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Aesthetic Order

A Philosophy of Order, Beauty and Art

Ruth Lorand

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Aesthetic Order

"an impressively far-ranging and thoughtful study"
Kendall Walton, University of Michigan

In spite of its centrality in human experience, beauty has in the last century been ostracized from philosophical discussions and its bond with art severed. *Aesthetic Order* not only revives interest in beauty and brings it back into the limelight of aesthetic discussion, but also recrowns it as a vital and central concept that reigns the understanding of art.

Ruth Lorand explains beauty in terms of a lawless order, one that captures the complexities of beauty and its inherent paradoxes. Art is then the product of the attempt to master this order and create beauty.

The book begins with a detailed discussion of the notions of order, disorder, and their mutual dependence. It proceeds with an analysis of interpretation. The notion of asesthetic order is presented as a complementary notion to the traditional, discursive concept of order, which is quantitative in its approach. Aesthetic order, as both quantitative and qualitative, interprets experience and expresses values, cultural and individual preferences, and a sense of necessity. Lorand draws from an impressive breadth of philosophical material from Plato to Spinoza, Kant, and Wittgenstein, as well as contemporary aestheticians such as Goodman, Mothersill, Ingarden, Danto, Margolis, and others. She also draws from recent research in experimental aesthetics and Information Theory.

Aesthetic Order challenges contemporary theories of aesthetics, offering beauty as a form of interpretation that integrates both quantitative and qualitative aspects of experience. It will be of importance to anyone interested in aesthetic theory.

Ruth Lorand is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Haifa, Israel.

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Ruth Lorand

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To my friend
Giora Hon

To those who are awake, there is one ordered universe common (to all), whereas in sleep each man turns away (from this world) to one of his own.

Heraclitus

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Introduction

This book is an inquiry into the nature of beauty and art. It presents a comprehensive theory of aesthetics that emerges from the analysis of the concepts of order and disorder, their various types and interrelations. The theory is based on the fundamental claim that beauty is an expression of a particular type of order, namely the aesthetic order. Art is presented as the product of the attempt to master this order and thereby create beauty.

Beauty is paradoxical. The experience of beauty is imbued with a sense of order and necessity—a beautiful object creates the impression that its elements complement each other and are rightly situated. However, the fact that there are neither constitutive nor stipulative rules that govern beauty appears to stand in contrast to the idea that beauty expresses order. In what sense, then, is beauty a form of order? A standard solution forces us to choose one of the following positions: either there are principles of beauty that have not yet been discovered and await philosophical and scientific examination, or there are no aesthetic principles, and beauty is therefore an expression of disorder. The theory presented in this book accepts neither of these positions; it strives to explain beauty in terms *of lawless order*. This inquiry demonstrates that the paradoxical concept of "lawless order" captures the paradoxical nature of beauty—captures, but does not solve it. The theory of lawless order does not pretend to remove the inherent paradox of beauty. It attempts to exploit the paradox as a means for understanding the peculiarities of the aesthetic experience.

One of the implications of defining beauty in terms of lawless order is that the domain of aesthetics, unlike the domain of ethics, does not allow for normative disciplines. There have been numerous attempts in the history of aesthetics to establish normative aesthetics, either in terms of cultural norms or in the form of a science (e.g. Baumgarten's science of aesthetics and Hogarth's line of grace). These attempts have been found wanting or ineffective and indeed have been rejected by many aestheticians, not least by Kant. Scientific endeavors to decode the formula of beauty—in psychological or mathematical terms—have also failed to fathom the enigmatic rules. Fashions, trends and schools decree rules that are expected to be abrogated, thereby making room for a succession of new ones.

This peculiarity of aesthetics is amplified when compared with ethics. The distinctions in ethics between (1) ethical problems (level of experience), (2) normative ethics (first-order theory) and (3) meta-ethics (second-order theory) is widely accepted and applied in the literature. Normative ethics, no matter how one conceives of its origin and validity, is effective in everyday life as well as in philosophical analyses. When it comes to aesthetics, a level seems to be missing between the (first) level of aesthetic experience and the (third) level of philosophical reflections. The philosophical inquiry into the nature of art and beauty, by the very analogy with ethics, ought to be, in fact, called "meta-aesthetics".

The philosophy of aesthetics thus finds itself in the awkward position whereby a second-order theory has no first-order theory upon which to reflect. Meta-aesthetics has to address the level of experience without any intermediary theory. The feeling that something essential is missing here may partly explain why the fortune of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy has never been glorious. However, the "absence" of normative aesthetics does not justify the claim that aesthetics (or meta-aesthetics) has no subject matter, or that it has to be dreary, or that it must be limited to methods of criticism.[1]

The difference between ethics and aesthetics concerning the normative level constitutes one of the primary issues of meta-aesthetics. This difference may serve as a key to the problematic nature of the aesthetic domain in general and the concepts that define its range in particular. Being caught in the clutches of analytical philosophy, many current aesthetic theories have been very impatient with any idea that is suspected of having been contaminated by essentialism. Analytical philosophy has encouraged fractured discussions of art as a series of separate issues and abstained from comprehensive theories.[2] Avoiding "essences" resulted in a confusing situation in which it is unacceptable to inquire into the essence of art or beauty, but it is acceptable to discuss the different implications of these concepts.

The theory of aesthetic order is a meta-aesthetic theory. It does not offer norms or methods of aesthetic appreciation, but searches for the fundamental concepts that may elucidate the aesthetic experience and associate it with non-aesthetic experiences. Paradoxical and problematic as it may be, the aesthetic experience is still a part of human experience and it needs to be understood as such. It must have, therefore, beside its peculiarities also a common ground with other aspects of life. This common ground is *order*.

The principal claim of the theory of aesthetic order is that order appears in two basic types: discursive and aesthetic. These types of order share the general characteristics of order: complexity, necessity and other quantitative features.

---

[1] These arguments were raised in articles by Hampshire, 'Logic and Appreciation'; Passmore, 'The Dreariness of Aesthetics'; and Gallie, 'The Function of Philosophical Aesthetics', all in Elton (1954). These authors, among others, formulated analytical criticism of traditional aesthetics and influenced the development of aesthetics particularly in the Anglo-American philosophy.

[2] Passmore advises aestheticians to withdraw from generalities and confine their discussions to particular properties of particular works of art, which, in his eyes, are the proper subject matter of aesthetics. Joseph Margolis assures us that "Passmore's advice […] has been followed." Margolis (1993:134).

However, discursive order consists of a priori principles that are typically associated with the conventional concept of law and predictability. By contrast, aesthetic order cannot be captured by a priori principles. It is a lawless order—a kind of necessity that is not dictated by general laws. Discursive order expresses the general, the common and the reproducible; aesthetic order expresses the individual, the unique and the search for the innovative. Discursive order expresses the need to regard the particular as an instance of the general and the individual as a member of a group. Aesthetic order, by contrast, expresses the need to conceive of the individual as unique and yet lawful. Both types of order are indispensable, irreducible and mutually dependent—in a word, they complement each other.

The book is divided into three parts:

I Understanding order: the general analysis of order and disorder
II Two types of order: the distinction between discursive and aesthetic order
III Aesthetic queries: central issues pertaining to beauty and art in the light of the theory of aesthetic order

I Understanding order

The first part of the book analyzes the general concepts of order and disorder. In spite of their centrality to human experience, these concepts have been given very little attention in philosophy. Order and disorder are not only the prerogative of science, they are relevant to every field of human interest, including beauty and art. The general analysis of order in Chapter 1 furnishes basic notions and justifications for the possibility of aesthetic order and its affiliations to other forms of order. Disorder, as the complementary concept of order, receives similar attention in Chapter 2. It plays an important role in understanding the origin of beauty and artistic merit.

II Two types of order

The second part of the book constitutes the main body of the aesthetic theory. It begins (in Chapter 3) with a detailed analysis *of discursive order,* the order that is expressed in logic, mathematics, scientific theories, moral theories and everyday general and systematic thinking. On the basis of the results obtained in the first part of the book, Part II continues with the argument that discursive order cannot, for logical as well as pragmatic reasons, exhaust all types of order.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the argument that beauty and art cannot be explained in terms of discursive order. Chapter 5 examines Bergson's contribution to the theory of order. Although Bergson's view is criticized on some crucial points, it is acknowledged as the seminal inspiration for the distinction between the two orders presented here.

Chapter 6 exhibits the *quantitative* characteristics of *aesthetic order* compared with discursive order. Whereas discursive order expresses a tendency towards high indifference, low informative value, high redundancy and predictability, aesthetic order is sensitive, informative and exhibits a tendency towards low redundancy and predictability.

Chapters 7 and 8 present an analysis of the *qualitative* aspect that has no analogy with discursive order. Aesthetic order, according to this analysis, consists of a special kind of *interpretative relations* among its elements. The discussion opens with a general account of interpretation. Again, from the general concept, through the examination of its various types, the analysis arrives at a detailed account of the specific kind of interpretation required for understanding aesthetic order. This analysis provides the basis for understanding art as a form of interpretation. A work of art, from this perspective, is the product of an interpretation that the artist gives to materials taken from various aspects of life.

Chapter 9 examines various relations and interactions between the two types of order and various types of disorder. These relations are important for the understanding of the dynamics governing the aesthetic realm. The analysis explains, for instance, how it is possible for a typical "non-aesthetic" object to acquire aesthetic interest (and vice versa), or how a change in knowledge and non-aesthetic values affects aesthetic evaluation.

III Aesthetic queries

The third and final part of the book applies the theory of aesthetic order to central problems of beauty and art. Chapter 10 considers beauty and Chapter 11 focuses on art. Kant's theory of beauty, for instance, is criticized in terms of the relations between the two orders: Kant regarded pure beauty as non-conceptual and detached from interests; according to the analysis presented in Chapters 7, 8, and 9, such a detachment is impossible. Mothersill's view, which offers an understanding of beauty in terms of individuality, is criticized for focusing on pleasure and ignoring the qualitative aspect of beauty. The chapter concludes with an account of the opposites of beauty; these opposites are presented in terms of discursive order and different types of disorder.

Chapter 11 examines and criticizes current definitions of art and argues that a work of art is the product of an attempt to create beauty. In the final analysis, beauty is a complementary interpretation of raw materials (as explained in Chapters 7, 8, and 10), an interpretation that attempts to express their hidden potential. A work of art offers a new interpretation of its constituting materials and thereby a new understanding of them. The work is therefore evaluated by this standard, that is, to what extent has the work succeeded in providing a new and significant understanding of its materials.

A work of art is evaluated on two levels that are theoretically distinct but hard to separate in actuality: (1) the choice of *materials* that express the preferences of the artist as well as cultural and natural constraints; and (2) the processing of these materials that results in the *new interpretation,* a new *aesthetic order*. The first level involves non-aesthetic evaluation (moral values, political beliefs, individual preferences, cultural motifs, natural resources, and such like); the second level is a purely aesthetic evaluation—the evaluation of the interpretation itself. The first level can be explained and justified by various theories (ethics, psychology, physics, and so forth), whereas the second level expresses an immediate apprehension whose evaluation cannot be justified by general laws. Art criticism and art history can offer knowledge regarding the first level, that is, the level of materials, but it cannot provide a method for evaluating the aesthetic order itself.

How can we know that something is beautiful, or that something is a good work of art, without relying on a priori principles? To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that we do. But how exactly this is achieved remains an enigma. We may offer a limited description for each case, but not a justification. Kant is apparently right: beauty concerns both our rationality and our sensuality.[3] However, in our aesthetic experience we are unable to distinguish the sensual from the rational; we cannot calculate their contributions separately. We are, therefore unable to clearly distinguish between "form" and "content" in the aesthetic context or evaluate separately each level of the aesthetic order. Explanations and justifications of the aesthetic experience, no matter how detailed and knowledgeable, remain partial and incomplete; the paradox and its enigmatic effect are capable of being alleviated but never removed. This is the unsolved problem of *lawless order*. Philosophical analysis, however, gains its strength not only from solving problems, but also from highlighting difficulties and drawing the limits of philosophical understanding.

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[3] "Pleasantness concerns irrational animals also, but beauty only concerns men, i.e. animal, but still rational, beings—not merely *qua* rational (e.g. spirits), but *qua* animal also." Kant (1951a: §5).

Part I

Understanding order

The general analysis of order and disorder

The book of Genesis begins with the creation of order out of chaos. Chaos, the state of no distinctions, was conquered when God separated heaven from earth, light from darkness and water from dry land. Life on earth had begun with distinctions and order.

Order concerns all aspects of life and has many manifestations. We discern order in Nature, in our thinking, in our goals and in our values. We distinguish between natural orders and artificial orders, actual orders and desired non-materialized orders, hidden and apparent orders, shared and private orders. In some cases we believe that order is inherent in things, in other cases we strive to impose order where we do not find it. But is there one basic understanding of what order is? Is such basic understanding necessary for the comprehension of particular orders?

David Bohm and David Peat answer this question positively. "The notion of order", they argue,

> extends beyond the confines of a particular theory; permeates the whole infrastructure of concepts, ideas, and values; and enters the very framework in which human thought is understood and action carried out. To understand the full meaning of creativity, and what impedes it, it is necessary to go into the whole nature and significance of order.
>
> (Bohm and Peat, 1989:104–5)

I tend to agree with Bohm and Peat mainly for methodological reasons: the understanding of the "whole nature" of order is a necessary step that should precede any particular implication of the concept within a theoretical framework. If one wishes to inquire into the nature of aesthetic order as distinct from other forms of order, one must start with the very common and general concept.

There is, however, a kind of philosophy that rejects such supposition or method of analysis and suggests that we inquire into particular functions of order and their relations rather than dwell on the general concept. At least one interpretation of Wittgenstein's "open concept" argument (Wittgenstein, 1976: Part I, §65–75) opposes the above Platonic view implied by Bohm and Peat. Such an understanding not only questions the possibility of a general understanding of "order" apart from its particular cases, but also denies the benefit of such an endeavor. Without going into the question whether or not all concepts have definable essences, I wish at the outset to clarify two methodological points:

1. The theory presented in this book is based mainly on conceptual analyses and arguments that depend on these analyses; conceptual essences constitute therefore the basic elements of the theory. The ontological status of these "essences" should not concern us here. One cannot analyze concepts, relate them to each other or present coherent arguments about their meaning unless one assumes, at least for the sake of argument, that concepts have distinct and definable contents. Definitions and analyses of concepts do not necessarily describe the common use of the word (which may be hard to describe) nor the common understanding of the concept (which may be confused). Rather, they give an account of the use of the term in a particular theory, and it may be useful for comparing different theories. This understanding guides the analysis of order that is offered here and will be essential to the aesthetic theory presented in the following chapters.
2. Although order is a fundamental concept, it is surprising how little attention it has received in philosophical discussions. It is common to find arguments concerning the existence, status, kinds and measure of order in a given system, but the idea of order itself is either briefly sketched, implied, or it is ignored altogether. Within the following analysis of order and disorder, I wish not only to prepare the necessary tools for a comprehensive theory of aesthetic order, but also to address this lacuna. I shall start, therefore, from the general idea of order and examine its basic presuppositions without particular affiliation to aesthetic matters.

1 What is order?

A working definition

We gain an intimate acquaintance with the nature of order through its complex manifestations in everyday experience. However, the complexity of experience tends to obscure the distinctions between the features that are typical of order *per se* and qualities that belong to the individual cases and their contexts. To disclose that which the richness of experience conceals requires an analysis of the concept of order itself, independently of its particular manifestations. The definition offered by Rudolf Arnheim may serve as a departure point:

> Order [is] the degree and kind of lawfulness governing the relations among the parts of an entity.
>
> (Arnheim, 1966:123).

This definition suggests that order resides in systems that are *complex* (they have distinct parts); that order is *quantitative* (it is manifested in *degrees*); that order consists of *relations* among the parts; and, finally, that order is *lawful*—it involves a *law,* or a principle, that governs the relations among the parts. The definition further implies the question of the logical status of order: is "governing the relations" an expression of an objective or a subjective state of affairs? Let us examine closely these basic categories: complexity, ordering principle (law), degrees of order, lawfulness, relations among the parts and objectivity versus subjectivity. These categories, as we shall see, are significant for the understanding of aesthetic order and its relations and interactions with other forms of order and disorder.

It should be noted that the term "order" is commonly used in two different senses, often without acknowledging the two denotations of the term; each emphasizes a different aspect of order. First, "order" denotes an *ordering principle:* a law, a rule, a pattern or a form by which the elements of a given set may be arranged. We refer, for instance, to alphabetical order, arithmetical order, social order, and so on. In this sense "order" and "law" are considered synonymous. Second, "order" denotes the condition of a given set, its *conformity* to the ordering principle. We may compare, for instance, two libraries that arrange their books according to the same principle—let us say by authors' surnames—thereby follow an identical *order*. This is order in the *first* sense. Yet these libraries may differ in respect to "order" in the *second* sense: books may be shelved more carelessly in one library than in the other. In this second usage, "order" denotes the *degree of conformity* of the set to its ordering principle.

Complexity: the principal presupposition

Order is associated with a *manifold system,* be it concrete or abstract, natural or artificial. Any kind of order requires a certain degree of complexity. According to Bohm and Peat (1989:111), "our first notion of order depends upon our ability to perceive similarities and differences." Clearly, order relies on both: the ability to distinguish heaven from earth (distinctions) and the ability to associate them (connections). Put differently, order is a "unity in diversity"—the ancient formula of beauty. An immediate consequence of this basic requirement is that no order exists in simple, totally homogeneous systems. It also follows that if beauty is indeed an expression of order, beauty is never simple. This clearly goes against Plotinus' argument in his first Enneade (1969:§6) that beauty may be simple.

An ideal simple entity, an atom in the philosophical sense, has no inner order. Order consists of the relations among the atoms that constitute the complex body. Leibniz articulated this understanding in his *Monadology*. The monad, according to Leibniz, is

> A simple substance, which enters into composites; simple, that is to say, without parts. And there must be simple substances, since there are composites […] Now where there are no parts, neither extension, nor figure, nor divisibility is possible.
>
> (1951:§1–3)

Order requires complexity, and complexity requires, in turn, simple entities. One cannot describe, understand or relate in any way to the complexity of an object without assuming some elementary components. This does not prove the existence of such elements but rather their theoretical necessity. However, complexity is a necessary but insufficient condition for order; a complex object may also be disordered.[1]

The applications of "simple" and "complex" are a matter of perspective and context, and not necessarily a reflection of an independent, objective state of affair. An object may be described as "simple" for many reasons without indicating thereby that it is simple in any firm philosophical sense. Are there real simple entities? Wittgenstein's distinction between *psychological terminus* and *logical terminus* is very useful here (Wittgenstein, 1967:§231, 42e). "Simple entities" in Wittgenstein's sense may be either a reflection of our cognitive capacities (we cannot perceive any further divisions or distinctions) or of our pragmatic needs (some purpose is served by regarding a certain object as simple). An object may seem simple or be regarded as simple in one context and as complex in another.

---

[1] René Girard summarizes Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of order and disorder as "differentiation vs. undifferentiation" (Girard, 1984:80–1). This implies that complexity always entails order and only simplicity (lack of differentiation) is disordered. Although differentiation that indicates complexity is a prerequisite for order, it is not a synonym of order. As I shall further elaborate, disorder may also exist among differentiated elements.

Consider the following question: is a person a simple or complex entity? The answer depends on the context in which the question is asked as well as on one's interest and perspective. The human body, from a biophysical point of view, is indeed complex; the human soul, likewise, is a complex system when considered from the perspective of any psychological theory. Descartes, however, regards the soul as a simple entity. Then again, as a citizen a person (body and soul) is a simple entity that partakes in a complex social order; s/he is one of the many "atoms" that together constitute a complex political body that is governed by laws (e.g. *Hobbes's Leviathan*). This understanding liberates us from the impossible task of proving the existence of simple entities or singling out such entities in a given case. I shall therefore regard in future discussion simplicity (homogeneity) and complexity as relational notions.

A set may express different levels of complexity, depending on the context and the purpose of analysis. For instance, molecules may be regarded as the basic elements of any living creature while cells, which are composed of molecules, form another level of complexity, and organs, which are composed of cells, form yet another level of complexity, and so on. Considering different levels of complexity may partly explain why two people that relate to the same object understand and appreciate it differently: they perceive different orders on different levels within the same object.

All sets that are ordered by the same ordering principle constitute a *class*. (Although "set" and "class" are often regarded as synonyms, for practical purposes I use them here as non-synonymous.) The elements of each set function as simple entities and as such they are not the elements of the class. A class consists of complex objects (sets) only. A class may be empty; it may have one, many or infinite denumerable sets. For instance, all sets that are ordered alphabetically, such as telephone directories and student-registration lists, constitute a class—the class of all alphabetically ordered sets. The basic elements, that is, the individual names on each list, are not elements of the alphabetical class. All things that are square-shaped (each of them being a set) form the square class. All objects (sets) that fit the structure of the artistic genre form a class, e.g. sonnets. A comparison within a single class is a comparison between degrees of conformity among sets and principles, e.g. which sonnet coheres more meticulously with the generic structure. A comparison between classes is a comparison between the complexity of the different ordering principles, e.g. between a sonnet and a ballad.

A single object (a set) may belong to more than one class. For instance, a person may be regarded and evaluated according to different categories; each category constitutes a class: citizen, father, worker, consumer, and so forth, and also as a unique individual (which is a class with only one member). Each category implies a different method of evaluation and ultimately a different value: X may be a better citizen than Y, but Y may be a better father than X.

Evaluating an object we may differentiate between its *degree of complexity* and its *degree of conformity* with the ordering principle. We may accordingly praise the richness (complexity) of a work of art and yet criticize its careless generic structure. It is important to note that no ontology is assumed by these definitions. Problems of measurement (methods and verifications) are likewise beyond the scope of the present discussion. For the present purposes it is sufficient to acknowledge that sets differ in their degree of order and that principles may differ in their degree of complexity.

The following is a summary of the basic definitions:

1. *Elements*—the constitutive entities of an object.
2. *Ordering principle*—the rule according to which the elements are organized and unified.
3. *Set*—a collection of elements, which is unified by an ordering principle.
4. *Class*—the group of sets that share the same ordering principle.
5. *Degree of conformity*—the measure of conformity of a given set to its ordering principle. Thus, sets that share the same ordering principle may differ in their degree of conformity.
6. *Degree of complexity*—the amount of distinctions resulting from the application of an ordering principle to a set.

Ordering principles

Characteristics of ordering principles

The ordering principle defines certain relations among the elements. Normally, viewing a set as governed by a certain principle indicates that the principle is considered essential to the set or relevant for some principal purpose. The ordering of a set by a principle may be realized in two different modes: either it is *constituted* or it is *discovered*. Constituting an order means that the observer forces a principle upon the set and thus creates an order that did not exist before. By contrast, to discover an order implies that the order is inherent in a given set and the observer merely encounters it. An inherent order, unlike the constituted order, is (ideally speaking) independent of the observer's interests. Physics, as many believe, *discovers* order in the natural realm. Moral and legal laws, by definition, *impose* order upon the social realm. Works of art are sometimes viewed as discoveries of patterns that are hidden in the raw material of the work, and sometimes as creations of human imagination that are forced upon the materials. However, even in the case of discovered orders, it is the observer's decision whether to regard that order as an essential one. In this sense ordering principles always reflect the observer's perspective.

Almost anything may function as a principle for ordering a set. Coherence, as Leibniz has taught us, is the only limit. A self-contradicting principle is impossible in all possible worlds; this exception aside, anything can function as an ordering principle. This does not mean that all principles are equally useful or desired or materialized. A principle may generate an empty class—it may not materialize in the actual world—and yet maintain its status as an ordering principle. For instance, Plato's ideal state, or any utopia, by definition, is an ordering principle that will never materialize.

An ordering principle may be generated in many ways; it always entails some level of abstraction. This, in a sense, limits the above statement that anything may function as an ordering principle. Consider an antique vase. It may serve as a prototype—an ordering principle. However, the original vase cannot function by itself as a principle because one cannot duplicate exactly the same vase without going through a process of abstraction. If one were to manufacture reproductions of it, one would then have to decide which of the features of the original object—the archetype—constitute the ordering principle. One must leave out some qualities for two main reasons: a certain feature may be either *irrelevant* to the particular goal, or it may be *impossible* to realize. As much as one would be interested in replicating the very antiquity of the original vase, one could not realize it for an obvious reason: one cannot reproduce vases that are two thousand years old. A skilled craftsman might be able to imitate the patina of antiquity and even deceive the unwary buyer, but the vase would still be new. The original vase can only function as its own ordering principle, that is, the principle of its own individual case. In this sense, the set and the ordering principle become one. Similarly, works of art may be abstracted in different ways and function as archetypes (ordering principles) for different purposes, but they are also expressing their own, individual order. For instance, a certain abstraction of *King Oedipus* served Aristotle in his presentation of the concept of tragedy in his *Poetics* and a different abstraction of the same work serves as an archetype in psychological theories. However, the original play has its own individual order that is clearly not preserved in the process of abstraction.

Degrees of complexity in ordering principles

Like a set, an ordering principle must also be complex; it cannot comprise a single component. The components of an ordering principle are further compounded by a logical operation. The law of identity, probably the simplest of all ordering principles, has at least three components: a concept of an object (any object), a concept of differentiation from other objects and the identity relation (to itself). A complexity of some degree is thereby obtained.

Consider a case from ancient philosophy. "Everything is water", said Thales of Miletus. Strictly speaking, this claim does not make any sense if we take "water" to be the sole component of this principle. To comprehend the common quality, one has to go through variations of the same material. Thus, even if it were true in some objective sense that everything is water, this truth would have escaped us since we

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[2] Anaximander went a step further. He preserved the idea of single substance as the primary basis of the universe and called this substance the *Non-limited*. He explained changes by contrasting fundamental opposites: cold and hot, wet and dry, etc. Anaximenes, the third Milesian philosopher, took the next step and suggested that *air* was the primordial matter. Air has the capacity for different densities that can be assigned to different states; this idea can therefore function as a proper ordering principle. "Here was a way", observes Samuel Sambursky, "of explaining in physical terms how the various forms of matter are derived from the primordial matter" (Sambursky, 1963:10).

would know nothing whatsoever about any contrasting features.[2] It is necessary, then, to have at least three components for an ordering principle to function: (1) a concept of an object singled out from (2) other object(s)—*separation*—and (3) a relation constituting a *connection* between the concept in question and the other object(s). In this sense, if we understand "everything is water" as a one-element principle, this "principle" is either self-contradictory or an obscure phrase.

Ordering principles may differ in their degree of complexity. The number of their components and their interrelations may vary. Children typically espouse relatively uncomplicated principles. They accept, for instance, the simple distinction between good and bad that they find in fairy tales. It is commonly expected of adults, however, to apply more subtle distinctions.

A square (as an ordering principle) is more complex than a circle since it has more distinguishable parts, but it is less complex than a rectangle. A circle is homogeneous in some sense—all the points on its circumference are located at the same distance from the center; the points are symmetrical with respect to the center and are therefore indistinguishable. By contrast, the points on the sides of a square have different distances from the center and are thus distinguishable, and the points of a rectangle are even more distinguishable since the sides are not all equal. These comparative differences are well appreciated by architects: most habitable spaces are ordered by the rectangle principle rather than by the square or the circle principle (this is not entirely the case in Byzantine architecture).

The degree of *maximum complexity* depends on the individual observer. It expresses the stage where the observer has exhausted the capacity for discerning distinctions. This stage may be the result of limited experience, limited knowledge, lack of interest, cultural determinations or limited physiological capacities. Since the observer's capacity is subject to improvement through learning and training, or through new technology, the degree of maximum complexity is flexible and relative; it is not equal for all observers or even for the same observer on different occasions.

Cultural and personal differences express different levels of complexity. A professional wine taster can distinguish one sort of wine from another, even when the variations are subtle. The layperson may only be able to distinguish broad categories such as white and red, dry and sweet. The Eskimos, so the story goes, make fine distinctions between different kinds of white precipitation, but for people in warmer climates, snow is snow. There is a special word in Hebrew that distinguishes a certain shade of light blue from blue in general—*th'cheleth* (in Italian—*celeste*). This particular color, which is mentioned in the Bible, carries cultural significance. It is one of the colors that decorates the tabernacle. This color has become a Jewish symbol and also one of the Israeli national colors. In English, by contrast, different shades of blue are considered sub-species of the same color. There are, of course, distinctions and patterns that are shared by various cultures. Folk tales from different cultures suggest similar distinctions in patterns of human life. Analogous stories of creation, as well as parallel narratives of other kinds (the return-of-the-hero story, the dangerous voyage story, the story of granting three wishes, and so forth) indicate common forms of complexity that underlie cultural differences. In a philosophical context we cannot avoid mentioning Kant's twelve categories that constitute, according to Kant, the common denominator of all creatures of reason.

Strong and weak orders

Strong and *weak,* in this context, are adjectives of the ordering principles. They indicate the stability of a principle from the perspective of the perceiver. Some principles of order are easier to perceive, recognize or remember than others, and therefore appear as "stronger" than others. It is obvious that a relatively simple principle, or an oft-repeated principle, is easier to grasp than a complicated or a rare one.

The "strength" of a principle may be the result of conformity to primary cognitive structures, habits or cultural traditions that encourage and develop certain interests and thus make certain principles fundamental and immediately perceptible. Differences in stability of "strength" may be the result of various conditions. A simple form, such as a generic human face, may be drawn very inaccurately: a circle, two elliptic forms and a curved line represent the head, the eyes and the mouth, and so on. The strength of this basic form enables an immediate identification to be evoked in a few lines. The answer to the question, "how many or how much is *enough*?" is a question of practical experience rather than of conceptual understanding. It is clear, however, that the human face is a very basic pattern in normal human experience, and therefore its principle (its abstract form) constitutes a strong order.

A weak order is an order that is hard to grasp, hard to remember or recognize because it is either too complicated, rare, or too remote from the interests of the perceiver. A weak order is easily dominated by strong orders; it is unstable and may collapse into a state of disorder. Yet it is important to note that a weak order is by no means a form of disorder, although it may create a situation that results in disorder. The process of learning a new language demonstrates how weak orders may become strong through repetition and use. First, the foreign language creates a sense of disorder, it is weak and elusive; when it is sufficiently dominated it retains its strength.

A strong order is less sensitive to inaccuracies; a weak order is more sensitive to the degree of order maintained in the set as well as to changes in context. For instance, the patterns of letters in one's native language are recognizable in many variations, even in sloppy handwriting (low degree of order) and constitute therefore a strong order. Letters of a less familiar alphabet constitute a weak order and are therefore more difficult to read in idiosyncratic handwritings.

