, yearning, pity, or sorrow, or plot or character development."[15] Gastronomers would cavil at the relegation of cuisine to a minor art, but in fact the reasons they advance for the artistic status of food and the aesthetic nature of eating are very similar to hedonic arguments advanced by philosophers on behalf of food, for they too stress the refinements of gustatory pleasure.

The issue that this conclusion raises for my purposes is not the status of food as an art form, a subject to which I am little attached.[16] But since I believe that the sense of taste has sound qualifications for being an aesthetic sense and therefore a sense that can furnish something called an aesthetic experience, the limits reached by the above line of defense would also indicate that the aesthetic potential for tastes, eating, and so forth are similarly limited. Rather than settling for this conclusion, I believe that this situation reveals a weakness in the approach that describes the value of aesthetic experience in hedonic terms.

It is virtually self-evident that the ability to arouse pleasure of a deliberate and sometimes sophisticated sort is an important feature both of food preparation and of artistic production. The deft crafting of an object (a meal, a melody, a story) in order to elicit in the audience an appropriate

kind of pleasure would seem to provide an important point of comparison between food and standard works of art. One would surmise that more sophisticated responses indicate more sophisticated objects; the more intense and complex the pleasure, the better the product. The person who seeks out and appreciates unusual food or *haute cuisine* is considered to have better taste than the one who prefers American style fast food, just as the listener who chooses Mahler over easy-listening background music is deemed to display superior appreciation of music. By this line of thought, fine art would be parallel to fine cooking, and popular art to food easy to grab on the street corner; if this were the case, then discovering the artistic depth of taste and eating would direct us not just to food but to *fine cuisine*.

This is a plausible position. Note, however, that this hedonic defense of gustatory experience virtually dooms it to relatively minor aesthetic status, once the comparisons move from relative preferences among foods and among artworks, to global comparisons between gustatory and artistic experiences. For it is very hard to argue that the pleasure gained from eating, no matter how sophisticated, is really equal in importance to appreciative enjoyment of Mahler's *Tragic Symphony*, or *King Lear*, or Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas*, or Jenny Holzer's *Under a Rock* series. These examples of artworks are very different, but they all have a measure of profundity and meaning that seems simply to be absent in even the finest gourmet meal. For this kind of art, as Jerrold Levinson observes, "we are forcibly reminded ... of how implausible it would be to reduce the mission and the message of art merely to the provision of pleasure, however indirect or intellectual, or of enjoyment, however sophisticated and rarefied."[17] With this observation we confront the limitations supposedly inherent in literal taste: food and the sense of taste channel our attention in a subjective direction, and the pleasure aroused is a pleasure of a bodily sort. In contrast, major artworks direct our attention to something important about the world—to history, society, human nature, fate, religion, life, death—including to subjects that do not afford immediate pleasure at all. Because some of the most important art involves *difficult* subject matter and a taxing appreciative experience, one could add that the limitations of food are a consequence of the limits of the human body, another side-effect of the physicality of taste experience. Perhaps, therefore, the alleged absence of representational and expressive properties for food is simply another consequence of the bodily nature of the sense of taste. But this too is open to challenge.

Food and cognition

I now return to the points that are invoked to classify taste as a subjective sense, for it is these that underwrite the apparent aesthetic limitations of eating. I shall argue against them one by one, and the upshot of my argument will be to point out that defending gustatory experience as a full-fledged

aesthetic experience requires defending it on cognitivist grounds. This section will also try to refine the most plausible thesis of cognitivist aesthetics.

We need look no further than the classic comparison of gustatory and aesthetic taste to recognize that one of the features that makes this metaphor apt is already not only hedonic but also cognitive: taste is highly discriminatory of the qualities of its objects. Hume pointed this out with his tale of the wine tasters, and a contemporary writer similarly invokes gustatory taste to introduce his analysis of aesthetic appreciation:

> Appreciation is conceptually linked to perception and to reflection. It is a kind of perception. One takes a sip of a cup of Darjeeling First Flush and appreciates its taste *in tasting it*. ... Appreciation is a mode of apprehension through which those features of an object that make it worthy of appreciation are identified.[18]

In other words, one of the traditional points of comparison that qualifies the metaphor of taste to be used in philosophical aesthetics is a perceptual capacity by means of which we *discover and recognize* features of its objects.

What is more, the qualities (earthiness, smokiness, and so forth) that characterize Darjeeling tea, are just those qualities that one must be able to perceive and to savor in order to grasp the worth of the object. This is an "outward" direction, a fact perhaps obscured because the object of taste is in one's mouth, which is admittedly an "inner" sort of venue. Nonetheless, the intentional direction of taste is to its object and not to the organ of reception, although the two are contiguous. Or perhaps it would be better to say that inner and outer converge at the same site when attention is directed to an object by means of a bodily sense. Whichever way one phrases it, the aesthetic experience afforded by literal taste is at once discriminative and judgmental at the same time that it is pleasurable—and we are still only talking about flavor perception. What is more, the aesthetic encounters possible through eating are not exhausted by appeal either to discriminatory capacity or to pleasure. Even more cognitive aspects are disclosed when we recognize the many ways that food and drink take on other meanings through representation and expression in social use, ceremony, and ritual.

Although the claim that foods do not represent has prima facie plausibility, in fact there are many familiar examples that belie that assertion. Foods represent whenever they are shaped to resemble or refer to something else: gummy bears, candy canes, yule logs, hot cross buns, pretzels, molded jello, and so forth. These particular examples are relatively playful, but nevertheless they do direct attention to the objects of representation. No doubt the denial of representation to food is intended to refer to something more profound: food is a poor medium for complex narrative, for example.[19] And granted, gummy bears are not paradigms of artistic depiction. However, by reflecting even on whimsical food-representations one can see how readily what we eat and drink is put to use in our commerce with the world around us.

Representational and expressive qualities are not manifest in foods in the same ways that they are in standard art forms. Many symbolic uses of foods, such as the distribution of candy corn at Halloween in North America, relies on fairly fixed and arbitrary practices. Telfer rightly observes that high degrees of cultural association and historical contexts are required to attach meanings to foods, indicating that foods are less flexible or manipulable means of communication than are works of art. Food is rich in some kinds of meaning; the food we eat, and the ways in which we eat it, have great historical and sociological significance and often various symbolic meanings too. But there are other kinds of meaning that food lacks. It cannot represent the world, as painting and literature can, and it cannot be said to embody or convey truths as they can also be said to do; food cannot express emotion either, as music often does: there is no language of food, as there is said to be a language of music.[20]

Granted, foods cannot be employed with the same articulate clarity or expressive freedom as words, tones, or paints, but the cognitive significance contributed by historical and sociological factors is central to gustatory aesthetics.

How in fact do foods take on meaning beyond the identification of flavor qualities and the visual representations into which they may be shaped? Association is one means, although one must be very careful about reliance on this phenomenon. If one grows up in a household that regularly has Sunday chicken dinner, then the taste of chicken will likely be associated with family stability, visits, or other homey, comfortable images. This will not be the case if the family dinner table is routinely argumentative. Because of such unpredictable contingencies, it may seem that association is a weak ground for cognitive aesthetic properties; it is too individual and idiosyncratic to yield anything of general interest.[21] If personal associations were the only means by which foods achieve meaning, their cognitive significance would be neither aesthetically important nor philosophically interesting. However, associative meanings are not limited to individual psychological patterns, for foods are repeatable components of social practices. Through patterns of eating and drinking repeated over time and at meaningful intervals, both individual foods and entire meals become complex cultural artifacts. As with all cultural artifacts, their cognitive significance is shared and widely accessible. The meanings of culturally significant meals may therefore rely on associations and practices, but those associations do not grow only out of individual experiences. Some are virtually pancultural, such as the widespread use of sweet flavors to connote luck or good fortune. Many are local, such as the old Polish practice of serving *czarna polewka*, "dark" or "black" soup, when rejecting the unwelcome advances of a suitor. As with most aesthetic encounters, within the culture in which gustatory idiom is recognized, the meanings are inseparable from the eating experience.

Gustatory cultural artifacts are especially evident with ceremonial or ritualized meals, which often combine representation and repetition, a necessary

element of tradition. The first refers to the events being commemorated; the second accrues associative significance as specific kinds of foods are eaten on standard occasions. At the Jewish Passover Seder, for example, certain foods explicitly refer to aspects of the story of the exodus from Egypt (bitter herbs, matzoh); others are eaten—within particular subcommunities—especially during that season (beef brisket, gefilte fish). The symbolic foods prepared for the Day of the Dead in Mexico are offerings of hospitality for the souls of the departed. This holiday demonstrates a combination of playful food imagery with serious religious practice, for the hallmark sugar-skulls and the dead man's bread that features crossed bones made from dough are both whimsical and seriously referential. Foods crafted into images of mortality used in this meal refer to death, and at the same time the entire feast is an expression of welcome and hospitality. Some religious rituals, such as the Christian Eucharist, engage the sense of taste in ways that have little to do with ordinary eating. However, the fact that the sense of taste is employed in such a ritual is critical, for one takes sacred substances into one's body. This somatic feature imparts to taste a peculiar and profound intimacy that lends eating a depth of participatory meaning under those circumstances that prompt reflection on the event.

Admittedly, such reflection is rarely habitual. Eating and drinking are such routine activities that we often lose sight of their deep significance. Hospitality, for example, which often includes food offerings, entails a relationship of trust among people. One offers food in friendship and accepts it in faith that it is good to eat. It is a common gesture that has a kind of mundane intimacy, its meanings manifest in the very rhythms of living.

These examples demonstrate that foods indeed can refer, represent, and express. They may be crafted into visual representations with references of their own. They may have expressive flavors such as bitter or sweet. And they may achieve meaning by means of more or less standardized associations with cultural practices. In addition, certain flavors or flavor groups signify entire cultures because they sum up central cooking themes, which may seem merely an accident of geography or climate.[22] Such meanings, however, are not limited to mere signals of regional agriculture and culinary practice. D. T. Suzuki suggests that tea, with its thin, ascetic flavor expresses Zen Buddhism rather in the way that wine expresses Christianity.[23]

None of this is intended to dispute that good food and drink can be also intensely pleasurable, although with several of these examples pleasure is rather beside the point. In any case, the very flavors in our mouths are "about" something, and it is not correct to assume that savoring them ensnares us in our own bodily sensations, oblivious to the personal, social, cultural, and ritual meanings that tasting, eating, and drinking provide.

Food and taste in art

The cognitive-aesthetic qualities of eating become even more vivid when one considers the treatment of foods in art, for art highlights the meanings of

food that are (or were) in everyday practice. It also helps uncover additional meanings that may seem absent from the realm of literal taste: the difficult aesthetic aspects of art that are present in tragedy or other works with profound and weighty subject matter. For the sake of brevity, I shall confine my remarks to a few examples of still life painting.

Still life is often considered a largely decorative genre. Foods and their containers can be attractive in themselves, and deft arrangements of china and glassware filled with glowing fruits and berries make for pretty pictures that seem ready-made to hang on dining room walls. Fine brushwork and domestic compositions may be used to render in paint highly illusionistic versions of the very objects that one might see on the table. These characteristics, enjoyable enough, have also served as reasons to censure this genre, for one traditional criticism of still life is that it pleases the eye without carrying any deeper meaning to the mind. Schopenhauer was one who discovered in the realistic depiction of foods a charm that amounted to sensuous pleasure rather than aesthetic contemplation. For him the traditional exclusion of literal from aesthetic taste extends to the very depiction of edibles; we might interpret him as asserting that both food and paintings that might inspire appetite satisfy only hedonic criteria.

However, still-life motifs since ancient times have also been used to convey a social or moral message. Sometimes that significance is coded in the foods depicted, as with oysters, symbols of sensuality; or crabs, symbols of dishonesty because of their habit of scrabbling sideways.[24] At other times the inevitable decay that foods undergo is highlighted to introduce *memento mori* themes into paintings. Moths flickering over fruit might symbolize the departure of the soul from the body; houseflies and other vermin indicate corruption and decay, and rot itself is pictured with spotted fruits or melons split and ruined. The tables depicted by still life are not all newly laid and ready for eating; many feature overturned and broken crockery, spilled wine, fish skeletons, bones stripped clean by the teeth of eaters now sated and departed. The detritus left after a meal may be painted with virtuosity, but it hardly stimulates appetite. Rather, it is a reminder of the transience of life and its trade with death, and of the fact that living things are destroyed to sustain other living things.

Some of the tougher themes of death and the brutalities implicit in eating are conveyed in a once-popular genre called the "gamepiece," which depicts newly slaughtered animals artfully arranged. Common motifs feature stags with entrails spilling from split guts; perhaps a hunting dog nibbles at the offal, taking his share before a rat waiting in the shadows moves in for its morsel. Or a brace of pheasants lies next to a gun, their feathers bright, their eyes dim; or a soft-furred rabbit hangs next to a copper cooking pot; or the head of a calf looks out of the picture frame from its place on a kitchen counter. The titles of such pieces make the theme of killing quite explicit, such as *Dead Birds with Arrows and Quiver*, *Ducks with Fowling Piece*, *Hare and Cooking Pot*, and so forth. To contemporary sensibilities, it might seem as if such depictions are appetite-killers, suitable for any place

but the dining room; in fact, however, they were popular pieces for just such venues well into the nineteenth century. Decorative as they may be, such compositions also signal the transience of life and the rhythms of time, meanings present in eating itself.[25] (To those who are skeptical about the relevance of still life painting to actual eating practices, I note that even gamepiece motifs are not far removed from kitchen practices. A 1971 cookbook features its own photographic gamepiece composition with dead birds, cheese, wine, and shotgun, captioned "Superb Richebourg celebrates autumn game birds and 20-gauge over/under that downed them.")[26]

Bringing such themes into focus indicates yet further the degree to which aesthetic encounters with eating exceed sensuous pleasure; it is here that the comparison with the aesthetic qualities of art is especially apt. Many uses of foods and drink clearly foster, even force, reflection upon the meaning of the event taking place, its location in culture and history, as well as its personal emotional import. In short, aesthetically valuable features of foods are not just those that taste good.

Cognitivism for and against

Traditional hedonic approaches to aesthetics tended to exaggerate the distinction between the experiences and satisfactions of the bodily senses, and experiences and satisfactions less phenomenally manifest in sensation. Although pleasure alone will not provide a robust account of aesthetic value, by no means does my argument attempt to uproot gustatory from sensory experience—if such a possibility were even imaginable. There is an undeniable measure of sensuousness in the experience of many aesthetic objects and works of art, including not only food but also sculpture, dance, and music.[27] I have observed the many ways that gustatory experience, which is importantly and inescapably sensory, is also cognitive in a variety of ways. I have argued that the aspects of eating, drinking, and tasting that bear the closest resemblance to the aesthetic values to be found in art are those with content—that is, those that refer or represent or express, and that direct attention to the intentional objects of taste. An advantage of a cognitivist over a hedonic approach is that the outward direction of aesthetic attention is foregrounded from the start. But cognitivism as a wholesale theory of the value of aesthetic experience also has some disadvantages and well known objections.

Berys Gaut observes that

> Aesthetic cognitivism ... is best thought of as a conjunction of two claims: first, that art can give us (non-trivial) knowledge, and second, that the capacity of art to give us (non-trivial) knowledge (partly) determines its value *qua* art, i.e. its aesthetic value.[28]

Candidates advanced for the content of such instruction include propositional knowledge, empathetic knowledge of another person or character,

phenomenal knowledge (knowledge of what it is like to experience something), and moral insights. Representational arts, especially literature and film, furnish the best illustrations for this approach.

The strongest objection to aesthetic cognitivism criticizes the claim that there is significant propositional knowledge to be gained from aesthetic encounters of any sort. Works of art, including those widely recognized as profound and insightful, do not all manifest the same propositions. Quite the contrary, those artworks that are recognized for their innovation, skill, sensitivity, complexity, and so forth, notoriously promote conflicting perspectives about such subjects as the basic goodness of human nature, the beneficence of God, or the reliability of family ties. Therefore, the truth of whatever claims are attributed to them cannot be what makes them valuable, and whatever cognitive content they have must be independent of their artistic worth.[29]

Moreover, art and aesthetic experience seem relatively poor paths to take to discover propositional knowledge. The information to be gained from art is less reliable than that derived from other sources, and artworks—especially those that are fictions—do not provide particularly good justificatory warrants. Even without conflicts of opinion, the lessons that art seems to convey are hardly eye-openers. Extracted from the contexts in which they are thematic, the moral truths of literature (for example) often appear as mere truisms: Life ends in tragedy; Love is more important than money, and so forth.

The cognitivist case I have been making for food bypasses all of these objections. No one expects to learn much by way of propositional knowledge from eating, although certain aspects of taste may be put propositionally: (that the 2005 vintage was superior to the 2004, or that Aunt Betty is a better cook than Uncle Sam). And certainly gustatory experience provides phenomenal knowledge—what a tree-ripened kumquat tastes like, for instance. But one is unlikely to parse the cognitive aspects of eating in terms of what food *teaches*. In that respect, cognitivism is an unlikely candidate for a theory of gustatory aesthetics. On the other hand, the aesthetic experience of eating may be used indirectly to illuminate cognitive aspects of general aesthetic experience that are less vulnerable to objections.

Teaching and learning are not the only cognitive activities; more relevant to the meaning properties of food are *realizing*, *recognizing*, *grasping*, and even *savoring*—activities that are exemplified in the singular experiences that are typical not only of eating but also of other aesthetic encounters. These sorts of engagements need not introduce new information of any sort at all. To recognize or realize something is as much a characterization of the *phenomenal quality* of an experience as of its *content*, especially—and indispensably—when that experience arises from aesthetic encounters. This variety of cognitivism may appear less than full-fledged, because I do not attempt to argue for acquisition of propositional knowledge or empathetic insight. On the other hand, the immediate acquaintance yielded by the reflective

experience of foods qualifies as a distinctively "aesthetic" brand of cognition with standing and value all its own.[30] Reflection on gustatory experience carries cognitive values and attention into the heart of even sensuous aesthetic experience.[31]

In sum: if our chief focus is pleasure, we neglect the aspects of food and eating that in fact most resemble what is valuable in works of art. And this suggests that a focus on pleasure also bypasses elements of the deepest importance for aesthetic experience in general. One is not even tempted to surmise that food is valued for what it teaches; and yet without cognitive content, gustatory aesthetic value is only partially recognized. Once we notice the extent and character of cognitive experience in eating, what looked to be merely sensuous enjoyment seamlessly extends through discriminatory savoring to recognizing symbol, representation, and a panoply of cultural artifactual properties, leading the tongue and the mind from flavor and sensuous satisfaction to meanings both local and global.

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Notes

1 The term "cognitivism" can be confusing, for it is used for different purposes in ethics, aesthetics, and emotion theory. In the course of this paper I shall clarify what I take to be the most plausible cognitivist position in aesthetics.
2 See e.g. George Dickie, *The Century of Taste: The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). The rise of taste philosophies supplanted an earlier meaning of the very term "aesthetic," which began in modern times as a term referring to sense-knowledge. Thus the cognitivist-hedonist rivalry can be said to have been present at the birth of modern aesthetics.
3 An extended treatment of this subject may be found in Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) esp. ch. 2. The argument of this paper proceeds from ideas I first explored in this book.
4 The aptness of this comparison is demonstrated with Frank Sibley's well known revival of taste in "Aesthetic Concepts" (*Philosophical Review*, 67 [1959]) and subsequent essays.
5 David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757) in *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1998) 141–42.
6 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) 41.
7 This history is detailed in Denise Gigante (ed.) *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-century Gastronomy* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Patricia Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
8 Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste* (1826) trans. M. F. K. Fisher (New York: Heritage Press, 1949) 1.

9 Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2005) 7–8.
10 Brillat-Savarin, p. 188.
11 Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, esp. ch. 4. See also Allen S. Weiss, *Feast and Folly: Cuisine, Intoxication, and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2002).
12 Elizabeth Telfer, *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London: Routledge, 1996) 57.
13 Telfer, op. cit.: 59.
14 Ibid.
15 Frank Sibley, "Tastes and Smells and Aesthetics," in *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, eds John Benson, Jeremy Roxbee-Cox and Betty Redfern (Oxford University Press, 2004) 249.
16 The argument about the artistic status of food is only salient if one has in mind the narrow concept of "fine art." Cuisine is indisputably a "practical" art (or whatever category one uses to contrast with the modern notion of fine art).
17 Jerrold Levinson, "Pleasure and the Value of Art," in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) 19. See also Levinson's arguments against pleasures of sensation in this essay.
18 Stein Haugom Olsen, "Appreciation," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. I, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 66.
19 Russell Pryba disputes this statement, observing that on the basis of a meal one can construct a narrative about food production and distribution and about cultural traditions and social relations. However, I would argue that this possibility is less narrative than diagnosis. The meal may signal a history that the diner can surmise, but the food itself does not present a narrative.
20 Elizabeth Telfer, "Food," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. II, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 210.
21 As Stephen Davies says, "the mechanisms and results of association are not philosophically puzzling," "Artistic Expression and the Hard Case of Pure Music," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006) 180.
22 Elisabeth Rozin, *The Flavor Principle Cookbook* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973) and *Ethnic Cuisine: The Flavor Principle Cookbook* (Lexington MA: Stephen Greene Press, 1983).
23 D. T. Suzuki, "Zen and the Art of Tea," from *Zen in Japanese Culture* (1959) reprinted in Korsmeyer, *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, 55–59.
24 Ildikó Ember, *Delights for the Senses: Dutch and Flemish Still-life Paintings from Budapest* (Wausau WI: Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, 1989) 24–27.
25 The thesis that fine dining often builds upon foods with difficult or disturbing themes is made in Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting: Eating Sublime and Terrible," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 60:3 (summer 2002) 218–25.
26 Charlotte Adams, *The Four Seasons Cookbook* (New York: Crescent Books, 1971) 49.
27 Richard Shusterman's "somaesthetics" is relevant to this observation. See for instance chapter 7 of *Performing Live* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
28 Berys Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 436–37.
29 Peter Lamarque, "Cognitive Values in the Arts: Marking the Boundaries," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006) 127–39. Additional critics of cognitivism include T. J. Diffey, "What Can We Learn from Art?" in *Art and Its Messages*, ed. Ste-

phen Davies (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 26–33; Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Cognitive Triviality of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32 (1992) 191–200.

30 As Nelson Goodman remarks of the status of art as a symbol: "The primary purpose is cognition in and for itself; the practicality, pleasure, compulsion, and communicative utility all depend on this." *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1976) 258.

31 Levinson similarly argues that pleasure cannot provide a complete picture of aesthetic value unless one places cognitive elements at the center of art's aesthetic value; moreover, the latter may be sufficiently taxing that pleasure sometimes disappears. See *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*, chapters 1 and 2.

Part III

Aesthetic experience, artists, and philosophies of art

9 Aesthetic experience, art and artists

Noel Carroll

Introduction

This essay examines the dominant characterization of aesthetic experience among Anglophone philosophers for the purpose of replacing it. To that end, I will begin by speculating about why the standard concept of aesthetic experience came to play and continues to play such an important role for the philosophy of art. Next I shall argue that that function is by now obsolete. Indeed, perhaps the standard characterization of aesthetic experience never really was as effective in discharging that function as its defenders imagined. I will also attempt to reveal other inadequacies of the dominant concept of aesthetic experience, especially in terms of the ways in which it appears to exclude certain kinds of artistic creativity from its domain, while, at the same time, I shall introduce an alternative conception of aesthetic experience which I call the *content-oriented* approach.

On the emergence of the standard concept of aesthetic experience

The dominant notion of aesthetic experience with respect to art, as it is generally articulated in the Western tradition, comes to the fore and begins to be consolidated in the eighteenth century.[1] It evolves from, among other things, Francis Hutcheson's characterization of the experience of beauty and Immanuel Kant's analysis of the aesthetic judgment. In both authors, the requirement of *disinterested pleasure* is paramount, though, since not all aesthetic experiences are *pleasurable*, in the usual sense of that word, this condition has been subsequently sometimes modified to the more minimal condition that aesthetic experiences are valued for their own sake.

The preceding conjecture is not intended to imply that elements or, even arguably, versions of what might be called "aesthetic experience" were not available in the tradition prior to the eighteenth century. Rather, my point is that until somewhere between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, aesthetic experience, parsed as pleasure, was not taken to be the end all of the arts, nor was it given anything like the significance with which it came to be invested by modern philosophers of art.

In the *Hippias Major*, Socrates entertains, but ultimately rejects, an account of *kalon* (the beautiful, the fine, or the excellent) that sounds like a partial forerunner to the dominant characterization of aesthetic experience in the Western tradition; he correlates the beautiful to that which pleases or delights by means of sights and sounds. This conception of an experience that is defined by its relations to the senses (seeing and hearing) and sensation (pleasure, delight) undoubtedly reverberates in Baumgarten's eighteenth-century neologism "aesthetics." But this conception is not finally an idea that Plato shares with Baumgarten, since Plato goes on to criticize it soon after he introduces it into the dialogue.

The definition of beauty that Socrates embraces, though not without obvious unease, in the *Hippias Major* is that *kalon* is connected to beneficial pleasure. Indeed, in book X of his *Republic*, Plato demands of the friends of poetry that they demonstrate that poetry affords beneficial pleasure, if poets are to be allowed re-entry into the ideal polis. Undoubtedly, the correlation between poetry and pleasure here influences the characterization of aesthetic experience which is assembled in the modern period. However, Plato is not endorsing anything like the modern view, since he is talking about *beneficial* pleasure—pleasure tied to interests—and not disinterested pleasure. Of course, he is not denying that such pleasure is to be had; rather, he does not value it very highly. In fact, he distrusts it.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle indicates that there are two kinds of pleasures with respect to the pertinent arts. There is the pleasure to accessed from imitation, which is cognitive in nature, and, therefore, beneficial or interested (thereby meeting Plato's challenge to the lovers of poetry). But there is also a second sort, which, though unlabeled, appears to be connected to formal features like color, melody, and rhythm.[2] Yet Aristotle scarcely bothers to examine this kind of pleasure. So, though Aristotle may acknowledge the existence of something like a predecessor-notion of aesthetic experience, or, at least, a part of one, he does not appear to accord it much importance.

It is not until the eighteenth century that the dominant characterization of aesthetic experience begins to become focal. As already noted, it was in the eighteenth century that Baumgarten coined the category of *aesthetics*, by which he intends sensitive or sensuous knowledge—that is, knowledge that comes by way of outer senses (such as sight and hearing) and/or by way of the inner sense of imagination (which responds to things like descriptive poetry by producing mental images). Although Baumgarten introduced "aesthetics" for the purposes of epistemology in general—where, in the terminology of Descartes and Leibniz, it exemplifies the category of clear but indistinct ideas—so many of Baumgarten's examples derived from poetry that the notion of aesthetics came to be closely associated with the address that artworks make upon the senses. In this regard, aesthetic experience became connected in philosophical thinking with the pleasureable sensations imparted by artworks and other beautiful things, such as landscapes and clothing, as they thrill and caress the senses.

Though explored under the rubric of "aesthetics" in Germany, similar preoccupations surfaced in the British Isles under the heading of "taste," and in France under the sobriquet of "le goût," a faculty whose activation engendered a virtually ineffable sensation of pleasure describable only vaguely as "je ne sais quoi" ("I know not what").[3]

In Britain, the very influential idea, popularized by Shaftsbury and Hutcheson, evolved that beauty itself was precisely an experience of disinterested pleasure excited, according to Hutcheson, by the stimulation of unity amidst diversity in a seventh and inner sense called taste. This thought, with modification, then found its way into Kant's theory of aesthetic judgments of free beauty which locates said judgments in feelings of a certain species of subjective pleasure (namely, the disinterested kind). Perhaps the French too contributed to Kant's formulation of the nature of aesthetic judgment insofar as their notion that such judgments are founded upon an "I-know-not-what" experience appears to correspond to Kant's idea that the experience cannot be subsumed under concepts.

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* has probably had the greatest influence on subsequent formulations of the most popular versions of aesthetic experience. Although Kant's treatise concerned aesthetic judgments rather than aesthetic experiences, it is easy to see how Kant's successors could skip so easily from the former to the latter insofar as, for Kant, the grounds for issuing aesthetic judgments are, in large measure, a matter of having certain kinds of experiences, namely, feelings of disinterested pleasure (which are, of course, otherwise known as an aesthetic experiences).

Echoes of Kant's theories can be heard in the works of philosophers as diverse as Arthur Schopenhauer, Clive Bell, and Monroe Beardsley. Though the accounts of aesthetic experience proffered by these theorists are rarely as complicated as Kant's—they are not only less complicated and thinner, but also sometimes diverge in details—they nevertheless typically hold on to, albeit with modifications, the notion of disinterestedness. However, as observed previously, since not all the experiences we wish to count as aesthetic—including, for example, the experience of the sublime—are unequivocally pleasureable—it has become common to drop the stipulation that aesthetic experiences are necessarily pleasureable and instead to suggest only that such experiences must be valued for their own sake and not for the sake or purpose of something else (which, needless to say, is another, perhaps more precise way of saying that these experiences are to be engaged disinterestedly).

Bell's conception of the aesthetic emotion is clearly a descendent of Kant's idea of disinterestedness, since the aesthetic emotion—Bell's name for aesthetic experience—is defined as discontinuous with any other sort of experience, most notably any of the kind that contributes usefully to the life of individuals and/or of society. Bell's aesthetic emotion, however popular and influential the idea was, suffered from being overly threadbare. It turned out to be very hard to put one's finger on it, given that so little that

is positively informative is said about it in Bell's account. A somewhat more informative and representative account of aesthetic experience, nevertheless, can be extrapolated from the writings of Jerome Stolnitz.[4]

For Stolnitz, an aesthetic experience is one that is had under the direction of an aesthetic attitude. And an aesthetic attitude, in turn, involves essentially the "disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone." Consequently, an aesthetic experience is a matter of the disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of an object for its own sake. This view of aesthetic experience, moreover, is probably the one shared, either consciously or subconsciously, by a very large number of philosophers of art.

In what follows, I intend eventually to interrogate its adequacy. Nevertheless, before embarking upon that project, it will be instructive to speculate about why this characterization of aesthetic experience took hold in the first instance. And, furthermore, why does it continue to exercise a grip upon the imaginations of so many philosophers of art? What needs did it serve? What functions does it perform? What is ultimately at stake in the persistent commitment to this conception? For answering these questions may help shed light upon the shape of the notion, as well as upon its tenacity.

I conjecture that the dominant notion of aesthetic experience that has taken hold since the eighteenth century performs two overlapping functions—one intellectual or, perhaps more accurately, philosophical, and the other social. Both these functions, moreover, are related to the consolidation—again in the eighteenth century—of what has come to be called the Modern System of the Arts.[5]

During the eighteenth century, a series of practices—including poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dance, and drama—were collected under the category of the Beaux Art, or the Fine Arts, or simply the Arts with a capital *A*.[6] These are, along with certain additions (including film and photography), what we refer to as the arts nowadays; they are the practices huddled onto the arts quad on campuses and they are the activities funded by governmental agencies such as the National Endowment of the Arts in the United States. However, though we find it "natural" to group the arts, or rather the *A*rts in this way, it wasn't always so. Instead it is a product of the modern era.

In the classical period, for example, the arts were any practice involving skill. Navigation was an art, as was charioteering. Medicine was an art; it was underwritten by knowledge that was teachable. Some of our fine arts were grouped together with other arts (that is, teachable skills), but not always in the way that we would do so. Music might be grouped together with mathematics rather than poetry, while poetry might go with rhetoric. Painting could even sometimes be classified alongside of chemistry and pharmacology inasmuch as painters and chemists and apothecaries belonged to guilds that ground things (such as pigments and pills) down. In short, the category of art with a capital *A*—which we presume to be perfectly obvious—is a historical invention.

For example, Aristotle was not a philosopher of *A*rt with a capital *A*; he was the philosopher of a particular artform, tragedy, though, of course, he also made some brief asides about painting.[7] There were no philosophers of art with a capital *A* until the eighteenth century, because we did not yet have that category self-consciously in play. In the Renaissance, painting and poetry might be compared, but primarily in order to win for painting the esteem in which poetry was already held. There was not the attempt to assemble all of the practices we call Art under one big tent. Our category appears to have arrived on the scene in the eighteenth century or thereabouts. Though the collection of practices listed in the catalogues of our present-day art schools strikes us as transparent, it is the result of a historical conjuncture.

Perhaps needless to say, once the category of *A*rt, or Fine Art, or the Beaux Arts took hold, the pressure—the intellectual or philosophical pressure—arose to say what constituted grounds for membership in this new order of the Muses. A first attempt to answer this question, undoubtedly inspired by Aristotle, was to postulate that representation, especially the representation of the beautiful in nature, was that which gained work entry into the Modern System of the Arts. Thus, in order to win membership in this most elevated company, dancing masters, like Jean-Georges Noverre, called for choreography that *represented* dramas, and the *ballet d'action* was born.

But this proposal could not long withstand a seminal development in the history of music—the rise to ascendancy of pure orchestral or absolute music. For, aside from some desperate attempts to claim that such music represented something (birdsongs, thunderstorms, and the like), it appeared wildly implausible to characterize most pure orchestral music as a representation of anything particular. Yet the membership of absolute music in the Modern System of the Arts was hard to gainsay. Indeed, for some in the nineteenth century, such music exhibited a condition toward which every other artform aspired. Thus, philosophically, the need for a new paradigm to replace representation as the criterion for membership in the Modern System became urgent. And, that, I hypothesize, is where Western culture's dominant characterization of aesthetic experience enters the picture.