Weakness or strength are thus not inherent qualities of an ordering principle. They are contextual judgments. A strong ordering principle wins the battle but not necessarily the war. This echoes Spinoza's axiom:

> There is no particular thing in Nature than which there is none more powerful or stronger; but whatever exists, there is also something stronger by which that existent thing can be destroyed.
>
> (Spinoza, 1989:IV, axiom)

We may also approach in this spirit the term “good gestalt”, which Arnheim calls “an unfortunate term” (Arnheim, 1971:52). “Good gestalt” is supposed to be stable, strong, and triumphant. Yet even “good gestalt” cannot secure its strength in every possible circumstance. A weak order may become stronger, and vice versa, without modifying the content of the principle. Being a “good gestalt” depends on changing circumstances and not merely on the form itself. One may be distracted or preoccupied so that a strong order becomes weaker: it is difficult to maintain two conversations simultaneously, even if each is clear and “strong”. This may be true of individuals as much as of cultures and nations. Cultures recognize specific orders and lose sight of others for a variety of reasons.

Quantitative and binary orders

The quantitative aspect of order, that is, the variety in degrees of coherence between sets and their ordering principles, forms the basis for comparisons and evaluations. For instance, one may compare two democracies and conclude that one coheres better than the other with the ideal democracy. Quantitativity does not necessarily require or assume a rigid method of measure; it is not clear how the degree of democracy should be measured, and yet such comparisons and “measurements” are not unusual. In some cases estimation of degree is intuitive and immediate; in others it involves theoretical and technical means. In some cases the evaluation consists of a comparison of the actual with the ideal model; in other cases there is no such model. For example, we may have neither a method nor an ideal model for accurately measuring pain, but this does not prevent us from describing an experience of pain as stronger or more intense than another experience.

Quantitativity is a key concept in evaluation, but not all orders are quantitative and thus not all forms of order constitute the basis for evaluation. Classificatory orders *per se* are not quantitative. For instance, chess is a game that is defined by certain rules; playing chess means adhering to the rules of the game. The question of degree is irrelevant here. One either plays chess, which means (by definition) adherence to the rules, or one may bend the rules and thus end up playing a new game. Let us call the non-quantitative cases of order *binary orders*. Sets of binary orders do not reflect any variations in degrees with respect to their ordering principles. When one wishes to evaluate a set of a binary order one needs to apply different, non-binary principles. Thus, the judgment that one chess game is better than another is not the judgment of which of the players followed the rules more carefully, but rather of different factors. Both the winner and the looser play exactly the same game, and therefore we need a non-binary principle for evaluating the differences between the players.

In some cases, the assertion that the order in question is binary and not quantitative (or vice versa) is a matter of a philosophical position. Natural laws, according to any firm determinist, define the range of natural events. By this definition, a natural event conforms to laws of Nature in the same sense that a chess game conforms with the rules of chess. If it does not follow the rules, the event is not natural, just as the game that violates the rules of chess is not a chess game. Needless to say, according to rationalist-determinist philosophy the notion of unnatural event defines an empty class that undermines the analogy between chess and Nature, but this is a different point.

All natural events, according to the above, share the same ordering principles; they are symmetrical in this sense, just as chess games are all chess games in the same sense. Therefore, when Spinoza wishes to introduce his concept of good (in *Ethics,* part IV), he employs quantitative notions such as the preservation and the wellbeing of the individuum. Aristotle's theory of Nature, by contrast, allows for degrees of conformity with natural categories: one specimen may be a better instance than another specimen, although both are perfectly natural. Nature, according to Aristotle, consists of quantitative orders as well as binary orders. Therefore, Aristotle can move from his theory of Nature to ethics without facing the difficulties that Spinoza is facing while attempting to construct his ethical theory.

To take another example, Kant's notion of morality is binary. A moral act is an act that has been undertaken with the intention of fulfilling a moral duty, i.e. the categorical imperative. Intentions, unlike feelings, are not quantitative: one either has the intention of obeying one's moral duty or one does not have such an intention. Thus, an act is either moral or immoral. This binary quality is clearly articulated in Kant's chemistry metaphor:

> When the analyst added alkali to a solution of lime in muriatic acid, the acid breaks away from the lime and combines with the alkali, and the lime precipitates.
>
> (Kant, 1956:72)

The lime does not mix with the alkali and does not become a little less "limish." Similarly, a Kantian moral act is a case of either/or: it does not tolerate alien elements, and cannot become a diminished moral act. Utilitarian ethics, by contrast, is typically quantitative: it allows for variations in degrees in the moral deed.

George Dickie's institutional definition of art differentiates between the classificatory and the evaluative sense of art (Dickie, 1974). By his definition, the status of an object as a work of art is determined by a binary principle only: it is either a work of art by the effective institutional norms or it is not. Its value as a work of art is a different matter, and is separately decided according to other principles. Like chess games, works of art differ in their values, but not in their classification as art. Mere classification is binary, whereas any evaluative principle is quantitative: it determines not only the category of the object but also the basis for its evaluation.

The present analysis of order will focus only on quantitative orders since it aims at constituting an evaluative theory of aesthetics. All further discussions of order, unless otherwise specified, are carried in the light of this understanding.

Lawfulness

Order is associated with lawfulness. Being in order entails following a law or an ordering principle. This does not, however, mean that order and lawfulness are synonymous. James K.Feibleman expresses this idea while employing different terminology:

> [Order] has always been understood in terms of law, a law that consists in a similarity among disparate elements, often combined with the property of compulsion.
>
> (Feibleman, 1968:3)

Feibleman's definition echoes the earlier observation that order requires differentiation and connection. Yet Feibleman introduces to the discussion two new concepts that seem to complement the notion of "lawfulness": (1) *similarity* among elements as a constant component of order; and (2) *compulsion*. This definition raises several questions. First, is similarity among elements a prerequisite of order? If this is so, what kind of similarity is required? Second, is compulsion an essential feature of order? If this is so, why is this feature only "often" associated with order, rather than "always"?

Books in a library, names in a telephone directory and atoms of a molecule are elements of sets that have at least one similar feature for each set, namely they retain the character of being a book, being a name and being an atom. These cases seem to substantiate the claim that similarity among elements is a prerequisite to any order. However, contrary to Feibleman, I hold that this cannot be an essential requirement of order *per se*. Let us consider the case of a work of art. A performance of *Othello* is ordered in the sense that the elements (all or most) seem to have their "right place" within the whole, and in a good performance, the elements (or most of them) are indeed in their "place". A good performance evokes a sense of order and necessity (compulsion), yet it is not clear that there is a similarity among the constitutive elements of the performance: the actors, the monologues, the music, the staging, etc. The question of similarity seems rather irrelevant and even awkward in this context. If it is accepted that a work of art exhibits some kind of order, then it must also be accepted that similarity among elements is not a prerequisite for all cases of order but only for a certain type of order. As a result, it is not a fundamental requirement of order in general. I shall expand this argument when I introduce the distinction between two types of order.

As for the second feature—compulsion—it is indeed an essential feature of order in general, which means that all types of order share this feature. I prefer to use the term *necessity* or *lawfulness* rather than compulsion because of the different connotations. An ordering principle requires, postulates or defines certain relations rather than constraints or determines them. The principle states how the elements should be or are expected to be; it does not necessarily state their actual position. Arnheim's definition (1966:123) also indicates that order is associated with necessity (lawfulness). However, order is not just "often" associated with necessity, as Feibleman puts it, but *always* associated with necessity. Though "necessity" is an essential feature of "order", the terms are not synonymous. Order always entails necessity; necessity does not always entail order. To make this argument more rigorous one should distinguish between two claims: (1) that all sets exhibit some degree of necessity and (2) that some sets or classes are necessary. This is a distinction between the necessity that is found within the set and the necessity of the set (or class) as a whole.

1 The ordering principle of a given set establishes certain relations within the set that define the required locations of the elements. This creates a *conditional necessity*. It expresses neither the necessity of the set itself nor the necessity of its ordering principle; the set and its principle may be contingent. For instance, in an alphabetically ordered telephone directory it is necessary that "Olukalns Zane" comes before, say, "Olund Eric". This necessity is dictated by the chosen ordering principle. It does not imply that the name list (the set) is in itself necessary (telephone directories did not exist before the invention of the telephone). The same is true about the chosen principle itself; one could arrange a telephone directory by a different principle, say, by the succession of the numbers. In this case "Olukalns Zane" could have been placed way after "Olund Eric".
2 A set (or an ordering principle) may acquire its necessity from a broader set (or a higher principle) in which the given set is included as a sub-type (or the lower principle is a derivative of the higher). Another case of necessity is that of the primary set or principle that precedes all and is defined as necessary in itself. A primary set that is necessary in itself is, for instance, Spinoza's substance. In the case of principles we may think of primary laws or logical axioms that are intuitively regarded as necessary in themselves.

Necessity is either inherent in the object (discovered), as we tend to believe about natural orders, or it may be imposed on the object (constituted), as it is with state laws. Imposed necessity governs the relevant sets as long as the decision is effective, whereas inherent necessity is believed to be independent of the perceiver's preferences. Thus, necessity may have many forms; not all of them associated with determinism and predictability. The necessity expressed by state laws indicates what ought to be done in a given context; it does not predict actual acts since it is not the case that every "ought" materializes. Works of art present us with a different notion of necessity: they express, as I shall further argue, possibilities which by definition tolerate alternatives—one work of art does not exclude another, and yet each (good) work of art, being highly ordered, evokes a sense of necessity. This sense of necessity expresses the observer's impression that the work is composed the way it should have been, even if this "should have been" is unknown to the observer before actually experiencing the work.

Order and relations

Relation and *order* are connected, yet they are disparate concepts. Elements that stand in various relations in an assembly do not necessarily constitute a set; even in a disordered state one finds various relations among the elements. A relation *qua* relation does not express necessity: "X is similar to Y" does not imply that X is necessarily similar to Y. Only when a relation is induced by an ordering principle, does it express some kind of necessity.

The status of a given relation is a matter of philosophical standpoint or of the specific context in which the relation occurs. Causality, for instance, is a relation that is typically associated with laws and necessity. Can causal relations be disordered? Hume (1928), for one, argued that causality does not analytically entail necessity. In a Bergsonian world, events never repeat themselves and, consequently, causal relations do not express a compliance with laws in the deterministic sense. According to Bergson (1944), the order of natural events is an order of creative evaluation that is not determined by laws in the traditional sense. It is not an analytical truth that relations entail necessity. "X follows Y" describes a temporal or spatial relation between X and Y. Such a relation can be "accidental". In a disordered context X may still follow Y but not necessarily so, and not in every case. Taken as an ordering principle, this relation would be expressed as follows: "In all sets of class A, X always follows Y." Russell has overlooked this point while analyzing relations as kinds of order ('The Definition of Order', in Russell, 1993). Russell's implied assumption is that since a relation *may become* an ordering principle, it is essentially an ordering principle. He rightly states that a set may have many orders due to the various relations that we may discern in the set, but this does not necessarily give any single relation the status of an ordering principle or the status of an ordered set.

Hume firmly criticized the tendency to move from relations (such as succession in time or space) found in actual experience to general conclusions about order and necessity. Hume implied thereby that relations and order are essentially different categories. Even if something recurs frequently, necessity cannot be concluded on this account alone. Hume underlined the logical truism that the conclusion may not contain anything that is not already included in the premises. Thus, necessity may not be inferred from (arbitrary) relations that occur in experience, since relations, on their own, do not express necessity. It is often a basis for criticism when one finds unnecessary (arbitrary, disordered) relations among the elements of an artwork. Be it the relations between the characters of a novel or a film, or the color relations in a painting or the material-form relations in a sculpture—if these relations seem arbitrary and do not express some kind of necessity, the work cannot be highly appreciated. This, again, indicates the discrimination between relations and order.

Objectivity versus subjectivity

Is order, any order, a reflection of an objective state or is it an expression of the perceiver's categories and perspective? What are the implications of each alternative? Essentially, "objectivity" denotes a state that is totally independent of the perceiver; it refers to the primary qualities, the real properties of the object.[3]

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[3] The distinction between primary and secondary qualities is adopted by Lock (1964) in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* but the origin of this distinction is in Democritos' atomism.

Subjectivity, by contrast, denotes a state that is entirely dependent on the observer; it signifies the observer's contribution to the apprehension of an object. The notion of secondary qualities indicates something in between the two extremes, a mutual production of the object and the subject—neither objective nor subjective in the original, rigid, sense.

Discussions of order are often associated with debates over *objectivity* versus *subjectivity*. It is generally assumed that if the universe is actually ordered either in the way we believe it is or in any other way, its inherent order constitutes an objective property. However, if the order we attribute to the universe (or any part of it) reflects the way our minds operate, then that order is subjective and we would be unable to comprehend any objective order.

The use of the terms "objective/subjective" in such extreme fashion is rather confusing.[4] How can we know anything at all about things that are *entirely* independent of our apprehension? Similarly, we can ask about the way we are able to relate to things that are *entirely* dependent on our own means of knowing. Kant has reduced primary qualities to secondary qualities and made experience dependent on reason.[5] The phenomena are neither objective nor subjective in the original sense; rather, they maintain the status of secondary qualities. These are not the things in themselves since they depend on reason; they are not subjective either since the contribution of reason (the categories) and intuition (time and space) must be by themselves related to something external to them, or else there is no knowledge. Kant (1951b:§13) emphasizes this difference between his view and Berkeley's idealism.

Following Kant's strategy, I hold that order is like a secondary quality. Order that is entirely independent of the observer's contribution or qualifications would be unknown and thus irrelevant for any of our purposes. Even if we do not contribute anything substantial to the perceived order, we still need to have certain qualifications that enable us to perceive it, or else it remains unknown and thus irrelevant. We can perceive only orders that correspond to our mental faculties. However, this does not make the order subjective in any rigid sense. Even in the extreme case in which one believes that all orders are creations of the mind imposed upon the world, there is still this world that has to endure whatever is imposed upon it and respond to this imposition. Everyday experience teaches that the world does not equally accept every kind of order that we seek to impose on it. Sometimes the world resists, and there are various degrees of resistance that may teach us something about the world that exists beyond our will and desired orders. We all know from experience that wood and metal lend themselves to different needs. We can make a hammer with a metal handle and a wooden head if we wish, but it will not work very well for most conventional purposes. This indicates differences in the "objective" nature of the materials. When the object successfully conforms to the order imposed on it, we can then conclude that some "objective" order has been obtained however mysterious this conformity may be.

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[4] Rorty's (1979:333–42) analysis of objectivism-subjectivism suggests a similar understanding of the problematic nature of these concepts.

[5] In the *Prolegomena* § 13 remark II, Kant (1951b) writes,

> "Long before Locke's time…It has been generally assumed and granted without detriment to the actual existence of external things that many of their predicates may be said to belong, not to the things themselves, but to their appearance…Heat, color, and taste, for instance, are of this kind. Now if I go farther and, for weighty reasons, rank as mere appearances the remaining qualities of bodies also, which are called primary—such as extension, place, and, in general, space with all that which belongs to it…—no one in the least can adduce the reason of its being inadmissible."

An order that is entirely independent of the perceiver cannot be known and in that sense it is non-existent. Berkeley (1963) strongly advocated this view. In his doctrine, the continuous existence of the universe depends on God's awareness. Descartes, who unlike Berkeley, believed in a universe that exists independently of any perception, also had to depend to some extent on God's awareness (the constant act of creation). Indeed, God as the ultimate perceiver of the universe plays the crucial role of the ultimate subject in rational cosmologies.

The fact that some orders are quantitative presents an argument against subjectivism. If order is indeed subjective, how is it that some sets do not fully conform to certain orders? Hume, for instance, portrayed genuine experience as totally disordered: a mere assembly of impressions that do not demonstrate necessity. However, Hume has to address the question of how is it possible that a bundle of impressions that, in his view, are *equally* indifferent to any form of order, exhibit *various* degrees of compliance with a "subjective" order imposed on them? Emphasis should be put on the adjective "various". What determines this kind of difference between orders if the mind that contemplates them is the same?

Moreover, the original meaning of "objectivity-subjectivity", namely quality of the object versus mere contributions of the subject, does not allow for differences in degrees whatsoever. If it is a quality of the object, it is fully objective, and if it is a mere contribution of the subject, it is fully subjective. One "primary quality" is no more or less primary and objective than another "primary quality" is. Accepting the quantitative feature of order entails that order is neither entirely objective nor entirely subjective and suggests that these concepts might be redundant, at least in the context of the present discussion.

Another problematic issue with respect to objectivity versus subjectivity is *complexity*. How is the degree of complexity determined? Is it objective, or is it subjective? Experience shows that the more we attend to an object, the higher complexity we are inclined to find in it. It is often the case with things as well as with people that the longer we know them and the more interest we take in them, the more we discover about them. If one is lost on a desert island with only a single book, one is more likely to find complexities in this book than in normal circumstances where that book is one among many. Low complexity may well be due to lack of attention: a closer and more involved examination may reveal a higher complexity. This conclusion may, of course, lead to the absurdity that all objects are equally complex; they only appear to have different complexity because our attention is erratic. However, let us look at the case from a different perspective. One could legitimately ask what it is in X that intrigues and attracts the attention of the perceiver more than Y, if not X's higher (genuine) complexity? The question is then, which comes first—objective complexity or subjective interest? In some cases it would seem as if the degree of complexity found in an object is inherent in it and therefore there is an objective difference in this matter. In other cases it appears as if it all depends on the observer's perspective.

A tourist visiting Paris for the first time may be struck by its apparent disorder, whereas an inhabitant sees familiar patterns in the flow of the hubbub of urban life. Is the tourist mistaken in finding confusion? A psychologist and a physiologist, both examining the same person, are likely to offer different descriptions (different complexities) and, consequently, evaluate that person's condition (that is the degree of order) according to different principles. Is one of them wrong while the other is right?

The process of devising an ordering principle (as in the example of the antique vase) demonstrates that it is possible to "find" various orders in the same object. Different observers may notice different elements in the same object and, consequently, different degrees of complexity may be reached. The ordering principles generated by an archetype are different abstractions of the same object, indicating different interests and perspectives. Does it make any sense to evaluate an abstraction as the right, real and objective one, and others as subjective, imaginary or mistaken?

In many, if not most, cases the terms "objective" and "subjective" are used with meanings slightly different from the original. "Objective" often implies *common to all,* when usually "all" refers to rational agents. Thus, an objective quality would be a quality equally perceived by all relevant members under similar conditions. Similarly, "subjective" purports to be sensitivity to individual differences, where no sufficiently wide common grounds may be found. All rational creatures are expected, for instance, to arrive at the same solution to a logical or a mathematical problem; the solution is then considered "objective". When it comes to evaluating art, individual differences seem to affect judgment, so the evaluation is considered "subjective". Kant uses the terms "objective" and "subjective" in this quantitative sense:

> Objective validity and necessary universality (for everybody) are equivalent terms, and though we do not know the object in itself, yet when we consider a judgment as universal, and hence necessary, we thereby understand it to have objective validity.
>
> (Kant, 1951b:§19)

Objective validity therefore is not independent of the subject's contribution, although it is a contribution not of the individual agent as such but of a "general agent". In this view, science, as a rational methodology, is considered objective (at least by Kant); aesthetic appreciation, by contrast, as the product of the power of judgment, is sensitive to individual differences, and therefore subjective. However, since aesthetic evaluations, in spite of the subjectivity, assume *a sensus communis* Kant (1951a:§18–22) categorizes them as subjective-objective.

According to this approach the difference between “objective” and “subjective” is not between the real state of the object and the qualities attributed to it by the observer, but rather a difference in *degree*. The more common is the subjective contribution, the less sensitive it is to individual differences; hence, the product of perception is “more objective”. Common categories create a sense of “objectivity.” For instance, it is “objective” that it is nearly midnight now. If my neighbor began to play his trumpet at this hour I would believe that he is either crazy or pretending to be crazy. Undoubtedly, it is midnight in this time zone. But if I call my friend from overseas, I accept (and act accordingly) that in her time zone it is five in the afternoon. In this sense, the determination of the time is not sensitive to the individual differences between me and my neighbor or my friend in a different time zone. Although it is highly “objective”, this determination is not independent of human categories and conventions regarding time.

Qualities or characteristics of a person may be graded according to their degree of “individuality”. Whatever depends on “pure reason” is highly objective, since reason is considered the same for all rational creatures (putting aside some racial or feminist arguments). Categories that define male or female are less common than categories dependent on rationality. Belonging to a certain culture in a certain period of time is a source for categories even less common than gender. Cultural orders are distinct from private orders that require qualities unique to one person or to a very limited group of people. Accordingly, we can find common orders labeled as “more objective”, and less common ones labeled as “more subjective” and a whole range of degrees between the two ideal extremes. In the final analysis, the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is made dependent on the *degree of sensitivity to individual difference:* “objectivity” expresses a tendency towards reduced sensitivity to individual differences, while “subjectivity” expresses the opposite tendency.

In the above sense “objectivity” is quantitative, but it does not directly depend on the number of people who are actually aware of it; it depends rather on the relevant *qualifications* to substantiate certain knowledge and act upon it. There are highly sophisticated mathematical orders that are known to a few, but this fact does not make these orders “subjective” since their comprehension depends on rationality (the common qualification of human beings). We assume ideally that all people are capable of comprehending these orders. By contrast, private orders may become common knowledge, but they will remain nonetheless subjective. To take an example, Tolstoy’s writing style is broadly known but it is still a private style, a private ordering principle: it “orders” only Tolstoy’s writings (and his imitators). That it is known to many does not make it less “subjective”, since it originates in qualities not commonly shared.

The degree of conformity between a principle and a set is always objective in the above sense. The degree of conformity between any given set and its given principle should not depend, ideally speaking, on the observer’s individuality. Although the estimation of this conformity depends on the acquaintance of the observer with both principle and set, the degree of conformity does not. Once the principle and the set are established—and they may differ for different observers

—the relation between them is a matter of "objective" measure. A person may fail to understand how to measure an angle or even fail to understand the concept of an angle, but once s/he has grasped this concept and the relevant method of measurement, his or her description and measurement of a specific triangle should not differ (ideally speaking) from those of another person. A person may not know the laws of the state, or may disagree with them, yet the policeman's assessment of this person's obedience to the law does not depend on the knowledge or agreement of the person in question; it is a matter of "facts". Ideally speaking, such an assessment can be made by anyone who is acquainted with the relevant facts: the laws of the state and the details of a person's conduct. In practice, however, things are naturally far more complicated. Both state laws and individual conduct (the "facts") are subject to interpretation and consequently the relation between them is not as constant and objective as one would have liked them to be.

When two people appear to have exactly the same principle and set in mind, they should agree about the degree of order found in the set. However, the ideal situation in which two persons perceive exactly the same information is hard to achieve or certify. Therefore, one cannot be sure whether differences in estimating the degree of order originate from differences in interpretation (the people in question do not in fact have exactly the same set and principle in mind), or that the differences are the result of an outright mistake made by one of the people.

Although it is possible to characterize certain aspects of order in terms of objectivity and subjectivity, not much benefit accrues from this terminology. The terminology itself confuses; it conveys one thing but implicitly refers to another. In philosophical discussions, unlike in politics, it is paramount that the implicit should be made explicit in order to expose the argument: if by "subjectivity" one means sensitivity to individual differences, why not state it clearly? Moreover, differentiating orders by either objective or subjective criteria conveys nothing about quantitative differences. An order may be more commonly known or accepted than another; it may be more useful or easier to implement for individual purposes than another; it may seem more or less compelling than others. Clearly, the distinction "objectivity-subjectivity" is too narrow (or too general) to convey the richness of such cases.

Henri Bergson points to a route between objectivity and subjectivity:

> Order is […] a certain agreement between subject and object. It is the mind finding itself again in things.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:244)

Since the mind finds itself in things and reaches, as it were, an "agreement" with things, order is neither objective nor subjective but a *mutual product* of mind (subject) and things (object). Clarence I.Lewis offers a similar approach in a less poetical language, "Empirical truth, or knowledge of the objective, arises through conceptual interpretation of the given." (Lewis, 1956:37). Knowledge of the objective is then a mutual product of the given, which is independent of the mind and the interpretation contributed by the mind. In other words, this knowledge is *relational*. It depends equally on the object (the given) and the observer (who interprets the given).

Order has then the status of “secondary quality.” Nonetheless, this observation, like “objectivity-subjectivity”, is insufficient for distinguishing among orders. An order cannot be more or less relational than another; it cannot be more or less of secondary quality than another. The quantitative character of order requires another terminology that should not clash with the general understanding of order as relational. I therefore propose to describe orders as exhibiting different degrees of *sensitivity to individual differences*. A private joke exhibits a high degree of sensitivity to individual differences, while the basic structure of a natural language is much less sensitive, though it is more sensitive than mathematical orders, and in this sense its rules are less “objective” than those of mathematics. Works of art, as I will further elaborate, exhibit a kind of order that is highly sensitive to individual differences, but this does not mean that their evaluation depends solely on the beholder and that it does not reflect the nature of the object.

Summary

1 Order does not exist in a simple state (homogeneity); an ordered object (a set) is by definition complex.

2 An ordering principle defines the relations of the elements within the set. The set is thus evaluated in accordance with the principle that is expected to govern the set. An ordering principle may be constitutive or inherent in the object; it may be accidental or determined by a higher principle.

3 Ordering principles may differ in their complexity and strength. A principle may be more or less complex than another principle; it may be stronger or weaker than other principles; it may be easy or difficult to perceive, recognize, or remember.

4 Some orders are binary—they merely classify objects and lack any evaluative aspect. Others are quantitative; they are manifested in various degrees of coherence between a set and its ordering principle. The main focus in this book is on quantitative orders.

5 Order consists of relations among the elements; however, order and relations are not synonymous. Relations may also occur in a disordered complex.

6 Order is neither objective nor subjective in a rigid sense; it is relational, a mutual product of object and observer. It may be more or less sensitive to individual differences, and in this sense, more or less objective (or subjective).

2 What is disorder?

"*Dis*order", as the term suggests, is a negation of order. However, this negation has more then one meaning and it materializes in more than one form. In mythologies of creation, order succeeds in conquering disorder; it is a triumph over disorder (chaos). Conversely, according to the second law of thermodynamics, disorder is the final stage—the eradication of all distinctions. In the first case the transition from disorder to order is a miraculous act, the act of creation; in the second case the transition from order to disorder is a gradual process.

Interest in the idea of disorder has grown since the concept of entropy was introduced toward the end of the nineteenth century. Most approaches have been scientific, artistic or popular, but very little has been done by way of a philosophical analysis. In this sense, the philosophical fate of "disorder" is similar to the fate of its complementary concept—order. This neglect is by no means an indication of the insignificance of the concept or its obviousness. Disorder is a vital, highly complicated concept that has a crucial role to play in explaining the process of creation as well as the function of art. It should not be dismissed as the mere negation of order. The following analysis attempts to establish this point.

Two negative definitions of disorder

As a negative term, disorder may be construed in two ways: *continuous* and *discrete*.

1 If disorder is a continuous concept, then order and disorder exist on a continuum: maximum order defines the positive pole and maximum disorder is the negative pole.
2 If disorder is a discrete concept, disorder is the opposite of order. In this case there is no gradual, progressive or continuous transition from order to disorder.

Both notions, disorder as a sub-type of order (a continuum) and disorder as an outright opposite to order (discrete), capture some aspects of disorder as a *negative* concept. They, however, fail to account for the *positive* aspect of disorder as well as for its different types. The following analysis examines more closely these two definitions, suggests a typology of disorder and aims at a third, *positive* definition of disorder.

Disorder as the negative pole of order

Disorder as a continuous concept is associated with quantitative order, that is, order that is manifested in various degrees. Quantitative order has two opposing tendencies: toward higher and lower degrees of order. These measures may either converge into certain limits or continue indefinitely in the opposing directions. Disorder may be thus considered as a special case of order or vice versa. By this definition, anything that can be ordered is also subject to disorder; anything that maintains a certain degree of conformity to the ordering principle may also suffer a certain degree of disorder.

In view of this perspective, the question naturally arises whether there can be, or must be, a point of maximum (absolute) order and maximum (absolute) disorder. The idea of maximum order has its role in theoretical constructs as well as in daily life. We use notions such as prototypes, ideals, models or "the best of all possible worlds". At the other end of the scale, we may have an image of a totally fractured set (that in fact is not a set anymore), an absolute disorder. The question is, though, whether such notions as total order or disorder can be accounted for. Indeed, any *actual* measure of order assumes these two extreme reference points. However, this assumption is in itself not self-evident, and the symmetry that it assumes between order and disorder is not at all obvious.

In Plato's view, perfect or absolute order is conceivable only by spirits free of bodily constraints that inhabit the sphere of ideas. In the seventeenth century it was widely believed that, given the right method and with perseverance, we could eventually come close to understanding the absolute order of the universe, that is, the perfect coherence between events and laws of Nature. Spinoza (*Ethics,* II, prop. XL, note ii), for one, believed that "intuitive knowledge", the third and highest kind of knowledge, "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things." In such a universe of perfect coherence disorder does not exist. Any degree of order less than the perfect one only indicates the limits of the human mind and not the true, real state of the universe. Needless to say that everyday experience does not encounter these perfect extremes. Even a firm determinist cannot avoid the imperfection of human experience. As Prigogine and Stengers (1984:60) comment, "we are neither living in the unitary world of Parmenides nor in the fragmented world of the atomists."

The notion of perfect conformity or absolute order is not only problematic in the pragmatic sense; it raises theoretical difficulties as well. For one, a set cannot express any conformity with its ordering principle without at the same time exhibiting some degree of *redundancy,* that is, a certain degree of non-conformity with the principle. This means that besides those qualities that are stipulated by the prevailing ordering principle, a set must also have some qualities that are not defined and cannot be defined by the relevant ordering principle. These "irrelevant" qualities are redundant in one sense but indispensable in another. For instance, the color of a particular triangle is irrelevant to the estimation of its accuracy and coherence with the triangle principle. However, no triangle can be actually measured unless it appears in some color. Only the idea of a triangle is colorless, but such an idea is the principle itself. Thus, we necessarily find some discrepancies between a set and a given ordering principle. The exact nature of this discrepancy in each case is not defined by the principle itself. Without such discrepancies the set and its principle become identical and the question of conformity dissolves itself.

Perfect disorder is even more problematic since no set can be conceived of as perfectly disordered even ideally. A set, any set, must, by definition, maintain some degree of order or else it is not a set. Establishing the presence of *total* unconformity would mean that there is no similarity (no coherence) whatsoever between the given set and any given principle. But, some kind of similarity can always be found between any two given objects, and therefore some minimal coherence must be obtained. [A similar point is found in Goodman (1984:4–5 and 39–40).] A circle, for instance, is not totally incongruous with the principle of a rectangle; for one, they have the same topological degree.

How then can we avoid the logical difficulties raised by the "polar theory" without forfeiting its methodological benefits? One way of preserving the benefit of these notions is by replacing the ideal, yet impossible poles, with more pragmatic notions. Instead of referring to *maximum* order and disorder, we may refer to *optimal* order and disorder. The optimal point would be the highest degree of order or disorder that is actually achieved or conceived of; such a point must be relational and flexible by definition.

Optimal order depends on the observer's ability to notice the relevant details of a given set. My judgment of the exact shape of things around me when I am not wearing my glasses is different from my judgment when I have them on. The ideal, completely accurate judgment (assuming that such a judgement is possible at all) is beyond my ability—with or without my glasses. I may think that my piano is in tune (optimal), but a well-trained piano tuner will hear subtle dissonance and decide that the sound is not optimal. But even the most skilled expert cannot discern an infinite number of gradations between one tone and the next.

Maximal order refers to only *one* ideal state, whereas optimal order is flexible and may vary. Different observers in various contexts may find different optimal orders in the same given set, just as they may perceive different complexities in the same set. Describing a degree of order as optimal means that the degree in question exhibits a satisfying conformity between a given principle and a given set. Satisfaction, however, is a relational concept. Whether one is satisfied with a given set or not depends not only on the qualities found in the set, but also on one's values, interests, previous experiences, and available information.

One may or may not accept the above as a pragmatic solution for the problem of maximum order; it cannot, however, be adopted in the case of disorder. There is a crucial asymmetry between the negative and the positive poles. It may appear that maximal or optimal disorder is reached by moving away from maximal or optimal order: order is constantly reduced until it reaches the point of total nullification or the point of total dissatisfaction. The logical difficulty is apparent: such a reduction can go forever without reaching the zero point. Plato's theory of ideas may demonstrate this difficulty. A Platonic idea is indeed an ultimate point, the point of perfect order. Although this perfect order is beyond reach in the material realm, one may still proceed in the right direction and get closer through intellectual endeavors. This illustrates the positive direction towards absolute order. And what about the opposite direction? It is not accidental that Plato did not portray the total opposite of an idea. The opposite of complete illumination must be complete misunderstanding. Is there, however, a definite point of ultimate confusion? Simply reversing the positive direction does not bring one to the ultimate negative pole, not even ideally. Although the phrase is often used, we could not even imagine what would be the state of a person who is *completely wrong*.

The same is true about *optimal* disorder. Optimal disorder should be the point of a *definite dissatisfaction*. The absurdity of this expression, I believe, is obvious. One may define a point of satisfaction beyond which one does not need or cannot imagine any improvement. The point of ultimate dissatisfaction, beyond which one cannot be more unsatisfied, is unlikely to be defined. We may use the expression, "when the worse comes to the worst"; but could we give a comprehensive definition or description of "worst"? The optimist believes that things could always be worse than the worst…

Disorder as a mere opposite of order

The second definition, the discrete concept, suggests that order and disorder do not have common grounds: they do not interact or share any common quality. For instance, as an outright opposition to order that is quantitative, disorder would be non-quantitative; it would have only one state. This suggests that disorder is the state of total *homogeneity* or *simplicity,* hence, no differentiation, no degrees of compliance, no complexity, only one defined state. Clearly, this conclusion cannot apply for most everyday cases of disorder. We often experience disorder in complex sets (my desk right now is an obvious example); in many cases disorder is associated with a high level of complication. Defining disorder as the complete opposite of order suggests that order and disorder are two distinct categories that have opposing qualities and have, as such, nothing in common. Thus, if order is complex, then disorder must be simple; if order is based on distinctions—disorder blends all distinctions; if order can be quantitative—disorder cannot be measured at all, and so on.

Disorder cannot be an outright opposite of order for the following reasons:

1 As a mere opposite of order, disorder would have to express a total absence of principles. But how can such an absence be described and explained if not through some positive expectations? Only when one has a specific order in mind can one declare the "absence" of this order. Considerations of this nature motivated Bergson to argue that disorder does not exist: in the absence of any specific expected order, one may find another order; the absence of all order is inconceivable (Bergson, 1944:2257–8; Bohm and Peat, 1989:128).

Moreover, a principle cannot be “missing” or “absent” in any sense. One can only argue that the set in question exhibits a very poor compliance with a given principle. For instance, it would make no sense to argue that in a certain form, say, a circle, the principle of a triangle is absent; rather one would commonly argue that the given form exhibits a very poor coherence with the principle of a triangle. The coherence of the given form with the triangle principle may be so poor that it becomes irrelevant to the case in question, but being irrelevant is not the same as being “missing” or impossible to contemplate. The former is a pragmatic notion and the latter reflects logical considerations. One may not be able to square a circle but this does not mean that a circle is a totally disordered square or that it has nothing in common with other geometrical forms. Another aspect of this issue is expressed in the fact that for any given object a principle can be formulated so that it satisfyingly coheres with the object. For instance, for any apparently arbitrary group of numbers a formula may be constructed so that it confers necessity upon the group.

2 A complete opposition to order must lack complexity; it must be simple. However, as a complete homogeneity disorder would be a mere theoretical entity, inconceivable and irrelevant to actual experience, since we do not experience anything that does not exhibit some degree of complexity. Even a relatively simple patch of color is not simple in the strict sense: besides its color it has a form, a background, a context, and so forth. Accepting that disorder is the state of total simplicity would mean that disorder could not be experienced, or that it does not exist at all. In this case we would be forced to find another concept for describing displeasing complex states such as my desk in a busy day.

3 Disorder, as the opposite of order, would be non-quantitative; it would have no degrees. Clearly, in this case the transition from order to disorder (and vice versa) cannot be conceived of as a gradual *process*. A gradual development from order to disorder (and vice versa) means that disorder can be gradually reduced (or increased), and thus it may be manifested in various degrees. Without a gradual process any change from disorder to order must be miraculous: God divides heaven from earth at a stroke, and puts thereby an end to chaos. Miracles may have their charm. They do not, however, serve as a good explanation for most cases of human experience. If I were to describe each change on my desk from disorder to order as a miracle, the notion of a miracle would undergo a serious inflation. We must have a concept of disorder that allows a gradual change from one stage to another and does not require the help of heavenly powers whenever one wishes to order one’s desk. The possibility of a gradual change is also associated with the idea that total order and total disorder are inconceivable; thus, any state of order also expresses some degree of disorder and similarly, in any state of disorder one may discern some degree of order.

Even if not all moves from order to disorder are gradual, it is necessary that the concepts of order and disorder allow for gradual processes. Disorder, therefore, must share some common qualities with order. These common qualities not only call for a mutual existence of order and disorder in the same object, but also allow for a gradual move from one state to another.

Types of disorder

Borderline cases

There are two borderline cases that may either be considered as forms of order or disorder, or, from a different perspective, be regarded as cases in which neither order nor disorder is applicable. These are the cases of *simplicity* and *limitlessness*. Both refer to theoretical, ideal entities, since no experience is possible without some degree of complexity and limitation.

The simple state: total homogeneity

Simplicity in its strict sense expresses, by definition, homogeneity in every possible respect. It cannot conform to any ordering principle since it has no elements and, obviously, no net of relations. It thus expresses "an absence of *all* ordering principles" in the most direct sense. One cannot even imagine how an ordering principle would relate to complete simplicity without marring it with some degree of complexity (see Chapter 1, pp. 10–12). However, since a pure simple state is rather theoretical and is not found in actual experience, one hesitates to refer to a simple state as exhibiting disorder. Moreover, since ordering principles are in fact not applicable to a simple state, and thus irrelevant to it, characterizing simplicity as the "absence of all ordering principle" is neither informative nor useful. This point is demonstrated by Spinoza's concept of substance. The substance—God or Nature—is simple in the ideal sense: it does not conform to anything external to it since there is nothing external to it, and it does not have a genuine inner structure since it has no genuine distinguishable elements. Is the substance, on this account, disordered? Spinoza, I believe, would reject this interpretation, since, from the pluralistic perspective, Nature perfectly coheres with the laws of Nature, and in this sense it is perfectly ordered. Indeed, the simple state opposes order in some sense, but at the same time it is not clearly disordered.

The limitless[1]

The limitless has no defined borders and thus no definition of center and margins. Without such definitions, the role and place of the elements cannot be determined, contemplated or evaluated. Consequently, the relationships between the elements are indefinable. In this sense, the limitless is disordered. However, like the simple state, the genuine limitless is a mere theoretical entity and not an object of experience. Even an open horizon is limited by the visual field and thus evokes a sense of order. Still, an object may appear (relatively) limitless to the observer, although it is actually limited. This happens when the borderlines of the object are for some reason obscured or beyond perception and it appears to extend infinitely in time or space. For instance:

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[1] Dorit Barchana-Lorand suggested this category to me.

> If we view a mountain in the distance it has a characteristic shape…. But suppose that we are standing at its base with, perhaps, its higher reaches shrouded in mist. […] The mountain seems […] to be a limitless phenomenal mass or aggregate, without any overall defining shape or form.
>
> (Crowther, 1989:79)

In the absence of limits, the components have no clear role or location within the whole. Every element becomes equally significant since we cannot distinguish between center and periphery. This equality expresses some kind of homogeneity that stands in contrast to the complexity and distinctiveness that precondition order. Kant makes this point explicitly:

> The sublime […] is to be found in a formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented, and yet its totality is also present to the thought.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:II, §23)

In this sense, the limitless expresses a tension between order (the image of the object's totality) and disorder (lack of actual boundaries—formlessness). However, one may argue that since there are no limits for defining the range of relevant elements, there is no object in the strict sense, and therefore the concepts of order and disorder do not apply.

Limits are mandatory for any form of order. Therefore, if art is to be understood in terms of order, then a work of art should have boundaries. If the sublime is to be defined in terms of limitlessness, then a work of art could never be sublime. It can, however, express sublimity in some indirect way by referring to the (limited) experience of sublimity. We need to distinguish between the attributes of the subject matter of the work and the attributes of the work itself. A work of art may represent or express forms of disorder (such as the sublime) in an ordered fashion, just as it may represent ugly objects in a beautiful manner (see Chapter 11, pp. 260–264).

Randomness

Randomness is the case in which some elements within a set appear not to cohere with the dominating principle (or any expected principle). The random elements have *equal* probability to be located anywhere within the set and have unpredictable relations with other elements. All methods of locating a random element also have *equal* chance of success.

Lottery games may serve as a paradigm for artificial randomness. Tickets of a lottery game should not differ in their chance of winning the first prize. They are, or rather expected to be, totally disordered. The only sure method of winning is to purchase all the tickets. All other methods have an equal probability of succeeding: one may choose the combination of the dates of birth of one's family members, one's passport number, or a combination of numbers that appeared in a dream. A proper lottery game, paradoxically enough, should exhibit a "well-organized" disorder. The assurance of a satisfying randomness is in itself a complicated and paradoxical project.

The change from disorder to order in the case of a lottery game is made by forcing a principle upon the set, the rule of the game that states a priori that the arbitrarily chosen number is the winning number.[2] However, when randomness is only apparent, the change from disorder to order is either a result of a research or an unexpected (random) discovery. An event may seem random (unexpected) owing to lack of knowledge; growth of knowledge may reveal the underlying order and connect seemingly disparate events by a principle.

Atomistic disorder

An atomistic disorder is the state in which the elements are disconnected from and indifferent to each other. Indifferent elements may endure any principle that is imposed on them. This type of disorder is somewhat similar to randomness but not identical to it. In the case of randomness, the elements may stand in various relations to one another, but these relations—all of them or some of them—are not necessitated by a principle. A random element may occur in a set that is relatively ordered and the elements do have various relations among them, partly unexpected relations. Atomistic disorder, by contrast, is manifested in an assembly of disconnected elements that do not form a set by their own nature since they do not relate to each other unless by an external force.

An atomistic assembly of elements can equally tolerate all kinds of ordering principles precisely because it exhibits no bias toward any principle. There is no "resistance", as it were, from within. This kind of disorder is theoretical rather than actual, since it is hard to imagine an actual case of utterly unrelated elements. Even the Greek atomists did not imagine utterly disconnected, homogeneous atoms but rather atoms that have some qualities which allow for connections among them. Yet, these atoms are held together by a mechanical (external) force. Max Planck's account of disorder is instructive in this connection, "…the single elements, with which the statistical approach operates, behave in complete independence from one another" (Planck, quoted and translated by Arnheim, 1971:14–15).

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[2] It should be noted that I use a priori here and in the following chapters not as denoting innate truth or self-illuminating propositions, but in its loose sense: any principle that can be known prior to the particular case, and thus enable some prior knowledge of it, is a priori. I follow here C.I.Lewis, who defines the a priori as definitive and analytic in its nature. (Lewis, 1956:231).

We find atomistic disorder in Descartes' theory of time, "every moment of its [time's] duration is independent of every other" (Descartes, 1991:231). It is God (the external force) who keeps the separated moments together by a constant act of creation. Leibniz's monads form another case of atomism. Monads are indivisible substances that do not interact. Like Descartes, Leibniz needs God (as an external force) to establish harmony among the "windowless" monads. Hume's theory of perception demonstrates a different role of atomistic disorder in a philosophical theory:

> There are two principles, which I cannot render consistent, nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences.
>
> (Hume, 1928: Appendix)

Simple perceptions are fragmented impressions that differ quantitatively. They can be arranged according to any ordering principle without any preference. It is the human mind that has a certain preference: it imposes the preferred principle upon the sense data. Conventionalism, therefore, assumes atomistic disorder as its basic and initiating presupposition. Indeed, atomisitic disorder is one of those metaphysical positions that stand in stark contrast to everyday experience, but nonetheless offer an explanation for it.

A conflict of orders

A conflict of orders occurs when parts of the same set are ordered by different principles without any coordination among them. Arnheim describes this kind of disorder as a state in which

> Within each piece, or group of pieces, there appears a clearly discernible order, which, however, is neither continued nor contradicted by neighboring order but is rather ignored, denied, distorted, made incomprehensible.
>
> (Arnheim, 1966:125)[3]

A conflict among principles prevents the clear comprehension of the set as a whole; it fractures it into sub-sets. A logical contradiction is the extreme case of such a conflict: one part is ruled by principle *A* and another part is ruled by *not-A*. Contradictions cannot be categorically overcome in any of the possible worlds; other conflicts may not be reconciled in one world (realm, context, field, etc.), but may be overcome in another. This point is significant for understanding changes and developments in aesthetic taste (see also Chapter 9, pp. 195–205).

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[3] Although Arnheim regards this as a definition of disorder in general, I take it to be only one form of disorder.

A library that is ordered partly by author, partly by title, and partly by subject is in a state of overall disorder. This is so in spite of the fact that the placement of each book has been guided by a well-proven and functional principle. Knowing the various principles that govern such a library would not enable one to locate a particular book, since one would not know according to which principle the book in question is ordered. Clearly, there is a need for a higher principle that defines which categories of books are ordered by author, which by title, and so forth. Without such a general higher principle, we would have as much trouble finding a specific book in this library as we would in a library that had no familiar ordering principles whatsoever.

Cournot's "causal series" (Cournot, 1956: Chapter iii) and Russell's "causal lines" (Russell, 1948: Chapter v) present another form of conflict between orders. Russell's definition of "chance" is based on the idea of separate causal lines that may clash:

> A 'causal line' […] is a temporal series of events that given some of them, something can be inferred about the others whatever may be happening elsewhere. […] Throughout a given causal line, there may be constancy of quality, constancy of structure.
>
> (Russell, 1948:459)

A contact between elements from different causal lines occurs by chance. Given that the causal lines are independent, there is an equal probability for segments of certain causal lines to collide. Feibleman elaborates on this in the following example:

> Let us suppose, for example, that two men are running toward the gates to trains in a busy railroad station. The gates are set in walls that are at right angles, and the two men in their haste collide. In the course of the consequent confusion they miss their train. Each was engaged in an orderly procedure according to well-understood rules of behavior. But there was […] the additional event of an accidental encounter where segments of the two procedures intersected.
>
> (Feibleman, 1968:9)

The idea of independent causal lines within the same universe is philosophically problematic. How can independent lines interact? How can disconnected independent lines be part of the same universe?

This difficulty may demonstrate once again why it is impossible to experience, or even imagine, total disorder: an object that has no unifying principle ceases to exist as an object (or a set). We cannot experience or think of an object without discerning in it some level of unity. We may describe an essay as disordered in the sense that it is about too many unrelated issues. The unity attained by the fact that the essay was written by X and has a certain title is insufficient for most purposes. We normally expect of an essay to express a coherent idea. Yet, "being written by

X" is the minimal unifying principle that makes it possible at all to describe the object as "a confused essay". The same is true about the causal lines: although we may experience relatively disconnected causal lines, we must assume that there is an overall principle that unites them and makes them all segments of the same nature, even if that principle is too general and unknown to us.

Chaos

Chaos is probably the most ancient concept of disorder. In creation stories it is the state that precedes all order; it is the raw material from which order emerges. There is, however, a discrepancy between the original meaning of "chaos" as portrayed in mythologies and the current use of "chaos". In many of the new studies, "chaos" is understood not as a form of disorder but rather as a kind of a highly complicated order. Bohm and Peat, for instance, use "chaos" both as a synonym for randomness and as an expression of a high order:

> The word *chaotic* provides a good description for the order of such movement (ocean waves as they break on rocks). Within the context of order that is visible to the eye of a close observer, this motion contains a number of sub-orders and is far from random. Nevertheless, to a more distant viewer these sub-orders become so fine that they are no longer visible to the eye and the order would be called random.
>
> (Bohm and Peat, 1989:126)

Considering the original meaning of the word, it is doubtful whether *chaos* can provide a "good description" for any kind of order. Indeed, there are all kinds of events or objects that conceal high order beneath their disordered appearance. This is true not only of powerful natural scenes such as ocean waves break on rocks, but also of every case in which the observer, owing to lack of knowledge or inability of some kind, is unable to comprehend the "real" order of the object. However, this common confusion should not result in a conceptual confusion: "chaos", in its original sense, refers to a pre-ordered state (by the origin of the concept), not to any form of order.

Notwithstanding, it is a fact that the term "chaos" is nowadays used to denote a highly sensitive and complicated order. Terminology is a matter of convention and as such there is no point in debating it. One may call a highly complicated order "chaos", just as one may name one's baby boy "girl". This terminology, however, results in confusion; it creates a clash among distinct categories. I prefer to keep the term "chaos" to denote the original meaning. As for indicating high, complicated and sensitive orders that collapse into states of disorder, I employ the term "overall sensitivity". This category is separately discussed in the next section.

In order to illustrate the original meaning of "chaos" we may consider the case of blurred vision: under this condition the resolution of the segments is low and the set appears almost homogeneous. The distinctions do not dissolve entirely and the object is not completely homogeneous; some poorly separated patches of color are still discerned. The change from disorder to order in such a chaotic state does not require an external principle but rather some changes within the field of vision.

In dreams different situations are often blended without clear distinctions. An interpretative act is needed to see the order that is latent in dream situations. In our childhood memories, events tend to fuse; we need, then, the testimony of adults or documents to put memories in order. In a pathological chaotic mental state one loses clear distinctions of one's own identity. This "de-individualization" occurs when a person identifies him or herself with a group or with another individual: it is not a total identification with another person, but the borderline between the individuals is vague.

The special significance of these cases is that the creation of order out of chaos does not depend on an external principle that is forced upon the object. Order is latent in chaos; it can grow, as it were, from within the chaotic state. It needs an external power to separate among the chaotic parts, but not an external principle. The external power does not force new distinctions upon the set; it brings to light or develops what is already there. The separation between heaven and earth is a *separation,* not an imposition. Some aspects of the creative process in art and in other fields may be understood in terms of bringing into light the latent order which the creator discerns in the chaotic state of the given materials.

There are many variations of chaos in ancient mythologies, but all express the same concept of formless material that consists of blended components or unsegregated segments from which distinctions that constitute the order of the universe emerge. Cosmology celebrates triumph over chaos.

According to an Egyptian myth, the primeval waters were inhabited by four pairs:

> [The first pair was] Nun and Naunet, primeval, formless ocean and primeval Matter; the second pair was Huh and Hauhet, the Illimitable and the Boundless. Then came Kùk and Kauket, Darkness and Obscurity; and, finally, Amon and Amaunet, the Hidden and Concealed.
>
> (Frankfurt et al., 1968:18)

According to a Mesopotamian myth, chaos is watery and consists of three intermingled elements: sweet waters; sea (salted) waters; clouds and mist. These three types of water were mingled in a large undefined mass (Girard, 1984:184). Darkness and water are boundless and obscure. The elements maintain their distinct characteristics (sweet, salted, misty etc.), but they are not yet properly differentiated. The act of creation is the act that materializes the latent potential for order.

Chaos, by this understanding, opposes atomistic disorder. Whereas atomistic disorder is the state of isolated, unrelated elements, chaos is the state of diminished borderlines among the segments, although without complete loss of all distinctions. Atomistic disorder calls for an external principle to be imposed upon the segregated elements; chaotic disorder implies latent, internal orders. The order established in an atomistic realm is conventional, external and does not express the nature of the elements (since there is no such nature). The order created out of chaos is not the act of producing something out of nothing but rather the act of realizing a potential and expressing the nature of the given materials.[4]

Overall sensitivity

"Overall sensitivity" is a state of total interdependence among the elements. This means that any change in one element immediately affects all the rest of the elements and consequently the set as a whole. An overall sensitive set is also sensitive to changes in context and therefore it is never stable. This is Heraclitus' ever-changing river, and Bergson's *élan vital*. It opposes atomistic disorder, that is, it opposes the state of total independence and indifference. Overall sensitivity also differs from chaos (in its original sense): the elements of an overall sensitive set are clearly distinct while chaos is expressed in a fusion of distinctions.

In a state of overall sensitivity each element is *equally* influential and significant within the set. The elements are distinct but their role within the whole is the same. There is no differentiation between minor and major, central and marginal, important and insignificant, relevant or irrelevant elements. This is exactly the type of disorder conveyed by the "butterfly effect" (Gleick, 1988:9–33). An apparently marginal, insignificant, minor and irrelevant event such as the flap of a butterfly's wings somewhere in the world may cause dramatic changes in weather conditions at another, distant part of the world. Thus, in order to predict the weather accurately one has to take into account (almost) everything! All the elements of a set are strongly and equally interdependent and therefore nothing is redundant. Even if some elements are actually redundant it is impossible to tell in advance which events are relevant and which are not. An overall sensitivity makes prediction impossible since knowledge of the unknown elements is also required for the acquaintance with the given elements. The "given" is thus unknown owing to the lack of overall knowledge of the set: one cannot know anything about the set unless one knows everything. If the knowledge of the whole could be achieved (which seems unlikely), such knowledge would eliminate the need or reason for predictions.

This argument forms an obstacle for firm determinism. Firm determinism endorses, in the last analysis, a firm homogeneity. Although each event in the chain is distinguishable and the whole chain is thus heterogeneous, it is still homogeneous in the sense that the *role* and *effectiveness* of all the events in the chain is *equal* and all elements are *equally informative* (non-redundant). One cannot remove or change one single element without causing an overall change in the whole set and thus altering its nature.

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[4] Girard ascribes to Lévi-Strauss the idea that disorder is a key concept in myths of creation despite the fact that disorder does not exist, "Why the disorder at the beginning? Lévi-Strauss would answer that it is there for purely logical reasons. In order to represent a process of differentiation myth needs its opposite as a point of departure. It requires the undifferentiated as background." (Girard, 1984:81).

The non-redundancy of the elements prevents their derivation from other elements and ultimately this also works against the idea of laws of Nature. Laws require some abstraction, some distinction between relevant and irrelevant qualities of the elements. But if nothing is redundant, such an abstraction is impossible. The elements have to be fully known in order to be known. This is one of the difficulties inherent in the theories of Laplace and Spinoza: on the one hand, prediction is the essential feature of such deterministic cosmologies; on the other hand, prediction is rendered impossible precisely because of the perfect, overall, determined necessity of the whole. Not one single event, minor as it can be, is without consequence. Paradoxically, the state of total sensitivity is simultaneously the world of firm determinism and the constantly changing world of Heraclitus. Needless to say, such totally sensitive sets cannot occur in experience; they simply cannot be perceived since they also exhibit sensitivity to the perceiver and the context of observation. Only tendencies toward overall sensitivity can be traced in actual sets. Such tendencies can be found not only in deterministic sets but also in theories of art such as the organic-form theories (see Chapter 4, pp. 75–77).

It should be noted that "overall sensitivity" as presented above corresponds to the current use of "chaos." However, the difference between the two types of disorder is important. Chaos, in its original sense, has a different affiliation to determinism. Its order is latent and may or may not be materialized. Moreover, whereas total overall sensitivities cannot be experienced (only tendencies toward such sensitivity can), chaotic states, by contrast, can be found in experience; they take part in actual manifestations of generating new orders—that is, creativity.

Symmetry

To define symmetry as a state of disorder seems to run counter to common sense. Symmetry is typically associated with balance and equality, terms that pertain to order rather than disorder. The technical definition of symmetry is an operation upon a given set that leaves it intact. This kind of operation results in an invariant of the set that is the mark of symmetry. The fundamental dynamical laws of mechanics are construed as symmetrical in the sense that they are reversible with respect to time. As such, mechanical laws bestow necessity and allow prediction. In what sense, then, is symmetry a form of disorder?

Everything depends on what question one asks and what one is looking for in a given set. Indeed, in a symmetrical set one knows exactly what to expect; all elements conform equally to the same principle; there is no differentiation among the elements in this respect. However, it is exactly this lack of differentiation that creates a sense of disorder when one's interest lies in the particular element. The fact that one cannot distinguish between the states of the set before and after the symmetrical operation is a demonstration of homogeneity—the mark of disorder.

The most famous philosophical metaphor for confusion caused by symmetry is Buridan's parable. The poor ass is confused by the perfect symmetry of the two heaps of hay, and since the rational ass has no reason whatsoever to prefer one over the other, it is doomed to starve. Let us examine a few other cases that clearly illustrate this confusing aspect of symmetry.

In the Arabic story of Ali Baba, one of the robbers draws a sign on Ali Baba's gate to distinguish it from other gates in the neighborhood and thus make it identifiable. This is an act of breaking symmetry in order to allow distinction and, in some sense, prediction. Ali Baba's maid noticed the sign and drew the same sign on each gate in the neighborhood to prevent the identification of Ali Baba's house. The maid succeeded in confusing the robbers by preserving the symmetry they sought to break. She saved her master by exploiting the disordered aspect of symmetry.

A circle is no doubt more symmetrical than a square or any other shape. It expresses a high order in that the whole may be deduced from any of its sections since each point on the circumference is necessarily equidistant from the center. Very little information is needed in order to reconstruct the whole circle. It is a perfect symbol of order. However, exactly for the same reason, a circle also expresses the elimination of all distinctions. "Moving in circles" is indeed an expression of confusion. The confusion originates in the fact that the points on the circle are indistinguishable, and there is no beginning and there is no ending to the circle. Only an external principle can break the symmetry of the circle (colors, numbers, etc.).

In a symmetrical set there is an equal probability that the element we are looking for will be any one of the set's elements. "All cats look alike at night" expresses symmetry. The fact that cats look alike may be a problem if one happens to be looking for a particular cat. In this case, one needs some information to break the symmetrical setting of all cats at night. Pete Seeger's song about the "little boxes" in which we all live suggests a similar understanding: symmetry entails the decline of individuality. If we all look alike, behave alike and live in the same little boxes, who are we as individuals?

There are all kinds of methods to overcome confusions caused by symmetry. Machines have serial numbers, streets have names and newborns have identification tags. The principal reason for naming people, marking objects and distinguishing between left and right is to break symmetry and create a helpful order.

The idea that symmetry could be a state of disorder is also conveyed by the second law of thermodynamics. Entropy means that the status of isolated sets tends to move from order (distinctions) to homogeneity (lack of distinctions). Thus, the growth of entropy parallels the increase in symmetry. In a state of thermodynamical equilibrium, entropy is maximum. From this perspective, concepts such as balance, equilibrium and symmetry express disorder. This may explain why entropy has been popularly interpreted as having apocalyptic implications. It suggests that the world inclines toward a state where everything gradually transforms into homogeneous dust.[5]

Let us take our last example from the Bible. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac begins with God commanding Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Genesis, 22:2). Rashi, the great Bible interpreter, wonders about the apparent redundancy in God's words and suggests that Abraham replied separately to each part of the command, trying thereby to postpone the terrible task via the confusion caused by symmetry. This is how Rashi imagines the full conversation between God and Abraham: "Thy son"—I have two sons; "Thine only son"—This one is the only son of his mother and the other is the only son of his mother; "whom thou lovest"—I love both of them. Finally God breaks the symmetry and stops the argument by using the ultimate, asymmetrical means of reference: the calling of the name—Isaac![6]

A positive definition of disorder

The classification of types of disorder serves not only to exhibit the variety of disorder but also to clarify its core. This takes us back to the initial question of how to define disorder in general. The required positive definition of disorder has to maintain the advantages of the two negative definitions—disorder as the *negative pole* of order and disorder as the outright opposite of order—and at the same time overcome their deficiencies. It also has to include the various types of disorder without eliminating their differences.

It is quite clear, to begin with, that disorder in general has to express some kind of homogeneity in opposition to the heterogeneity of order. At the same time, the definition should allow for all sets that are subject to order to be subject to disorder as well. The above typology of disorder clearly suggests that simple states cannot be the sole form of disorder and most, if not all cases of disorder are found in complex objects. This means that if disorder expresses homogeneity of some sort, it must be a homogeneity that may occur in complexities without eradicating the differences among the elements.

In view of these requirements I suggest the following definition: disorder is a state of *homogeneity in probabilities*. Homogeneity in probabilities means that the object is perceived as expressing equal chance of some sort; it does not mean that the object is homogeneous in every respect. Equal chance or homogeneity in probabilities may refer to the location of the elements within the set, their qualities, their interrelations or their conformity with different ordering principles. It is the state in which "anything goes", "anything can be anywhere", and "anyone can be

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[5] Arnheim describes the popular connotations of the second law of thermodynamics when it began to enter the public consciousness at the beginning of the twentieth century. It became a "cosmic memento mori, pointing to the underlying cause of the gradual decay of all things physical and mental" (Arnheim, 1971:9).

[6] Rashi's commentary has been published in many editions. I have used the 1946 edition of the *Pentateuch,* trans. Rev. M.Rosenbaum and A.M.Silberman, London: Shapiro, Vallentine & Co.

anything". Having equal probability does not imply having the same qualities: two elements that differ in many of their qualities may still have equal probability of some sort. For instance, when the weather forecast predicts a fifty percent chance of rain it means that dry weather and rain are equally probable. The situations in question, although equally probable, are very different.

One immediate benefit of this definition is that it does not restrict disorder to mere simple states. Disorder is a state which has a variety of possibilities (complex) that are homogeneous (simple) in their probability. This positive definition coheres with the two negative definitions while avoiding their traps. It expresses an opposition to order without eliminating the common ground that allows the move from one to another.