Of course, several alternative paradigms offered themselves. But one of the most enduring and most significant, especially for our purposes, is that artworks, properly so called, are objects and performances designed to afford a certain kind of pleasure—namely, the sort of disinterested pleasure that was emphasized previously.[8] Most often, this sort of pleasure was thought to be derived from attention to the form of the artwork. Thus, this position is sometimes referred to as formalism or aesthetic formalism.

However, this philosophical tendency can be further modified. For reasons expressed earlier, the theorist may choose to replace the notion of pleasure with the valuation of the experience for its own sake and, furthermore, add that that value need not be connected to the form of the work, so long as it is grounded upon attention to some pertinent aspect of the work.

Because this approach uses aesthetic experience as its means to define a work of fine art, it is often called the aesthetic theory of art. The theory can be as thin as: something is an artwork if and only if it is intended or designed to promote an appreciable degree of aesthetic experience. Stolnitz's theory, introduced earlier, is clearly a variation upon this patent.

The aesthetic theory of art is a putative solution to the question of why the practices assembled under the rubric of the Fine Arts belong together as a group. *Ex hypothesi*, they are all designed to afford aesthetic experiences. Moreover, this proposal has the further philosophical attraction of implying—in one fell swoop—a fundamental disassociation of the Fine Arts from all the other arts. For the Fine Arts, understood as works prized exclusively for the intrinsically valuable experiences they encourage, can be thought to stand apart, virtually automatically, from all the other arts—such as agriculture, rhetoric, and engineering—since the other arts are valued primarily for their utility and not the sake of the intrinsically valued experiences they engender. If aesthetic experience is the mark of *A*rt, properly so called, and aesthetic experience is divorced from serving any ulterior purpose, then *A*rtworks, properly so called, thereby have no essential truck with any aims, interests, or purposes other than that of providing intrinsically valued experiences.

That is, since the end of *A*rtworks is a mental state that is separate from every other practice, it would appear to follow almost immediately that the means *qua A*rt to attaining that state should be equally distinct from every other category of activity. If the end state is to be untainted by practical, selfish, or social interests and purposes, it stands to reason that the means to that mental state must be undiluted as well, lest interest and purpose seep into the vaunted mental condition. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Kant argued that aesthetic pleasure not be connected to concepts, since concepts tend to be bound up with interests, purposes, and activities.

But in any event, the conception of art as the intended promotion of *sui-generic* value neatly cleaves *A*rt (i.e. Fine Art) from every other human enterprise with a single stroke and by definition, since something that is aimed at producing an experience that is categorically unalloyed with the interests and purposes attached to other human practices must be, it seems fair to surmise, a thing apart. Thus, the aesthetic theory of art elegantly suits the philosophical task of essentially defining membership in the Modern System of the Arts: it defines membership in terms of the intention to engender an experience valuable for its own sake, or, in other words, an experience that has no inherent or necessary connection to any ulterior purposes and the practices.

Furthermore, the aesthetic theory of art has a number of corollary philosophical attractions. If a work of art, properly so called, is such in virtue of its function to support aesthetic experience, then the artistic value of the work can be measured in terms of the degree to which it promotes or impedes aesthetic experience. Likewise the theory gives us a way to establish

what reasons are relevant to commending a work *qua* its status as *A*rt—namely, any aspect of the work that enhances its capacity to deliver aesthetic experience can be adduced as a good-making feature of the work. In short, the aesthetic theory of art in connection with the standard characterization of aesthetic experience is such a serviceable and unified theoretical package that a great many philosophers are loath to give up on it.

Of course, with respect to many of the individual members of the recently convoked *Modern* System of Arts—for example, poems, sculptures, or pieces music—the aesthetic theory of art was quite highly revisionist. In the *premodern* period, poetry was frequently valued for, among other things, its educative power, especially in terms of morality. Horace did not deny that poetry delights, but the pleasure it induced was harnessed to its usefulness. Poetry involved pleasure, but the sort of beneficial pleasure of which Plato dreamt.[9] Poetry and its associated pleasures served a social purpose by making the lessons of the ethos of cultures eminently accessible to their citizenry.

Likewise, sculpture told the history and embodied the virtues of nations, while music accompanied rituals—religious and civic—modulating feelings to synchronize with the events it accompanied. These works were not intended to be occasions for the cultivation of experiences valued for their own sake. The arts were designed as a means of deepening the experiences and activities of the religious, cultural, and political practices they subserved. In premodern times, to regard especially the artworks deemed to be the most significant culturally as simply or even primarily opportunities for aesthetic experiences—such as swoons of disinterested pleasure—vastly distorted that which the works in question were designed to achieve.

Most patriotic songs were likely to have been intended to raise the kind of pride that would lead to courageous efforts. The mental states these songs excited were not supposed to be valuable for their own sake, but for the activity they promoted. To regard a song of this sort as an occasion for having a contemplative experience valuable for its own sake was to use the song in a way for which it was not expressly designed. Though not all, nor perhaps even most, of the objects and performances enlisted in the Modern System of the Arts—and particularly those created in the premodern period—were meant essentially to be instruments of aesthetic delectation, it was their alleged capacity to be used as such, even where this was at odds with their very nature, that supposedly warranted their incorporation in the kingdom of *A*rt.

The aesthetic theory of art, albeit a revisionist theory, then, appeared, at least to many, as a solution to the problem of membership in the Modern System of the Arts. Moreover, insofar as the aesthetic theory of art depended upon a certain conception of aesthetic experience—namely, as contemplative and sympathetic attention for its own sake—this particular characterization of aesthetic experience became deeply entrenched. That is, it is my hypothesis that, to a large extent, this version of aesthetic experience

has come to have the authority it does because of the conceptual role it promises to play in the identification of artworks qua *A*rt.

In brief, what we have labeled the standard concept of aesthetic experience sustains its influence because of the function it is supposed to perform in the rationalization of the Modern System of the Arts via the aesthetic theory of art. That is the intellectual need to whose satisfaction the standard concept was thought to contribute in the first instance, and it remains the question to which many philosophers still believe it supplies the most compelling answer. Furthermore, I suggest, the essentially negative cast of the characterization—as having nothing to do with ulterior interests or purposes—assumes its conceptual shape given the burden of the aesthetic theory of art to hive *A*rt off from everything else. To assure the autonomy of art from everything else, aesthetic experience is defined as something utterly apart from every conceivable purpose. The aesthetic theory of art and the standard concept of aesthetic experience fit each other like a hand in a glove. Together they recommend themselves intellectually or philosophically as the best solution to the Enlightenment (and post-Enlightenment) problem of discovering the rationale of the Modern System of the Arts.

But the aesthetic theory of art did not arise in a social vacuum. There were important cultural developments which worked in its favor and, consequently, in favor of the acceptance of the standard conception of aesthetic experience that came in tandem with it. This package of theories emerged in a period where patronage of the arts was evolving in noteworthy ways. In earlier times, the primary patrons of the representational arts had been political or religious. Generally, art was commissioned to serve the functions of the church or the state (or the dukedom, or whatever other civil authority). Such art was explicitly tied to social purposes—to command reverence, to show forth the power of the king, or his magnificence, to aggrandize the court, to teach ethics or doctrine, to memorialize the past, and so on. During the Counter-reformation, for example, the Council of Trent recommended that art be used as an emotional stimulus to piety and that "by means of stories of the mysteries of our Redemption portrayed by paintings or representations, the people be instructed and confirmed in the habit of remembering, and continually revolving in mind the articles of faith."[10]

However as the bourgeoisie appeared, a new market for art dawned as well. The bourgeoisie used art as a way of enlivening the leisure time that was increasingly at their disposal. As Gadamer observed, the value of art became subjectivized.[11] That is, instead of serving objective social purposes, art began to be esteemed for the subjective pleasures it sustained.

Whereas previously art was very frequently incorporated into the portentous affairs of culture—for example, in the form of civic or religious statues of moral exemplars or historic heroes at the appropriate institutional sites, or in the form of music, song, and pageants as parts of religious or political rituals—the arts under the emerging dispensation were re-conceived as a

kind of play, a contemplative play in response to the form of the work, irrespective of the cognitive, political, social, spiritual, and/or moral content and/or utility of the work. Moreover, as time wore on and the demands of this new market became better defined, artworks and, indeed, even entire art movements began to cater to it.

The bourgeoisie sought beautiful things to brighten their lives, including not only furniture, table ware, carriages, and gardens, but pictures, exquisite writing, and the like. Taste became a marker of social capital for the rising middle class. Art became more and more an object of bourgeois consumption. As Hegel noticed, artworks began to migrate from sites of public intercourse, where they had contributed to the various purposes of the culture at large, into museums where they became "purposeless" (as Kant would have it) objects of contemplation.[12] A critical estate began to flourish whose spokespersons, like Joseph Addison, tutored the leisured classes in the best ways to spend their time in pursuit of the pleasures of the imagination.[13] Moreover, the directives of these critics were soon codified in the theories of taste and aesthetics advanced by philosophers like Hutcheson, Hume, and Kant.

Though the participants in this emerging practice would probably not have described the situation in this way, the artwork was becoming a commodity[14] whose purpose, to speak paradoxically perhaps, was exactly—usually by means of its form—to engender disinterested pleasure, also known as aesthetic experience, or even more obscurely, as the purposeless play of one's contemplative powers. The aesthetic theory of art neatly fit the bourgeois practices of connoisseurship and consumption, undoubtedly because, in this case, the theory and the practice were mutually informative.

Furthermore, that the standard characterization of aesthetic experience, which is itself the *sine qua non* of the aesthetic theory of art, is an essentially contemplative affair suited the bourgeois practice of art consumption perfectly, since the standard concept is above all a *spectatorship* model of aesthetic experience. It is as if it is simply assumed that the subjects of aesthetic experience will be onlookers—readers, viewers, and listeners (consumers)—rather than, say, also artists. Aesthetic experience is, in other words, conceived as an experience for audiences (indeed, leisured audiences). It is a matter of reception rather than production.

The standard concept of aesthetic experience, then, took hold in the eighteenth century for at least two, inter-related reasons. There was the intellectual or philosophical task of rationalizing membership in the Modern System of the Arts in terms of some criterion, on the one hand, and the social pressure to arrive at a criterion that reflected the emerging bourgeois practices of consuming the fine arts, on the other hand. The aesthetic theory of art appeared to fit the bill on both counts. And inasmuch as the standard concept of aesthetic experience is the cornerstone of any aesthetic theory of art, this conception of aesthetic experience became deeply embedded in the tradition.

Nevertheless, there remains the two-pronged question of whether the theory ever really succeeded in defining *A*rt in the first place and of whether

it continues to do so. These issues will be taken up in the next section. Specifically, we want to know: does the standard characterization of aesthetic experience live up to the role that has made it dominant?

Interrogating the aesthetic theory of art

It is my conviction that aesthetic experience has such pride of place in discussions amongst philosophers of art because of the indispensable role it is thought to play in one of the most seductive definitions of art, namely the aesthetic theory of art. By mobilizing the standard characterization of aesthetic experience, the aesthetic theorist of art appears to provide the sort of rationale necessary to make sense of the Modern System of the Arts.

In short, I suspect that many philosophers are tempted to hold onto the standard characterization of aesthetic experience just because they are convinced that it plays this role in their web of beliefs. Consequently, in order to persuade them to abandon the standard characterization of aesthetic experience, it is not enough to show its internal weaknesses. They must also be convinced that it, in tandem with the aesthetic theory of art, cannot deliver the systematic results that they desire. Thus, our first order of business is to challenge the aesthetic theory of art.

Though the aesthetic theory of art relies centrally upon the notion of aesthetic experience, it is not sufficient to say that something is a work of art if and only if it affords aesthetic experience. This is not a sufficient condition for art status, since fully natural vistas may also afford what adherents of the aesthetic viewpoint count as aesthetic experiences; but natural vistas are not artworks, since they need not be artifacts. Nor does the preceding formula provide us with a necessary condition for art status, since presumably there are artworks which we regard as failures precisely because they do cannot deliver aesthetic experiences in the standard sense but which we nevertheless still count as artworks. A god-awful statue is still an artwork even if the artist's mother can wring no pleasure from it.

One straightforward way in which to repair the theory in order to avert these kinds of counter-examples is to invoke the concept of intention. Revising the aesthetic theory then, we can say that something is an artwork if and only if it is *intended* to afford aesthetic experience. Since natural vistas are not the products of intention, this version of the theory defeats the first of the previous objections. And, second, failed artworks, like our god-awful statue, are putatively intended to support aesthetic experiences, even if they do not do so. So they are still artworks, albeit bad ones.

Nevertheless, the theory is still not as tight as it should be. It remains too inclusive. For, so many objects which we do not regard as artworks are nevertheless designed or intended to support aesthetic experiences. Stroll down the aisle of any supermarket or variety store. The shelves are full are items in packages designed or meant to support at least some quotient of aesthetic experience. But even if Warhol's various packages are art, these

everyday packages are not. In the modern industrial world, it is rare to come upon an artifact that has not been fashioned with some, however minimal, intention to engage aesthetic experience in the presiding sense of that phrase. But Walmart is not some bargain-basement Louvre. In order to block this objection, the aesthetic theory of art must be revised even further.

One option is to say that the objects must be intended to deliver an appreciable (perceptible) amount of aesthetic experience. But how will the threshold be established here in a way that both is non-arbitrary and avoids inviting a slippery slope? And, in any event, surely the designers of the lowliest cereal box *intend* it to ferry an appreciable degree of aesthetic experience.

Another option is to require that the objects and performances in question be created with the *primary* intention to afford aesthetic experience. This formulation, moreover, fits well with the consumerist orientation of the modern artworld. And yet it would seem to fail as a generalization about everything the Modern System of the Arts is supposed to embrace.

This should be patently obvious for reasons already discussed—to wit: the aesthetic theory of art is highly revisionist. Historically, most of what we now call art, both in Western culture and elsewhere throughout the world, was not made with the primary intention to afford aesthetic experiences of the disinterested variety. Most art, particularly in the premodern period, was made with the primary intention to serve various social purposes—religious, political, moral, cognitive, communal, and so forth. Towns did not erect cathedrals primarily in order to have something folks might enjoy looking at for the sheer fun of it.

Likewise, tribal peoples did not decorate their shields with fearsome visages in order to invite their adversaries to contemplate them sympathetically in autotelic acts of attention valued for their own sake. This was not only not the primary intention behind the art of the pertinent shield makers; it was not even a tertiary intention either. In fact, it was no intention of theirs at all. Were the enemy to value the experience of these shields for their own sake that would surely have defeated the intentions of their designers who made these shields to frighten off rival tribesmen. The last thing these shield makers could have wanted would be for the enemy to hunker down in their lands because they enjoyed ogling their shields.

In brief, though the shields in question would count as art for most of us today, they cannot be so on the grounds that they were created with the primary intention to curry aesthetic experience. Moreover, so much traditional art is analogous to these shields in having ulterior purposes as central purposes that the aesthetic theory of art has questionable applicability when it comes to a staggering amount of premodern art.

The friend of the aesthetic theory of art, of course, will point out that *we* can ignore the original intention behind works such as these and savor them disinterestedly. But then are we really contemplating the works sympathetically—that is, on their own terms? And, in any case, if that it what we are

doing, it certainly cannot be captured by saying that these are works created with the primary intention that they afford aesthetic experience. Furthermore, if it is *our* intention to treat said works as objects of aesthetic experience that makes the works art, won't the theory become overly inclusive? Can't I intend to treat snowflakes and myriad other natural phenomena that way? But they are not artworks.

Perhaps the defender of the aesthetic theory of art will grant that the theory has problems with premodern art, but claim adequacy for it in the modern period. Nevertheless, even this modification of the scope of the theory is extremely controversial. For though we may live in the so-called *modern* period of art, not all art in the modern period is modernist. Much remains committed to premodern notions of art as connected to purposes—religious, political, cognitive, moral, etc.

According to A. O. Scott, the major American novels of the last twenty-five years—including Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, John Updike's *Rabbit Angstrom* series, and Don DeLillo's *Underworld*—are all concerned with history: with figuring out and illuminating both how Americans as a people have gotten to this stage of their history and what perilous tensions that passage has compounded and exacerbated.[15] These authors write with the primary intention to clarify our national identity—to enable us to see who we are by showing us how we became that way and to bid us to use those insights to influence who we shall become.

These novelists have interests that are cognitive, moral, and political all at once. Their works are not devoid of social purpose, nor are they dedicated primarily to affording some disinterested experience valued for its own sake. These writers have a sense of civic responsibility and urgency; they stand, broadly speaking, in a prophetic tradition. For, these authors are striving to achieve a transformative understanding not only for themselves but for their readers—a transformative understanding which may have subtle ramifications for both our private and our public lives.