The measure of probability is relational. It depends both on the object in question and the observer's context. The calculation of probabilities involves different kinds of information, theories and beliefs that the observer holds to be true or relevant to the case. For a person who does not speak Hungarian, an accidental conversation in this language can be about almost anything. However, since actual cases are rarely strictly symmetrical and disconnected from familiar orders, one may have a sense of direction even with an unfamiliar language. This "sense of direction" suggests that nothing we experience can be entirely unfamiliar or meaningless since it is somehow associated with our previous knowledge and experience. In the preface to *New Essays on Human Understanding* Leibniz explains that minute impressions break the equality of probabilities and direct us in one way or another. In a word, we never experience total disorder, and as Leibniz believed, we are thus redeemed from the unfortunate destiny of the rational ass.

A state of homogeneity in probabilities—theoretical or actual—may bear negative as well as positive connotations. Shuffling cards prior to starting a card game is a clear case of intentionally creating homogeneity in probabilities. By shuffling the cards one attempts to create equal chances for each player to win the game. (Whether one succeeds or fails in creating a genuine equality is beside the point here.) This example indicates that disorder is favored in some cases. Monarchy, as well as any class society, expresses heterogeneity in probabilities, and democracy (ideally speaking) expresses homogeneity in probabilities. The fact that in some cases a certain amount or a certain kind of disorder is desired should not lead us to think that disorder is some kind of order merely because it is desired. Arnheim, for instance, regards the homogeneity achieved by shuffling cards as order. He argues that "this homogeneity is the order demanded by the purpose of the operation." (Arnheim, 1971:14). In my view, Arnheim confuses desirability with order. Disorder, even if it is desired, does not cease to be a state of disorder on this account. Disorder has its own benefits.

Homogeneity of probabilities is expressed by all types of disorder, from different perspectives or on different levels. Let us re-examine the different kinds of disorder in view of this new definition:

1 *Simple states* are homogeneous in every respect. However, the concept of

probability in this context is vacuous. *Limitless* objects exhibit homogeneity regarding the role or location of the components within the object: there is no differentiation between center and background, and the actual limits are arbitrary and may equally be anywhere.

2 *Randomness* is a state in which the actual occurrence or non-occurrence of a single element within the given set has equal probability.

3 *Atomistic disorder* is the case of an assembly of elements that tolerates equally any ordering principle. All principles have equal probability, and thus the chosen principle expresses a capricious choice, a mere convention.

4 *Conflict of orders* is the state in which various segments conform to different principles that cannot be united by a higher principle. The set as a whole tolerates equally any additional segment ordered by any principle (from a given contradiction any conclusion can be deduced; all conclusions are equally valid).

5 *Chaos* is a state in which the elements or the segments are not clearly differentiated and therefore their essential qualities are not determined. These qualities may be differentiated and materialized in many ways. The methods, and even the nature of the essential qualities have (ideally) equal probability to create a satisfactory order.

6 *Overall sensitivity* expresses homogeneity in the role and significance of each element in the set. It indicates equal probability for each element in its effectiveness within the set as a whole.

7 *Symmetry* expresses homogeneity in the sense that each element has equal probability in being located anywhere within the set. In fact, every form of disorder exhibits some kind of symmetry since equal probability, in itself, is an expression of symmetry.

Summary

1 Disorder may have two negative definitions: *negative pole* of order and *opposite* pole of order.

2 Disorder as the negative pole raises the problems of perfect order and disorder: how can the highest and the lowest degree of order be determined and comprehended?

3 Absolute order and disorder are inconceivable.

4 Optimal order and disorder express the pragmatic aspect of the above problem. It is the highest degree of order or disorder that is actually achieved.

5 Disorder, as a complete opposite of order is a simple, homogeneous state. However, disorder also appears in sets (which are complex by definition). Consequently, order and disorder do have some common features and thus disorder is not an outright opposite of order.

6 Disorder is manifested in many types: simple state, the limitless, randomness, atomistic disorder, clash of orders, chaos, overall sensitivity and symmetry (in some sense).

7 The core of all types of disorder is *homogeneity in probability*. It allows for

disorder in complex, heterogeneous objects. This is a positive definition of disorder that avoids the problem of the negative definitions and the issue of extreme poles. Homogeneity in probability is quantitative and relational in the sense that actual states may express more or less equality in their probabilities, depending on the context and the observer.

Part II

Two types of order

The distinction between discursive and aesthetic order

The relation between a set and an ordering principle constitutes the infrastructure of any order. This relation allows for two logical possibilities: an ordering principle is either *external* to its set or *internal* to it. Being "external" means that the principle is independent of the particular sets and it therefore can be understood and contemplated apart from any particular case. The "external" principle is thus like an idea or a pattern that is capable of being imprinted in different materials and of reaching a variety of degrees in the accuracy of its imprinting. Being "internal" means that the principle cannot be detached from the particular set in which it is found and cannot be separately contemplated as an abstract, independent formula. The "internal" principle consists of the relations among the elements of a particular set; these relations do not maintain the same character in a different set that consists on other elements. In other words, the elements of the set constitute their own principle by generating an individual net of interrelationships among them. The nature of these relationships as well as the diversity between "external" and "internal" principles will be elaborated and analyzed in the following chapters. There is, however, no third alternative.

These two options generate two species of order: an order that consists of external relations and an order that consists of internal relations. The first option will be referred to as "discursive order"[1] and the second as—"aesthetic order." The general concept of order as defined in the previous chapters implies no bias towards either type. Both types share the general qualities of order, but differ in some important features; both have various relations with each other as well as with types of disorder. This net of interrelations among forms of order and disorder allows for a variety and richness of experience.

Although the general concept of order has no inclination toward any one type of order, Western philosophy and science have traditionally expressed a strong bias to discursive order. The second type of order, as well as the very idea of its possibility, is commonly avoided. Prigogine expresses the position typical to Western philosophy when he defines order as an "outcome of some preconceived plan" (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984:41) A plan is, by definition, "preconceived" or else it is not a plan. As such, it always precedes its actualization and is "external" to its actualization; it is capable of existing apart of any actualization. Order, from this perspective, is determined by principles (the "plan") that exist *prior* to any of their instances and independent of them. A plan, even if not accomplished, is still a plan. Even if the principle is known through a particular set, its logical status as an ordering principle does not depend on that set or any other particular sets. Examining a building without seeing its plan first, we normally assume that there was such a plan, or that a plan can be "deduced" and put to use for constructing other, similar buildings. This quality of discursive orders allows the examination of theories, principles, laws or rules before and apart from their implementations.

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[1] This term, along with other useful observations, was suggested by Professor Michael Straus from the Department of Philosophy, University of Haifa, Israel.

Paul Weiss disagrees with the idea that a principle may exist on its own, apart from any of the particular sets:

> If there is to be order, there must be something that is ordered; otherwise the order would be nothing more than an idea of order, a possibility, not a structure. [...] An order without anything that is ordered is not possible.
> (Weiss, 1966:15)

Is Weiss right? Much depends on the exact meaning of "order" in the paragraph cited. Note that Weiss does not distinguish here between the two senses of "order" that were differentiated in the first chapter: (1) "order" in the sense of *ordering principle;* and (2) "order" in the sense *of degree of conformity* (see Chapter 1, p. 9). Weiss is correct about the second sense of order, but not about the first. Indeed, we cannot measure the degree of conformity of a non-existent set. But we can conceive of an ordering principle quite apart from its actualizations. It is possible to understand and evaluate the idea (the plan) of Plato's republic, and even to estimate its potential success before we know whether Plato actually tried to establish such a republic. Indeed, any external ordering principle is an idea in the same sense that any plan or theory is an idea of order. Contrary to Weiss's position, orders are often considered before there is "anything that is ordered", otherwise plans and theories *per se* would be meaningless. The fact that we have a viable concept of an empty class is the best argument against Weiss.

This Platonic attitude does not have to be Platonic in the strict sense. One may adopt a view according to which the principle does not exist external to the contemplating mind. Nonetheless, even an orthodox nominalist must accept that a plan, a theory or an idea of a structure is in some way distinct from, and independent of, the actual class it governs. Logical arguments may serve as a paradigm for this understanding: "*if* P implies Q, and Q implies R, *then* P implies R" is the structure of a valid argument independent of whatever P, Q and R stand for. This abstract pattern serves as an ordering principle and may constitute innumerable valid arguments regardless of the content and truth-value of the particular components that exemplify this argument.

This point takes us back to Feibleman's definition of order as "a law that consists in similarity among disparate elements" (Feibleman, 1968:3). The view that order consists of similarities is rooted in pre-Socratic philosophy and has since then inhered in Western thought. The ordering principle, the law, constitutes similarities. Heraclitus has stated that "one must follow that [the universal law, namely] which is common [to all]" and "it is wise to agree that all things are one" (Freeman, 1962: Fragments 2 and 50) This begs the question: what kind of a similarity does the principle constitute? There are two possibilities here: similarity may occur either (1) among the elements of a set or (2) among all sets of a class.

1 Is similarity among the *elements* of a set a prerequisite of order? This is not necessarily so. Take any common object—for example a table. It is obviously an artifact, the product of a preconceived plan. Is there a similarity among all its parts? They may all be made of wood, but one can easily imagine a table made from a combination of various materials (glass, metal, plastic, etc.). Do they all have the same shape? Again, they might, but not necessarily; all kinds of combination are possible. One may argue that all elements of a table, regardless of the specific material, color or form, essentially belong to the physical realm. Even this argument can be rejected on the basis of including the idea and function of the table as its elements. At any rate, it is not at all obvious that similarity among the elements of a set is necessary.
2 Is similarity among *all sets* of a class a prerequisite of order? The answer is positive. We find similarities among tables manufactured according to the same plan, among natural events subjected to the same law, among logical arguments of the same structure, and so on. However, this is an inherent truth: sets of the same class are similar by definition, they all share the same ordering principle; otherwise they would not be members of the same class.

Feibleman's notion of similarity becomes vacuous in the case of empty classes as well as in the case of classes that consist of one member. Now, by "one member class" I do not mean a mere coincidence in which only one case actually conforms to an idea, but a class that cannot have more than one member by its very nature (for example, "the present king of France"). Such a notion of "one member class" does not contradict the general concept of order. Furthermore, similarity also occurs in forms of disorder: homogeneity in probability expresses similarity of the highest degree. Therefore, the notion of similarity cannot serve as a key concept in understanding order.

So goes a general account of the conventional concept of order. Feibleman's definition as well as Prigogine's is at best a half-truth. Although every outcome of a preconceived plan constitutes a form of order, the inverse is not necessarily true. This conventional concept does not exhaust all possible forms of order. The "absence" of a priori principles or lack of similarities does not necessarily result in disorder. Some forms of order are not generated in accordance with a priori principles. In the case of "a truly new form, invented by art or by Nature" so Bergson argues, "[…] the thing and the idea of the thing, its reality and its possibility", are created "at one stroke" (Bergson, 1946:23). That is, in creating a new form, the principle does not precede the set by definition: it is new. Works of art are typical examples: they are not created or appreciated according to fixed rules (in many cases they tend to break rules), yet they exhibit order—they express complexity and necessity in various degrees.

The two types of order differ in many respects, but they share the characteristics of the general concept of order: *complexity, heterogeneity in probability* and *necessity* in various degrees. The two orders are mutually dependent; they complement each other and relate to each other in various ways. Nonetheless, they are irreducible one to each other; both orders are indispensable for the understanding of human experience.

The following chapter presents a detailed account of the conventional concept, the *discursive order*. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the examination of doctrines that endorse discursive orders only. The purpose of this examination is to show that a second type of order is unavoidable. The fifth chapter is dedicated to Bergson's theory of two orders. Its purpose is to create a background for the detailed examination of aesthetic order in Chapters 6–8. Chapter 9 concludes the second part of the book with an analysis of the various interrelations among the two orders and types of disorder.

3 Discursive order

The conventional concept

The characteristics of discursive order

Discursive order is manifested in many sub-types: moral principles, natural laws, state laws, logical and mathematical principles, archetypes of all sorts, recipes, and the like. There are, of course, substantial differences among these sub-types; they differ in their realm, modes, functions and significance, yet they are all based on principles that can be apprehended prior to and independent of their particular cases.

Discursive order, consisting as it does of external relations between set and principle, has a strong affiliation to *atomistic disorder*. It may be recalled that in this category, order cannot emerge from within. Homogeneous, disconnected elements are indifferent (ideally speaking) to any form of order and therefore easy to manipulate via external principles. All the characteristics of discursive order are in fact different aspects of this affiliation.

Discursive order may take two forms: quantitative or binary. As already stated, binary orders do not serve as a basis for evaluation. They form categories for mere classifications without differentiating among sets of the same class. Quantitative orders supply the basis for evaluations since they allow for a variety of degrees within the same class; they supply the factors for evaluating the compliance of each set to the relevant ordering principle. The following focuses on quantitative orders in accordance with the main interest of the present analysis: the understanding of aesthetic *evaluation*.

Quantitative discursive orders are characterized by a tendency to a high degree of indifference, a high degree of predictability and redundancy, a low degree of informative value and a high degree of openness.

Indifference

Indifference is a kind of relation that may occur among elements, sets, classes, principles and their contexts. "X is indifferent to Y" means that X is not affected by Y, regardless of any other relations they may have. Indifference is not a reflexive relation; it may be mutual but it does not have to be. Although X is indifferent to Y, Y may or may not be indifferent to X. A clear demonstration of one-way indifference is in the popular understanding of events in time: past events determine future events, but future events do not affect the past: the results of the past events may be modified, but not the events that caused them. The weather, for another example, may affect my moods profoundly, but my moods do not affect the weather (or so I believe). A portrait may resemble a person but it is indifferent to changes in the person over passing years; the resemblance may change, but the picture does not. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Oscar Wilde reverses the usual indifference between picture and model. It is Dorian Gray who remains ageless (indifferent to changes) while his portrait mysteriously ages. Of course, these cases of indifference are *not* absolute; different interpretations of the above examples may present them in a different light. It may be argued that past events acquire different meanings in the light of new events; in this sense they are not indifferent to future events. A radical deterministic view may hold that my moods also have some role in determining the weather (nothing is redundant). Similarly, a painting or a photograph may acquire different meanings for its viewers if the photographed person leaves, dies or changes radically. These examples indicate that the quality of indifference (as all other qualities of order) may be interpreted in more than one way, and their applications depend on a whole set of beliefs that motivate the interpreters.

A geometrical axiom, to take another example, is indifferent to the degree of its apprehension by any person. It remains the same whether one gets it right or not. Here again, the indifference is *not* absolute, since the use of an axiom depends on whether it is *chosen* to be the fundamental axiom of a certain geometry or not.

In Spinoza's "overall sensitive" world, events and entities (within the global substance) are never indifferent to one another. An absolute and mutual indifference may only exist between two substances. But since there is only one substance in Spinoza's system, the concept of indifference remains vacuous. Notwithstanding, there is a kind of mutual indifference among the attributes. Mind and body are two attributes that are indifferent one to each other in some sense.[1]

Indifference may appear in various degrees, but the ideal extreme of *absolute indifference* does not express order at all; it is in fact a form *of atomistic disorder*. Some degree of sensitivity persists in any version of discursive order, for it is required to establish the *connection* among the elements and the principle; such a connection cannot be established without some degree of sensitivity. A state of absolute indifference is a state of no connections whatsoever. This is one of the problems with radical conventionalism: if the elements have no bias whatsoever towards any kind of order, they equally tolerate all orders. In the last analysis, they cannot constitute any order, not even a conventional one, since there will be no pragmatic reason whatsoever for preferring one order to another. Therefore, discursive order is characterized here not by total indifference but rather by a *tendency* to a *high* degree of *indifference.* No set can reach the level of absolute indifference without collapsing into a state of disorder. As we already stated in Chapter 2, total disorder is beyond perception. Actual disorders are never total, and the *actual* point at which high order collapses into a state of disorder cannot be determined since it is flexible and context-dependent.

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[1] The attributes do not interact, but any change in terms of one attribute is at the same time a change in terms of the other, since all attributes are aspects of the same thing. This is Spinoza's resolution of the problem raised by Descartes' dualism. It is interesting to note that Spinoza could not accept one-way indifference but that Descartes accepts it. The mind-body relation is described mainly as a mental influence on the body. The relationship between God and the created world presents another kind of one-way indifference in Descartes' philosophy. God, according to Descartes, creates and determines the world but is not affected by it. However, according to Spinoza, God and Nature are one and the same (like mind and body), therefore the issue of indifference resolves itself.

We may distinguish among five aspects of indifference in discursive order:

1 between the elements and their ordering principle
2 among the elements of the same set
3 among ordering principles
4 among all sets of the same class
5 between the set and its context

Indifference between elements and ordering principles

The indifference between elements and principles is mutual: (1) the same principle may govern different sets without being affected by the number of sets or their particular nature; (2) similarly, the same elements may be ordered by various principles and remain (ideally) the same.

1 *Ordering principles* are independent of the elements they order into a set. In many cases we need concrete instances in order to comprehend a principle, and some instances may be more useful than others for this purpose. However, the principle (being a Platonic entity) has a “life of its own”, independent of the particular instance by which it was perceived. Once the principle is understood it may be further applied. We teach the five year old that two apples plus three apples are five apples: we hope that soon enough the child will not need apples, fingers or candies in order to understand this abstract, arithmetical truth. Logical arguments, like mathematical statements, transcend the specific content of their constitutive elements. The validity of an argument does not depend on the literal truth of its presuppositions nor does it depend on the symbols that were chosen to express it.

The mode of existence of moral principles is debatable, but their logical status, by definition (being about “ought”), is independent of their implementations. Moral principles dictate the form of the right action; they are not contingent on actual behaviors. That is, even if a moral principle is violated it does not cease, on this account, to function as a moral principle and its content does not change. The fact that a principle may generate an empty class clearly indicates the indifference of the principle towards its possible instances. Rules of a game that nobody plays are no less game rules than those of a popular and regularly played game. One can understand the game rules without playing the game. Parliament may pass a law that for various reasons might never be implemented; such a law is no less a law than one which has been rigorously applied.

The fact that principles may differ in their applicabilities suggests some degree of sensitivity towards their instances (no actual indifference is total). Consider the following cases, (a) An alphabetical order obliges one to construct its sets out of words (or rather, objects represented by words). This allows us to order an almost unlimited range of objects: books, people, animals, stars, cities, flowers, and so forth, (b) Weight, as an ordering principle, requires us to construct sets out of objects that belong to the physical realm. We can choose from a large range of objects, but some things are excluded; for example, ideas and feelings (unless "weight" is used metaphorically), (c) The principle that governs the process of employment requires that candidates be human beings, that they fall within a certain age group, that they pass certain exams and possess certain skills. Comparing these principles, we may observe that since alphabetical order is highly abstract it demands very little of its sets. It may therefore govern sets consisting of physical and mental elements. Consequently, the indifference that this principle exhibits towards the elements is very high. Ordering by weights is less abstract; it limits its sets to the physical realm. The third principle, the least abstract of the three, defines more specific demands from its elements. These specific demands clearly express lower indifference. We may therefore conclude that the level of abstraction and generality of the principle is directly proportional to the level of indifference between principle and elements of a set.

2 The same elements may be governed by various principles. The classification of an object according to different categories does not interfere with the composition of the object. The relations ascribed by Spinoza to the substance and its attributes may serve as a paradigm:

> [...] it is the nature of a substance that each of its attributes is conceived through itself [...] it is far from absurd to attribute several attributes to one substance.
>
> (Spinoza, 1989: I, note to prop. X)

The attributes are independent of each other, namely they constitute different ordering principles; they all refer to the same substance at the same time. The substance does not depend on the particular attribute by which we comprehend it; but it cannot be entirely indifferent to the attributes because these attributes allow for understanding the modes of the substance.

This kind of indifference has a significant implication. Two people may approach the same object in different ways; they may understand it and evaluate it differently in accordance with their different interests and worldviews. Yet, regardless of these differences they may agree that they relate to the *same object,* the very object that remains indifferent to their disputes. This has a bearing on aesthetic evaluation and may partly explain differences in taste. *War and Peace* can be categorized and evaluated by the novelty of its subject matter, by its genre, its language, its moral view, and so forth. In each case it remains the same novel with the same words in the same order. It is exactly this kind of indifference that allows disagreements: it is the same book although viewed by different readers from different perspectives. Indeed, one may argue that different perspectives create different objects; therefore the book is not the same for all readers. Consequently, two readers could not disagree about the book.[2] Such an argument rejects the idea of indifference and demands high sensitivity (if not total) in each case. It is interesting to note that while Spinoza allows some indifference between the substance and its attributes, he denies it in the realm of concepts. Thus, real arguments among people referring to the same concept are impossible:

> For men either do not rightly explain their own minds, or do not rightly interpret the minds of others. For, in truth, while they flatly contradict one another, they either think the same things or different things, with the result that the errors and absurdities which they find in others do not exist.
>
> (Spinoza, 1989: II, note to prop. XLVII)

In other words, disagreements are only apparent; genuine disagreements are made impossible since concepts and ideas are, according to Spinoza, highly sensitive to their context. Only a sufficient degree of indifference allows for two people to relate to the *same* concept or object from *different* perspectives and to have a genuine argument. If we accept two extremes only, that is, absolute indifference and absolute sensitivity, Spinoza (as well as Stanley Fish) is right: there is no (one) text in the classroom, and as result there can be no real argument about *the* text. This conclusion leads in the last analysis to a firm solipsism. However, if we accept that indifference and sensitivity are quantitative and limited, we allow for different observers to have the (more or less) same object in mind in spite of differences in perspective. Consequently, agreements and disagreements are not only possible but also never total.

Indifference among the elements of the same set

There is a limited, one-way indifference, among the elements of a set. The elements that precede other elements in time, space or logical sequence are indifferent to those that come after them in every relevant respect. The latter elements do not affect the location of the former. This is demonstrated in the understanding of past events as unaffected by the future.

For example, if an alphabetical list is correctly ordered up to J and then places N before K, the first section (A–J) remains in order no matter what comes afterwards. However, all that comes after K is bound to be in a lower degree of order. M, for instance, is not in its correct position in relation to K or J, since instead of being the thirteenth letter, it is now the twelfth. If bricks are removed from the middle of the wall, the top part may tumble, but the stability of the bottom part will not be adversely affected.

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[2] Stanley Fish's question "is there a text in this class?" reflects a similar point with regard to interpretation (Fish, 1980). See also Chapter 7.

Another kind of indifference between elements is expressed in the fact that the nature of the individual element is not modified by the external relation it has with other elements that participate in the same set. A rose is a rose, regardless of the other flowers in the same bouquet. This, as we shall see, is not quite the case when aesthetic order is considered.

Indifference among ordering principles

The indifference among ordering principles is not an overall indifference. It is necessary to distinguish between (1) the indifference among the principles *per se* and (2) the indifference among their applications.

1. There may be a high degree of indifference among principles from different realms or disciplines. Mathematical principles are highly indifferent to moral principles and vice versa. Oscar Wilde believed that aesthetics should be indifferent to ethics; one should not evaluate works of art from the perspective of one's moral values. In later life, Tolstoy came to believe precisely the opposite. Being indifferent to each other, principles of different disciplines are like different languages that should not mix. This is how Spinoza describes the relations between the attributes of the substance:

   > One is conceived without the aid of the other…nor could one of them be produced from another.
   >
   > (Spinoza, 1989: I, note to prop. X)

   Nevertheless, even if it is not theoretically anticipated, in practice it often happens that disciplines mix and influence each other in many ways like living languages. The case of relations between principles that belong to the same theory is different. A theory is constructed of definitions, assumptions and principles. A change in this net of dependence amounts to a change in the theory itself. However, these theoretical elements are independent in the sense that the same principle or the same definition may be part of a different theory, playing a different role.[3]
2. Ordering principles are in some cases independent of each other for their *application*. For instance, the same behavior may be analyzed in psychological, physical, or moral terms without necessarily excluding one of them as mistaken or irrelevant, and without necessarily imposing the conclusions of one discipline on to another. Notwithstanding, principles may

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[3] Theories, in this sense, behave like works of art, that is, they express aesthetic order. See the discussions in Chapters 9 and 11.

complement or contradict each other and thus reveal various degrees of sensitivity to one another. In the case of complementary principles, the application of one prepares the ground for the application of the other. In the case of contradicting principles, when one principle is applied, the application of the other is excluded.

Indifference among all sets of the same class

All sets of the same class, sharing the same ordering principle, exhibit a mutual indifference to one another. Members of a class, unlike members of a social club, do not necessarily develop any special relations because of their common "membership". They do not directly affect each other's degree of order. The degree of conformity of each set to their common ordering principle is determined independently of the others.

In an Aristotelian conception of Nature, various sets of the same class (genre) may realize their generic potential in different degrees. The fact that X is a good specimen is not affected by the fact that Y is not. According to Kantian ethics, each act or intention maintains its moral value separately, on its own account, regardless of the values of previous similar cases. The fact that I honestly intend to obey the imperative category on one occasion does not guarantee that my intention will be equally moral on the next occasion (psychological considerations aside). Sets also exhibit indifference to the actual number of the sets that belong within the same class. Whether there are many or a few sets within the same class is irrelevant to the degree of order maintained by each set. Each set is autonomous in this respect.

Indifference between the set and its context

The degree of order found in a set is determined solely by its conformity to a specific principle. It is highly indifferent to the set's context. This kind of indifference allows for an object to remain the *same* through changing contexts. A rose is a rose whether it grows in the garden or rests in a vase, whether it is called "a rose" or receives another name. Some degree of indifference to context is a necessary requirement for experience as well as for its contemplation. The inverse—the state of absolute sensitivity to context—expresses disorder: if X at time t_1 is absolutely different from X at t_2, we could not even be aware of this truth: the comparison between the situations would become impossible.

Although the context may have further causal impact on the set, it is irrelevant for estimating its degree of order at a given time. Causal relations between set and context may be relevant to the history of the set, namely to the question of how the set developed a certain degree of order in a given period of time. But this history is irrelevant to the actual degree of order found in that set at a defined moment.

The degree of indifference that a set exhibits to its context also indicates the *strength* of that order. Information theory expresses this idea by the concept of *noise*. A noise is a disturbance in the background of the message (the set). In strong orders, i.e. well-established, known orders, the noise does not disturb the transmission and reception of the message. There is a connection between the degree of indifference to context in a set and its strength. Strong orders may "endure" all kinds of noise whereas more complicated sensitive orders may be more easily defeated by noise. Listening to a conversation in one's native language, one can easily tolerate background noises and sloppy pronunciation, but to follow a conversation in a newly acquired foreign language one needs clear pronunciation and a quiet background.

Informative value, predictability and redundancy

Informative value, predictability and redundancy are different aspects of the same quality. These terms are borrowed from the Information Theory, according to which

> *Messages* are measured by a *quantity* of *information,* which is the originality, that is, the quantity of unpredictability (unforeseeability) that they present.
>
> (Moles, 1966:54)

An element that is highly predictable has a low informative value and is highly redundant. In sets that exhibit low coherence to their principle, predictability and redundancy are low and the informative value of missing (unknown) elements is high. It should be noted that in the present analysis "informative value" is merely quantitative and entirely disconnected from content signification.

Informative value and predictability

Informative value is the degree of *novelty* of information carried by the elements. Novelty is not a mere description of the set but rather an expression of the current knowledge of the observer. The degree of novelty expresses the relation between the known and the unknown and the gap between the expected and unexpected. A totally unfamiliar element (if such an element is possible) cannot carry informative value, because it does not connect the known with the unknown. This immediately raises the old query of progress in knowledge—how is it possible to learn anything that is really new? Or, in different terms, how can anything carry high informative value? One thing is sure: the concept of discursive order cannot answer this question. We will return to this question in the discussion of aesthetic order. The concept of discursive order can only define the unknown in terms of an unexpected connection between familiar elements and principle. The object in question is expected to be ordered by X and it is actually (surprisingly) ordered by Y. But X is not necessarily new and neither is Y. For example, you go to see a tragedy by Shakespeare and find the stage full of singing and dancing. Then you realize that the principle of a musical has been applied to the play. Such an experience is highly informative and simultaneously confusing. It may give the observer a sense of disorder, a sense of a new aesthetic order, or both: first disorder and then a discovery of a new aesthetic order (This touches upon the relation between disorder and aesthetic order. See Chapter 9.)

Sets of discursive order typically carry low informative value. Being external to the set, the discursive principle carries a priori information. The prior knowledge of the principle supplies information about the set before the set is actually experienced. Thus, the higher the degree of conformity to the principle, the lower its informative value. In this sense a discursive set exhibits a tendency toward null informative value, although this tendency can never reach its absolute phase.

The need to experience the actual set involves a need for information that cannot be supplied by the a priori principle. For example, knowledge of the actual degree of coherence with the principle cannot precede the experience of the set; this knowledge is not supplied by the principle alone. If I want to know whether an object is highly or poorly ordered, I have to inspect the object itself. For instance, it is not enough to know the state laws in order to know the rate of crime in a certain period (although in some cases one may make a good guess).

Prediction is an aspect of informative value. It is not the mere action of foreseeing the future, but a whole range of deductive reasoning. Knowledge of the future, if it is not deduced from analysis of the past (the given elements), has nothing to do with discursive orders. In this sense, prediction does not concern itself with anticipating the new, but only with extrapolating from the old. In a sense, this kind of prediction denies the existence of the new.[4] Predicting elements of a set means deducing missing elements (information) based on those given.

Prediction is thus possible under two conditions: (1) the ordering principle is known, and (2) a segment of the set is given. In some cases, the ordering principle itself can be extracted from the given elements. Given a segment of an arithmetical progression and the general idea of progression, one may deduce the principle (or at least, one possible principle) of the specific progression and continue it endlessly. Although it concerns the past, reconstruction of objects (archeology) or events (history) may be regarded as a kind of prediction. The fictional character Sherlock Holmes predicts complicated events—past as well as future—from a few given details. His genius lies in extracting the ordering principle from extremely minute segments of information.

Laplace's (1951) concept of omniscient intelligence demonstrates the predictive aspect of discursive order. Laplace (like Spinoza and others before him) believed that the universe is perfectly ordered. In his *Théorie Analytique des Probabilitiés* he claims that knowing all the laws of Nature (the relevant ordering principles) as well as the positions and momenta of all the particles in the universe at a given instance (a minute section of the set), the omniscient intelligence is able to calculate the whole chain of events at all times. Laplace's omniscient intelligence knows this chain of events with certitude, that is, with a probability one.

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[4] Bergson uses this argument in his criticism of Western philosophy. See Chapter 5.

Redundancy

Redundancy in discursive order occurs on four levels:

1 redundancy of predictable details
2 redundancy of additional sets
3 redundancy of irrelevant elements
4 redundancy in strong orders

REDUNDANCY OF PREDICTABLE DETAILS

Redundancy is a reflection of predictability. Details that are highly predictable are highly redundant. As soon as we deduce the formula of an arithmetic progression from a given section, the remainder of the progression is obvious and thus redundant. Redundancy, like other qualities of order, cannot be absolute. One cannot predict missing elements unless some part of the set is given (and thus not redundant). Although each element of a highly ordered set is highly redundant, the elements clearly cannot all be redundant. A maximum discursive order would demand a complete redundancy which, in turn, results in a complete nullification of the set. Without an adequate, non-redundant segment, even an omniscient intelligence cannot predict or deduce the rest of the chain. (But how does an omniscient intelligence remain omniscient under these difficult conditions? The question, fortunately, lies beyond the scope of this discussion.)

REDUNDANCY OF ADDITIONAL SETS

If a highly ordered set is given, its *ordering principle* may be deduced and further applied to other sets. Once the principle is deduced, one does not need additional sets of the same principle. In other words, one sample may be enough.[5] In some cases, one needs more than one set of the same class to reveal a specific ordering principle, since a singular set may lead to many different directions and one wants other cases to eliminate possibilities. This is typically the case of psychometric exams: on the bases of two given complete sets, one has to deduce the principle which is not given and thereby complete a given section and make it a third set. But even if one needs more than one set of the same class to extract the principle, one usually does not need *all* the sets of the class for this purpose.

REDUNDANCY OF IRRELEVANT ELEMENTS

Redundancy of irrelevant elements arises because a discursive ordering principle is bound to be more abstract than any of its sets. The complexity of the principle cannot be identical with the complexity of the set it governs. Heinz Von Foerster (1984) makes this point with respect to description:

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[5] A similar point is presented by Husserl (1982: Vol. II, §3 and 4).

> If the length of the description approximates the length of the arrangement, it is clear that we do not understand this arrangement, for the description just parrots the arrangement.
>
> (Von Foerster, 1981:184)

The immediate implication of this statement is that the set (since it is more concrete than the principle) is bound to have more qualities than those demanded by a sole ordering principle. For instance, any concrete object that is square also has color, weight, size, etc. These qualities are necessary in the "real world" but are redundant when we only consider the object's conformity with the principle of squareness. The very existence of the set creates this kind of redundancy. Here we reach an important conclusion, namely that *irrelevant details* are indispensable for the functioning of discursive order. This conclusion stands in stark contrast to the Platonic view that irrelevant (material) qualities *obstruct* order from reaching its maximum degree, i.e. becoming an *idea*. Accepting that *maximum* order is probably a vacuous notion, we must accept that some "irrelevant" qualities are essential for the possibility of any actual set.

REDUNDANCY IN STRONG ORDERS

A strong order is easily recognizable even when conformity between a principle and a set is low. A strong order is, by definition, highly indifferent not only to its context but also to its degree of order. As a result, it allows high redundancy of details. It is as if, while experiencing the object, it becomes transparent and one sees the principle and not the object itself; the object thus becomes *almost* entirely redundant. For instance, it is often argued that physicians tend to regard their patients as "cases" and not as individuals, that is, they see the general phenomenon through the individual person.

Everyone familiar with Western culture can recognize the face of the "Mona Lisa" from even a part of a bad reproduction. The strength of this overexposed painting results in a high redundancy of its details. However, when this painting is considered for its artistic merit all (or most) of its details are non-redundant. Another example: spelling errors in one's native language are highly redundant. For this reason one hardly notices the spelling errors in one's own writing; the familiarity of the words makes their spelling "transparent". The reader "predicts" the spelling and "corrects" the errors automatically.

In strong orders, redundancies of this kind—missing parts, wrong elements, fuzzy outlines—occur very often without affecting our understanding of the relevant objects. This has a pragmatic value since it allows us to move faster from one element to another, to skip a few elements here and there, and saves us the effort of concentrating equally on each and every detail. Redundancy of this kind is useful.

Openness

Open sets

An open set is a set in which the resolution of the borderlines does not determine its degree of coherence. High openness is the state in which substitution, subtraction and addition of elements do not affect the conformity between set and principle. The degree of "openness" depends on the degree of sensitivity (or indifference) of the ordering principle or on the strength of the principle. It is also another aspect of the tendency toward high redundancy in discursive orders. Symbols in a logical argument may be replaced by other symbols and still maintain the same validity; new books may be added to a library and names may be removed from an alphabetical list without affecting the overall order of the set.

Openness is quantitative. Too many new or different elements might alter the nature of the original principle. Indeed, a principle never changes in the strict sense, but its degree of actualization in a given set may decrease. The principle itself is always "there" in some sense, in the "realm of ideas" (either literally or metaphorically) ready to be used, implemented or considered whenever the mind summons it.

Open classes

Being indifferent, the ordering principle allows for an infinite number of sets. The actual limit of the number of sets conforming to the same principle is not derivable from the principle itself; it is rather an expression of the circumstances. The number of libraries that can be arranged by the same principle, the number of things that can be square, the number of natural events that obey the same natural laws—these classes are (ideally) infinite.

Summary

1 Discursive order is the traditional, rational order.
2 It consists of principles that are a priori and, in this sense, external to and independent of any of their particular instances.
3 As such, discursive order has an affiliation to atomistic disorder: it is characterized by a tendency towards high indifference. The point of maximum indifference collapses into a state of atomistic disorder.
4 High discursive order expresses high redundancy, high predictability and low informative value. These features reflect each other and have many aspects and manifestations.
5 Discursive order consists of an open set and an open class. It is the order of the general, the repeatable and therefore the expected.

4 Beyond discursive order

Discursive order depends on a priori principles. It can be thus contrasted in two alternative ways: (1) by disorder only—the case of an "absence" of ordering principles (the limitation of this notion was discussed in Chapter 2), or (2) by disorder as well as by a different type of order. The second alternative suggests that the "absence" of external principles (or a poor compliance to such principles) does not necessarily lead to disorder. In this case, each type of order is contrasted in two ways: by disorder and by an alternative order.

Viewing discursive order as contrasted only by disorder reflects the conventional approach. However, I argue that the second alternative is not only more adequate but also more beneficial for understanding different aspects of experience, mainly aesthetic experience. Moreover, I argue that the acknowledgment of a second type of order is mandatory even in theories that explicitly avoid this type of order. The notion of *primary laws* may serve as a paradigm for demonstrating this general point.

Laws of any kind—natural, logical, moral or even state laws—may be divided into two types: they are either primary laws or laws derived from primary laws. Primary laws are the principles by which everything in the relevant realm (natural phenomena, logical arguments, or moral issues) is organized. They are not derived, by definition, from higher laws; they are not determined or justified by any principle external to them. They are self-constitutive and embody their own reasoning. Primary laws carry indispensable and irreducible information.

If it were true that the only alternative to discursive order is disorder, primary laws (being highly informative and unpredictable) would form a perfect case of disorder. However, it would be both self-defeating and confusing to assert that the primary ordering principles are in themselves disordered. Disorder may develop into order, but it cannot, on its own, constitute order. Laws cannot be disordered; they ought to be lawful themselves in some sense. Since primary laws do not gain lawfulness from another, higher law, they must have some inherent lawfulness. Since primary laws do not conform to the demands of discursive order, or to the characteristics of disorder, we are compelled to pursue the idea of a non-discursive type of order. This argument may be related, for instance, to Descartes' conception of natural laws.

God, according to Descartes, created the universe in an act of absolute freedom, under no compulsion imposed by any primary demands whatsoever. Unlike Leibniz, who believed that logic preconditions any possible world, Descartes holds that logic and mathematics were created by God. From this standpoint Descartes wrote to Mersenne:

> The mathematical truths which you call eternal have been laid down by God and depend on him entirely no less than the rest of his creatures. [...] It is God who has laid down these laws in Nature just as a king lays down laws in his kingdom.
>
> (Descartes, 1991:23)

In another letter he wrote:

> And even if God has willed that some truths should be necessary, this does not mean that he willed them necessarily.
>
> (Descartes, 1991:235)

God's laws are thus the necessary truths that govern the whole universe, but they are not governed by prior laws. They express God's free creation. As the ordering principles of a perfectly ordered world, God's laws make events highly predictable; they establish discursive orders within Nature. However, these laws by themselves are not subordinated to such order. Although they enable predictions, they are unpredictable in themselves; although they create high redundancy in particular events, they themselves contain essential, non-redundant information.

Nonetheless, God's laws, being "necessary truths", as Descartes puts it, are definitely not disordered. Although free creations, God's laws are not arbitrary and capricious. In fact, Descartes made it clear in his *Meditations* that a capricious, inconsistent God is his worst nightmare. This nightmare inspires Descartes' deep faith that God's perfection disallows the possibility of a capricious, disordered, unstable universe. Descartes implicitly accepts then the idea of an order that is not based on a priori principles and at the same time is not capricious. Ergo, God's laws constitute a "lawless order".

The plea for a non-discursive order is extremely significant for the understanding of aesthetic experience and its interrelations with other domains. It is also indispensable for understanding some problems and gaps in other disciplines. Beauty, understood in terms of aesthetic order, may therefore bear explanatory power beyond the traditional boundaries of the aesthetic domain.

The idea of examining beauty in terms of order is not new. Plato writes in *Philebus* (64e) that measure and proportion constitute beauty and excellence. Aristotle (1928: XIII.3, 1078^b 1–6) associates beauty with order and symmetry and definiteness. St Thomas Aquinas mentions proportion and harmony among the three requirements of beauty (*Summa Theologica,* XXXIX). Berkeley defines beauty in terms of symmetry and proportion that are pleasing to the eye (*The New Alciphron* III, 8), and according to Hume:

> Beauty is such an order and construction of parts, as either by primary constitution of our nature, by custom, or by caprice is fitted to give pleasure and satisfaction to the soul.
>
> (Hume, 1966:24–5)

Hume does not explain in what sense may order be associated with "custom" or "caprice" and how a "capricious" order is capable of satisfying the soul. Beardsley, who argues against the attempt to associate aesthetic order with observations offered by the Information Theory, writes:

> What distinguishes beautiful things from other things is a high degree of some kind of order.
>
> (Beardsley, 1968:192)

Beardsley states that aesthetic order is different from other orders. However, like his predecessors, Beardsley does not offer a sufficient answer to the crucial question: what is the nature of this "kind of order"? In this chapter I shall examine a few attempts to answer this question and articulate the deficiencies of the positions that ignore the idea of a non-discursive order.

Beauty as a discursive concept

There are three ways to explain beauty under the assumption that discursive order exhausts all possibilities of order: (1) beauty expresses a high discursive order; (2) beauty is a form of disorder; and (3) beauty is a medium point between high order and disorder. None of these options assumes a second type of order.

If beauty were to be a high discursive order, it should then exhibit a high degree of compliance with certain ordering principles. The task of the aesthetician would be, in this case, to disclose these principles and supply constant and solid grounds not only for proper aesthetic appreciation but also for the much more complex enterprise, the creation of beauty. That is, once we know the beauty-making principles, we could apply them in the same manner in which we follow a cake recipe or manipulate natural forces or follow moral duties. One can immediately see, I believe, the problems inherent in such a reductionist approach.

Denying the possibility of such aesthetic principles, one is forced, so it seems, to accept that beauty is a form of disorder. This would explain the inability to predict beauty and define general aesthetic principles that guarantee beauty, but it would clearly go against the basic intuition that beauty expresses order. Such a view would make aesthetic experience an even bigger mystery than it already is; what is there to admire in a disordered object? Moreover, why do we prefer one form of disorder to another?

Each of these alternatives touches upon a genuine characteristic of beauty. On the one hand, a beautiful object is a highly organized object that expresses some kind of necessity. As such it must be explained in terms of order. On the other hand, beauty does not seem to be determined by principles or a priori knowledge, even if it is in some way or another dependent on such knowledge. Placing beauty between the two extremes and regarding beauty as a *medium* degree of discursive order may seem a reasonable reconciliation as it seems to draw benefits from each side. On the one hand it allows that beauty is not merely a meticulous conformity to rules; on the other hand it avoids the embarrassment of regarding beauty as an expression of disorder. There is, however, a price to pay; this midway between order and disorder lacks some of the positive aspects of each extreme alternative and, as I shall argue, leads to dubious results.

Each of these options enjoyed its moment of grace in the history of aesthetics. Let us examine typical advocates of each of the above possibilities.

Beauty as a form of high discursive order

The intuition that art and beauty express order is bound to lead to an analogy with natural order and raise hopes that aesthetics can be made into a science. After all, why should attempts to decode Nature, which is not our own creation, seem more plausible than investigating our *own* products and pleasures?

Baumgarten's ambition to establish a new science of aesthetics was influenced by Leibniz's philosophy, which had given rise to the idea that beauty expresses an obscure knowledge:

> We often observe that painters and other artists judge quite correctly what is good or defective in works of art, but are frequently not able to account for their judgment, and if asked, can only answer that they somehow missed something in the things which displeased them but what it was they themselves did not know.
>
> (Leibniz, 1951: *Reflection on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas*)

Baumgarten (1954) called it "sensuous knowledge." His science of aesthetics was intended to investigate direct perception in which particular representations are combined into a whole. Obscure and vague sensuous perceptions would thus be transformed into clear and vivid images. In short, Baumgarten believed that the secrets of beauty, like the secrets of Nature, could be revealed by systematic empirical investigation and put to good use. This idea was strongly criticized by Kant, who believed that aesthetic perceptions are non-conceptual and therefore cannot be conveyed in terms of discursive knowledge:

> At the foundation of this term [Aesthetics] lies the disappointed hope which the eminent analyst, Baumgarten, conceived, of subjecting the criticism of the beautiful to principles of reason, and so of elevating its rules into a science. But his endeavors were in vain.
>
> (Kant, 1962: Part I, note to Introductory)

Notwithstanding, Baumgarten has his followers. Among them are psychologists who have endorsed *Experimental Aesthetics,* and mathematicians who have tried to translate the traditional formula, "Unity in diversity", into measurable variables and to uncover a hidden code of aesthetic preferences.

One of the most impressive and influential efforts in this direction is G.D. Birkhoff's (1933) analysis of polygons and vases. Taking literally St Augustine's belief that numbers can express beauty,[1] Birkhoff searched for a mathematical formula for beauty. His conclusion was that the pleasure derived from any work of art or object of beauty depends on two variables: the amount of *order* ("O")—the *unity* of the object, and the amount of *complexity* ("C")—the *variety* exhibited by the object. The nature of the basic elements, Birkhoff maintained, had to be decided anew for each class of objects. However, once the elements were decided, the *measure* of the aesthetic pleasure ("M") derived from each object was given by the formula: M=O/C. Birkhoff postulated that all works of art share the same general principle even if their elements differ. The predictive value of Birkhoff's formula was put to test, criticized and improved upon.[2] The code of beauty was allegedly broken.

It may seem that although the results are not completely satisfying the direction and method are right. Why, then, do most aestheticians take Kant's position rather than Birkhoff's or Baumgarten's? Clearly, the objection should not be based solely on criticism of Birkhoff's methodology or technique. The point is not technical, but rather theoretical: the idea that beauty can be decoded clashes with the intuition that beauty is unexpected and that good art is praised (among other things) for its novelty. Well-known, predictable patterns tend to be boring. Moreover, as Kant has indicated, it is easy to fall into the trap of identifying pleasant forms with beauty. Sheer pleasantness is sensual. Some forms are indeed more pleasant to the eye than others, just as some combinations of sounds are more pleasant to the ear than others for physiological and psychological reasons. Revealing the formula of such pleasing forms is not the same as revealing the formula of beauty. A pleasing form or color does not guarantee beauty. If green is indeed pleasant to the eye it does not follow that the presence of this color guarantees beauty or artistic merit. There is more to beautiful objects than a combination of some pleasing elements. Some beautiful objects are composed of elements that are not very pleasing on their own, and ugliness is sometimes expressed in a disharmonious complex of pleasing or even beautiful elements.

Nevertheless, I do sympathize with Birkhoff's project as well as with Baumgarten's vision: some are intrigued by the secrets of natural order; others are fascinated by the mystery of beauty. Attempts to solve the various puzzles of experience are, apparently, irresistible. Yet, I agree with Kant and his many followers. Although the intuition that beauty express order is powerful, the analogy with natural order in this respect is wrong. Beauty is not a discursive order. A beautiful object, natural or artificial, does not exhibit high redundancy and low informative value. On the contrary, it is a significant feature of beautiful objects that they exhibit low redundancy, low predictability and high informative value—the very characteristics of *low* discursive order and disorder. Describing an artwork as predictable sounds more like a denouncement than a mere description. If there were to be aesthetic principles and these were to be decoded and constitute a science, then the experience of beauty would have to be annulled.

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[1] St Augustine conceived beauty and order in terms of numbers, "Ask what delights you in dancing, and number will reply: Lo, here am I. Examine the beauty of bodily form and you will find that everything in its place by number." (*De libero arbitrio* II, xvi, 42).

[2] For a detailed report see Eysenck (1941:83–92).

Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, was also a journalist and a writer with philosophical inspirations. One of his stories entitled *Solon in Lydie*[3] is about a young man who invented a formula for producing flour without having to grow wheat. His invention would free people from the need to work, put an end to poverty and allow for a carefree life. The young man wanted the king's consent to marry his daughter and in return he would reveal his secret formula for the benefit of the people. The king summoned Solon and asked for his advice. Solon's verdict was decisive: "Du sollst ihn töten wenn er die Wahrheit gesprochen hat!" (You should kill him if he has spoken the truth). And so the king with a broken heart did. The moral of the story is clear. I believe, that a similar tale could have been told about a young man who claimed to have discovered the formula for beauty.

Beauty as a form of disorder

Discarding the analogy with natural laws, one may conclude that disorder is the only alternative to characterizing beauty. This option is implied by the Information Theory, which approaches the idea of aesthetic measure from a somewhat different angle. Dealing with communication channels, the Information Theory regards information as quantitative. Abraham Moles asserts that

> The essential fact here is that *information* must be considered as *quantity*…it appears at the origin of communication theory.
>
> (Moles, 1966:19)

This doctrine offers a mathematical apparatus that describes, analyzes and measures communication systems.

In this theory, a message is considered a finite set of perception elements drawn from a repertoire and assembled in a structure. Its informative value is a function of the improbability, that is, the novelty and unpredictability, of the received message. The formula that defines information is analogous to Boltzman's formula, which defines entropy as the proportion of disorder within a given system. A clear message, namely a highly ordered message, is a message of *low informative* value, *high redundancy* and *high predictability;* thus, it reflects features of discursive order. The Information Theory contributed to aesthetics the idea that aesthetic value is actually an informative value. Since information is measurable, the idea kindled new hopes, especially in the study of music, that there will be a measure after all of aesthetic value (Kreitler and Kreitler, 1972:143).

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[3] The story was written in 1900 in German.

Examining the implications of the Information Theory for the understanding of music, Beardsley argues that viewing aesthetic value as merely informative value leads to absurdities. He cites L.B.Meyer, according to whom

> what creates or increases the information contained in a piece of music increases its value.
>
> (Meyer, 1959:490)

Beardsley's response is that

> If […] the notes were given out of random, information would be at maximum; in Meyer's terminology, *uncertainty* would be complete—but this would be *undesirable uncertainty*.
>
> (Beardsley, 1986:204)

In other words, high informative value is also the mark of high disorder. Unless there is a way to differentiate between the two cases—high informative value as an expression of disorder and high informative value as an expression of some kind of order—we are left with the peculiar notion that aesthetic value is actually an expression of disorder.

Moles acknowledges a similar problem when distinguishing between *semantic* information and *aesthetic* information. The founders of the Information Theory, Moles argues, have neglected this fundamental distinction. Semantic information has

> a universal logic […] translatable into a foreign language, serves in the behaviorist conception to prepare *actions […] esthetic* information which is untranslatable, refers to the repertoire of knowledge common to the particular transmitter and particular receptor. Theoretically, this information cannot be translated into any other "language" or system of logical symbols because this other language does not exist.
>
> (Moles, 1966:129)

Semantic information characterizes the messages with which the Information Theory deals. It is indifferent to the specific form or language in which it is expressed; therefore, it is translatable. News, for instance, conveys semantic information because it can be heard on the radio in different languages, or read in newspapers in different places, and can (ideally speaking) still carry the same information. Once we have heard the news on the radio, its informative value is exhausted. Unless some disturbance occurred during the original transmission, we gain nothing by listening to it again. If we know the message, its content becomes equal to its title. When we want to refer to the message, there is no need to repeat its details; it is sufficient to refer to its title. The position in the case of aesthetic information is different. The title of the symphony does not equal its content, even if we have already heard it; we go to the theater to see *Hamlet* performed, although we already know the play, because the message is not exhausted by its semantic information. According to Moles, works of art

> are messages of practically unlimited information richness in comparison with the apperceptual capacity of the human being. He must rely on repeated reception in order to lower their originality [...] or in order to lower the information rate so that he can assimilate what he perceives.
> (Moles 1966:166)

Note that Moles associates different types of information with different objects: works of art carry aesthetic information whereas radio news carries semantic information. This should be considered very carefully. I am not sure that it is beneficial to distinguish between objects rather than between concepts and approaches. After all, the truth of Moles's observation depends very much on the person in question and the context. It is not that obvious that works of art (all of them) carry the same type of information in every case. There are people who are bored to death by a symphony they have already heard or a film they have previously seen, and once they know how a play ends they do not see any point in watching it on stage; for these people the content equals the title. On the other hand, a news item may carry rich information for people who take an extensive interest in politics and these people are able to find hidden meanings in seemingly insignificant details.

Moles offers us three ways of distinguishing artistic messages from semantic information: (1) the *limited mnemonic* of the listener; (2) variations in different realizations of the same work—this is, according to Moles, "*the field of freedom* of the work"; and (3) the *richness* of a work of art *transcends the individual's perceptual capacity*. It does not take a very sophisticated analysis in order to observe that all these three reasons are actually one. They all amount to a reduction in *quantity*. Call it richness, freedom or complexity—these positive and intriguing terms should not conceal the fact that it is quantity that defines the difference between the two kinds of information; the Information Theory offers no other factor for differentiating them; semantic information is simply less complicated than aesthetic information. This quantitative reduction, however, is not very convincing: how can one seriously argue that *Hamlet* carries more or less information than a history book or Einstein's Theory of Relativity? Is the latter less complicated then the former? Is there a reliable method for measuring the differences without involving debatable presuppositions and values? I doubt it. Much depends on the perspective and interest one chooses to take. Moreover, if the essential difference is in *quantity,* the two kinds of information do not really differ in *kind*. Both low complexity and high complexity may share the same category of discursive order.

Indeed, to make the difference defensible, Moles (1966:167) adds another factor, which he calls the pleasure of *resensualization*. However, as Moles states, this factor is independent of the informative value; it is not directly proportional to the degree of complexity or informative value. Moreover, the pleasure of resensualization is not at all unique to works of art or complex messages of any kind. It appears in the taste of fresh bread, in the sight of a cherry tree in bloom, or in the sound of a loved one's voice. We take pleasure in sensing them even if their complexity and informative value is low. This kind of pleasure has nothing to do in particular with richness of information, novelty or originality, at least not in an obvious and explicit way. In order to explain this kind of pleasure, one has to move from the quantitative notion of information to a qualitative one. The Information Theory is not equipped with the necessary tools to deal with issues of quality, nor is any theory that is based on discursive order alone.

What remains, then, is a quantitative reduction, which does not explain how works of art differ from complex, confusing states of disorder. Both obtain high informative value, complexity and novelty. Realizing the problem, Moles (1966:199) concludes by stating that the aesthetic message "has symbols unknown to us and rules often little known; it is untranslatable and unique". The question remains, then, how symbols "unknown to us" can convey information to us, and in what sense this "unknown" territory is any different from states of disorder.

It is quite clear that the tools of the Information Theory are *not adequate* to the task of drawing the line between disorder and aesthetic order. Even Moles, who admits the difference, does not offer anything that distinguishes aesthetic order from disorder. On the contrary, it seems that he has no other choice but to include aesthetic features under the category of disorder. The following list of dialectical poles appears at the end of Moles's book as a summary and conclusion, and demonstrates these shortcomings and their counter-intuitive nature:

Order	Disorder
Predictable	Unpredictable
Banal	Original
Redundant	Informative
Intelligible	Novel
Simple	Complex

(Moles, 1966:208)

Note that originality appears under disorder, and that order is characterized as simple, not as complex. Are sets of discursive order really simple? Moreover, elements of disorder are indeed unpredictable and so are good works of art, but do they belong, on this account alone, to the same category? Elements of a disordered system carry informative value but they also express homogeneity in probabilities. Does a good work of art, or any object of great beauty, being informative, express the same kind of homogeneity? Is disorder necessarily original just because it is unpredictable, as Moles argues? Do all original objects evoke in the observer a sense of disorder?

The idea that highly appreciated works of art express disorder runs counter to common sense and immediate experience: the experience of disorder and the experience of beauty in Nature and in art are different kinds of experience altogether. A tourist lost in New York City does not feel the admiration or amazement one usually feels when contemplating the beauty of urban architecture. The lost tourist is more likely to be confused, uncertain, anxious, and probably incapable of paying attention to the beauty of the city. An experience of a beautiful object or a good work of art, although it involves unpredictability and novelty, is by no means an experience of disorder of any kind; it does not express randomness, chaos, or a clash of orders. Beautiful objects are more inclined to induce a sense of order, pleasure, admiration and rightness. If this is accepted, there must be a way to distinguish the order of which beauty consists from both high discursive order, which is banal and predictable, and disorder, which is informative but confusing.

Beauty as a "happy medium"

If all we have is discursive order and disorder, a compromise may seem the only way to avoid identifying beauty with disorder. The reasonable solution, so it seems, would lie in between the two extremes of high discursive order and disorder. In other words, beauty and good art are to be explained in terms of a *medium* degree of order. Nancy Etcoff refers to this notion as "the love of the average" (Etcoff, 1999:143–147). She cites Francis Galton's work as evidence for this argument. Galton took photographs of convicted murderers, superimposed them and composed a single photograph of their images. This composite photograph turned out to be the best looking face of all the original ones. Galton concluded that

> the average portrait of many persons is free from the irregularities that variously blemish the looks of each of them.
>
> (quoted by Etcoff, 1999:144)

The experiment is indeed intriguing, but the theoretical conclusion that the average is the most beautiful is misleading. For one, a face that is free of irregularities is by no means average. Indeed, irregularities in human faces may have negative effects for various reasons, but this does not entail that all irregularities have such negative effect. It very much depends on the particular case and the cultural values of the beholders. Applying the idea of "average" to art or natural objects of beauty may reveal its absurdity. Hiller and Isaacson, however, argue in the spirit expressed by Etcoff:

> Most musical compositions reflect a balance between the extremes of order and disorder, and [...] stylistic differences depend to a considerable extent upon fluctuations relative to these two poles.
>
> (Hiller and Isaacson, 1959:167)

Berlyne (1960) takes a similar direction and explains the aesthetic pleasures as an expression of a medium point. Arousal is his key concept. The art experience, according to Berlyne, is an experience of arousal that the work generates and the subsequent reduction in arousal that the completed experience of the work affords. This is a reflection of "unity in diversity": diversity (disorder) causes rise in arousal, unity (order) reduces it.

Diversity, complexity and novelty, “collative stimulus variables” in Berlyne’s terms, are the conditions that induce a high level of arousal. In an artwork, these qualities elicit in the perceiver a conflict among alternative associations, a variety of reactions and possible interpretations. The subsequent exploration of the work leads to a resolution of the conflict, a reduction in uncertainty, and as a result, a decrease in arousal. The movement from arousal to its reduction produces the aesthetic pleasure.

Witmer (1893:96–144) regarded the golden section as a *happy medium* between too much and too little variety. Berlyne similarly argues that

> experiments tend to confirm the view that some intermediate degree of complexity produces the most pleasing effect and that extremes of simplicity or complexity are distasteful.
>
> (Berlyne, 1966:237)

It is an undeniable analytical truth that “too much” or “too little” cannot be right. This is so by definition. If a relatively simple object pleases us, it is not *too simple;* but rather *just right* for what it is. High order is not *too much* order, and consequently medium order is not necessarily the right one. High order means that everything is in its right place according to the governing ordering principle. It is pleasing because it is a high order, and it is a high order because it is just right. This analytic reasoning will not take us very far.[4]

Moreover, regardless of experimental results, something is basically wrong with a theory that attempts to characterize *high* beauty in terms of *medium* order. This point is far beyond any criticism of the actual experiments, their methods and the results. In fact, I do agree that the experience of beauty can be described as a medium order if the only kind of order for which we can account is discursive order. It is intuitively true that the new is perceived as such only in the light of the old; the original has to be contrasted with the banal; informative value is carried by redundant, non-informative signals, and so on. But this approach too cannot provide us with a formula for beauty. *Something in between* high informative value and high redundancy is a rather mechanical formula that can easily be obtained without attaining beauty. Simply mixing a quantity of known elements with an equal quantity of unknown elements will not necessarily produce high aesthetic value.[5] Even if this proportion of informative and redundant elements is a necessary condition, it is certainly not sufficient to make the whole beautiful or pleasing in any other way. Beauty is not that simple. Beauty (being *highly* appreciated) needs to be explained in terms of high "something" rather than in terms of medium order; lower beauty or ugliness should consist of low levels of that "something".

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[4] On vacation at a ski resort I overheard a woman complaining to her friend, “My problem is that I am not allowed to eat too much.” Her friend’s immediate reply was: “But my dear, *no one* is allowed to eat *too much*!”

[5] Richmond Browne, a jazz pianist describes a similar formula:

> “The [music] listener is constantly making predictions; actual infinitesimal predictions as to whether the next [musical] event will be a repetition of something, or something different. The player is constantly either confirming or denying these predictions in the listener’s mind. As nearly as [I] can tell, the listener must come out right about 50% of the time—if he is too successful in predicting, he will be bored; if he is too unsuccessful, he will give up and call the music ‘disorganized’.”
>
> (Coker, 1964:15).

Beardsley (1986:212) maintains that there are two limitations that prevent information theorists from "telling the whole story about aesthetic value": (1) the identification of complexity and disorder in the Information Theory fails to explain the fact that complexity is a relevant reason for praise in art; and (2) the degree of informative value is not enough to establish the aesthetic worth of an object. High informative value is not necessarily an expression of beauty. Beardsley insists that such a mechanical solution leads to absurdities:

> I can imagine…two melodies turned out by the same computer, according to the same system of probabilities, not differing significantly in their total information value, that are nevertheless very different in their qualities as melodies.
>
> (Beardsley, 1968:215)

Beardsley accepts that art is governed by order, and that order is a key concept in understanding art:

> Order enters art in the small, in the textural relations among the elements; and it enters in the structural relations among the larger segments. But freedom, diversity, and uniqueness mark the special emergent quality of the whole, what stamps the work with individuality.
>
> (Beardsley, 1968:218)

However, this view is no less dubious than the one criticized so boldly by Beardsley himself. Uniqueness, diversity and freedom are indeed concepts that indicate high informative value and are often associated with art. But these are also marks of disorder in the conventional sense and are definitely insufficient for the analysis of beauty.