These novels are but one case in point of art in the modern period that remains committed to being valuable primarily for the purposes—cognitive, moral, and social—they advance. More examples are readily available. But these should suffice to establish that the aesthetic theory of art is not an adequate definition of art, even for the so-called modern period. Moreover, if we look further afield—historically and transculturally—it becomes quickly apparent that a great deal of (most of?) that which we are disposed to call *A*rt in our current parlance does not accord with the aesthetic theory of art (understood as requiring that something is art if and only if it is intended primarily to afford aesthetic experience (in the dominant variant of the notion of the aesthetic)).

Thus, if it is true that the dominant characterization of aesthetic experience derives its authority from the contribution it makes to the aesthetic theory of art, then the characterization does not deserve any special points

for its intimate relationship to that theory, since the aesthetic theory of art itself is highly dubious.

Undoubtedly, the defender of the aesthetic theory of art will not give up the ship in the face of the preceding fusillade of counter-examples. She will remain loyal to the aesthetic theory on the grounds that she believes that it is our best shot at rationalizing the Modern System of the Arts. She has faith in the proposition that all that is called for is a bit more tinkering with the fine points of the theory before the coherence of the Modern System of the Arts will finally be disclosed.

I, on the other hand, do not think that the Modern System of the Arts is coherent. Arguably, it may have made sense when it was first assembled under the rubric of the representational theory of art. When music was primarily song, hymn and opera, it was plausible to group it alongside of poetry. But as art mutated in various directions, whatever initial coherence obtained unraveled. With each passing decade and each successive art movement, the aims of art evolved diversely, and even very encompassing theories like the aesthetic theory of art and the expression theory of art could not accommodate its every variation.

What connects the various works we now count as belonging to the realm ofart are historical narratives that link contemporary candidates for the status of art with past artworks in the right way. The Modern System of the Arts is no longer a system, but a tradition, a work in progress with a past, rather than something unified by a principle like the function of imparting aesthetic experience.

But what about aesthetic experience?

I have argued that philosophers of art cleave to the standard characterization of aesthetic experience because they mistakenly believe that it will make an honest category out of the Modern System of the Arts. I have challenged this supposition; indeed, I seriously doubt that anything at this late date can conceptually put the Modern System of the Arts back together again. However, even if I have shown this much, the friend of the standard characterization of aesthetic experience will immediately remind me that I have not shown that there is anything wrong with the standard characterization of aesthetic experience. At best, I have demonstrated that philosophers persevere with it for the wrong reason.

Yet I also maintain that the standard characterization of aesthetic experience is inadequate on its own terms. To begin with, the standard characterization is stunningly uninformative. Try to operationalize the notion that it is the contemplative and sympathetic attention to an object for its own sake, or, even more vaguely, the notion that it is an experience valued for its own sake. Clearly, neither of these formulations represents sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience, since I can contemplate sympathetically the construction of the habitat of a community of naked mole

rats and putatively value for its own sake my experience of coming to understand their adaptive behaviors, without that counting as an aesthetic experience. It is more aptly described as an ethological experience. Thus, the most the standard characterization could deliver is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience.

But the aforesaid conditions, construed as necessary, provide virtually no guidance either concerning how I might go about having an aesthetic experience, or how I might instruct someone else to do so, or, if I am engaged in research, what behaviors or mental processes I should observe in order to investigate aesthetic experience. Presumably the concept of a certain form of experience should contain information about the way in which one has the experience in question. Yet the standard characterization of aesthetic experience says next to nothing about what goes into such an experience except to say that the experience is valued for its own sake.

Moreover, in a period where philosophers of art are beginning to enrich their inquiries by joining hands with cognitive scientists, the standard characterization of aesthetic experience is effectively useless from the point of view of empirical research. It gives one precious little by way the variables one would need to focus upon. Saying that an aesthetic experience is one which the percipient values for its own sake fails to differentiate it from what many enthusiasts are likely to say of the chess experience.

Not only is the notion of intrinsic valuation insufficient to discriminate aesthetic experience from other intrinsically valuable ones (supposing you go in for that kind of talk); it is also hard to imagine how anyone could use this meager description concretely to initiate having an aesthetic experience of an artwork. To be told (1) to peruse sympathetically some painting and (2) to value the perusing for its own sake, is not a recommendation—especially with respect to the second condition—that I find very helpful to act upon. I, at least, need to know more about the way in which to proceed.

Part of the problem is that the notion that an aesthetic experience is one valued for its own sake is primarily negative. It tells one what you shouldn't be doing—namely valuing the experience instrumentally—and not how to go about what you should be doing. Nor does it tell you very much about the way in which to study subjects who are allegedly undergoing such experiences in response to artworks. What would your questionnaire look like: "Are you valuing this experience for its own sake?" You won't find out very much that way.

Perhaps the standard characterization of aesthetic experience is partly motivated by grander architectonic considerations about the categories of large-scale types of experiences. Certainly Kant wanted to work out distinctions between certain classes of judgments. Maybe his successors wish to accomplish the same level of categorization with respect to various forms of experience. Whether or not this cartography is useful in other domains of philosophy, I question its utility with respect to the philosophy of art. For, being told that the aesthetic experience of art falls under some big category

of experiences valued for their own sake, tells one nothing about exactly what such experiences comprise.

Furthermore, this apparent reticence seems to me to be utterly at odds with what customarily happens in the actual artworld as we know it. For, in the ordinary course of affairs, we are far more forthcoming about telling people about the ways in which to have aesthetic experiences than the standard account allows. We tell them to be on the lookout for various formal structures (like symmetries and contrasts) for vividly instantiated aesthetic properties (such as lightness, elegance, or brittleness), or for more anthropomorphic or expressive qualities (including sadness or joyousness). In short, we tell them that which is the appropriate focus or *content* of such experiences.

Of course, the percipient's attention to factors like these—aesthetic properties all—must be informed by the ways mandated in the artistic traditions in question in terms of the pertinent strategies of reception. That is, typically we instruct the potential subjects of aesthetic experience about what the content of their experience should be—we tell them what to look for in accordance with the relevant conventions, strategies, and traditions of attention for the genres and artforms at hand.

Moreover, these instructions are something that people can readily get the hang of, in contrast to the more elusive suggestion that one cherish one's experience for its own sake. Thus, insofar as this sort of *content-oriented* characterization of aesthetic experience is more informative than the standard characterization, with its obscure talk of valuing the experience for its own sake, the standard characterization should not be our preferred version of aesthetic experience. The content-oriented approach should be.

That is, instead of identifying aesthetic experiences with those valued necessarily for their own sake, it is far more enlightening to maintain that an experience is an aesthetic one if it involves informed attention to the formal, expressive or otherwise aesthetic properties of the artwork in ways that are consistent with the norms and strategies of detection proscribed for that type of work by its conventions, genre, and tradition. An experience of an artwork, in other words, is aesthetic if the content of the experience is aesthetic—a matter of formal, expressive, or otherwise aesthetic properties and relations—and if that content is negotiated in the appropriate or correct manner.

At this point in the dialectic, the friend of the standard characterization of aesthetic experience may suggest that his approach and the content-oriented approach are not really at odds. They can be amalgamated thus: an aesthetic experience involves (1) informed attention to the aesthetic properties of an artwork (2) which attention is valued for its own sake. However, I dispute whether appending the clause—"valued for its own sake"—is really necessary.

In his "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," David Hume claims that "nothing is so proper to cure us of this delicacy of passion as the cultivating

of that higher and more refined taste" which, among other things, is that talent which enables us to discern discriminately artistic compositions.[16] Here Hume explicitly regards delicacy of passion as a defective character trait that can be combated by exercising our powers of noticing fine distinctions, which powers Hume labels the "delicacy of taste."

Exercising delicacy of taste in response to an artistic composition—detecting an expressive or otherwise aesthetic property of an artwork—is what Hume would, had he our vocabulary, have called an aesthetic experience. But note, it is an aesthetic experience that he recommends for being instrumentally valuable—that is, valuable as an antidote to our violent passions.

Nor is this a one-off remark by Hume. In his "Of Refinement in the Arts," Hume again observes that the refined (delicate, tasteful) experience of the arts softens tempers and counteracts barbarism.[17] Thus, on Hume's view, it would appear to be possible to undertake and value an aesthetic experience—the perception of an aesthetic property—without valuing said experience intrinsically, but rather instrumentally.[18]

Moreover, since Hume's position is not obviously self-contradictory, we have no reason to think that an experience of the aesthetic content of an artwork, sans valuing the experience for its own sake, is not a genuine aesthetic experience. Indeed, how else should we characterize it?[19] Consequently, valuing the pertinent experience of delicate discernment for its own sake is not a necessary condition for having an aesthetic experience.

Of course, we need not rest the argument here solely upon Hume's testimony. For, it is perfectly possible to imagine that someone, who never read Hume, might indulge in aesthetic experiences involving the delicate discernment of aesthetic properties on the belief—which may not be true—that it can rein-in his choleric tendencies. Maybe his grandfather recommended this nostrum; maybe he hatched it on his own. Nevertheless, so long as the percipient is attending to aesthetic properties of the artwork in the right way, shouldn't we count his experience as a legitimate aesthetic experience, even if his reasons for doing so are instrumental? How else should we categorize it? But if we agree to classify it as an aesthetic experience, then valuing said experiences for their own sake is not a necessary feature of aesthetic experience.

To have a grammatical experience of a stretch of writing, attend to its grammatical properties. Similarly, in order to have an aesthetic experience of an artwork, attend to its aesthetic properties in the ways mandated by the relevant practice. It is not clear why adding "and value the experience of detecting those properties for its own sake" is necessary. It really does tell us anything further about what one must do in order to peruse the object (or performance) in a specifically aesthetic fashion.

How does one go about instructing someone else to value something for its own sake? What does being told to do so add to the operations/computations one undertakes? And what if one performs the requisite acts of

attention, but not for their own sakes, but for some instrumental purpose, such as softening one's passions? Isn't it just arbitrary to suppose that one could be attending to the aesthetic content of the work in the right way, but not be having an aesthetic experience? Indeed, as what kind of other experience should it be classified?

In order to appreciate the arbitrariness of tacking on the requirement of intrinsic valuation to the content-oriented conception of aesthetic experience, imagine someone who, inspired by Hume's essay, seeks out aesthetic experiences in order to calm his savage breast. He reads Addison and Steele with interest and works on his native capacity to make delicate discriminations; but he does so in order to put his more robust passions in check. Moreover, he takes the pleasure he feels in making such fine distinctions as he does as a sign that his powers of delicate discernment are on the rise and that he is, thereby, conquering his violent tendencies. In other words, he values the pleasure in question instrumentally. Clearly, such a person is conceivable.

Imagine, at the same time, that he has a younger twin brother who engages the same artworks the elder twin does, with the same delicacy of discernment, and who tracks the self-same features of the works as his elder does using the same techniques of detection. But the younger twin values the experience for its own sake whereas the older brother values it instrumentally. Certainly such a situation is a possible one. But wouldn't it be patently arbitrary in such a situation to say one is having an aesthetic experience and the other is not? Is the prostitute not having a sexual experience because she values it solely instrumentally, whereas the libertine, engaged in precisely the same activities, is having a sexual experience because she values it as an end in itself?

Another liability with the standard notion of aesthetic experience is particularly evident in Stolnitz's formulation of it. For, as noted earlier, it seems excessively biased toward the consumption or reception side of the artistic interaction. As the artist attends to his piece, working out, for example, its formal design, his activity is hardly describable as "contemplative." Think of Jackson Pollock feverishly dripping paint on the picture plain of his canvas. He is intimately attending to and knowingly related to the form of his painting, discovering it splash by splash; but it strains the English language to call what he was doing *contemplative*. Recall that Harold Rosenberg dubbed it "action painting" and the label stuck for good reason.

Perhaps it will be observed that, on occasion, Pollock paused to survey what he had accomplished. In those moments, it might be said that he is contemplating the work, and, therefore that, in those intervals, he was having full fledged aesthetic experiences of the work. But, that seems overly contrived. Surely, Pollock was as engaged attentively with the form of the work while he was creating it as when he was inspecting it. It is not as though he was slipping in and out of a string of intermittent states of aesthetic experience.

And, what of artists who do not pause midway to size-up their results? Think of a dancer improvising to a piece of music; as she attends to the forms in the music, she invents movement patterns to interpret the sonic ones. She doesn't pause to look at a video of what she's done; she just keeps dancing, continuously attentive to the formal relationships between the music and her movement throughout.

Nor need the dancer be a professional. Imagine you are freely adapting your moves—*à la* 1970s—to a piece by the Rolling Stones. This example and the preceding ones all seem to me to be paradigmatic aesthetic experiences. But they do not involve contemplation. Thus, they will not fit Stolnitz's version of aesthetic experience. On the other hand, they pose no problem for the content-oriented approach, since the performers in each case are attending to the aesthetic properties of their artistic activities even as they generate them.

In response to objections like these, the advocate of the standard characterization of aesthetic experience may opt to part company from Stolnitz by dropping any mention of contemplation and by committing himself simply to the requirement that an experience is aesthetic only if it is valued for its own sake. But even this version of the standard account appears to fail to accommodate the activities of at least some conceivable artists. Imagine the artist who is in it for the money or the fame. He designs his pieces adroitly; he molds their formal structures with great care and understanding. But he values his own achievements exclusively for the glory and/or the riches they bring him.

Had he had the acumen to be an investment banker, he would have pursued that career. But as it happens, he has the eye of an artist rather than that of a financier. So he plies his art in order to secure the life-style he covets. He strives for perfection in the form of his artworks for ulterior or instrumental ends. When he looks upon the formal ingenuity of his artworks, he feels pleasure as dollar signs dance in his head. He does not value his engagement with form for its own sake, though his handling of the aesthetic dimension of his pieces is by all accounts quite masterful, knowing, and sure—in fact, it is far more estimable than that of the starving artist down the street who values his own formal engagements with his own work for its own sake.

There is, I submit, no reason to protest that the preceding case is not a possible one. Artists can be as venal as anyone else. But perhaps the defender of the standard view will attempt to claim that the example is not truly conceivable, on the grounds that our mercenary artist will have to stand back from his work from time to time in order to establish that the form is working as he intends; he will have to use himself as a detector in order to assure that his formal design will deliver the experience he wants. And when he does this, in those moments, it may be suggested, he will have to undergo an aesthetic experience in the standard sense in order to realize his more instrumental ends.

In response, first I wonder if valuing something intrinsically as a subroutine in valuing it instrumentally counts, in the last analysis, as genuinely valuing something for its own sake. But, that not withstanding, I would also challenge the idea that in order to assess the efficacy of the work, the artist must undergo an aesthetic experience in the standard sense. If I am constructing a suspense movie, I merely need to stand back from the rushes and notice whether or not I am feeling the palpitation of suspense. I need not value having that sensation for its own sake. I may cherish it precisely because it convinces me that I've got a blockbuster in the can. Nor does it make much sense to suppose that I must have a feeling that my experience is valuable for its own sake. There is no such feeling.

Nor need we focus merely on the case of the mercenary or social climbing artist in order to make the point here. Many artists, including cloistered monks in the Middle Ages, produced artworks, such as stained glass windows, sculptures, and illuminated texts, in order to express their reverence for the divinity. As they perused the intricate formal designs with which they decorated, for example, the pages of sacred texts, it is reasonable to think that many, or, at least, some of them valued them solely as humble offerings to God. We need not infer that they appreciated these designs for affording intrinsically valued experiences. If these works yielded satisfaction, that was not its own reward but a sign that they might be pleasing in the eyes of the Lord.

Moreover, with regard to some artist-monks, they valued their formal inventions not for the putative, associated, intrinsically valuable experiences, but instrumentally as a means to salvation An early twelfth-century inscription reads: "The monk Amandus alone wrote this book/for whom it may obtain the rewards of perpetual life."[20]

According to the standard characterization, the experience of artists like these, though concentrated relentlessly and with understanding, upon the form of their artworks, counterintuitively, does not qualify as aesthetic experience. It is some other, mysteriously unclassified experience of the aesthetic properties of an artwork.

Of course, similar problems can arise with respect not only to artists, but with critics as well. Suppose a critic keenly scrutinizes a work of art in order to write an article about it for which she will be handsomely paid. She piths the complex formal design of the work with breathtaking brilliance and understanding. Perhaps she even makes it possible for some of her readers to claim that she has enabled them to have an experience of the work which they value for its own sake.

But she does not value her experience of the formal structure of the work for the sake of having had that experience. To her, criticism has just become a job—one she does well, one that puts food on the table, but not one that she still relishes. The standard characterization will have to reject her experience as aesthetic. Yet that is a perplexing result, since critics, even jaded ones like this, often serve as exemplars of what it is to have an aesthetic

experience. We turn to them to guide us in the ways of aesthetic experience—to show us where to look and how to connect the various features of the work that capture our attention.