Freedom is a tricky concept. It can be based neither on randomness nor on necessity. It does not fit a deterministic system and it does not express an indeterministic state. We cannot explain order by combining it with "grains" of freedom. After all, what is *order combined with freedom*? The notion can be interpreted in many ways, but Beardsley does not specify the meaning he had in mind. Does Beardsley wish to suggest that the artist follows rules and thus creates an ordered object, and, at the same time, that the artist freely violates or ignores these rules in his or her unique way? Is the work an expression of predictable, a priori patterns and, at same time, unique and thus unpredictable? Or does it mean that the artist is free to create a new order? If so, in what sense is the artist free? How does this freedom affect or express the nature of the new order? Free creations do not necessarily result in works of art or beautiful objects. As we know from experience, freedom may initiate a variety of actions and products, not all of them desirable.

On the one hand, Beardsley rightly maintains the idea that order is an essential quality of art. On the other hand, he admits the shortcomings of the conventional concept of order by supporting it with the crutches of freedom and uniqueness. These crutches, however, are detrimental to the concept of order rather than fortifying it. Being "free" of a priori constraints contradicts the discursive demand of coherence with the ordering principle. The result of this contradiction would be either a reduced order (a happy or not-so-happy medium) or a complete disorder. However, if neither of these solutions is acceptable, we must look for an alternative explanation.

Beauty as a non-discursive concept

Organic form

The concept of "organic form" has been regarded for a long time as one of the keys to understanding art and beauty. An organic form as opposed to a mechanical one clearly accords with the intuition that a mechanical explanation does not comprehensively account for aesthetic experience. Mechanisms look to external forces to explain any change in an object, but the idea of "organic form" is based on inner forces or structures that determine the nature of the object from within. However, as we shall see, the many known variations of this concept do not suffice for establishing an alternative to discursive order.

The first formulation of art as an *organic form,* or *organic unity,* was offered by Plato:

> Every discourse ought to be a living creature, having a body of its own and a head and feet; there should be a middle, beginning, and end, adapted to one another and to the whole.
>
> (Plato, 1970, *Phaedrus,* 264c)

Plato emphasizes the interdependence of the parts of a living body and, by analogy, of a work of art. Although this is one of the essential characteristics of organic form, it is true in general for every individual entity, natural or artificial. It does not exclude, for instance, machines. A machine must exhibit harmony among its parts in order to function properly, each part functioning within the whole and in accord with the others.

Coleridge emphasizes the independence of an organic form and the harmony required in such entities not only between parts but also between *matter* and *form.* The form of a mechanical object is, by contrast, alien to its material. A mechanical order appears

> when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material.… The organic

> form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within.
>
> (Raysor, 1930:224)

The main characteristics of organic form, according to Coleridge, are the following:

1 The origin of the whole precedes the differentiation of the parts. The whole is primary, the parts are derived.
2 An organic form conveys the process of its own development to the observer. Its process is an essential part of it.
3 As it grows, the organism assimilates diverse elements into its own substance.
4 The achieved form of the organic object is directed from within.
5 The various parts of organic form are interdependent.[6]

Let us examine these points briefly:

1 The materials of an artwork do precede the complete work. Works of art do not hatch as complete wholes, in the process of composing a work different materials are selected, processed and unified into one whole.
2 The process of creation is, in most cases, not only hidden from the spectator but also very often only partly known to the artist. The artist, in many cases, is unable to give a sufficient account of the process that led to the final product. Most artists do not even take up this task, and when they do attempt to articulate the process of creation they are neither reliable nor able to account for the whole process, or indeed both.[7]
3 Once they are completed, works of art do not normally grow or develop or assimilate new elements, at least not in an obvious sense. Objects of beauty or works of art are usually appreciated as complete (finished) products. Indeed, one may regard the history of a work in terms of its development, but this is not a development inherent in the structure of the work; it is rather a development in the work's appreciation, interpretation and, as a result, in its cultural role.
4 By definition, artifacts are determined not by themselves but by their makers—the artists. Yet, one may argue that in some sense the artist is inspired or compelled by the materials of his work rather than determining and controlling them. In this sense it is possible to maintain that the work is directed from within.

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[6] These are Coleridge's observations as presented in Ritterbush (1972:25–60).

[7] Plato describes in *Ion* the creation of poetry as an uncontrolled process which the poet is incapable of accounting for. By contrast, Edgar Allan Poe illustrates a very different type of process in his *Theory of Composition*. According to Poe, the process of composing a poem consists of a series of clear calculations that the poet is not only aware of but can also repeat and explain, step by step. I find Poe less convincing than Plato, although both seem to take extreme positions.

5 The fifth characterization concerns interdependence among the parts. In one sense, parts of a work do *exist* independently of each other. One chapter of a novel is finished before the other, and the first act of a play is performed on stage before the last. Yet, it is true that, being parts of one whole, their *role* and *meaning* are interdependent.

Osborne's notion of aesthetic order

In an article entitled *Aesthetic and Other Forms of Order,* Osborne (1982:3–16) presents his version of organic form. Following McTaggart's (1927: Chapter XXI) typology, Osborne introduces aesthetic order as a supplement to *natural orders*. McTaggart defines three kinds of natural order: *causal, serial* and *classificatory* order. These are not mutually exclusive but, according to Osborne, together they include all substantive forms of order that exist outside the field of aesthetics. All these orders may have some relevance to works of art, but they do not convey the aesthetic quality of the work. Osborne examines the relevance of each of these orders to art:

1. A work may be described in terms of *causal* order, since it is, in a sense, a physical or mental object subjected to physical or psychological causal laws. However, causal laws cannot explain the emergence of aesthetic properties or account for artistic value.
2. A work may be analyzed in terms of *serial* order, since any work is an object in time and space. A serial analysis of colors or pitches may teach us important things about the work that they are part of, but, again, it cannot sufficiently account for the aesthetic qualities and values of the work.
3. *Classificatory order* is also applicable to art. Works of art may be classified by more than one category, and each classification draws attention to a different aspect of the work. But classifying, say, a play as a comedy does not capture the significance and individuality of the work.

Osborne suggests (like Beardsley and others) that aesthetic order is an emergent whole that reflects its aesthetic properties back upon its contained parts, although each of the parts on their own is *aesthetically neutral*. The same elements in a different whole, standing in different relations with each other, convey different aesthetic properties, "By isolating the parts of an aesthetic whole you change their nature into something different" (Osborne, 1982:14). In essence, Osborne's aesthetic order takes us back to the idea of organic form without much advancement. It is especially disappointing since the term *aesthetic order* appears to carry new promises. Below are the main points of criticisms that can be leveled against Osborne's proposition.

1. The claim that the properties and values of the whole cannot be reduced to those of the parts is true for art as well as for any mechanical object. The parts of a disassembled watch lack the qualities and the instrumental value of the

watch as a whole. If, as a whole, a watch that functions properly exhibits by this very fact an aesthetic quality, then the disparity between mechanic objects (or mechanic aspect) and organic or aesthetic objects (or aspect) is very slight.

2 The claim that isolated parts of organic form lose their unique "organic" significance is also true for the orders designated by Osborne as "natural orders". When segregated, the elements of a certain causal relationship lose their causal qualities. A fact that is considered in isolation is neither a cause nor an outcome of anything. Causes are observed as such only when viewed as parts of a whole event or a chain of events. The same is true for serial orders. A patch of color is neither darker nor brighter, neither warmer nor colder, when examined on its own (again, if this is possible at all). A color maintains its serial qualities only when considered in serial relations, that is, as an element of a set. The main question here is what exactly is meant by "on its own" and whether anything is perceivable "on its own", apart from any context. I hold that there is always an explicit or implicit order in the background of any object of experience; always some context is involved that provides the seemingly "isolated" object with certain relations and interferes with its apparent isolation.

3 The claim that isolated parts of an aesthetic whole are aesthetically neutral is not necessarily true. A work of art may be composed of parts taken from other works or even contain, as a part, a whole previous work. An arpeggio detached from a complete symphony may also be beautiful (as a separated entity) and have its aesthetic significance. Parts of works of art or of non-artistic wholes can be beautiful or ugly "on their own". Thus we may speak of beautiful eyes, beautiful words, ugly architectural elements, and so on. This allows, for instance, for the argument that a beautiful work of art is not necessarily a work that depicts beautiful objects and vice versa.

4 Osborne ascribes to aesthetic order the quality of being directly apprehended. This, again, may also be true for many other things. We directly apprehend that the temperature in the room is dropping or that the noise of cars in the street is increasing. As for causality, to use one of Osborne's counter-examples, there is no consensus regarding the way this is perceived. One has to distinguish here between causal laws that are general and as such not directly perceived and a particular causal relation that occurs in actual experience. According to Hume (1928), causality (in particular cases) is neither directly apprehended nor conceived by reason. However, according to Michotte (1963) and Piaget (1969), causality is indeed directly apprehended. At any rate, the matter is not as clear and agreed upon as Osborne tends to present it.

5 Osborne maintains that "inner order" is specific to aesthetic objects. Does this mean that aesthetic order is attributed to a defined group of objects? Considering Osborne's examples, it seems that this is his intention. However, differentiating between "aesthetic" and "non-aesthetic" objects is problematic. For one, it does not allow for changes in status and does not explain how a former "non-aesthetic" object suddenly gains aesthetic worth (the case of ready-made or utility objects that become decorative items).

6 The concept of the organic whole that Osborne identifies with "aesthetic order" is incapable of substantiating the various interrelations between art and reality. It regards works of art as unique individuals complete in themselves without equipping them with "channels" or "hooks" to connect them to the non-artistic realm. A comprehensive aesthetic theory should also consider the role of art in social and individual life. It should consider the aesthetic phenomena as an integral part of human experience, not an isolated, detached realm.

7 Finally, there are two points that above all, may be responsible for the inadequacy of "organic form" in any of its variations, including Osborne's notion of aesthetic order: the concept does not give a sufficient account of (a) the *quantitative* aspect of aesthetics and (b) the *qualitative* aspect of aesthetics.

(a) "Organic form" in any of its variations does not embody a variety of degrees. It is a *binary* concept. This means that objects classified as "organic" differ from those that are classified as "mechanical", but "organic" objects do not differ among themselves with respect to their values of "organic" features. The following demonstrates a typical application of "organic form" which entirely ignores the quantitative aspect:

> Every work of art [...] is an organism. Its most essential feature is the character of inevitability—that nothing could be changed or moved from its place, but that all must be as it is.
>
> (Wolfflin, 1950:124)

Is it *equally* true for *all* works of art that *nothing* could be changed in them (without affecting their worth or meaning)? Such an understanding leads to an unnecessary extreme. It does not allow for differentiation in values or in quality of materials among works of art. Moreover, it renders all elements of a work equally significant within the whole, which brings us back to the notion of overall sensitivity as a type of disorder (see Chapter 2, pp. 39–40). If all elements are equally important the whole is a homogeneous, meaningless object and not an organic unity.

The avoidance of quantitative differences also goes against our immediate experience of art and other objects of aesthetic interest. It is clear that some objects are more sensitive than others are, and it is not necessarily true that any change whatsoever is aesthetically effective. A poem by Baudelaire cannot lose or gain a word without suffering, whereas whole pages of Doestoevsky or Dickens could vanish and the work would retain its integrity and form. Moreover, different works of art are sensitive to different kinds of change and are not equally affected by all changes.

Reproductions of the black-and-white photographs of Edward Steiglitz are very effective; some of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings are even better in their reproduction form than in the original, but this does not apply to the paintings of Monet and Cezanne.

Being organic makes an object no more nor less organic than another, just as a mechanical object does not acquire a certain “degree of being mechanical”. None of the characterizations of organic forms allow for degrees. Although we accept that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, we cannot be justified in asking: how much *more?* Nevertheless, a concept of measure or degree is needed for dealing with the fact that one object is more beautiful than another, or that one work of art is better than another. The concept of organic form (as well as Osborne’s “aesthetic order”) cannot differentiate bad art from non-art or account for varieties in degrees of beauty and artistic merit.[8] Dickie (1974) has addressed the problem of lumping together art definitions with art appreciation. As a solution he suggests a categorical separation between the classificatory concept of art and the concept of art appreciation. See also Chapter 11, pp. 253–256.

(b) An object may be insignificant in the eyes of the observer and yet manifest all the qualities of organic form. This point often escapes the attention of aestheticians. The “content” of the “message” or the nature of the work’s materials (which on their own are not organic wholes) is significant for the work’s evaluation. We praise the artist not only for the form into which s/he has shaped the raw materials, but also for the choice of materials. In fact, it is not clear whether these two can be actually separated. We praise the artist for the profound insight into the nature of the work’s subject matter, for the deep understanding of human nature, or for the acute portrayal of a specific social problem, and so forth. It is never a mere form that makes the work praiseworthy.

It is not enough to observe that the “form” and “content” need to be harmonious, or that a work is individual and informative. The nature of the information, its relevance and significance for the spectator, are no less crucial for the appreciation of the work. Not every harmonious object is worth while. This compels art critics to deal with non-aesthetic values that do not allow a neutral analysis of form and content. However, if the evaluative distinction is acknowledged (and I cannot see how it can be ignored), qualitative aspects must be then part of the aesthetic analysis. To conclude, the objective of this criticism is not to argue that *organic form* is a false concept. There is certainly a grain of truth in the intuition that led aestheticians to view art via the idea of organic form. This idea, however, cannot carry the burden of a comprehensive aesthetic theory. It calls to mind the story of the man who told his friends that he had been attacked by twenty wolves in the forest. Since his friends were skeptical, the man kept reducing the number of the wolves, until he finally gave in, “But I can swear that something was howling there in the bushes!” Something, I dare say, is also howling in the bushes of “organic form.”

Summary

1 Discursive order cannot underpin Beauty. There are no principles that determine a priori the beauty of an object since novelty is an essential feature of beauty. This partly explains why a science of aesthetics is not possible.
2 Beauty is not a form of disorder, as this is clearly counter-intuitive. Beauty expresses some kind of order, although it does not cohere with discursive order.
3 Beauty is not a medium degree of order; it expresses a high degree of order.
4 The notion of "organic form" is insufficient. It fails to distinguish clearly the aesthetic realm from other realms; it fails further to give a sufficient account of differences in degrees of aesthetic value.

5 Bergson

The unpredictable order

Bergson's theory of two orders has not attracted the attention that I believe it deserves. His inclination towards intuitive knowledge and his enthusiastic poetic style, qualities that won him the Nobel Prize for literature, aroused suspicions of mysticism, especially in the environment of analytical philosophy. However, good and fruitful ideas should not be ignored simply because they carry certain associations. As far as I can ascertain, Bergson, in his *Creative Evolution,* was the first to present an explicit theory of two orders. The distinction is presented mainly in *Creative Evolution,* Chapter III. Bergson appears to be following Pascal's distinction between the mathematical and the intuitive mind (the first aphorisms of Pascal's *Pensées*).

Bergson's distinction between *geometrical* order and *vital* order inspired the present analysis. Nevertheless, there are some crucial points of disagreement that I wish to raise in order to draw a clear line between Bergson's view and my view. The discussion in this chapter has, then, two purposes: to pay tribute to Bergson's profound insight and to use the points of disagreement to sharpen some of my own concepts.

The core of Bergson's theory of order consists of two connected arguments: (1) that disorder does not exist, and (2) that there are two generic types of order—vital and geometrical. The burden of the second claim is to validate the first. Both claims challenge Western philosophy, which implicitly holds only one type of order, the type that entails determinism. The idea of two types of order is not only a critical tool against determinism; it also corresponds to Bergson's general dualistic tendency, a tendency that reveals itself in almost every subject he explores.

Bergson is not an impartial dualist. He not only examines his concepts in pairs but also expresses a clear bias toward one element of each pair. It is always one of the two that reflects the genuine quality of reality or presents the more vigorous and alluring aspect of experience: *intuition* versus intellect, *time* versus space, *organized* versus unorganized bodies, and *vital* versus geometrical order. Indeed, a firm denial of disorder can be viewed as a rejection of a third element that interferes with the symmetrical dualistic picture: it is neither the product of the intellect nor the product of the intuition. Since there is no third dimension in which disorder may reside, so the argument goes, disorder cannot exist.

Space versus time, intellect versus intuition

Bergson's two orders play an important role in his overall criticism of traditional Western philosophy. This criticism focuses mainly on the analogy between time and space. Time and space express, according to Bergson, two distinct lines of thinking; the analogy that rationalists tend to draw between them is false. Space, and therefore geometry, represents the operation of the intellect. Space is homogeneous and symmetrical; it does not have any direction or inner tendencies of its own. Spatial objects are indifferent to whatever is imposed on them, and as such they can be divided in any way and will comply with any (external) principle imposed on them. A spatial approach regards the whole as comprising equal units, among which only an external principle can differentiate:

> The intellect is characterized by unlimited power of decomposing according to any law and of recomposing into any system.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:173)

Time, or more exactly duration,[1] has an inner natural direction. It is neither symmetrical nor homogenous. One cannot go back in time as one can in space. Duration expresses the real nature of events and can be apprehended only by intuition. Living things that have an inner, irreversible direction belong to the realm of duration.

Bergson criticizes rationalist philosophy for its mechanical-geometrical approach that analyzes living, organized bodies and unorganized, lifeless bodies according to the same method. This approach makes time dispensable or illusionary. Bergson agrees with Kant that intelligence "is bathed in an atmosphere of spatiality" (Bergson, 1944:223), but on this same account he criticizes Kant for drawing an analogy between time and space. Attributing spatial qualities to time and denying its own non-spatial qualities results in a denial of a non-intellectual, intuitive, knowledge. That *time is real* and reflects the non-spatial nature of things—this is the essence of Bergson's philosophy.

Space being homogeneous and reversible, is also predictable. All spatial elements are alike in the sense that they may endure any order imposed on them (like the case of atomistic disorder), and, thus, whatever is true for one spatial element may also be true for another. Treating time in the same manner as space leads to the errors of determinism. Logical deduction is confused here with prediction of events, "to foresee consists of projecting into the future what has been perceived in the past" (Bergson, 1944:9). This is, in fact, merely a matter of "predicting" the past, which is already known, not foreseeing the "truly new", which is, by definition, unpredictable.[2]

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[1] "Time", in Bergson's writing, is usually the general term that rationalists regard as being analogous to space. "Duration" expresses the distinct features of time, its real nature: its irreversibility, its continuity and its inner unpredictable direction.

[2] On novelty and predictability in Bergson's theory, see Capek (1961). Capek notes that a state is not simply predictable or unpredictable, but has various degrees of predictability, "the more predictable, the larger the statistical complex of the elementary events that are considered" (Capek, 1961:340).

Bergson's main argument against the autonomy of the traditional concept of order is, therefore, concerned with predictability:

> We say of astronomical phenomena that they manifest an admirable order, meaning by this that they can be foreseen mathematically. And we find an order no less admirable in a symphony of Beethoven, which is genius, originality, and therefore unforeseeability itself
>
> (Bergson, 1944:245)

What is important here is Bergson's observation that unpredictable order manifests necessity and is by no means random or capricious. As indicated in this quotation, art is the major paradigm for this order. However, although most of Bergson's examples are drawn from art, he applies his ideas beyond the artistic realm. The concept of unpredictable order is necessary for the understanding of the *élan vital*. As the title of Bergson's seminal book indicates, evolution itself has a direction, its structure being determined in process. Yet, being *creative,* evolution is unpredictable and indeterministic. The *élan vital* is like a skillful painter's brush-stroke: free of external, mechanical constraints and yet necessary and meaningful.

Prediction—or what we call prediction—is a mere deduction of probabilities based on past events. It is the logical conclusion of the past that, like any logical conclusion, is already implicit in the given. It tells us nothing about what is really new. Real prediction should supply truly new, non-deducible information. Such predictions, however, are logically impossible: a new event maintains its novelty precisely because it is unpredictable. If it is predictable it is not new, but if it is not new, it simply repeats past events and thus does not require prediction. On this account, rationalism (mainly in the seventeenth century) has renounced the existence of the genuinely new and, consequently, the reality of time. Bergson believes that the cost of giving up time in order to preserve intellectualism is too high. The price is a true understanding of reality:

> Philosophical systems are not cut to the measure of the reality in which we live [...] any one of them [...] could apply equally well to a world in which neither plants nor animals have existence [...] and in which men would quite possibly do without eating and drinking [...] where, born decrepit, they would end as babies-in-arms.
>
> (Bergson, 1946:9)

In spite of this harsh criticism, Bergson does not dismiss intellectual knowledge; he merely wishes to limit its range and redefine its scope. Although the intellect is not designed for true, adequate knowledge of reality, it has an important pragmatic value. Deductive prediction, although it is based on the past, is indispensable for pragmatic reasons. Sometimes we need to ignore differences between the old and the new; in such cases, the intellect enables us to benefit from predictive orders.[3]

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[3] This raises another problem: how can such a prediction be useful if it is based on false grounds? Is the useful entirely disconnected from the truth?

The concept of disorder, according to Bergson, stems from the idea that there is only one type of order which, therefore, must be opposed by disorder. Bergson disagrees that order is a triumph over disorder: since disorder does not exist, it cannot be conquered. He offers instead a second type of order and thus makes the idea of '"disorder" dispensable: in the absence of one type of order one finds not a state of disorder but an alternative type of order.

Vital and geometrical order

Geometric order is a spatial, intellectual order; vital order is durational and intuitive. Bergson mentions other orders as well, and it is not clear whether he is suggesting the existence of other orders, or simply using synonyms for the basic dualism that he proposes. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I assume the latter: that Bergson has only two major types of order in mind. The geometric order is thus "physical", "automatic", "spatial", "intellectual", and it is the order of "unorganized (lifeless) bodies". The second type of order, the vital order, is "intuitive", "natural", "positive", "willed", "creative", "individual", and it is the order of "organized (living) bodies".

The parallel distinction between "organized bodies" and "unorganized bodies" is the distinction between natural, living entities (organic forms) and unnaturally divided solid entities (mechanical forms). Organized bodies are living creatures "closed off" by Nature, marked with individuality that is composed of heterogeneous parts which complement each other. Their inner direction cannot be apprehended via the intellect. Unorganized bodies are composed of homogeneous parts and lack individuality. They are separated and closed off (defined) by the intellect, and their structures thus lack necessity. The intellect is incapable of understanding and defining life and thus incapable of realizing the differences between a living body and a lifeless object. The intellect approaches organized bodies by the same method with which it approaches unorganized bodies, and treats both kinds as motionless objects. Intellectual analysis ends, therefore, with "elementary facts" (atomism). Only the intuition is capable of apprehending a living object as a whole without breaking it into homogeneous units.[4]

Although each order has its role in human experience, the orders are not equally valuable. This point is significant in Bergson's doctrine: vital order is true to the nature of things, a nature that consists of creative evolution. The values and status of the two orders stem from the value of their sources:

> Intuition and intellect present two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:291)

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[4] On intelligence versus intuition see also Felt (1987:38–50). Felt (1987:43) describes intelligence as making "conceptual blueprints."

Intuitive, vital order reflects the natural direction of the mind, whereas geometric order is alien to this inclination. To create its order, the intellect neglects real parts of the object, interrupts the heterogeneity of the durational object, breaks the whole into homogeneous units, and forces upon it a mechanical order:

> The farther I pursue this quite negative direction…the more extension and complexity I shall create…. Yet this complexity and extension represent nothing positive: they express the deficiency of will.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:229)

This new complexity is mechanical, artificial and does not reflect the inherent structure of the object; it is a result of a negative action: the more an object is "broken" into unnatural components, the more complicated its structure appears. The products of intuition, then, are always superior to the products of the intellect. This, as I will further argue, is another point of my disagreement with Bergson.

Geometric order is indifferent, or to use Bergson's terms, motionless. Hence, it consists of solid, lifeless and homogeneous elements that do not have any inner tendencies. The elements of a geometrical object lack any "will" or direction of their own, which renders them susceptible to acceptance of any external pattern imposed upon them. The principles of geometric order are "impersonal premises [that] are given once for all" (Bergson, 1944:10). There is also a kind of indifference among all objects of geometric order and among the components of these objects, "perfect spatiality would consist in a perfect externality of parts in their relation to one another, that is to say, in a complete reciprocal independence" (Bergson, 1944:222).

When the intellect approaches organized bodies, it "freezes" their motion and "turns" them into solid, indifferent entities. This is why life can never be apprehended intellectually, only via intuition.

Owing to the homogeneity of spatial objects, the principles of geometric order can be implemented repeatedly in various cases, ignoring differences among the cases. Although consciousness cannot go through the same state twice, intellectual order consists of repetitions and is based on the assumption that the same components will give the same results. This, again, reflects the illusion of predictability.

Vital order consists solely of relations directed from within. The intuition grasps a succession that is not juxtaposition, but is rather, says Bergson (1946:35), "a growth from within". The ordered object and its vital principle are one. When a truly new form, artistic or natural, is born, the thing and the idea of the thing, its reality and its possibility, are "created at one stroke". This attitude opposes Prigogine and Stengers' notion that order consists (solely) of "a preconceived plan" (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984:41). Since the object and the idea of it are the same in cases of "new forms", the vital form is individual to the object. Vital objects, each being truly new, do not share the same order, just as it is impossible to undergo exactly the same experience twice. Therefore, one cannot conceive principles of vital order on the basis of accumulated experience. In the absence of such principles, there is no basis for predicting new vital orders.

This is the hub of Bergson's observation: a state exists in which predictions are entirely impossible and yet this is a state of order, not disorder! Art is the major paradigm:

> We imagine that everything which occurs could have been foreseen by any sufficiently informed mind, and that, in the form of an idea, it was thus pre-existent to its realization; an absurd conception in the case of a work of art.
>
> (Bergson, 1946:22)

In the case of art, we cannot separate the idea, i.e. the ordering principle, from the body of the work. Is it also the same with organized bodies? Bergson does not make this clear. Although each entity is unique, organized bodies may be classified and categorized. Horses, apple trees or snails can be regarded as classes and can be represented by a prototype that serves as the ordering principle. After all, apple trees, in most cases, do not interest us for their individuality, yet regarding them as a class does not deny their organic qualities.

Organized bodies are "separated and closed off by Nature herself (Bergson, 1944:15) whereas art is "closed off" by the artist's intuition. Unorganized bodies are cut off from their homogeneous environment and separated by intentional action, an action that lacks real inner necessity: it can go on indefinitely or stop arbitrarily. Geometrically ordered objects are thus open sets. Their borders are defined by the intellect and as such lack necessity:

> If I boil water in a kettle on a stove, the operation and the objects that support it are, in reality, bound up with multitude of other objects and a multitude of other operations. […] for the special end I am pursuing, I may admit that things happen as if the group water-kettle-stove were an independent microcosm.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:234)

With works of art or naturally organized bodies, this is not the case. Their borderlines are determined from within, not by a capricious convention.

A stone, an unorganized, lifeless body, maintains its qualities as a stone when it breaks into pieces. This indicates the flexible borders of geometric order. But a work of art, when subdivided or joined with other entities, undergoes significant modification; its meaning changes. Thus, the original borderlines of the work are significant. A similar point is expressed in Osborne's notion of "aesthetic order" and other variations of "organic form" (see Chapter 4, pp. 75–80). However, Bergson's analogy between the natural flow of events and works of art or living bodies does not quite work. The natural flow of events, the *élan vital,* unlike an organized body, has no borders, no beginning or end. It is limitless. The limitlessness is either a form of disorder or a state to which order and disorder are inapplicable (see Chapter 4, pp. 32–33).

An endless flow keeps changing along with its progression. The human mind cannot comprehend a constantly changing structure; nor can it experience anything endless. We can relate to an event, discuss it and evaluate it only when its outlines are drawn and it stands as a separate entity that has interrelations with other events, other separate entities. We often talk about certain periods in our life in this manner. We "design" them as stories that have beginnings and endings, even though we understand (intellectually!) that from an "objective" perspective, these borderlines are arbitrary designations.

A durational succession, as Bergson conceives of it, manifests qualities of disorder rather than order: its parts have no clear distinctions, their borderlines are boundless and obscure, and their structure, therefore, is inconceivable. It is a state of chaotic disorder rather than a typical manifestation of order. This conclusion coheres with Bergson's logic: we do not experience the *endless* flow just as we do not experience a total disorder; it is not an immediate intuitive apprehension. It must, therefore, involve intellectual considerations. I suspect that the concept of "endless flow" is more intellectual than Bergson cares to admit. We understand *intellectually* that the chain of events can go far beyond limited experience.

Interrelations between the two kinds of order

Bergson disallows any interaction between the two orders, since each stems from an entirely different and independent faculty. Each creates its own domain and its own purposes. Croce (1992) expresses a similar view by defining two types of knowledge: intuitive and logical. However, in some loose sense, there is an asymmetrical interaction between the two orders, "from intuition one can pass on to analysis, but not from analysis to intuition" (Bergson, 1946:213). In other words, it is impossible to create a vital order using intellectual methods, but it is possible to take a vital order apart and analyze it using intellectual methods. The result of such an analysis will not be a full intellectual understanding of the intuitive product; such an understanding is impossible. It would be a limited, pragmatic understanding. The "secret" of vitality will never reveal itself to the intellect. As Bergson puts it, "life does not proceed by the association and addition of elements" (Bergson, 1944:99). This means that the intellect cannot reconstruct living entities nor capture their vitality. Thus, only the intuition can create and apprehend works of art, which are analogous to living entities. This point echoes Kant's notion of the non-conceptuality of aesthetic evaluation.[5] Bergson suggests, then, that vital orders are not composed of conceptual components, whereas conceptual entities are generated by the process of fracturing vital orders (Felt, 1987:44).

A paradox arises here. Although he places intuition above intellect, Bergson equips the intellect with a power that he denies intuition: the intellect can exercise its capacity on the products of intuition via analysis, but intuition is unable to construct a whole out of conceptual parts. This also implies that the "damage" caused by the intellect while fracturing the vital order cannot be reversed, and that intuition cannot approach intellectual products the way it approaches natural objects. I do not see the necessity of such a claim within Bergson's theory, and I certainly do not agree that it is necessary in any way.

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[5] This issue is separately discussed in Chapter 10. I will try to show that Kant, Croce, Bergson, and others take the separation between the intuitive and the conceptual (or intellectual) unnecessarily far, and consequently lose the explanatory power of their distinctions.