Of course, the content-oriented approach has no problem ascribing aesthetic experiences to the artists and critics just canvassed, so long as they are attending appropriately and with understanding to the formal, expressive, or otherwise aesthetic qualities of the relevant artworks. It is true that the content-oriented approach will be of little value in solving the demarcation problem—in helping us to sort the art from the non-art—since the content-oriented approach presumes that we have some independent way, sans reference to aesthetic experience, to establish when we are dealing with an instance of *A*rt with a capital *A*. But this should not be counted as a failure of the content-oriented approach to aesthetic experience. For, as I hope I have shown, it has always been a serious philosophical misunderstanding to suppose that the standard characterization of aesthetic experience, when coupled with the aesthetic theory of art, could solve the demarcation problem.

Notes

1 Henceforth, throughout this essay, unless explicitly alerted otherwise, the reader should presume that I am always talking about aesthetic experience in relation to artworks.
2 Of course, it remains unclear in the text whether these pleasures are tied to benefits, since Aristotle may hold that the pleasures these features instill are in the service of abetting or, at least, reinforcing the kinds of cognitive engagement he believes to be central to the imitative arts.
3 It should be noted that for Hutcheson *disinterestedness* amounts to little more than impartiality—that is, the pleasure in question is not a consequence of the pleasing recognition that the object of the stimulus serves one's *personal* interests. But since Hutcheson, like Shaftsbury, thinks that virtue evokes the pertinent kind of pleasure, their versions of disinterestedness are not utterly divorced from serving social, specifically moral, purposes. Kant, as we shall see, will champion a far more encompassing concept of disinterestedness, one that separates the pleasure in question not only from personal, selfish or egoistic purposes but from any social, moral, religious, or political purposes as well. It is in Kant that disinterestedness and purposelessness come together.
4 See Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1960) ch. 1.
5 This discussion is based on Paul O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in his *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
6 It is interesting to speculate that calling these arts alternatively the Beaux Arts or the Fine Arts might be connected to the ambiguity in the notion of *kalon* discussed earlier, since *kalon* too can be translated alternatively as "beautiful" or "fine" as well as "excellent."
7 Of course, Aristotle spoke of music and dance briefly too, but he thought of them as primarily accessories to drama.
8 A very important rival to this paradigm is the expression theory of art which has been influential throughout the modern period. It will not, however, be discussed in this essay.

9 Surely Horace's *dulce et utile* is descended from Plato's call for beneficial pleasure.
10 Quoted in Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600–1750* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1958) ch. I.
11 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
12 Indeed, as art begins to exit living social practices and emigrates into its own hermetic domains, like the concert hall, the gallery, and the museum, it abdicates its highest vocation, as Hegel notes, though perhaps not for the precise reasons that he suggests.
13 See, for example, Joseph Addison, "Taste and the Pleasures of the Imagination," in *Critical Essays from The Spectator*, ed. Donald Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 172–209.
14 John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 92. See also: Paul Mattick, "Art and Money," in *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
15 A. O. Scott, "In Search of the Best," *New York Times Book Review*, 21 (May 2006) 17–19. Aesthetic theorists of literature and other formalists sometimes dismiss articles like Scott's on the grounds that the kinds of considerations that concern him are really extra-literary—not really a proper move in the literary language game. However, I don't see how—without begging the question—one can rule as out of bounds the sorts of criticism Scott, a fully credentialed commentator, makes; if Scott doesn't count as a member in good standing in the practice of literature who does, and, more to the point, why them and not Scott?
16 David Hume, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," in his *Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 11.
17 David Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts," in *Selected Essays*, 171, 169.
18 It should be obvious that Hume has no allegiance to the notion of that an aesthetic experience is a matter of disinterested pleasure as it is understood in the post-Kantian tradition, since Hume is willing to count moral defects in artworks as blemishes with regard to their beauty. See his "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Selected Essays*, 152, 153.
19 It is remarkable that the proponents of the standard characterization of aesthetic experience never tell us how we are to categorize cases like this. Will they propose a special category? That seems both *ad hoc* and, in any event, hardly economical conceptually.
20 Andrew Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972) 67.

10 Between being and doing

Aesthetics at the crossroads

Jean-Pierre Cometti

In the beginning of *Ethics without Ontology*, Hilary Putnam notes that:

> The unfortunate division of contemporary philosophy into separate "fields" [ethics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, philosophy of logic, philosophy of mathematics, and still others] often conceals the way in which the arguments and issues arises in field after field.[1]

The recent and progressive re-emergence of ontological questions in aesthetics fully confirms this in a field that has its breakthroughs and drawbacks.

Ontological questions have been reintroduced in the analytical tradition by the 1948 publication of Quine's "On What There Is."[2] They have since developed in the context of a debate which in the Middle Ages already opposed the realists, the nominalists and the conceptualists.[3] Antirealism, partially sprung from Quine's influence and a specific reading of Wittgenstein, contributed to a recentering of the debate around an apparently exclusive alternative, various versions of which may be found in the many fields of philosophical thought, from the philosophy of mathematics to the philosophy of mind.

Until recently, aesthetics could seem to have remained aloof from these quarrels. The philosophy of art was simultaneously influenced by logical empiricism and its doubts about aesthetics, by Wittgenstein's philosophy of language games and its restrictive development, and by Nelson Goodman's own orientations, and as such it has remained neutral and has even abstained from entering this debate until the 1980s. In a famous article in which he insists that one should ask what art does rather than what it is, Goodman has justified this position and warned against the inevitable perplexities that await he who searches for a definition of art. Thus, in his own particular way, he prolonged what had first been John Dewey's and Monroe Beardsley's attitude, which happened to be a significant contribution to aesthetic thought later hastily put aside by positivism.[4]

These successive episodes still mostly constitute the background of today's debates, and I do not believe that one should set aside the questions

raised by Dewey, Beardsley and Goodman. They are intimately related to the eventful developments of analytical philosophy, from the early Carnap and the Quine of the "Two Dogmas" to the "linguistic" and then the "cognitive turn," not to mention the rebirth of pragmatism with authors such as Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam and Robert Brandom.[5] But they are also intimately related to the perplexities and questions raised by twentieth-century art and the revolutions that have occured in its development. Indeed, one should note that, contrary to what happens in a large part of European aesthetics, the reflection about art in America, although it has focused on the analysis of problems rather than on some direct or so-called substantial relation to art, has never been totally disconnected from the evolving reality of the artistic field. Arthur Danto, the best known American philosopher in France, is a good illustration of this dual inspiration and of a real interest for the significant events in the history of twentieth-century art.[6]

This interest in recent artistic developments may not be unrelated to the United States' role in the international artistic scene since World War II. For the time being, however, whether this dual inspiration has now dried up or not, it is clear that it has rejoined the trends of other philosophical fields by giving a new impulse to ontological questions, as clearly demonstrated by the renewed interest in the question of the definition of art.[7] Naturally, this gives rise to many different theses, but the doubts raised by the authors of the "linguistic turn" who chose to give up this type of questioning have been left far behind. The debate mostly concentrates on the nature of aesthetic and/or artistic properties, and it expectedly pits the realists against the antirealists, and the relativists against the antirelativists.

I will not make here a complete account of the debate, still less of its many philosophical implications. I will only sketch its essential outline, in order to show how, in my view, aesthetics remains at the crossroads. By this, I mean it is in a position that is essentially linked to the contemporary situation of art, broadly speaking, and to the patterns and representations historically inscribed in it.

The ontology of art

That one may do without an ontological analysis in the philosophical study of art may sound absurd. Indeed, if there is such a thing that we call "art," then it is perfectly legitimate that one should question this "there is." This questioning may take many different forms. It may turn metaphysical, or engage in the "deconstruction" of metaphysics—Heideggerian or Derridian. It may choose more minimal options, whether one wishes to bear or to bull the market. It may also explore other possibilities, taking into account the modes in which the artworks manifest themselves to us or how we relate to them.

All things being equal, and setting aside all speculations as to the place they have in a general history or representation of Being or beings, one does have to face the fact that objects of a particular nature do exist to which we

ascribe a specific name and status and which do necessarily attract our attention by their particular properties. From that stance, however simple it may be, the question they raise is not different from that raised by the world or by objects in general, with this only restriction that one must discern the various regions concerned, unless one chooses to satisfy oneself with the answer immediately implied by the question "What is there?": "What there is"—i.e. "everything" there is.

The first hypotheses that come to mind are those suggested by conventional philosophical schemes. Either there does exist a particular nature (essence) of these particular objects we call "artworks" and they call for some kind of particular recognition, or what qualifies an artwork as art must be related to some constituting and recognition process that must be identified as such and from which the very concept of art cannot be severed.[8] This debate differs from its equivalent in the philosophy of mathematics only by the nature of the considered objects. It hinges on the confrontation between the realists and the antirealists. The realists sustain that what qualifies art as art does not depend on the modes of recognition applied to it, while the antirealists believe that the properties ascribed to artworks are inconceivable without these modes of recognition, to which they give a constitutive role.

Naturally, such a schematic description leaves aside many more nuanced, complex, and sometimes ambiguous options. I will mention but a few, of various natures. Beardsley, who is somewhat marginal in this debate since he investigates the nature of the aesthetic experience, notes in the beginning of his magnum opus, *Aesthetics*, that there would be no art nor artwork should we be unable to speak of them.[9] The idea sounds important and I will deal with it further down, but what does it mean in the debate we are now considering? Should one perceive it as a form of what today is called antirealism? Strangely enough, it does not prevent Beardsley from raising the question of criteria for the evaluation of artworks, exactly as if these criteria were dependent on some of their properties.[10] Inversely, how should we understand this thesis which leads Danto to consider that an interpretation is the very principle that distinguishes art from non-art?[11] Such a distinction certainly has some ontological meaning, and subordinating it to properties sustains some form of ontological realism. However, how can we be expected to speak of interpretation without supposing some subject(s) likely to be engaged in the process of interpreting? These two positions are so closely interrelated, that perhaps it is not so easy to be a pure realist or antirealist, or even to give some powerful meaning to this disjunction.

Speaking of artworks, this question calls for a precise scrutiny of the sort of properties that are likely to justify either position—and why not a third one usually excluded from this type of debate? We apparently have no other means to characterize a thing than by indicating what are its specific and differential properties, whatever name we give them. In the case of art, these properties or attributes call for a double specification: they must be such

that they qualify the thing as art, as opposed to what is not art; they must also allow to distinguish artworks from other artworks in terms of their uniqueness as well as in terms of their respective value. In those three cases, it is generally allowed that these properties must be of some artistic nature—although aesthetic properties sensu stricto may also be taken into consideration.[12] Indeed, those properties that allow one to distinguish between two artworks could not be thus applied—and hence be accepted as relevant—should they be similar to those that allow one to distinguish between two ordinary objects, for they would compel us to dissociate what makes the artworks unique and what gives them value.

It goes without saying that such conditions belong to our understanding of the concept of art—one could almost say, to its "grammar." As such, they do not make it possible for us to decide on the reality of the properties considered or, more precisely, on their ontology. However, these two aspects of the question are intially interrelated, for their nature—to know whether artistic, and not only aesthetic, properties do exist—bears upon the very possibility of an ontology of artworks.

On what conditions could they be ascribed some kind of intrinsic objective reality? The usual expedient argument in favor of artistic properties puts forward that we distinguish between what is art and what is not—as we commonly do—by grounding our distinction on specific attributes, or else such a distinction would be impossible and the road would thus be paved for a form of aesthetic relativism that one would likely wish to limit to the field of evaluative judgments.[13]

The problem with this apparently natural hypothesis is two- and perhaps threefold. First, the properties one usually thinks of do not necessarily offer the expected satisfactory guarantee. Second, should this however be the case, one could not assert their (objective and intrinsic) reality otherwise than by begging the question ("it has to be so"). Third, one may wonder whether these properties' status is not exaggeratedly related to some ontological presupposition that gives priority to "objects," to such an extent that the questions raised might radically differ should we decide to give it up. I will dwell on theses three successive points for a moment.

The difficulties and ambiguities that characterize the first point have to do with the fact that the properties likely enter into a suitably functional definition must be of an "artistic" nature—i.e. they must be different from those that help us determine how an object or a feature belongs to a style or a genre: the novel or the epic in the field of literature, painting or drawing, Impressionism or fauvism, baroque or Romantic music, etc. Such classificatory distinctions are the objects of possibly polemical descriptions, but no one doubts the possibility of these properties and descriptions. Criticism and history are largely dependent upon them, and the descriptions and categories they use include value judgments that hark back to some cultural context, but the propositions they make are likely to be explained in such a way that discussion is possible—as long as they use a common form of

language that is open to justification.[14] But when, one may ask, does a property cease to be generic—not differing from those that usually allow us to classify objects—to become truly artistic, if one means by this that it may qualify an object as art without being assimilable to a mere conventional criterion? Naturally, conventions as such do assume this double function—identification and recognition—, but as such they naturally fail to ground as real the properties they help us identify.[15] In this sense, they offer no guarantee. I will not dwell upon the discontinuities of the "history of art" that may confirm our doubts. The only way to overcome them—or to turn them around—may consist in trying to close the "pale of history" as Arthur Danto has been doing for over two decades. But this possible rescue of realist artistic properties is inevitably turned upside down in the end, since, when history ends and art "after the end of art" begins, the recapitulative and intertextual dimensions of the postmodern thus made possible inevitably transform what the realist stance attributed to art per se into mere conventions.[16]

Needless to say, that those attempts at restoring the pertinence of intention—be it an "art intention," as suggested by Genette—change absolutely nothing, since one may not invoke any form of intention without resorting to criteria that must be external by definition.[17]

So, how could one ascertain the "reality" of the postulated properties otherwise than through the forms and conditions of their recognition? Realism as to aesthetic properties—be it metaphysical or moderate—is like all realism: it begs the question and ascribes a decisive role to the imperative sentence: "It has to be so." This imperative plays a part that the history of metaphysics has made respectable—if only because it has often been serviceable—but it really makes clear how are reasoning is often based on injunctions whose necessity, at best, is based on what is suggested to us by grammar. It may be, indeed, that a large fraction of conceptions and conceptual certainties are principally grounded in grammar, which in some cases serves as a justification. The grammar of the word "art," indeed, opens upon a number of implications belonging to our language. But it also opens upon a whole set of specific illusions, of which the realism of aesthetic properties may be a sample. Are these illusions necessary? At this point, one must examine the question of the object.[18]

A short survey of the ontological approaches of artworks reveals how much they rely on the object in relation with the question of identity. The ontology of artworks essentially is an ontology of the object (of presence, a Heideggerian would say), and this obviously is the reason why the question of properties has such an important part to play in it. Naturally, this same question may be applied to events and processes, but in order for these events and processes to become artworks or art, it is necessary that they should at one point fit into some object category, for under this condition only may the identity of the artwork be preserved. Music is a case in point. A work's performance (language does predetermine our meaning ...) may

be considered as an event or process some of whose properties as a musical language or emotions conveyed may be described. But, as in all allographic art, we here have only an occurrence of the work, so that these describable properties must ultimately somehow, at least for some of them, refer to some underlying reality that can not be limited to the sole performance, or else it would not even be identifiable or classifiable as such. The object we call the work—whether one sees it as a type, an inscription, or whatever—seems to be the condition under which the possibility of art exists. In this sense, the problem of the identity of the artwork is indeed subsumed in the postulate of a particular category of objects. Most artforms and artworks we are familiar with justify this reduction which, no doubt, belongs to the grammar of the word "art."

There remains one difficulty, however—clearly raised in the discussion of Goodman's theses on music—when one focuses on non-written, traditional or improvised musics, or more generally on all these musics whose meaning and identity are strictly limited to one occurrence or, to be more precise, to one performance as such.[19] The questions of the identity and of the object are then put in a radically different way and the natural postulations of the ontologies of art become highly contestable. I will now try to develop this point and to extend its implications beyond the limited realm of these specific types of music.

Being or doing

Allographic works in general are interesting for they do not concentrate our attention on the object but on the performance.[20] Naturally, as is suggested by the case of music, the very fact that one may associate the work to a number of occurrences or performances presupposes that the work has some distinct status. The theses on identity, whether they resort to an inscription or to a type, presuppose that one may relate the performances to something that makes the identification possible and whose properties must also be identifiable.[21] In this sense, the allographic work, like autographic works, must assume some condition of subsistance that guarantees the possibility of its existence. This condition may take different forms, but it is grounded on some more essential stability that allows us to speak of the work in the singular.[22]

It is likely that, in this context, the attribution of the work to its author plays a more important role than one would first be ready to believe.[23] One of Goodman's examples best illustrates this. If one admits that an artwork exists as an artwork only when it functions as an artwork, then one may consider that a painting by Rembrandt used to fill in a broken window pane ceases to exist as the artwork it is as soon as it is used to this other end. But then one cannot abstain from thinking that it will again assume its previous status as soon as it is hung back on the walls of the Rijksmuseum. ... However unstable its status may appear, it reveals itself to be resistant, as if

it was incorporated in the work itself as much as in the concept of the artwork.

Significantly, dealing with the question of identity raised by such possible détournements, Goodman finally admits that the Rembrandt used as a window pane does not lose its identity. It ceases to be an artwork because it does not function as such, but its attributive identity is not modified.[24] One is tempted to ask to what extent it may resist modification. How far should one go in the détournement of the object—it is an object, indeed, in this case—for the object to lose all identity (including its identity as an object)? One may answer that the limit is not factual but conceptual. If we needed to think that, under extreme conditions, artworks somehow cease to be identifiable, we would then no longer need to speak of artworks, unless we modified our concept of artworks and redefined all artworks as ephemeral—and this would make sense only if one related the artwork to an author. This last point doubtless is a major condition of the concept of artwork—especially when one considers how the various possible détournements jeopardize an identity which the physical object is in no position to ascertain by its own means.[25]

Another famous example goes in the same direction. In the name of his "right of détournement"—quite comparable to that Duchamp himself brilliantly exerted in his own time—a young artist of Marseilles decided to put Marcel's "Fountain" back to its original use. The trial that ensued clearly foregrounded the importance of property rights (they contribute to the fixation of identity, since they presuppose it) and the crucial role of attribution as regards the constitution of an object as artwork and its integrity—and hence, its identity.[26]

At the same time, all this reveals the contingency of the object's properties. "Fountain" is irrelevant as object, as Duchamp has often repeated. As object, it offers conditions of identification and permanence that are useful, but it is not these properties that give it the status of art.[27]

We have been dealing with autographic works. Is it any different with allographic art? In the case of music one might first be tempted to say that détournements—which are so frequent in this medium—are limited in scope by the prescriptions given by the score, or at least—when there is no such thing as a score—in a set of identifiable features which have a normic effect.[28] In the case of a readymade, the physical object's defining features are not likely to have any relevant normic value. On the contrary, a series of notes or a harmonic suite may have such power.[29] The only acceptable détournements are those that preserve a sufficient number of identity features. They may then be perceived as variations and the value they are given depends upon their difference. To be more precise, it is the distance and the nature of the distance taken with the source work that gives them meaning and value.

The only artworks which seem to share the characteristics of music and of the readymade are those, such as acousmatic music, for which there is no

inscription and whose occurrences have a status comparable to that of a primitive recording's copies. But once more, as in all the cases I have mentioned, reasoning in terms of works that are identifiable in a form or an object probably puts the question wrongly.

The conditions in which a great number of musical works are being produced today may help us understand why. The recording—the printing or digitalization—has become a decisive element of the process. As such, technically, it may seem merely contingent, but such is not the case. First, because the printing acts as a condition of production and of diffusion: a work's conditions of diffusion are part of its process of production. Second—and simultaneously—because this is a true condition of production, since what is being printed (or digitalized) is not an occurrence of the work but the work as such, i.e. the realization at a given instant of a sound event whose identity strictly adheres to what happened at that instant under certain given conditions that may only be preserved through a recording.

The transformation of the works' conditions of production is of great interest. It modifies musical practices as such. The record has played a decisive role in the evolution of jazz music and, more generally, of all improvised musics. The possibility of hearing several times the same musical sequences has refashioned learning processes by refocussing them on hearing the music rather than reading a score. The place given to sound is another important element in those new musical practices that benefit from the new techniques of the record and CD. However, the most important consequence of all this is a new perception of "reproductibility" and of the meaning one should give to the conditions in which a work is being produced.[30] I will now dwell upon this point, for it may help us understand why the ontological approaches are so limited in scope.

Certainly, a record is an object. What qualifies it functionally, and may allow us to ascribe it some value, is contained in the fact that it is the recording of a musical event that is not necessarily just another performance—by which I mean one occurrence of a work which may have many occurrences. In such a case, in which the work resides within a unique event, the recording is not a contingent element anymore. Contrary to what happens with the recordings of written works, the take here gives the condition of reproducibility without which the work would only exist in a given space and time. The record, here, is what gives the work its identity, and this identity cannot be dissociated from the record.[31] The technical possibility guarantees the work's aesthetic existence, and they cannot be dissociated.

One may formulate this differently, however. Our representation of what a work should be makes it look much like an object and obfuscates a very important aspect that is more obvious in musical works. A recording session is an event or a performance of which a record keeps a trace. Not only can the work not be dissociated from it, but it cannot be dissociated from the conditions of the session—this includes the characteristics of amplification, the definition of the sound, whether there is an audience or not, the envir-

onment, whether and how the recording was prepared or rehearsed, and all the variable conditions of the moment. In other words, to use one of Goodman's favorite words, one should include into the definition of a work's production all the modes of its activation.[32] But one should be aware that such a formulation still distinguishes the activation from the work. In the case of a works as performance, the work and the activation are but one.[33]

One may object that these remarks concern but one very specific type of art in the limited field of music. I believe such is not the case. As far as music is concerned, it would be an error to believe that a work's performances are but mere occurrences or instantiations of it. This would be contestable even for written music, and it is contrary to the practices of music lovers who may be attracted by such or such composer but may also be passionately devoted to such or such interpretation. The quest for a satisfactory interpretation often takes the appearance of a quest for "authenticity," but this illusion is self-contradictory since it values a mode of attraction which, as far as music is concerned, is performance-centered.[34] Now, of course, while we speak of performance, written works exist in an inscription that defines its rules and limits. But perhaps one should see this as a mere historical contingency that has been hypostatized by our language as well as by our institutional, legal and economic frameworks.[35]

Furthermore, what we have glimpsed concerning musical works is not irrelevant to visual artworks. Autographic works, which are more easily given object status, are not to be dissociated from the conditions of activation that allow them to function aesthetically. The reification or fetishization of which they are the object is in the line of an illusion generally held to be a constitutive element of the judgment of taste, but this illusion obstructs our understanding of works that function contextually and interactively. Anyhow, if no object may play this part of the artwork alone, if the illusion that it is possible all the same is based exclusively on reasons and conditions limited to certain institutional cultural and economic conditions, and if this culturally determined illusion cannot pretend to have a final say about the art of all eras and cultures, then one must admit the obvious and give up once and for all the ontology of the object that governs our analyses and valuations.

Aesthetics without ontology

If I were to sum up my reflections and the reasons why, in my mind, we should reject all ontological approaches to art, I would like to do so by adapting Putnam's phrase I used at the start of this chapter: we need an aesthetics without ontology.[36] Naturally, all depends on what one tries to defend under the banner of ontology. I have tried to show that a philosophical or critical approach to artworks should devote some attention to the conditions under which they function. This Goodmanian notion is rooted in the idea that the only possible aesthetics is an aesthetics of usages and that

pragmatic conditions should always prevail over other conditions.[37] As Wittgenstein suggested in another context, it is in the nature of philosophy that it fall in the trap of images that create confusion and perplexities. For all things pertaining to art, the object is such a powerful image that springs from our grammar—by which I mean our language and all that is suggested by our judgments.[38] Furthermore, this powerful image is in tune with our familiar tendency to reify, with the needs and preferences of the economy of art, not to speak of our economy of desires, which both spring from and return to the global market. But this image is not the truer for all that. It is directly contested by a great variety of contemporary artistic modes I have not analyzed here, ranging from Duchampian readymades to land art and new forms of music. Finally, this powerful image does stand when the philosophical analysis of art takes into account the role of activation and of contextual and interactive conditions under which artworks actually function.

This is the reason why we should include the works' operating modes in our view of artworks or in the very notion of the work of art—but do we really need to seek a definition? And naturally, we should first take into consideration the necessarily variable conditions under which they operate. Concentrating our attention on this aspect would not necessarily exclude all ontology, but it would considerably alter its meaning and reach. One important aspect would have to do with the question whether it is useful to reason in terms of properties. I have already expressed my doubts about this. I would add that the only acceptable properties, in my perspective, are those that remain describable in a given context of action and understanding, somewhat like what happens in Wittgenstein's language games. In other words, the description should focus on those rules and criteria that are immanent in the game, but also, and in a comparable measure, on the implied situation.

One is often mistaken in situations of linguistic communication when one concentrates exclusively on the words. It is the usages and the pragmatic conditions they determine that make the whole system work meaningfully. So it goes with art. The Being is always one with a Doing beyond which it is useless to cast one's net. In this matter also there comes a moment when "my spade is turned."[39] One should not exclude the possibility of a humble ontology: art and artworks have their own mode of existence, although they thus interact with conditions far in excess of their restricted field of definition. In the perspective of such an appreciation, however, questions of aesthetic properties' realism or irrealism, transcendence or immanence, are utterly irrelevant. Ontology, in this perspective, is rather one with anthropology.

Translated by Bertrand Rougé

Notes

1 H. Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 1.

2 W. V. O. Quine, "On What There Is," *Review of Metaphysics*, 1948, in *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper, 1963).
3 Cf. Quine, op. cit.: 14–15.
4 M. Beardsley,*Aesthetics : Problems in the Philosophy of Crticism* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1951). Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* (1978) can be read as giving up any positivistic prohibition, and opening a way to pragmatist views, contrasting with definitional approaches.
5 W. V. O. Quine "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"; in R. Rorty (ed.) *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); R. Brandom, *Making it Explicit* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). This story—in relation to questions belonging to philosophy of language and then to philosophy of mind—runs along two main streams corresponding to analytic and pragmatist philosophy. Contrasting with analytic aesthetics' interest in definition and ontology, pragmatist aesthetics gives priority to *experience* (Cf. R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) and *Sous l'interprétation* (Paris: L'Eclat, 1994)).
6 A. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
7 Cf. J.-P. Cometti (ed.) *Les définitions de l'art* (Brussels: La Lettre Volée, 2004).
8 For such aspects of the question, see Rainer Rochlitz, "Définitions philosophiques et définitions pratiques de l'art," in *Les définitions de l'art*, op. cit.
9 Cf. M. Beardsley, op. cit.: 2nd edn, "post scriptum" of 1981.
10 M. Beardsley, op. cit.
11 A. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, op.cit.
12 Sensu stricto, "aesthetic" properties cannot be relevant. But the very notion of "artistic" properties is not clear, and perhaps it is misleading, for it might be restricted to generic properties, i.e. properties falling into descriptions and conventions. The only other possibility seems to be what Wittgenstein uttered in his *Tractatus* : "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen." In such a case, there is no room for what we call "aesthetics" as a field of philosophy.
13 Relativism of taste is not self-refuting, for the claim itself is not a matter of taste. But subjectivism generates other difficulties and paradoxes in relation with Kant's "claim to universality" involved in any judgment of taste. To give it a meaning, you have to rely on (public) *criteria*—and not on any "private language."
14 As they can be *described* they can be *justified*. This is a (philosophical) presupposition of any valuation. If not, there is no other way than subjectivism and the fallacy of private language.
15 This does not mean that where you have conventions you do not have any "objectivity." But properties that are ascribed to objects on the ground of conventions, and help us to give a referential pole to the discussion cannot either be *the same* or tolerate the *same description*. Even physical and perceptual properties, often taken as irrelevant, from an artistic point of view, may have an artistic meaning under *some conditions*. The same colour, for instance, or the same sound—both *have* a physical status and *do not have* the same value or meaning in two different works. *These* conditions play the main part for distinguishing what is art and what is not art. It is not enough to conceive art in the light of thought or interpretation.
16 "Postmodernity"—i.e. the transformation of properties and styles into conventions able to be used without any precondition—exemplify such a situation. The Hegelian concept of *Geist* only conceals the very nature of this conviction: "Anything real is rational, anything rational us real." That is the magic way for solving the question of "aesthetic properties."
17 Cf. G. Genette, "Du texte à l'oeuvre," in *Questions IV* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1999). Speaking of "intention d'art" rather than of "intention artistique" does not supply any solution. It begs the question and looks like a tautology. It makes no difference.

18 R. Wollheim's *Art and its Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) helps to understand what aporia we have to face when thinking in terms of objects.
19 One can think of course of traditional music without any score, but overall of what happened with new means of recording, i.e. new modes of production and diffusion—on the ground of the same material: recording is the very condition under which the work enters into the public space, and by which it exists.
20 See D. Davies, *Art as Performance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) and the discussion around his arguments in *Philosophiques*, 32.1, "Disputatio."
21 Such a possibility depends on several properties shared by any performance. But it does not hold in contextual, random or improvised musics.
22 This fact contributes to the conception of work as an object.
23 In present conditions, the connection of any work with a name plays an important role in recognizing the work as art, and in giving it a place on the market.
24 Cf. N. Goodman, "Art in action," in *Of Mind and Other Matters*, op. cit.
25 As in any case where the object is "indifferent" (Duchamp) or "indiscernable" (Danto).
26 Cf. Nathalie Heinich, *L'art contemporain exposé aux rejets*, Nîmes: J. Chambon, 1998, V, "Pinoncelli pisse à Nîmes."
27 What would allow us to take it as an object—of some kind : properties of form, color, material, and so on—is on the contrary what excludes it from the world of art. One would have to make a special case for aesthetic properties, but this is exactly what Duchamp refused.
28 The meaning and value of such détournements depends on aspects and determinations belonging to the first work. A lot of cases have to be considered: irony, humor, reference, quotation, and so on, but you have first to recognize to *what* such or such aspect refers—and so you are able to *hear as*. One question is whether the same holds for "readymades". What holds for Duchamp's *In Advance of a Broken Arm*—for instance—doesn't seem so different. In thinking it in terms of "indiscernibility," you let in on the side what appears as a lateral reference and its ironic or critical meaning.
29 They hold as *prescriptions*.
30 See the interesting remarks of Vincent Cotro and of Christophe Kihm in "Révolutions industrielles de la musique," *Cahiers de médiologie/IRCAM* (Paris: Fayard, 2005).
31 Recording played a major part in jazz and its development, especially regarding improvisation. For instance, Charlie Parker paid a lot of attention to Lester Young's own records. For several important reasons, a score (including a retranscription) could not help in this way; what can be heard in this way could be compared with Kant's *exemplarity* of any work of art.
32 It's difficult not to think of Benjamin's "aura" and "technical reproductibility." But—I think—new means of reproduction need new ways of thinking *authenticity* (the question of *here* and *now*).
33 Any record is of course an object, and can be related as such to magical aspects or functions.
34 N. Goodman, "Art in Action," in *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) 146–74.
35 See the discussion with D. Davies, in *Philosophiques*, op. cit.
36 H. Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology*, op. cit.
37 In such a way that it involves its very *plurality*. As for interpretation, there is here no room for *exclusivity* nor *authenticity*.
38 Cf. *Art, modes d'emploi*, op. cit., and my "Activating Art," *Journal of Aesthetices and Art Criticism* (winter 2000).
39 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) section 217c.

11 Schopenhauer and the foundations of aesthetic experience

Alex Neill

> Kant, instead of viewing the aesthetic problem from the experience of the artist (the creator), like all philosophers considered art and the beautiful exclusively from the point of view of the "spectator," and in the process unwittingly included the "spectator" himself in the concept "beautiful" ... —the experiences of the artists are on this thorny issue "more interesting."
>
> (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, essay 3, section 6)[1]

Is aesthetic experience a distinctive kind of experience, with a set of defining features, and perhaps even a particular phenomenology; and if so, what is its character? Or is it rather the case that a variety of different sorts of experience can properly be thought of as aesthetic? These are questions that have swum in and out of focus in philosophical aesthetics for centuries. My purpose in what follows is not to attempt to add to the number of answers that have been offered to them, by producing or defending a particular account of the nature of aesthetic experience. My interest is rather in the question of how such accounts are grounded: to what sort(s) of thing will an account of the nature of aesthetic experience have to appeal in order to stand any chance of success? And in particular, I aim to show that in the aesthetic theory that he develops in *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer suggests an answer to that question which is radically different from the one commonly attributed to him—that is, the one that was dominant in early modern aesthetic theory and that underpins much contemporary thought about the nature of aesthetic experience.