For the sake of argument, let us accept Bergson's view that art is created exclusively by intuition. Even so, a work of art, being an artifact, utilizes and depends on intellectual products, and no work of art can exist without such components. A poem, for instance, is certainly a work of art composed of words that refer to concepts. Words are typically intellectual products by Bergson's own admission. A poem, therefore, intuitive as it may be, involves intellectual components. Put it differently, geometric orders function in poems as components or raw materials for vital orders. This does not mean that the final product, the poem as a whole, expresses a geometric order, but it cannot be denied that every poem consist of intellectual products.

The case of poetry clearly demonstrates how it is possible to move from geometric order to vital order, from intellectual products (words, concepts) to an intuitive product. Motion pictures, to use one of Bergson's favorite examples (see, for instance, Bergson, 1944:296–299), not only demonstrate how motion is broken into motionless separate pictures, but also how those motionless entities "miraculously" turn into a flowing durational succession. The separate motionless pictures, when operated by an intellectual (predictable) technique, are apprehended as moving, "living" pictures, simulating the real flow of events. This manifests how the two orders are interrelated.

There is yet a more general question concerning the priority of one order over the other. Is it necessary to privilege the intuitive order over the intellectual order, as Bergson does? My answer is no. Each order may use materials taken from the other, and each faculty—intuition or intellect—may depend on the other for certain functions (this issue is the main concern of Chapter 9).

Intuition can and does process intellectual products and reconstruct them into an integrative whole. This process, Bergson may argue, cannot be analyzed by the intellect because it expresses qualities of vital order. This may be true, but it does not prevent the process itself. Moreover, no product of the intuition is perceivable unless its elements are intellectually familiar on some level. This indicates a mutual dependence between the two faculties and, consequently, between the two orders. Grasping something as a whole involves distinctions among its parts, and if there are no distinguishable parts, the whole is nothing but a simple homogeneous entity, and as such it is not a *whole*. An admirable symphony is a complete whole, but it is certainly not a simple entity, and the intellect can distinguish among its parts. The complexity of a symphony may be described, although not exhaustively, in terms of geometric order. The "geometric" parts (the pitches, for instance) may exist as separate entities, definable by external (mechanical) principles and available to other vital orders. As *intellectual* entities, pitches express mathematical relations. These relations are "stable" and exist prior to any particular composition; these constitute the raw material of which different musical pieces are composed. The act of composition is indeed an act which shows that intuition can move from geometric order to vital order by using intellectual products as basic elements.

This does not imply that the act of composition is in itself intellectual. Moreover, Bergson indeed admits that the mind moves back and forth from one order to another. He claims that the two orders reflect operations of the mind. This necessarily implies the ability to move in both directions, otherwise the mind would have to stick to one order without the possibility of switching to its alternative. My claim goes even further: not only do the two orders have positive interaction, they are also mutually dependent and cannot exist separately (see Chapter 9).

The problem of disorder

Order, according to Bergson, reflects the operation of the mind. "That order exists is a fact" (Bergson, 1944:253). This statement is a consequence of the assumption that "Order is…a certain agreement between subject and object. It is the mind finding itself again in things" (Bergson, 1944:244). If indeed order reflects the operation of the mind, there is no situation in which we cannot find some kind of order. Whenever the mind is active, either in its natural-vital or its intellectual direction, it will reveal in the object with which it is occupied one of the two orders. No particular order is necessary in itself, since for any kind of order an alternative one may be found. It is inescapable, then, that we always find some kind of order and no state can be conceived of as disordered.

Disorder, Bergson argues, does not exist.[6] It is just a "simple verbal entity" (Bergson, 1944:243), a word that does not refer to a real state of affairs. If only one type of order existed, as the conventional view implies, then disorder would be not only possible but necessary. This argument is based on the following line of thought: in order to understand or even to notice a certain state of affairs, it has to be contrasted with an opposite state or it must be limited by a state of a different nature. This point is consistent with Bergson's dualism. Organized bodies are opposed to unorganized bodies, motion is opposed to the motionless, and so on. Since rational philosophy acknowledges only one type of order, it has to complement it with the notion of disorder. Moreover, being homogeneous, the elements of geometric order are, in fact, in a state of disorder. They are ordered and differentiated by a mechanical, external principle. In this sense, disorder precedes order, and order is indeed a "conquest over disorder" (Bergson, 1944:240).

If this were the actual situation, disorder would be the key concept for any cosmology or epistemology. This is, for instance, the view of empiricists like Hume and Lock: the given is a chaotic cluster of impression; the mind forces order upon the given. Bergson rejects this approach as a mere pragmatic projection of the intellect. According to Bergson, vital order precedes any homogeneity imposed on it by the intellect; it is the inherent order of Nature. Geometric order produces itself automatically by interrupting and fracturing vital order into homogeneous units. Thus, the intellect creates a virtual disorder that is then “conquered” and ordered by a mechanical principle. Vital order, being “natural”, forms the positive pole, whereas geometric order, being “unnatural”, forms the negative pole. It is clear, then, that Bergson does not need disorder as an opposing principle. In his philosophy, there already exist two types of order to oppose one each other.

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[6] A similar view about disorder is expressed by Bohm and Peat (1989:127), "[…] here it is proposed that whatever happens must take place in some order so that the notion of a 'total lack of order' has no real meaning."

Disorder denotes, then, not the absence of order, but the absence of the specific order one expected to find. Whenever the mind is active, it will find some kind of order, although it may not be the order that it expects or prefers. In this sense, disorder is simply the term we use to express our disappointed expectations, and thus it is merely a “verbal entity”. The situation in which both orders are absent “is neither perceived nor conceived” (Bergson, 1944:243). This is, no doubt, an effective argument.

There are, however, a few problems that I wish to consider concerning Bergson’s concept of disorder: (1) Bergson ignores the possibility of *degrees* of order—the quantitative aspect; (2) disorder, according to my analysis, cannot be defined as a mere absence of order. These points are crucial for the general understanding of order and particularly for the analysis of aesthetic order.

The quantitative aspect

Although Bergson treats order qualitatively, he neglects the fact that order is also quantitative. Bergson hardly pays any attention to the obvious fact that order manifests itself in various degrees. Bergson seems to avoid the issue of degrees because quantity is a typical intellectual feature. This, argues Deleuze (1988:23), is “the Bergsonian leitmotif: people have seen differences in degree where there are differences in kind”. The question still remains whether this justifies a dismissal of differences in degrees.

Bergson does indeed focus on qualitative differences, and his argument against quantitative reduction is probably justified. Nevertheless, there is no need to support the opposite extreme, which is no less contrary to common sense and everyday experience—a qualitative reduction. Quantity and quality should not exclude each other. Moreover, the quantitative aspect of order is not typical of rationalist theories either, and Bergson unwittingly aligns himself with his opponents. Rationalism tends to espouse the notion of total order, and does not generally consider orders that may vary in degree. Paradoxical as it may sound, degrees of order are a matter of intuition. The intellect cannot give a sufficient account of variety in degrees of compliance or coherence, it can only accept it as a fact: objects of experience are not simply ordered or disordered, nor do they only belong to one kind of order or another. The binary approach to order, as well as the denial of disorder, is rather a rationalist notion. In the perfectly ordered universe of Spinoza and Leibniz, for instance, coherence between events and laws is maximum; the notion of quantitative coherence is ruled out and disorder does not exist. It is interesting to note that in this respect philosophy resembles politics: the extreme tendencies of opposite sides may arrive at the same solution by different routes.

Bergson sums up the issue of degrees by asserting that “reality is ordered exactly to the degree in which it satisfies our thought” (Bergson, 1944:224). This is a somewhat surprising statement. It may mean that the order we ideally impute to reality is of a satisfying degree, but this is surely not the degree of order actually found in things. It is quite obvious that in experience one finds various degrees of order in natural objects as well as in one’s own activities and products. If we found every object completely or satisfyingly ordered, the concept of order, let alone the concept of disorder, would have never occurred to us.

Bergson suggests that there is a hierarchy between the two kinds of order:

> I shall [...] place at the summit of the hierarchy the vital order; then, as a diminution or lower complication of it, the geometric order, and finally, at the bottom of all, an absence of order, incoherence itself.
>
> (Bergson, 1944:257–8)

This may be interpreted in at least two ways. (1) The hierarchy of orders expresses the degree of faithfulness to reality. This conforms to the idea that vital order is more real than geometric order. (2) There is only *one* type of order, which at its high level appears as *vital,* at its lower level appears as *geometric* and at its lowest level is incoherence (disorder). It is not clear which of the two options Bergson had in mind, but even if I misunderstood Bergson’s real intention here, it seems certain that he does not entertain the idea of degrees or levels of order.

It is quite clear that questions of degree cannot be avoided in the case of geometric order. Since geometric order entails external principles imposed on different objects, variations of conformity are bound to appear. This is even more so if we take Bergson’s own perspective: since events cannot be repeated, and no two objects are identical, there must be some difference among sets that conform to the same external principle. Each drop of water, according to Bergson, is a non-repeatable unique entity. Consequently two drops of water cannot maintain exactly the same degree of order. Moreover, only pure geometric entities conform totally to their principle and thus the pure form and its principle become one and the same.

This issue raises a further problem. Intuition, according to Bergson, is totally sensitive. It apprehends each event as unique, and it is sensitive to differences ignored by the intellect. Paradoxically enough, this also characterizes the intuition as being very logical. It is logical to conclude that two seemingly identical drops of water must be different. Leibniz, for one, believed that this is an expression of the basic principle of identity. Bergson’s intuition is purely logical in this respect; it absolutely conforms to the axiom of identity.

Bergson is probably right to some extent about disorder: we may never experience total disorder. But this is only half of the truth. Not only is total disorder beyond our grasp, but so is perfect order (this point has been previously raised in Chapters 1 and 2). Many philosophers have associated perfect order with heavenly powers because the frail human mind cannot apprehend it. This does not mean, however, that the two ideal extremes are mere “verbal entities”. They are problematic, ideal states, but not meaningless. Moreover, they are indispensable concepts for our understanding of orders that we can apprehend. In our worldview, the concept of disorder is no less important than the concept of order. If we accept the proposition that actual objects are less than perfectly ordered, then any order of some degree simultaneously implies a disorder of some degree.

Bergson often relates vital order to art. But works of art, just like intellectually ordered products, also differ in their degrees of order. Evaluating a work of art would mean evaluating its degree of vital order, that is, its degree of inner necessity and unpredictability. It is undeniable that some works of art are more highly evaluated than others, and that there are good and bad works of art, highly original works as well as relatively predictable works, and so on. The degree of order associated with a good work of art is not the same as the degree associated with a lesser work. If a Beethoven symphony exhibits, as Bergson puts it, an "admirable order", there are surely some less admirable orders expressed by inferior composers. If all works of art were equally "admirable", this attribute would become meaningless, and there would be nothing special about Beethoven's symphony.

A theory that recognizes only ideal instances is not very useful, especially when it is meant to be relevant to real experience and deal with real objects, not with ideal entities. Recognizing the fact that order, vital or geometric, comes in various degrees also means accepting the concept of disorder as an essential component of the theory. Once again, Bergson's somewhat overenthusiastic and emotional approach leads him to such unnecessary extremes. He fuses ideology with philosophical analysis, a fusion which I believe one should strive to avoid.

Disorder and the absence of order

Bergson argues that in the absence of one type of order another type is found. Everyday experience tells us otherwise. It is simply not always true that in the absence of intellectual order we find beauty (vital order), or that each poor work of art exhibits a perfect intellectual order. A work of art may be evaluated as a very poor product of intuition, but that does not make it, ipso facto, an excellent work of the intellect. In a case of mixed styles that do not integrate, for instance, there is no reasonable order of any kind. Inconsistency in style may be ugly and discursively disordered. By the same token, not every intellectual failure is a brilliant work of art.

In later discussions I shall defend the view that each order is constructed of materials defined by its alternate order. If I am right, the two orders are mutually dependent and interact in various ways. From this perspective, the presence of one type of order always indicates the presence of the other type, *not* the absence of it. Vital order (or aesthetic order in my terms) does not exist in the absence of geometric (or discursive order) and vice versa. Bergson's commitment to dualism gives rise to a fallacy not dissimilar to the failure with which he charges rationalism: ignoring important aspects of real experience. I suggest the existence of a third pole, to oppose both types of order. This third pole, i.e. disorder, is not meaningless nor is it a mere verbal entity. It is as indispensable to the understanding of experience as the two types of order.

Paradoxically enough, Bergson's conception of durational succession, the endless flow that he considers to be the essential reality, seems closer to disorder than to any other kind of experience. It is not predictable, therefore it is not a geometric order; it has no borders to define its extension and its internal relations, therefore it is chaotic. The analogy Bergson draws between reality and art is problematic. Durational flow, unlike a work of art, is an open set, and as such cannot be evaluated for its order until we have defined some sections of it, as historians do with the flow of events. History is such an open endless flow, but when we wish to discuss certain periods, evaluate them and compare them with others, we have to define them (artificially) as closed sets, as separate "stories" that make sense on their own.

The question, as I see it, is not whether order or disorder is real, since any order is according to Bergson a reflection of the operation of the mind. The question is whether the concept of disorder is reducible to the concept of either of the two types of order without a loss of important and useful distinctions. The answer, I believe, is negative. The concept of disorder, as I argued in Chapter 2, is not simply an absence of some kind of order. There is more to "disorder" than such an absence and it is certainly not a mere verbal entity. If it is true that "order" reflects the operation of the mind, it is also true, for similar reasons, that "disorder" reflects such operation. Moreover, there exist not only two types of order that relate to each other in various ways, but also different types of disorder, each type relating to types of order according to its particular characteristics. Geometric (or discursive) order is not automatically a vital disorder, and durational, vital order is not simply the absence of geometric order.

Bergson has complained that traditional philosophy is inaccurate; it does not grasp the complexity of real life. One may raise the question whether any philosophy can or should try to accurately capture real life: I doubt that this is the task of philosophy. However, even if it were the task of philosophy, Bergson's reductive dualism would not helped us accomplish this task without accepting the complex net of interrelations among all types of order and disorder.

Summary

1. Bergson distinguishes between vital and geometric orders and denies the existence of disorder.
2. Vital order is an intuitive, unpredictable necessity, whereas geometric order is an intellectual, conventional, discursive order.
3. The two orders, according to Bergson, do not interrelate. One can move only from intuition to intellect in a negative sense: the intellect disassembles the vital order, but vital orders cannot be created on the basis of intellectual orders.
4. Disorder, according to Bergson, is meaningless; it is a mere "verbal entity". Order cannot be totally absent. In the absence of one type of order, one always finds another type of order.

5 My criticism pertains to (1) the denial of positive interactions among the two orders in both direction; (2) the absence of the quantitative aspect in Bergson's theory of order; and (3) the denial of a meaningful concept of disorder and its various interrelations with both types of order.

6 Aesthetic order

Quantitative analysis

Bergson's "vital order" as well as the traditional notion of "organic form" ignores quantitative factors. This is one of the main reasons why neither of these concepts can sufficiently complement discursive order or be an adequate concept of aesthetic evaluation. A non-quantitative concept of order is of little use in the aesthetic domain because it fails to account for the evaluative aspect. The concept of aesthetic order that is presented here differs significantly from the concepts offered by the theories above, namely that it has quantitative as well as qualitative characteristics. Indeed, aesthetic order is quantitative; however, this does not entail a satisfying method for measuring it. The very ground of the quantitative aspect of aesthetic order is puzzling: how can any particular aesthetic order be measured if the set and its principle are inseparable? How can we differentiate between degrees of aesthetic order, if each object constitutes its own order?

The following discussion addresses these questions and their implications. It examines the basic diversities between the two orders employing the same factors used in the analysis of discursive order. Both types of order share the general qualities of order: *complexity, heterogeneity* in probabilities and *necessity* in various degrees. Both types extend between two hypothetical extremes; both are quantitative; both oppose various states of disorder. Yet, discursive order is merely quantitative, whereas aesthetic order is both quantitative and qualitative. As already stated, the degree of discursive order is the measure of the coherence between an external, *a priori* principle and a given object (the set). By contrast, the aesthetic principle, being internal to the given object, exists as a potential for the object's aesthetic excellence. The principle is discovered through the direct experience of its materialization. Perhaps "discovered" is somewhat too strong a term in this context since the aesthetic principle never reveals itself as a clear and distinct concept that can be grasped apart from the object. Experiencing the object, the observer at once grasps the so-far-unknown potential and its degree of materialization. Yet, the idea of the potential (the principle) is not a clear and applicable concept. If an object is of low aesthetic value, the observer does not necessarily have the clear knowledge of its ideal state, and in most cases does not know how to achieve an aesthetic excellence. Knowledge of the aesthetic principle is obscure; it becomes clear and vivid only by being exposed to a high degree of aesthetic order. The experience of a high degree of aesthetic order evokes the sense of necessity; the sense that the object is ordered as it "should be"; that it does justice to its constituting materials. This indicates that the value or degree of aesthetic order is not determined by quantitative factors alone. The quantitative analysis draws a comparison between discursive and aesthetic order. However, since this comparison cannot fully explicate the peculiar nature of aesthetic order it must be complemented by a qualitative analysis. The qualitative aspect of aesthetic order is presented separately in the following chapters since it requires a different apparatus.

The relations between the two orders have an affinity to the relations between the general and the individual. A discursive principle is general in the sense that it can be applied to many sets; an aesthetic principle is individual in the sense that it applies (ideally) to one set only. A discursive principle is an abstract formula; an aesthetic principle is concrete and cannot be separated from or abstracted of its particular case. It should be stressed, however, that the two orders could not be simply reduced to "general" and "individual". Individuality on its own cannot capture the complexity of aesthetic order, and it certainly is insufficient for explaining the evaluative differences between individuals. Although generality may be considered quantitative, individuality *per se* is not a matter of degree. A general principle may be more or less general than another, i.e. its range of applications and degree of abstraction may vary. By contrast, no individual is more or less individual than another. An ugly object is no less individual and unique than a beautiful or a mediocre one.[1] If we assume that aesthetic order must apply to all these cases and must account for their differences, "individuality" is a necessary but insufficient category.

The distinction between the two orders does not imply a classification of objects. Aesthetic order is not exclusive to art, to objects of high beauty or to any specific group of objects. All objects of experience are subject to both orders: discursive and aesthetic.[2] A flower is both a sample of its species (its discursive order) and an object for aesthetic appreciation; a utility object may function well and be ugly or beautiful independently of its functioning. The actual status of an object as "discursive" or "aesthetic" is determined by cultural traditions, fashions and public or personal interests.

The quantitative features of aesthetic order, like those of discursive order, are the features that indicate a high or a low degree of order. Since no order is absolute, none of the quantitative features is expressed in its totality, but rather in its tendency toward a high or a low degree.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity in aesthetic order stands in contrast to the indifference that characterizes discursive order. Being sensitive does not mean that all aesthetic orders are equally sensitive to all changes. There are different kinds of changes, and an object (or rather its aesthetic order) may be highly sensitive to one change but indifferent or less sensitive to another. Poetry, in general, is more sensitive to changes in singular words than a novel is; however, even poems are not equally sensitive to changes in each of the words. The degree of sensitivity like the degree of indifference has its limit: total sensitivity, like total indifference, is a state of disorder rather then order (see Chapter 2, pp. 39–40). An object that is totally sensitive to any change whatsoever cannot even be experienced since it lacks the stability that is demanded for experience. This is one of the problems with Bergson's notion of vital order and with theories of organic form. The sensitivity attributed to them is taken to an impossible extreme that eliminates the demarcation line between order and disorder. High sensitivity must be limited by some degree of indifference, and vice versa, or else the set collapses into a state of disorder. Thus, high aesthetic order means exactly that—high sensitivity, not absolute sensitivity.

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[1] Mothersill (1984) suggests that individuality is a key concept in aesthetic evaluation. A more detailed presentation of her argument and my objections are presented in Chapter 10.

[2] There are only two exceptions to this generality: (1) The universe as a whole has no external relations since, by definition, there is nothing external to it (e.g. Spinoza's substance); and (2) simple entities have no internal relations since by definition they have no parts.

Acknowledging a theoretical demand for limitation to sensitivity (or indifference) does not mean that one has dealt with the pragmatic and normative problems concerning the measure of limitation. Highly pertinent questions remain: how much sensitivity can an object bear without collapsing into a state of disorder? and how is the limit to sensitivity determined? The answers to these questions depend, among other things, on the agent's capacity to perceive minor changes. But how can we know if a certain limit is only individually dependent? Alternatively, how can we know whether that which the sensitive observer associates with the object is really there?

In his essay *"Of the Standard of Taste"* Hume (1985) refers to this issue by relating to us Sancho's story from *Don Quixote:*

> Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent [...] One of them [...] pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other [...] gives also his verdict in favor of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish [...] On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom an old key with leathern thong tied to it.
>
> (Hume, 1985:234–5)

Is this a sufficient answer? Is the ultimate test so obvious? Even if it could be proven in the above sense that a certain observer's sensitivity reflects real qualities of the object, this would not change much in the aesthetic experience of a non-sensitive person. If one's sensitivity were such that one could not sense the trace of metal in the wine, it would not change the taste of the wine if one were shown that the metal was there. The awareness of the metal object in the wine may have a psychological effect on the taste, but it will not necessarily make one's palate more sensitive in the future. People may admire (or pretend to admire) a work of art just because others praise it, not necessarily because they understand what all the fuss is about. The borderline between the "genuine" impression and the reaction that is caused by the observations and appreciation of others is not always clear to the agent himself.

A person highly sensitive to the taste of food may sense that the sauce is made of preserved tomatoes instead of fresh ones, whereas a less sensitive person would not be able to tell the difference, and would be entirely satisfied with the sauce. Although the facts about the materials of the sauce can be demonstrated, there is no use having a rule that only fresh tomatoes can *please* us and taste good. What if someone likes the preserved tomatoes better? What if someone cannot sense the difference? A person highly sensitive to words will not only notice subtle differences between two versions of the same poem (or translations of it) but also the impact and significance of these differences. However, it is not clear that everyone needs to adopt this as a standard. One may see through minor nuances, ignore them and still appreciate the poem profoundly. Education and experience can, to some degree, develop or block sensitivities, but these cannot determine the normative question of how much sensitivity is required in order to experience a given object "correctly". One thing is clear, determining the taste of a highly sensitive person as a standard of taste is practically ineffective.

We can conclude that although an infinite number of differences may be found between any two events or objects, there is a limit to the differences that are actually perceived and that are actually effective or significant in a given context.

Sensitivity in aesthetic order appears at the following levels:

1 between the elements and the ordering principle
2 among all elements of the same set
3 among ordering principles that occur in the same context
4 among sets of the same class
5 between the ordered set and its context

These levels are parallel to the levels of indifference in discursive order. However, in aesthetic order the difference between the levels is less effective than it is in discursive order. For instance, level 3 and level 4 differ significantly in discursive order, but they do not really differ in aesthetic order since the aesthetic principle and the set are inseparable.

Sensitivity between the set and its ordering principle

The internal relationships among the elements constitute at once the principle and the set. This means that the set constitutes its own individual principle. Thus, (almost) any modification of the elements would affect outright the principle itself, that is, the net of relationships between the elements and the potential they harbor. Different elements (different materials) indicate different potentials and, therefore, different aesthetic principles.

Works of art typically demonstrate this point. What is an aesthetic principle of, say, a poem? It is easier to state what it is not: it is not the poem's generic patterns or the linguistic rules according to which it was composed. It is not the moral or psychological idea that is embedded in it. It is rather the sense of inner necessity that the poem evokes (if indeed it does evoke such sense) as a result of the overall relationships of which it consists, or rather, the overall impression of the observer of these relationships. It is manifested in the impression that the words, the rhythm, the metaphors or any other elements of the poem are well situated and complement each other. In other words, they do justice to the potentials of materials they are made of, and they satisfyingly "fulfill" the "promise" embedded in them. If the poem does not evoke such impression, it indicates that something is wrong with its overall structure. Viewing the poem (or any object) as an attempt to materialize a potential and achieve an optimum aesthetic order allows not only for degrees of order but also for the possibility of improving the results in case they are unsatisfactory. A talented and inspired person is capable (ideally speaking) of improving the poem; this, in fact, is manifested in the process of creation: the final product is (or should be) an improvement of earlier drafts. In a good work of art or any beautiful object, the principle (the potential) and the object (the final materialization) become one and the same. Only in aesthetic failures does one sense the gap between the principle and the object in the way one grasps an unfulfilled promise (although one does not have a clear notion of the promise before experiencing its fulfillment).

Abstracting a pattern from a good poem and composing another poem according to that very pattern cannot guarantee the same sense of necessity in the new poem since the genuine "principle" of the poem is not just an element of it; it is the individual essence of the poem itself. This is one of art's paradoxes: although a great work of art sets an example, the attempts to follow that example are, in most cases, of lower merit. Whereas the original poem consists of its own (internal) principle, its imitation depends on a principle that is external to it—the principle adopted from the original. This touches upon a paradox in Kant's conception of art. On the one hand, works of a genius "must be models, i.e. exemplary". They "must serve as a standard or rule of judgement for others" (Kant, 1951a §46). On the other hand, a work that is made according to a standard, that is, an imitation, is not original and thus not of a high value.

Let us examine the issue of "aesthetic principle" from a different angle. The "grin without a cat" in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* expresses a common experience that Lewis Carol brought to its extreme.[3] The specific grin of the Cheshire cat at once arranges the facial details of the cat and is determined by them. The grin induces a specific meaning upon the facial features and at the same time it is dependent on these features. The grin and the facial features are sensitive to each other. Of course, a grin cannot really stand on its own; it cannot be separated from the particular face in which it appears. Yet, it appears to Alice to be separated from the cat's face, as if it could be apprehended independently. The grin functions like an aesthetic ordering principle that cannot be independent of the set, since there is no grin without a face; at the same time, the grin appears as a separated, independent entity (as if it were an external ordering principle). This enchanting absurdity of Wonderland vividly exemplifies one of the paradoxes of aesthetics.

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[3] As the three-year-old Ella referred to her father: "he is like the Cheshire cat, because he disappears [goes to work] and then re-appears."

In a similar way we may refer to a person's smile as if it were a separate entity: "he is quite ugly, but he has such a warm smile; when he smiles he is not ugly anymore". The smile is at once a "separate" entity and the expression that modifies the whole face. A facial expression is highly sensitive to changes and in some cases it takes only very minor, hardly noticeable changes to modify the entire expression. This high sensitivity may cause a contrasting effect: although minor changes may cause dramatic modification to the facial expression, these changes may not be noticed at all on their own. One may not remember the color of the eyes, or the form of the lips, or the length of the brow, yet one may remember the expression as a whole, as if it were disconnected from or abstracted from the constitutive elements of the face (the set). Children, for instance, being entirely dependent on their parents, tend to notice minor variations of expression on their parents' faces; they are not, however, able to specify the modified elements.

Plotinus expresses a different understanding of facial expressions. He supports his argument against the idea that beauty is an order (proportion) on the basis of his analysis of facial expressions:

> Since the same face, without change of symmetry, sometimes appears beautiful and sometimes not, how can we avoid saying that the beauty is something supervening on the symmetry.
>
> (Plotinus, 1969:VI)

If we take "symmetry" in this context to represent order (a questionable assumption on it own)[4] it seems that Plotinus argues that a change in a facial expression has no impact on its overall aesthetic order. The features of the face and their proportions, according to this understanding, remain the same regardless of changes in expression. If Plotinus were right, it would indicate indifference between expressional changes and beauty of the the face as a whole. It would also mean that the form of the face could be "detached" or abstracted from any of its particular expressions. Plotinus, I believe, is entirely mistaken here. A face is never without expression, and some expressions can change a face's beauty dramatically. A beautiful face may appear ugly when the person is raging with spite or anger. The change in expression rearranges the facial features, affects the overall aesthetic order and creates new ones—better or worse. The illusion that such changes are not effective is caused by pragmatic forces: we cannot constantly keep changing our aesthetic judgment concerning the same object (the same face) along with every minor change. Moreover, we cannot be aware of every minor change. There is a limit to the sensitivity of our perception. When we state that a face is beautiful, we more or less "fix" the facial order, usually according to a pleasant expression, or any expression that we take to be typical (and thus "stable") of that person. Doing so, we regard it as "an abstraction", a (relatively) stable, discursive order that is indifferent to changes in expressions until a change which is significant enough to draw our attention forces us to modify our judgment. This is similar to the way we perceive, for instance, shapes of objects around us. We regard the table as being a rectangle, although we do not see it as such from most angles. Pragmatic forces "design" a (relatively) stable object; art often interferes with this stability by exposing the aesthetic significance of unusual angles and the effect of minor changes.

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[4] The notion of symmetry in antiquity probably had a meaning somewhat different to the one it has now. It probably meant proportion.

A reproduction of a painting in different colors or sizes, or similar sculptures made of different materials or the same symphony played on different instruments do not exhibit the same internal coherence, i.e. the same aesthetic order. Sometimes even a subtle change in size or color can make a decisive difference to the entire appearance of the image. The bronze statue may look right but the "same" statue in marble may look wrong because of the different interrelations between, so called, form and matter. A piece will sound differently when played on the piano or when played on the harpsichord. The Early Music movement, which has gained a great deal of popularity and respect in recent years, arose from the conviction that, music written before the nineteenth century should be played on original instruments, or copies of the originals, rather than on their modern equivalents. It is believed that only the original instruments are capable of preserving the original (and therefore the right) aesthetic order of the music.

Size, as another element, does matter in aesthetic order. Visitors to the Louvre are often disappointed when they finally see the original *Mona Lisa*. It seems small (and therefore less impressive) in comparison with its reputation. People tend to assume that a painting that has become a significant cultural symbol cannot be so small in size. Size expresses meaning and as such it is expected to cohere with the other features of the object. A beautiful object may look monstrous, and perhaps ugly, when magnified, and insignificant or even ridiculous when miniaturized.

Looking at a magnified photo of a familiar object, we not only see it differently but also may be hard-pressed to identify it. Size brings into play new elements and as a result, the meaning and thus the degree of aesthetic order of the whole is modified.

Sensitivity among all elements of the same set

The elements of an aesthetic set influence each other's role within the whole. This level is interrelated with the first level: if a change in a single element affects the degree of materialization of the ordering principle, it certainly affects the rest of the elements. Alter the shade of one patch of color in a painting and the overall color feeling may be different. A change of pitch in a musical phrase may affect the whole melody. The alteration of one element restructures the interrelations among all the elements, changing the emphasis and significance of each part.

However, sensitivity, like any other feature of order, reflects complexity and diversity. One of the expressions of this diversity is that the elements are *not equally* effective or sensitive within the set. Some elements are more central than others, and some of their qualities are more significant than others. A bouquet of flowers may look pretty much the same if some flowers are replaced; even if one replaces a red rose with a white one, the overall impression may not be significantly modified. The degree of sensitivity depends on the role of the specific element within the whole, and that role, in turn, is sensitive to the observer and to the changing context. Two observers may react differently to the same change.