Again, then: in what sort(s) of thing will any potentially successful account of the nature of aesthetic experience have to be grounded? A common answer (albeit one not always made explicit by those who in effect endorse it) has been "introspection."[2] Monroe Beardsley, for example, suggested that the difficulty philosophers have experienced in articulating "the aesthetic character of experience" derives not least from the difficulty involved in producing "accurate phenomenological description";[3] elsewhere he proposed that the person best equipped to articulate that character is "the practised introspecter."[4] And the latest of his own attempts to characterize aesthetic experience was quite clearly introspection-based: aesthetic experience,

he suggested, is experience marked by feelings of "object directedness," "felt freedom," "detached affect," "active discovery," and "wholeness."[5]

Now if Beardsley's characterization of aesthetic experience is in fact underwritten by nothing more than appeal to introspection, then however rich and illuminating it may be, it will in the end be undermined by what might be called lack of authority. And this, I suggest, applies to any characterization of aesthetic experience based on introspection. For suppose we were to ask why it is *these* features in particular—"object directedness," "wholeness," and so on, in Beardsley's case—which are taken to distinguish aesthetic experience. One answer might be: "If you introspect on your own aesthetic experiences, and reflect on the introspection-based reports on their aesthetic experiences given by others, you will simply discover that these are the features that emerge." But to the extent that what is at issue here is (as it was for Beardsley[6]) in part precisely whether there is any such thing as "a peculiarly aesthetic sort of experience," this answer comes dangerously close to begging the question.[7] Again, then, we might ask why the kind of experience (allegedly) distinguished by the features in question is properly to be thought of as *aesthetic*? And the answer, I suppose, is likely to be that if we introspect on our experiences of what Beardsley called "artkind instances," and of "other objects or situations (especially natural objects) that are often grouped with artkind instances in respect to an interest we take in them,"[8] we will find that these are the features that emerge. But emerge as what? As most common, or most frequently occurring? That seems unlikely to be true—"artkind instances" and the sorts of things that are often grouped with them in discussions of this sort are experienced in all sorts of ways, and there is no reason to suppose that the features Beardsley lists, or those cited in any other introspection-based account, are more common or frequent features of our experience of them than are a host of other candidates, such as envy, covetousness, irritation, boredom, exhaustion, depression, indifference, and so on.

Could it rather be said that features of the sort Beardsley is concerned with emerge as somehow most *significant* when we consider our experiences of "artkind instances" and the like? Something like this is clearly what is needed; but this move will be available only if the proponent of an account like Beardsley's—an introspection-based account of aesthetic experience—has some non-question-begging means of establishing the significance of these features, of showing what *makes* them most significant. And introspection cannot play that role, simply because it lacks the relevant kind of authority: the fact that a certain feature of my experience seems significant to me does not in itself entail that it *is* significant in the sense required here, which is—in Beardsley's terms—that of being criterial of a distinctive kind or category of experience.

The moral here is that appeal to introspection cannot by itself adequately ground an account of the nature of aesthetic experience. Any attempt to delimit this variety of experience, or indeed to suggest that there is such a

variety to be delimited, if it is to stand any chance of being authoritative, will in the end have to appeal to something other than the results of introspection. And to see what that might be, it is helpful to think back to the origins of the modern idea of aesthetic experience, in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century British empiricism.

Looking to the writings of that period, a beguilingly simple answer to the question of what constitutes aesthetic experience emerges: a given experience of *x* is an aesthetic experience just in case it is an experience of *x* as beautiful. In fact, of course, that is far too simple, as was recognized very early on in the development of early modern aesthetics: if this answer, or proto-definition of aesthetic experience, is to be more than momentarily tempting, "beautiful" will have to be taken as a place-holder for a range of properties—sublimity and picturesqueness were early additions to the range, and more recently the case has been argued (if not yet won) for properties such as messiness, cleanliness and even sparkliness.[9] It would seem, then, that a full expression of the basic empiricist intuition that aesthetic experience is the experience of something as the possessor of an aesthetic property would have to be disjunctive in form ("a given experience of *x* is an aesthetic experience just in case it is an experience of *x* as beautiful, or as sublime, or as picturesque, or as …") and is likely to be quite extended. However, reflection on the direction that the development of early modern philosophical aesthetics took in the period between the appearance of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* and Kant's Third Critique, and in particular on the increasing focus on taste and the logic of aesthetic judgment during that period, suggests a somewhat more economical formulation of the empiricist intuition, as follows: *a given experience of* x *is an aesthetic experience if it is such as could ground a characterization of* x *in terms of aesthetic predicates, or could ground an aesthetic judgment (a judgment of taste) the object of which is* x.

Now I take it to be uncontroversial that something like this, which I'll call the empiricist conception, is the way in which aesthetic experience was generally conceived in the lead-up to the nineteenth century—though doubtless the formulation I have just given would have to be modified in one way or another in order to be plausibly attributed to any particular figure in that period. It is, as might be expected from a period in which the idea of aesthetic experience was in its nascency, a very minimal conception; for example, it is neutral with respect to the questions with which we began, the questions of whether aesthetic experience is a distinctive kind of experience, and if it is, what its character might be. For, first, the empiricist conception, as I have formulated it, leaves open the question of whether there is a more or less wide range of varieties of experience that can ground aesthetic judgment, or whether there is only one such variety; and, second, it leaves open the scope of the term "aesthetic predicate," and hence leaves open the question of whether or not a particular variety of experience is necessary to ground a characterization of something in terms of such predicates.

Despite its minimalism, however, the empiricist conception does suggest an (at least partial) explanation of why it is that any account of aesthetic experience which relies wholly on appeal to introspection must be inadequate: however suggestive the results of introspection may be, they cannot by themselves settle the issue of what sort(s) of experience can ground aesthetic judgments, or the application of aesthetic predicates, and hence cannot be decisive in determining the nature of aesthetic experience. And at the same time, the empiricist conception points toward what it is that is missing from any account of aesthetic experience that is based wholly on introspection: any account of aesthetic experience that is to have any chance of being authoritative, it claims, will have to be grounded in considerations about the logic of aesthetic judgment, or the logical grammar of aesthetic predicates.

Now this claim may seem quite opposed to the thought that in giving an account of the character of aesthetic experience our basic appeal will be to introspection. But in fact, I suggest, accounts such as Beardsley's are most charitably understood not only as consistent with, but as ultimately grounded in, the empiricist conception. I argued earlier that what an account of the former sort needs, and what introspection cannot provide, is a non-question-begging way of establishing the significance of those features which it claims are revealed by introspection to be central to aesthetic experience—in Beardsley's case, "wholeness," "detached affect," and so on. And a natural move for the proponent of such an account ("natural" both in the sense that, given the extent to which empiricist intuitions are embedded in contemporary aesthetics, it is hard to think of a proponent of an apparently introspection-based account who would be very resistant to it, and in the sense that it is hard to think of a better one) is to appeal to the empiricist conception: to argue, that is, that the features in question are significant in the relevant sense because they (unlike others) are capable of grounding judgments of taste and the application of aesthetic predicates.[10]

And introspection-based accounts are not the only contemporary accounts of aesthetic experience that are most naturally (again, in both senses given above) construed as underwritten by the empiricist conception. We can also see the latter as underpinning, for example, Robert Stecker's "minimal conception" of aesthetic experience as "the experience of attending in a discriminating manner to forms, qualities or meaningful features of things, attending to these for their own sake or for the sake of this very experience."[11] For if one were to ask why it is experience of this sort that is properly construed as aesthetic, rather than, say, the experience of attending to things in such a way as most efficiently to bring on a bad headache, it is hard to see a better answer than that experience of the sort that Stecker has in mind, but not experience designed to bring on a headache, is capable of grounding aesthetic judgments and/or the application of aesthetic predicates.[12] And that answer, again, appeals directly to the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience.

I began, then, by asking what sort(s) of thing an account of aesthetic experience will have to appeal to if it is to stand any chance of being successful.

As we have seen, the answer implied by eighteenth-century aesthetic theory—an answer, I have suggested, that remains alive and well in contemporary philosophical aesthetics—is that such an account will have to be grounded in considerations concerning the logical grammar of aesthetic predicates and the logic of aesthetic judgment. And it is against this backdrop that I want to turn now to one of the most distinctive characterizations of aesthetic experience that the history of philosophical aesthetics has to offer: the characterization developed by Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation*.

In section 34 of that work, Schopenhauer gives a memorable sketch of the character of aesthetic experience, as he conceives it. "Raised up by the power of the mind," he writes,

> we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one another, whose final goal is always the relation to our own will. Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*. Further, we do not let abstract thought, the concepts of reason, take possession of our consciousness, but, instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to perception, sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether it be a landscape, a tree, a rock, a crag, a building, or anything else. We *lose* ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression; in other words, we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object. . . . [W]hat is thus known is no longer the individual thing as such, but the Idea, the eternal form.[13]

Some of the central aspects of Schopenhauer's understanding of aesthetic experience are represented here. To summarize (necessarily briefly): (1) Our capacity for abstract reasoning, and the fact that our epistemic access to the world is standardly governed by the forms of the principle of sufficient reason (namely, space, time, and causality), are in Schopenhauer's view functions of the fact that the intellect's evolutionary purpose is to serve the needs of the individual will. (2) In aesthetic experience, our individuality is "forgotten," or as he puts it elsewhere, "abolished";[14] that is to say, in aesthetic experience the intellect breaks free of its service to the will. Once relieved from that service, the intellect is no longer given over to abstract reasoning or to perception governed by the forms of the principle of sufficient reason. (3) Given that individuation is a function of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, this means that when the intellect is not operating in service to the will, the objects of perception are not individuals. (4) When the intellect is not operating in service to the will, the objects of

perception are rather the (as Schopenhauer insists, Platonic) "Ideas." What precisely the Ideas are supposed to be, their place in Schopenhauer's ontological scheme, is a matter of considerable debate among scholars; for present purposes, however, we can remain agnostic on the matter, noting simply that in Schopenhauer's scheme the Idea of a kind of thing in one sense or another represents its essential nature. When he says that in aesthetic experience the objects of perception are the Ideas, then, Schopenhauer's thought is that in aesthetic experience we have, in one sense or another, access to the essence of things, to a reality that lies behind the realm of ordinary, non-aesthetic, experience.

Now this is to say the least a very distinctive, even idiosyncratic, view of the nature of aesthetic experience. And of the many questions it prompts, an obvious one is this: even supposing that we grant that Schopenhauer has given us a coherent and well founded characterization of a particular variety of experience, why should we think of this variety of experience as distinctively *aesthetic*?

Given the point in the development of philosophical aesthetics at which Schopenhauer was writing, it would seem plausible to suppose that his answer to this question would in one way or another appeal to the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience. And although Schopenhauer himself does not (at any rate, explicitly) address the question, what he does say suggests two answers that might be given on his behalf, both of which appear to do just that. The first is that experience of the sort outlined in the passage I have just quoted is aesthetic inasmuch as this is simply what the experience of beauty (and, with certain modifications, of sublimity) consists in. Charity, however, suggests that this answer should be suppressed (however attractive one suspects that it may have been to Schopenhauer himself), for in the context of his system it is hopeless. What makes it so is that much of Schopenhauer's discussion of beauty and sublimity is devoted, in effect, to *defining* those concepts in terms of the sort of experience outlined in the passage quoted above. And given the stipulative nature of those definitions, if his characterization of this sort of experience as aesthetic were based on its capacity to ground the application of such concepts, that characterization would itself be no more than stipulative.

The second answer, however, looks more promising; indeed, to those schooled in the history of philosophical aesthetics, it has often seemed obvious. For in drawing the distinction between "the ordinary way of considering things" and what he refers to as the "aesthetic way of knowing," or "aesthetic method of consideration," Schopenhauer emphasizes a feature of the latter that has long been held to be a fundamental feature of aesthetic experience: namely, its disinterestedness. As he construes it, our ordinary epistemic engagement with the world is interested, in the sense that the intellect is ordinarily concerned with things only inasmuch as they bear directly or indirectly on the needs of the individual will. In the normal course of things, indeed, what we can have knowledge of is limited to what

is in this sense of interest to us: as Schopenhauer puts it at one point, "knowledge that serves the [individual] will really knows nothing more about objects than their relations" to each other and to the individual, precisely because "only through these is the object *interesting* to the individual."[15] By contrast, "the aesthetic way of knowing" involves contemplation without consideration of "the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things"—which is to say, without any consideration of their bearing on us. "We can apprehend the purely objective inner nature of things, namely the *Ideas* appearing in them," Schopenhauer says later, "only when we ourselves have no interest in them";[16] only by "considering things as though they could never in any way concern the [individual] will."[17] Such consideration or contemplation is "calm," then, in the sense that it involves no reference to our own needs or wants: as Schopenhauer says, "physiologically considered" such contemplation depends on "a strong excitation of the brain's perceptive activity, without any excitation of inclinations and emotions."[18]

It is clear, then, that Schopenhauer holds that the kind of attention to things that gives us access to their "inner nature" is disinterested attention. By itself, however, that cannot license his characterization of that kind of attention as aesthetic, for although the association of disinterestedness with aesthetic experience is very familiar—so familiar, indeed, that the basis of Schopenhauer's characterization of the "aesthetic method of consideration" as aesthetic may just seem obvious—the connection between the two cannot simply be taken as given. For one thing, even if disinterestedness is a necessary condition of aesthetic experience, it may not be a sufficient condition. Furthermore, it cannot simply be assumed that disinterestedness *is* a necessary condition of aesthetic experience: it is certainly not self-evident that it is, and arguments that it is not are far from uncommon in the recent history of aesthetics. Disinterestedness, in short, is in the same boat as any other property that may be proposed as being distinctive of aesthetic experience: if such a proposal is to be persuasive, it will have to be underwritten by an argument that establishes the necessity or sufficiency (or at the very least, as I put the point in relation to Beardsley's theory, the significance) of that property for aesthetic experience. And given this, the attempt to justify Schopenhauer's characterization of the kind of experience in which we gain access to the Ideas as aesthetic experience on the basis that he construes that experience as disinterested, faces a hurdle. For at no point does Schopenhauer offer any such argument.[19]

But perhaps this hurdle is not insurmountable. After all, Schopenhauer was profoundly influenced by Kant. And Kant, of course, did provide an argument for the necessity of disinterestness to aesthetic experience; an argument that appeals directly to—indeed, that might be said to be the paradigm expression of—the empiricist conception. To put it very sketchily, Kant argued that disinterestedness is essential to aesthetic experience inasmuch as, given the peculiar nature of judgments of taste, only disinterested

pleasure is capable of grounding such judgments. Now Schopenhauer's picture of aesthetic experience is in some respects very reminiscent of Kant's: not only do both see disinterestedness as an essential quality of the experience, but Schopenhauer's view that the experience does not involve conceptual thought, and that it is made possible by the intellect's freedom from its service to the will, is at least evocative of Kant's thought that aesthetic experience depends on the free play of the faculties of understanding and imagination. Isn't it reasonable, then, to assume that it is indeed the disinterested character of the variety of experience that gives us access to the Ideas that leads Schopenhauer to label it "aesthetic," and that in doing so he is implicitly relying on Kant's argument for the necessity of disinterestedness to aesthetic experience, and hence, in effect, on the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience?

This line of thought represents a common way of understanding Schopenhauer's place in the history of the idea of aesthetic experience: Nietzsche, for example, while noting that Schopenhauer's "close relationship to the arts was of a completely different order from Kant's," suggested that "Schopenhauer made use of the Kantian version of the aesthetic problem," and "failed to escape the Kantian definition'.[20] And Copleston argues that "Schopenhauer developed what Kant had already noted [concerning disinterestedness and judgments of taste,] and incorporated it into his philosophical system. The Kantian influence is an undoubted fact, and Schopenhauer, of course, was quite aware of the fact."[21] Now Copleston is right that the Kantian influence on Schopenhauer's aesthetics is a fact that needs to be recognized. But a proper understanding of Schopenhauer's aesthetics depends on recognizing too (a) that there are central elements of Kant's aesthetics that are not taken up or developed by Schopenhauer; (b) that there are important elements of Schopenhauer's aesthetics that are not in Kant's; and (c) that even where Schopenhauer's picture of aesthetic experience can usefully be thought of as a development of Kantian ideas, it is a development that does not simply apply or extend those ideas, but that radically transforms them. And the firmer our grasp of these points is, I suggest, the less temptation there is to suppose that Schopenhauer's characterization of the variety of experience in which we have access to the Ideas as aesthetic is based on an implicit appeal to Kant's argument for the necessity of disinterestedness to aesthetic experience.

Consider first the most evident instance of the sort of thing referred to in point (a) above: Kant's concern with the logic of aesthetic judgment. This is a topic about which Schopenhauer simply has nothing to say. It hardly needs remarking, however, that Kant's argument for the necessity of disinterestedness to aesthetic experience is based entirely on considerations concerning the logic of different types of judgment: as he has it, disinterestedness is essential to aesthetic experience inasmuch as only disinterested pleasure can ground judgments that have the logical character that judgemnts of taste, as opposed to cognitive judgments and judgments of the agreeable, have. If

Schopenhauer were implicitly relying on this argument, then, he would be committed to (at least something very similar to) a Kantian view of aesthetic judgment. However, not only does he say nothing to suggest that he is aware of any such commitment, but what he does say about aesthetic experience implies a quite *un*-Kantian conception of aesthetic judgment: in contrast to Kant's view that judgments of taste are essentially non-cognitive, Schopenhauer's commitment to the thought that in aesthetic experience we have access to the Ideas suggests that judgments grounded in such experience will in one way or another have deep cognitive significance. To reiterate point (b) above, not everything in Schopenhauer's aesthetics is also to be found in Kant's.

But there is a further and even more compelling reason to reject the thought that Schopenhauer's reference to disinterestedness is essentially Kantian. For in Schopenhauer's hands, the notion of disinterestness is very different to the notion that Kant appealed to in characterizing the nature of judgments of taste—so different, indeed, that it is far from clear that Schopenhauer's notion can in any very useful way be thought of as a development of Kant's at all. Kant's notion of disinterestedness is, after all, fairly limited: for one thing, in his analysis of aesthetic judgment, "disinterested" is a term that qualifies *pleasure*, specifically, rather than a general attitude or way of engaging with things; and for pleasure to count as disinterested, all that is required is that its occurrence be unrelated to any desires of the person experiencing it.[22] It is true that the occurrence of this variety of pleasure depends on the "free play" of the faculties, but there is certainly no suggestion in Kant that disinterested pleasure depends on anything like perception unconstrained by the forms of sensory intuition or the categories of the understanding! But that, *mutatis mutandis*, as it were, is precisely what disinterestedness in the Schopenhauerian sense involves. In Schopenhauerian terms, "disinterested" qualifies not just one aspect, but every aspect of an episode of experience; it denotes, as it were, a general mode of engagement with or attention to the objects of perception. In short, as Schopenhauer construes it, disinterested experience is much more radically discontinuous with ordinary experience than it is in Kant's theory. And it is clearly not the case that the necessity of (so to speak) Schopenhauerian disinterestness to aesthetic experience can be derived from Kant's thought on the logic of aesthetic judgment, or even from Kantian-type considerations: no plausible account of the logic of aesthetic judgment could entail that judgments of beauty, for example, depend for their force and coherence on experience in which the object of the judgment has been perceived not as a particular thing, but rather as (something like) a type or universal.

In the end, then, it is simply implausible—or at least extremely uncharitable—to suppose that in characterizing the variety of experience in which we have access to the Ideas as aesthetic, Schopenhauer is relying on Kant's argument for the necessity of disinterestedness to aesthetic experience.[23] And this brings us back to the question: why does Schopenhauer characterize

this variety of experience as aesthetic? What, if anything, is supposed to licence that characterization?

Thus far, we have been supposing that Schopenhauer's answer to this question is bound to be couched in terms of the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience—a supposition which looks plausible enough, given the point at which Schopenhauer was writing and the clear influence on his work of Kant's thought. But in fact, I suggest, so long as we are constrained by that supposition, we will inevitably end up either attributing to Schopenhauer an answer (like those I have considered above) that he could not, or at least should not, have thought a good one; or concluding that he has no answer at all. And in either case, we will end up with a distorted picture of what he has in mind. For Schopenhauer does in fact have an answer to our question, but it turns out to be an answer based on a perspective on aesthetic experience entirely different from that which was dominant among his predecessors in the history of philosophy and which, as I suggested earlier, remains alive and well in contemporary philosophical aesthetics.

This answer emerges when Schopenhauer begins to develop his theory of art. As the subtitle of book III of *The World as Will and Representation*—"The representation independent of the principle of sufficient reason: the Platonic Idea: the object of art"—suggests, Schopenhauer's thought is that works of art (with, as it turns out, the important exception of musical works) are in some sense *about* the Ideas. He introduces the thought as follows:

> What kind of knowledge is it that considers what continues to exist outside and independently of all relations, but which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and is therefore known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the Ideas that are the immediate and adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, of the Will? It is *art*, the work of genius.[24]

The suggestion that art is a "kind of knowledge" has an odd ring, but it is in fact consistent with more familiar ways of conceiving of art: on the one hand, with the conception of art as a set of things, namely artworks; and on the other, with that of art as a kind of activity or practice (or set of activities or practices). For what Schopenhauer is claiming is that works of art are, like the theoretical products of the social, natural and pure sciences, the products of a certain sort of reflection; or—a different way of putting the same point—that the practice of art, like the practices of the sciences, is itself grounded in a certain sort of reflection or "way of considering things."[25] So his thought that art is a "kind of knowledge" might be captured by saying that art is a practice, or set of practices, that is grounded in a kind of knowledge, or by saying that works of art express a kind of knowledge. And the kind of knowledge in question, Schopenhauer claims, is knowledge of the Ideas.

If works of art express knowledge of the Ideas, then, the creator of a work of art, the artist, must have had epistemic access to the Idea(s) that his work

represents. Indeed, Schopenhauer suggests that the capacity for sustained engagement with the Ideas is the essence of artistic genius: "the man of genius … dwells on the consideration of life itself, strives to grasp the Idea of each thing, not its relations to other things."[26] And it is here that that disinterestedness comes into Schopenhauer's picture. For the Ideas, as "the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies," do not exist in space and time: as Schopenhauer puts it, "neither plurality nor change belongs to [them]." And that is to say that the Ideas cannot be grasped in terms of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason (space, time and causation); as he says, "the Idea does not enter into that principle."[27] Now ordinarily human beings are limited to knowledge that is constrained by the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, as a function of the fact that intellect, the faculty of knowledge, has as its function the maintenance of an individual will, which is interested in matters external to itself only insofar as they are causally (hence spatially and temporally) related to it. It follows, then, that only under conditions in which the intellect is not "serving" the will could epistemic access to the Ideas—that is to say, the experience that the artist requires, the experience that is expressed in a work of art—be possible. But where the intellect has broken free of the will, it has also broken free not merely of inclination and desire, but of individuality as such.[28] And that is precisely the condition under which experience is, in the Schopenhauerian sense, disinterested. Schopenhauer does, then, provide the theoretical resources out of which an argument for the necessity of disinterestedness to aesthetic experience can be constructed. But both the argument and the conception of disinterestedness with which it is concerned are wholly different from those developed by Kant.

Now it is likely to be objected at this point that all this at best shows how it is that Schopenhauer construes disinterestedness as essential to *artistic*, as opposed to *aesthetic*, experience. And responding to this objection brings us, finally, to the answer to our question concerning what underwrites Schopenhauer's characterization of the variety of experience in which a person has access to the Ideas as aesthetic. The fact is, I suggest, that his characterization of this variety of experience as aesthetic is based precisely on his conception of the nature of art and the experience of the artist. It is true that, as Schopenhauer (somewhat grudgingly) accepts, the capacity for experience of the Ideas is not restricted to those possessed of artistic genius: a limited capacity for this kind of experience, he says, "must be inherent in all men."[29] And even in those possessed of genius, experience of the Ideas is not sufficient for the production of art; the genius also needs motive and artistic technique if his experience is to be expressed (or, more precisely, if what he has experienced is to be represented) in a work of art. However, experience of the realm of Ideas is certainly a *necessary* condition for the production of a work of art: it is the experience in which the artist or creative genius receives the inspiration out of which the work of art grows. And I take this to be the basis of Schopenhauer's identification of aesthetic

experience: experience of the Ideas, experience that is disinterested in the sense that it involves transcending the demands of the will, and hence the transcendence of individuality, constitutes aesthetic experience just inasmuch as it is the variety of experience which makes art possible. As he might have put it, if any sort of experience merits the label "aesthetic," what stronger candidate could there be than the variety of experience through which an artist receives his inspiration?

In the end, then, Schopenhauer offers an answer to the question with which we began—the question of what sort of thing could constitute the basis of a potentially plausible account of the nature of aesthetic experience—that is strikingly different from the answer that has been dominant in philosophical aesthetics since the eighteenth century. While the latter, inspired by the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience, has construed aesthetic experience essentially in terms of the logic of aesthetic judgment, and in that sense in terms of the experience of the "spectator," as Nietzsche put it in the passage that I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Schopenhauer's conception of aesthetic experience, in striking contrast, is derived fundamentally from reflection on the experience of the artist and the nature of art.[30]

With respect to the history of philosophical aesthetics, this is highly significant. Schopenhauer's role in that history has all too often been misunderstood as amounting to little more than that of an (eccentric) elaborator of Kantian ideas. But as I have argued, this is a mistake; getting the history right—which is to say, getting an accurate understanding of the tradition out of which contemporary philosophical aesthetics has developed—depends on recognizing that in fact Schopenhauer offered a distinctive alternative to the line of thought about aesthetic experience that had its paradigm statement in the Third Critique. Getting the history right, that is, depends on paying closer attention to Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory than philosophers have typically paid it to date.

But is Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic experience of anything more than historical interest and significance? The question with which we began concerned the possible sources of appeal of any *plausible* account of aesthetic experience. And is Schopenhauer's account even potentially plausible?

The answer likely to spring to mind first is that obviously it is not, inasmuch as it is so deeply rooted in his metaphysical system, which is, to put it mildly, hard to swallow whole. Now there is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater here: it may be that at least some of Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory (and indeed his philosophy of art) is sufficiently detachable from his metaphysics to bear assessment on its own terms. Whether or not that is so is a matter for another occasion. But in the meantime, it is worth considering whether the core element of his thought that I have focused on in this paper—the idea that aesthetic experience is best understood by appeal to the nature of art and to the experience of artists—considered independently of any particular metaphysical underpinnings, is even potentially plausible.

One might be tempted to appeal to the "test of time" here: doesn't the fact that the empiricist, or judgment-based, conception of aesthetic experience has come to be as dominant as it has, and the virtual disappearance from philosophy of what might loosely be called the Schopenhauerian perspective (perhaps the only contexts in which the latter even partially survived that have had much impact in contemporary philosophical aesthetics are Dewey's thought on aesthetic experience, and Clive Bell's on the nature of art) indicate the superiority of the former? But by itself this appeal is not persuasive, for the decline in fortune of the Schopenhauerian perspective (or rather, its decline in philosophical aesthetics; for obvious reasons, it has never gone out of favor among artists) may be explicable in ways that do not imply the superiority of the empiricist conception. Nietzsche, for example, argues (in effect) that it is explicable in terms of character failure in philosophers.[31] Less apocalyptically, the following might be pointed to as contributory factors: First, the aesthetic theory of the first major proponent of the perspective, Schopenhauer himself, has commonly either been misread as offering no more than an idiosyncratic variation on Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, or summarily rejected because of its metaphysical underpinnings. Second, those who did take up the perspective following Schopenhauer—notably Nietzsche, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Bell, and Dewey—did so in styles that were in one way or another at odds with the increasingly academic and professional discipline that philosophy was at the time becoming. Third, the issues that the empiricist conception of aesthetic experience brought to the fore in aesthetics were much more obviously and clearly related to issues in other areas of philosophy, and particularly in metaphysics, epistemology and meta-ethics, than were those highlighted by the artist-centered conception. Fourth, an increasing reluctance in Anglo-Saxon philosophy, partly fueled by developments in the discipline, and partly by developments in the artworld, to think in grand terms about the nature of art (as opposed to the definition of the concept), let alone to attempt to theorize on the basis of artists' experience.

In the end, I suggest, an explanation of the dominance in modern philosophical aesthetics of the empiricist, or judgment-based, conception over the Schopenhauerian perspective on aesthetic experience is very likely to be explicable in terms of considerations such as these; that is, in terms of considerations that do not imply the conceptual superiority of the judgment-based conception. Again, then, it is worth asking whether the Schopenhauerian, or art/artist-centered, perspective on aesthetic experience, considered independently of any particular metaphysical underpinnings that it might be given, has anything to recommend it.

If one conceives aesthetic experience as a species, so to speak, as constituting a distinctive variety of experience, the answer is that it does not. For whether one thinks of aesthetic experience as a particular species of experience that is evoked or constituted by focused engagement with works of art and certain other sorts of thing (as Monroe Beardsley did, for example), or as a species

of experience that grounds aesthetic judgment (as Kant did, for example), it would clearly be implausible, unless one were in the grip of a certain sort of metaphysical picture, to suppose that reflection on the experience of artists (even supposing that such experience is all of a kind) would be of any more than marginal use in fleshing out such a such a conception.

The problem here, however, lies with these ways of conceiving aesthetic experience, rather than with the Schopenhauerian perspective on the matter. For the fact is that the idea of aesthetic experience as a distinctive species of experience is simply no longer viable. The ways in which art has developed in the last century or so make unignorable the fact that there is no one species of experience constituted or evoked by our engagement with works of art, let alone a species of experience constituted or evoked by our experience of works of art and all the other sorts of things that may be the objects of aesthetic judgment.[32] By the same token, nor can it plausibly be supposed that there is any single species of experience that is alone capable of grounding aesthetic judgment.[33] And what this suggests is that the idea of aesthetic experience, if it is to be useful at all, needs to be understood in a so-to-speak particularist way: rather than thinking in terms of a distinctive species of experience, we should be thinking in terms of what is it to experience particular sorts of thing aesthetically. There is simply no reason to suppose that what it is to experience Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* aesthetically has much if anything in common with what it is aesthetically to experience Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son*, or that either of these experiences has much if anything in common with an aesthetic experience of a grove of giant sequoias. But that is not to deny that with respect to each of these things there may be distinctively aesthetic ways of experiencing them, or that in attempting to understand their significance and value it may well be important to reflect on what aesthetic experience of them may consist in, and on what it may depend on or demand from us. And in thinking about aesthetic experience at this level, there is every reason to suppose that with respect to certain works of art (consider Elie Wiesel's *Night*, for example), and indeed certain genres of art (conceptual art, for example), an emphasis—a Schopenhauerian emphasis—on the nature of the (sort of) thing being experienced, and on the experience of its creator, is likely to be essential.

Notes

1 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 83.
2 There is an obvious parallel here in the philosophy of religion, where attempts to understand the nature of religious experience have very often appealed to introspection.
3 Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience," in his *The Aesthetic Point of View*, eds Michael Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1982) 286.
4 Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience Regained," in *The Aesthetic Point of View*, 78.

5 Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, 288.
6 As he says, "it is ... still an open question whether it is possible—or, if possible, worthwhile—to distinguish a peculiarly aesthetic sort of experience" (Beardsley, op. cit.: 285).
7 It may be objected that this charge is based on a misconception of the role supposed to be played by introspection in this context; introspection, it might be held, is meant to reveal the character, rather than establish the existence, of aesthetic experience. But this suggests that episodes of aesthetic experience can be identified independently of introspection, and an account of what that identification is based on will have to be provided. In the following paragraphs I consider what I take to be the most natural basis of such an account in post-seventeenth-century philosophical aesthetics.
8 Beardsley, op. cit: 285.
9 See for example Thomas Leddy, "Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: 'Neat,' 'Messy,' 'Clean,' 'Dirty,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53 (1995) 259–68; and his "Sparkle and Shine," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 37 (1997) 259–73.
10 Whether this move would be successful with respect to any particular account is another matter, of course. But if it were not, that would be a *prima facie* strike against the account in question.
11 Robert Stecker, "Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Value," *Philosophy Compass*, 1:1 (2006) 1–10. http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1747–9991.2005.00007.x
12 I leave aside the question of whether experience of the sort Stecker characterizes is in fact capable of doing so.
13 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969) 178–79 (henceforth WWR I or WWR II, depending on the volume referred to).
14 WWR I: 169.
15 WWR I: 177.
16 WWR II: 369.
17 WWR II: 367.
18 Ibid.
19 Although, as I shall argue later, something of the sort can be reconstructed from what he does say.
20 Nietzsche, op.cit.: 83, 84.
21 Frederick Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism* (London: Search Press, 1975) 108.
22 On this, see Nick Zangwill, "UnKantian Notions of Disinterest," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32 (1992).
23 For a related discussion of differences between the aesthetic theories of Kant and Schopenhauer, see Christopher Janaway, "Kant's Aesthetics and the 'Empty Cognitive Stock,'" *Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (October 1997) reprinted in Paul Guyer (ed.) *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
24 WWR I: 184.
25 Ibid.
26 WWR I: 188.
27 WWR I: 169.
28 The account of just what this means, and how it is possible, is complex and by no means transparent in Schopenhauer's writings.
29 WWR I: 194.
30 Nietzsche was wrong, then, in attributing the Kantian, or empiricist, perspective to "all philosophers": Schopenhauer took precisely the perspective that Nietzsche thought ought to be taken, and took himself.

31 See the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals.*
32 Any proposal that there is such a variety of experience will inevitably be met with two sorts of response: from the artworld, and perhaps also from those interested in the aesthetics of the environment, with the production of things that seem to be legitimate objects of aesthetic judgment but which cannot appropriately (or perhaps even possibly) be experienced in the way proposed; and from philosophical aesthetics, with a barrage of arguments to the effect that all sorts of things that are neither artworks nor in any obvious sense objects of aesthetic judgment can nonetheless be appropriately experienced in the way proposed.
33 Accounts like that proposed by Stecker, for example, (see note 11 above), are better understood as defining a genus, rather than a species, of experience.

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