The significance of an element within the whole may be measured by the effect of its change. There is no systematic, accurate measure but a process of trial and experience: when an element is replaced or modified, one has to re-experience the whole and estimate the consequence. This is typical in a process of creation; it explains the phenomenon of drafts. Some changes do not matter, some are highly significant, but there is no way of knowing in advance which change will achieve the satisfying result. One has to try it and directly experience the effect. Replacing a word in a poem may cause a dramatic change in the poem's meaning, but then again it may not. One has to "test" the variations and decide. A colored cushion may change the whole atmosphere of a dull room, but the same cushion would escape notice in a vividly colored room. A novel is generally less sensitive to single words than a poem is, but this is not always the case. Recall the famous last word of Joyce's *Ulysses*—"Yes"; if it had been "No" or "Maybe" our understanding of the entire novel would be quite different. Such changes and their effects are determined a posteriori, not a priori. It depends on the individual case and its context and cannot be generalized.

Sensitivity among ordering principles in the same context

Aesthetic ordering principles are sensitive to each other and influence each other's degree of order. The fact that the set and its principle are inseparable means that aesthetic principles influence each other in the same way that elements within a single set do. In the last analysis, this is the aesthetic sensitivity between comparable objects. Acquaintances with new works often prompt us to re-evaluate an older work with similar qualities. The most beautiful garden in the neighborhood may look dull compared with the gardens at the palace of Versailles. An enjoyable melody may sound flat and banal if it is played immediately after Bach's *Matthäus Passion*. We may enjoy a film very much, but when comparing it with an earlier version our appreciation may decline. Works of art (or rather the experience of them) affect each other's degree of aesthetic value in the same way as colors or tones affect each other. If we had never seen Picasso's work, we might never have appreciated the beauty of African masks. Had we not tasted that wonderful wine last year in Paris, we would still think highly of our local wine. This may partly explain changes in taste: the richer our experience grows, the more refined and complex our taste may become, as we have in mind more cases that can be compared and, as a result, our sensitivity to details is refined.

Sensitivity among sets of the same class

This point is problematic: aesthetic orders are essentially one-member classes and thus by definition there cannot be interrelations among sets of the same aesthetic order. But even if, strictly speaking, no two separate entities can share exactly the same aesthetic order, one may still consider similar objects as having a similar aesthetic order, expressing similar potentials. After all, there is an essential difference between strict logical demands and actual experience. Some differences among objects may be so subtle or insignificant that they pass unnoticed by the observer or become redundant. In this loose sense, two distinct entities may look (or sound) more or less the same and this fact bears on their evaluation. Aesthetic orders are sensitive to duplications and repetitions. There are two distinct cases of "repetition": (1) the same object is repeated—it is experienced many times; and (2) distinct objects may share a very similar aesthetic order.

1 An often-repeated object generates many experiences of (more or less) the same ordering principle. One can read the same book twice, or watch the same film over and over again or listen repeatedly to the same record, not to mention our experiencing of familiar scenery. Each experience may be regarded as having a separate object, although it is, at least from a pragmatic point of view, the very same one. The book one reads the second time is the same book one read before; otherwise it would not be the "second" reading. Yet, on second reading, the book is somewhat different, as if the object in question were modified. We may be more bored or more enthralled the second time around. During the second reading the reader may concentrate on the style and less on the already known plot, and may thus notice elements that escaped attention during the first reading. The reader may be in a different state of mind, be aware of information s/he was not aware of in the first reading, and so on. I am almost tempted to comment that no two readings are the same, but there is also a limit to such sensitivity. Upon listening to the same record for the eleventh time, we may not perceive it differently from the tenth time, or at least, we would not be aware of any difference. Therefore, even in the case of a repeated object, one cannot know in advance whether the previous impression will be repeated or not.

These "distinct" objects of experience affect each other's degree of order. The first acquaintance with a book or a film obviously influences (but does not determine) any subsequent readings or viewing. Conversely, the later experience is capable of shedding new light on the original experience and thus modifying its meaning or significance. The different aesthetic experiences are not independent of each other.

The change that occurs during repetitions may have various results. We may notice previously unnoticed elements and discover different internal relationships and as a result "produce" or "reveal" a higher necessity among the elements. Repetition may also result in a diminished order. On first reading Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Illitch,* we may be caught up in the unfolding events and the characters; on the second or third reading, we may be better able to perceive that Tolstoy is manipulating the story in order to illustrate his moral ideology (discursive order). The necessity of the details, in such a case, becomes dependent on an external factor, namely the ideology of the writer. From an aesthetic point of view such a manipulation or external dependence would cause a lower inner necessity (lower degree of aesthetic order).

It is also possible that a repetition will not expose anything we have not experienced before, and will result in a boring or mechanical experience. This does not necessarily mean that the aesthetic order of the repeated set has miraculously been reduced. However, since the focus of the observer's attention is now on the repeated pattern, the discursive perspective takes over while the aesthetic is pushed aside and thus "weakened". A case in point is the famous tasting scene in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. In this scene the protagonist observes with amazement the great emotional change that he has brought upon himself by tasting the "petites madeleines" dipped in tea.

> No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin…

The protagonist then searches for the meaning of this experience and seeks to seize and apprehend it. He therefore repeats the act, but to no avail:

> I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, then a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic.

The author realizes that the truth he is seeking lies not in the cup but in him,

> The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret.
>
> (Proust, 1989:48–9)

Evidently, the mechanical repetition of the tastes turns the aesthetic experience of the first tasting into a discursive one in the sequential attempts.

Discursive orders always get stronger through repetition. The more instances of the same principle one experiences, the easier is its identification or application in further cases. Aesthetic orders, by contrast, get weaker through repetitions. Exposure to endless reproductions of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* makes the experience of them somewhat obvious, expected, taken for granted. Who would pay attention to the aesthetic order of a painting once it has been transformed into a popular cultural symbol? Even a great admirer of Van Gogh may tire of looking at "Sunflowers." Of course, it has not lost its original internal order, because it is still the very same painting (at least in some pragmatic sense), but due to repetitions the internal order is overpowered by an external one. This again does not have to be the final verdict: an object that has had too much exposure can be "revived" by being viewed in a new way, or in a significantly new context. It may regain its original impact or acquire a new one.

2 When many objects appear to have the same (or very similar) aesthetic order, the degree of order of each case is reduced. This kind of experience occurs very often in what we call "fashion". Fashion tends to excite (or repulse) people when it is still novel. It offers a fresh way of arranging objects: new combinations of colors, shapes, tastes, sounds, rhythms, expressions and ideas. Nonetheless, being fashionable also means that the new is reproduced and seen almost everywhere. The overexposed style sooner or later becomes banal. We may end up wondering what we ever saw in it in the first place. Likewise, a new artistic style may be highly surprising and intriguing at first, but can become tiresome from overuse. It is not necessarily the appreciation of the style itself that is getting lower, but the appreciation of each work that follows the *same principle*. As a consequence of overuse, the principle itself becomes strong like any discursive principle and overpowers the individual aesthetic order of its instances; it becomes indifferent to the context or the particular object in which it is embedded.

Sensitivity between the set and its context

Aesthetic orders are sensitive to their context, including the observer's perspective, knowledge and previous experience. When Beethoven's *Mondschein* is played as background music in a supermarket it is experienced differently from when it is played in a concert hall. Verbal sets change their meanings when put in a new context. Politicians often complain that their words have been taken out of context and their meaning is thus modified. A beautiful line of a poem may sound ridiculous when quoted in a comic movie; an acknowledged masterpiece may lose some of its impressive features when it appears in the "wrong" context.[5] Even if a work persists through changing contexts, this does not imply that it carries the same meaning or produces the same effect; it may be similarly appreciated but for different reasons.

The issue of sensitivity to context touches upon historical differences in appreciating art. Do we appreciate Homer as the poet he was in his days? Can we appreciate Homer's poems for the same reasons they were appreciated by his contemporaries? I am inclined to answer negatively, but my answer is hesitant. On the one hand, context does matter; there are so many examples to support this claim. On the other hand, we tend to believe that there is something inherent in great works of art that does not fade with changing times. Each option raises difficulties of its own. If it is not the same Homer, then what is it exactly that we appreciate in his poems? Is it our own reflection? If it is indeed the same Homer, does this mean that his poems are indifferent to context, a typical quality of discursive order? Is it just an idea that we admire in his poetry? Is it a technique? Or is it something different, more sensitive and unique that cannot be explained by discursive terms?

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[5] The notion of "right" or "wrong" context for appreciating works of art is also expressed by theories of "aesthetic distance." See Bullough (1913), Longman (1947), and others.

As already noted, no actual object exhibits an absolute sensitivity to any change whatsoever. Some degree of indifference enters all aesthetic orders, just as some degree of sensitivity must enter all discursive orders. Without some indifference to context, we could not watch the *same* film twice or recognize the *same* painting placed in a different museum. In this sense, Homer's poetry is the same to some degree even two and a half thousand years later. However, being sensitive to context, it is inevitable that Homer's poetry could not fully maintain its original meaning over the centuries. This kind of question touches upon the general issue of classical art and its role in cultural life throughout the ages (see Chapter 9, pp. 178–179, and Chapter 11, pp. 294–301). In general, I believe that although something must have been lost along the years and something new must have been gained, there is still a common core that allows us (people of the twenty-first century) to be associated with Homer's contemporaries. This common core consists of some common needs, interests and values.

Predictability, redundancy and informative value

Aesthetic order exhibits a tendency toward low predictability, low redundancy and high informative value. Discursive order exhibits a tendency in the opposite direction. This tendency, like the tendency towards high sensitivity, is limited. It cannot reach the extreme of any direction.

Predictability

Predictability may occur in two forms: (1) deduction of the whole from a given part of a set; and (2) familiarity which enables prediction. In this second case, the set as a whole is already known from previous experience; when given a part of the set, the perceiver is reminded of the rest and is thus able to complete it. This is not a deductive completion. For instance, one easily joins a familiar melody, or is able to quote the next line of a familiar poem upon hearing the preceding lines. This is clearly not a result of a deductive procedure; it does not indicate a prevailing principle.

Deduction

High deductibility expresses low aesthetic value. If the whole can be deduced from a part, it means that the tendency toward external relationships is strong and dominates the set. Deducing the whole from a given part indicates that the part and the whole are governed by the same principle that is external to both. If one has the impression that the end of a story is deducible from its beginning, one's experience is of low aesthetic order. However, a story may start as a banal, seemingly predictable story, and then take a surprising turn. Archeologists reconstruct fractured objects and even add missing fragments relying on known patterns. Such reconstructions indicate predictability and, hence, high discursive order. However, the reconstructed object may also reveal significant qualities of its own; qualities that are not deduced from the pattern it shares with other similar objects.

This last point indicates a kind of predictability that does not affect the aesthetic value of the object. Upon watching a film or reading a book, we may be able to predict the plot and still enjoy the acting, the technique or the dialogues, which are themselves original. Since the object is complex, we may appreciate one component of it more than another and dismiss the predictable component as insignificant. Different genres emphasize different components as their central features, and the significance of unpredictability is associated with the central features and not the marginal ones. Plots are typically essential in detective stories and therefore a predictable plot in this genre is usually at fault. However, in a *Bildungsroman* a predictable plot is not necessarily an indication of a low aesthetic order.

Familiarity

The familiarity of the object does not directly affect the degree of its internal order, but may do so indirectly. The ability to complete a tune or a poem because one already knows it may bring into play all kinds of new elements that affect the aesthetic value of the whole. It may indicate good memory (positive); it may indicate that the poem is part of one's spiritual world (positive); it may indicate that the poem has been heard many times (positive or negative, depending on context); it may indicate that the banality of the rhyme makes it easy to remember (negative); or it may be evidence that one was forced to learn it by heart (positive or negative), and so on. Children usually like to hear the same story over and over again, and they often want it to be told in exactly the same way. Children, and sometimes adults, tend to favor what they already know and enjoy, which has nothing directly to do with the preference of one aesthetic order over another, but rather express the need for security and familiarity with one's environment or the need to build a solid foundation for one's cultural world.

A tune may be banal but well known. As such, it constitutes a strong order, but not necessarily a high aesthetic order. A familiar tune may keep reverberating in our heads despite our wish to be rid of it. Some classical works are also well known, but their high aesthetic order is not derived from this fact. Yet, in some cases a melody may sound banal because it is overused for banal purposes, such the signature tune for a radio program. The history of the reception of a work may consist of different phases of neglect and admiration. This history is not determined solely by the so-called "objective" aesthetic worth of the work; it involves all kinds of social and psychological forces. (This issue is further discussed in Chapter 9.)

Redundancy

Redundancy of predictable elements

Elements of aesthetic order may be redundant either because they can be deduced from a given part or because the object is already known. These two cases are equivalent to the above two cases of predictability. The first case indicates a low aesthetic order but the second does not.

Irrelevant elements

Unlike discursive order, aesthetic order does not tolerate irrelevant qualities; it is too sensitive to them. Irrelevant qualities are either excluded from the set because they are extraneous to it, or if they do belong within the set they interfere with its degree of order. For instance, the chemical formula of the ink in which a poem is written is an element that in some way belongs to the object we call “the poem”. Without it (or without an equivalent feature) the poem would not have materialized. Yet, when considering the poem as an aesthetic set, the qualities of the ink are usually excluded; they are not considered as elements of the poem. In most cases it would make no difference whatsoever whether the ink is of cheap quality or whether its color is blue or black. This does not mean that the ink might not become a relevant factor from a different perspective, when subject to a different convention; for example, in the case of calligraphy.

A dispute over the object’s aesthetic value sometimes begins with a dispute over the relevant qualities and elements of the object. If these are not agreed upon, the chances are that the aesthetic value attributed to the object will not be agreed upon either. For instance, the famous debate about the relevance of the author’s intention is, in fact, a debate about the relevant components of a work. The overall impression or understanding of a work may modify if one considers the author’s intentions or biography as part of the work or as a necessary requirement for the understanding of the work. Whatever partakes in the experience, that is, whatever the observer is aware of and regards as a part of the object, has some influence of the aesthetic order of the object in question. The presence of an element in the set bears aesthetic significance; the mark of its absence has a similar affect in cases when the observer notices such an absence and reacts to it. The observer’s expectations, their fulfillment or disappointment partake in forming the aesthetic order and are, therefore, relevant to it. The question concerning the *justification* of certain demands or expectations is beside the point here. Even if one is not justified (by some standards) in associating a story with one’s own life experience, the fact that one does so affects one’s aesthetic impression of the whole. In this sense the “unjustified” element becomes relevant. It is relevant because it is effective, not because it is well argued for or against.

Non-redundant redundancy

There is a type of redundancy that, in spite of the above, plays an important role in aesthetic orders. Since the elements do not have the same function or significance within the set, some elements are bound to appear marginal or arbitrary in comparison with others. As a result they seem to be relatively redundant and replaceable. This kind of redundancy is needed to constitute *internal heterogeneity* in which the roles of the elements are differentiated; it is also needed to create the internal environment for the more essential elements. The central elements gain their significance in relation to their "internal context". On their own, their significance may not be manifested. A novel cannot be read with equal attention to each sentence or detail. Some of the details may appear somewhat redundant. This does not mean that they can be erased from the novel without causing damage. Their *apparent redundancy* is necessary for preparing the grounds for the central elements. Similarly, in every drama there must be some non-dramatic moments. No drama can consist purely of climaxes for the obvious reason that they would cease to be climaxes if there were nothing with which to contrast them. In order to create highlights, marginally "redundant" elements must occur. In paintings we find elements that function as backgrounds or balance to the main scene. Such elements appear to be replaceable or redundant, but this is not necessarily the case. Chekhov, for one, makes extensive use of apparently redundant elements; these elements create an atmosphere that in many of his stories becomes the leitmotif. In this sense, a seemingly redundant element may be highly informative.

Informative value

Informative value reflects non-predictability and low redundancy. It reflects the degree of novelty of the information carried by the elements.

Non-deductive information

A highly informative set is a set that cannot be deduced from any of its given parts. Given a part of the whole, the perceiver is unable to predict the rest; the rest is thus highly informative. Although this level refers to the interrelationships of the elements, it also reflects the perceiver's perspective. For a first-time reader of Agatha Christie, details are most informative and the solution to the murder case may be entirely unexpected; for an experienced reader, the surprise is likely to be reduced. After reading several of the Hercule Poirot mysteries, the reader begins to perceive a pattern and to anticipate possible solutions.

However, even if an object is highly predictable, it is never without some informative value, because we cannot be sure that our prediction is accurate until we arrive at the point where it is tested. The question is whether one is interested enough to find out. Given that knowledge is always limited, one can never be certain that one's prediction will materialize exactly as foreseen: one may be surprised to discover that the plot really is as unoriginal as suspected, and that all predictions turned out to be accurate. This may cause a pleasure that has nothing to do with a high value of aesthetic order since in effect it indicates low aesthetic value. This kind of pleasure is more likely to express the sense of control, understanding and confidence that such predictions may evoke.

The informative value of repetitions

Even if an object was highly informative on first experience, once it is known its repetition does not carry the same degree of information. Nevertheless, as discussed above, repetitions may reveal new elements or new aspects of the object, and in such cases, the object's reoccurrence does not elicit a mere repetition of the previous experience. The limitation of memory also plays an important role here (see Moles, 1966:122). Owing to this limitation the reoccurrence of an experience may be highly informative, despite the fact that the main outlines of the content are already known.

The value of information value

The "value" component of "informative value" may not designate the quantitative but rather the qualitative measure of information. In this sense, a low informative value means that the information, although new, is of *low importance*. This may be regarded as a more "subjective" or rather individualistic measure. For instance, if I am primarily interested in the style of the story and not in the plot itself, the actual solution of the murder is of low *value* for me even if I could not have guessed it. In this sense, high informative value may be of a low value for the beholder. This touches upon the disparity between "informative value" and "the value of information". Not every high informative value is of a high value for the observer. The former indicates the degree of novelty of a given information, the latter indicates its significance. I may be highly surprised by the turn in a piece of music, but at the same time I may not like it since it expresses, say, caprice or decadence.

Although aesthetic order is characterized by a tendency towards high information, informative value on its own is insufficient to determine aesthetic value. The significance of the information is no less crucial. Kant observed that originality (high informative value) is an important feature of art, but on its own it is insufficient since "it also can produce original nonsense" (Kant, 1951a: §46). This point is often neglected by aestheticians who are eager to deal with more "objective" and quantitative factors. The quantitative aspect creates the impression of objective measure whereas the qualitative value is (relatively) more subjective and reflects the priorities of a culture or an individual observer.

A closed set and a closed class

Closed set

Because of its sensitivity, aesthetic order must reside within defined and closed borders. These borders determine the range of the set and exclude irrelevant elements. They thus define the interrelationships among the elements, since a change in the range of elements also means a change in the internal relations among the elements. Whatever is perceived within a given set has a part to play in its aesthetic order.

This feature reflects the fact that aesthetic order is the order of individuality. Clear borderlines define the particularity of the set and "protect" it from fusing with other sets and thus losing its own personality. Borders are required in order to separate between an object and its context, between the relevant and the irrelevant elements. This does not mean that the borderlines are always clear and distinct and equally experienced by all observers. Borders may become a matter of interpretation and dispute. A dispute over borderlines is a dispute over the nature of the object, its interpretation and evaluation. For instance, if one considers the frame to be an element of the painting, then the frame partakes in the appreciation of the whole. If the frame is excluded, one has to look at the painting ignoring the frame and its influence (which is not an easy task if the frame is not removed).

Sometimes it may seem that aesthetic order is found in open sets, such as landscapes. It may seem that the object of our aesthetic admiration does not have defined borders, but this is an illusion. The illusion is created by the gap between knowledge and actual experience. We know, for instance, that the landscape we see in front of us extends beyond our visual field. Yet, we actually experience and respond only to the closed set formed by our visual field or "framed" by the window. Enlarging the "frame", changing perspectives or angles, does make a difference. The kind of difference and its overall impact on the observer varies in each case. Some changes are hardly noticed and some cause dramatic modifications in the object. Being conditioned by borderlines is an important characteristic that differentiates matters of aesthetic appreciation from the sublime. Beautiful objects, good works of art or even ugly or bad works of art, are evaluated as closed sets; the sublime, at least on Kant's view, is related to lack of borders.[6]

This point serves as a basis for the disagreement with theories that regard works of art, specifically literary works, as essentially incomplete, awaiting the observer or the reader to complete them. Ingarden (1973a, b), Iser (1971, 1974, 1978) and others share the view that the reader has an active role in *completing* the work and filling in gaps. My claim regarding "closed borders" runs counter to this position and regards such theories as being based on a fundamental mistake, namely the conception that the work can be incomplete or boundless when presented to the reader or the viewer. According to the closed-borders argument, the artist either completes the work or it is incomplete and not ready to be presented. The observer, I argue, does not have a role in the act of creation; the observer rather *observes, perceives, reacts, reflects* and *interprets*. These activities are different from the act of creating or completing an unfinished work. In my view, this issue is of crucial importance to the understanding of art and the aesthetic experience in general; it therefore deserves a detailed argument that I present in Chapter 11 in the framework of a general analysis of art.

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[6] The experience of Nature as limitless, according to Kant, produces the sublime, a different category altogether. It has more in common with disorder than with aesthetic order. See Chapter 2, pp. 32–33.

One-member class

An aesthetic order is ideally a one-member class. The principle and the set are one, and therefore there is only one set in each class of an aesthetic ordering principle. However, the uniqueness or individuality of aesthetic order has various manifestations and degrees. Duplications of a single set do not, normally, create different aesthetic orders. Copies of the same novel or records of the same music are viewed as one object. We do not talk in the plural form about, say, Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* although the novel exists in many different editions. The copies may not look the same, and may indeed have different pagination, yet we regard this work of Tolstoy as an individuum. The differences among the various editions are irrelevant to the appreciation of Tolstoy's work. These differences may, though, indicate differences in appreciation of the work or cultural norms and economic forces. For instance, a fancy edition may be taken to express a high appreciation of the book. Yet, reproductions of a painting are not considered the same as the original, since by its very nature a painting depends on its visual properties.

Differences in versions, however, are another matter. Different versions of the same aesthetic order create a manifold class. For instance, different translations of the same novel or different performances of the same play. A class of aesthetic versions is different in Nature from a class of discursively ordered sets. In the latter we tend to evaluate each set separately according to the common, external ordering principle. The comparison among discursive sets is, therefore, indirect; it is mediated by the common external principle. By contrast, different aesthetic versions are compared directly with each other. Comparing two performances of the same play, we do not apply a set of performing principles; the comparison is direct, like the comparison between two shades of red. Both performances may be equally good although they present different understandings of the original script.

Quantity plays an important role here. As long as we have only a few sets with similar aesthetic order, we tend to see them as versions of the same order and to regard their differences as minor variations. But when we find more sets of the same aesthetic order, this order acquires the status of a discursive ordering principle and we come to regard the sets as different applications of the same pattern (discursive principle). In this case, the comparison between versions is not just a direct comparison, it is also mediated by the general ideas and expectations we may have with regard to the script, the score—the mutual ordering principle. We regard, for instance, a play by Shakespeare as some kind of blueprint that classifies many different performances of *Hamlet*. This blueprint is a binary, not a quantitative principle, since all (or most) performances of this play conform to the original text—otherwise, they could not be a performance of *Hamlet*. Nevertheless, each performance offers a new version (a new interpretation) of the original blueprint and as such, each can be evaluated as a separate aesthetic order. The blueprint itself (the script) is also a set of aesthetic order, yet, insofar as it is a *blueprint,* it functions as an external, discursive principle. It is not enough to know that it is *Hamlet* in order to determine the value of a particular performance. We normally distinguish between the value of the original script and the value of a given performance.

As sets of aesthetic order, each performance may have its own order—the original text is only one element among many that determine its aesthetic worth. The comparison among versions of an aesthetic order is not a comparison of accuracy (we assume that the dialogues in all performances of *Hamlet* are equally loyal to the original text). The comparison among the performances concentrates rather on the value of their interpretation. The same can be said about different performances of the same piece of music, or different readings of a poem. It can also be said that painting, sculpturing or photographing the same object is analogous to the above cases. The model serves as a blueprint. Each "performance" is evaluated for its aesthetic order as an individuum, yet comparisons between different versions are unavoidable and bound to affect the evaluation of each case. If one had seen three different performances of *Hamlet,* one could not avoid comparing between them and "grading" them. This grading is usually influenced by the standards of the first performance.

To sum up, aesthetic order is the order of the unpredictable, internal relationships within an individual set. It is an internal necessity that is not determined by a priori principles. It is contrary to discursive order in the following aspects:

Aesthetic order	*Discursive order*
Individual, private	General, common
Internal relationships	External relationships
No a priori principle	A priori principles
Sensitive	Indifferent
High informative value	Low informative value
Low redundancy	High redundancy
High novelty	High predictability
Closed set and class	Open set and class

The problem of maximum aesthetic order

The notion of maximum order, as already noted in Chapter 2, is problematic. Maximum order would occur if all characteristics were manifested in their extreme. However, such a totality is not only practically unachievable, but also logically inconceivable. Let us re-examine a few aspects of this claim with regard to aesthetic order:

1 *Sensitivity:* A perfect sensitivity would be a state in which there is nothing stable in a given set. A totally sensitive set would constantly change its order. Given the problem of time, identity and accumulative changes in the observer,

the set would be in constant flux. Instead of achieving perfection, it would result (if anything) in an impossible state of total disorder and confusion. If we cannot experience the same river twice, in the last analysis we cannot experience it even once. This is why the tendency towards high sensitivity cannot be even imagined in its totality.

2 *Information, redundancy and predictability:* A totally new set in which information value is at maximum is also inconceivable. Novelty and information appear only in relation to old and known elements. Some degree of redundancy must be found in every set, or else it would be so strange, so alien, so disconnected from experience that it could not even be imagined, let alone experienced.

3 *Closed set:* What would constitute a totally closed set? If we consider this metaphorically and attempt to imagine totally hermetic borders, we fall into the trap of an endless process. A closed set involves the definition of what belongs in the set and what does not. How can such a definition be finalized? How can it take into account every possible element in the universe and define its relevance or irrelevance to a particular set? Attempts to resolve these problems resulted in either including the whole world in each aesthetic set or totally isolating the aesthetic set from its external context. Both cases lead to absurdities (see further discussion in Chapter 11, pp. 278–288).

High aesthetic order, like discursive order, depends on tendencies that cannot be fully maximized. For those who expect theories to supply clear-cut answers and form the basis for solid norms, this conclusion is not very satisfactory. No ideal case can be drawn, no clear point of limit can be defined. This is part of the problem inherent in the concept of order in general and aesthetic order in particular. If at any given time we cannot imagine any set that would exhibit a higher aesthetic order than the present one, it by no means expresses maximum order but rather *optimal* order. Moreover, the gradation of aesthetic orders cannot be completed, since there is no one definite principle that decides the issue. Does Bach's *Passion of St John* exhibit a higher aesthetic order than Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*? Some would say yes, some would say no, some would be unable even to consider the issue, and many enlightening reasons can be given for all answers. No reply can be fully justified once and for all. Moreover, the fact that we cannot define the point of maximum degree of aesthetic order prevents us from answering questions such as, "Has the music of Bach reached the highest degree of aesthetic order?" All we can say is that as far as we know or as far as our taste goes Bach's is the greatest music that we have ever experienced, or that Bach is among the best three composers whose music we have experienced, and so on. This experience does not guarantee that in the future we shall never ever encounter a greater musician or change our mind. In fact, nothing secures the hierarchy of the current aesthetic appreciation.

Although this conclusion may sound somewhat disappointing, there is also some comfort to be found in this: not achieving maximum order implies that there is no limit to beauty, and no risk of attaining the peak of our ability to create or discover new aesthetic orders. The problem with this consolation is that we are able to use our limitless creative capacities for negative as well as positive ends.

Summary

1. Aesthetic order is a lawless order. It does not consist of a priori (external) principles; it is an "internal" order. The principle cannot be abstracted from the particular set and applied to another set. The complex of relationships among the elements determines the aesthetic order of the set; in this sense the set and the principle are one.
2. Aesthetic order is characterized by the tendency towards high sensitivity to internal as well as external changes. It is also characterized by a tendency towards high informative value, low predictability and low redundancy.
3. Aesthetic order forms a closed set and one-member class. It depends on defined borders and differentiation between relevant and irrelevant elements; the definition of borders often becomes a matter of interpretation and dispute.
4. The tendencies of aesthetic order, like those of discursive order, cannot reach maximum points. At their extremes, both types of order collapse into states of disorder. Maximum sensitivity, like maximum indifference, is a characteristic of disorder.

7 Aesthetic order

Qualitative analysis (I)

The internal relations: mutual interpretation

The quantitative analysis has provided a basis for comparison between the two types of order. However, although the quantitative aspect exhausts the essence of discursive order, aesthetic order requires a qualitative analysis in order to elucidate the nature of its *internal* relations. The quantitative analysis presupposes the feasibility of a lawless order; the burden on the qualitative analysis is to explain the peculiarities inherent in this presupposition and account for the kind of relations that constitutes such an order.

The short and conclusive account is that the internal, aesthetic relations are *interpretative relations:* the elements of aesthetic order mutually interpret each other. This, of course, requires a detailed justification and clarification in order to demonstrate and substantiate it. This justification is the focus of the next two chapters; it consists of three stages:

1 A general analysis of the concept of interpretation.
2 A classification of types of interpretation.
3 The placement of aesthetic relationships within the above typology and the demarcation of aesthetic order from other types of interpretation.

This chapter is dedicated to the first stage, that is, the analysis of interpretation in general. It attempts to specify the exact meaning and role of "interpretation" in the present theory and to differentiate it from other theories of interpretation as well as from other related cognitive activities.

Hermeneutics: too broad and too narrow

Interpretation is relevant to all aspects of life and is manifested in different types, some are more common than others. It is widely accepted, and almost without question, that verbal texts are natural candidates for interpretation. It is also quite common to regard musical and dramatic performances on stage as forms of interpretation. It is less common, but certainly not unusual, to argue that a painting interprets its model. But what about, say, dancing and cooking? Can these activities too be categorized as forms of interpretation? What do all these have in common as forms of *interpretation* in spite of differences in subject matter, material and technique?

A useful and viable account of interpretation should provide us with a concept that embraces all forms of interpretation, prior to differentiating among its various manifestations. The differences between, say, viewing a painting as an interpretative activity and regarding a musical performance as an act of interpretation are indeed significant. However, these differences can be presented and analyzed only in the light of a general common concept that outlines both cases as forms of *interpretation*. Unfortunately, this demand is often neglected in theories of interpretation. Most theories of interpretation not only fail to account for the variety of interpretative activities, but in most cases neglect the consequences of the very existence of such a variety. Most of the literature on interpretation confines itself to the verbal domain and to problems of validity. Very little attention is paid to the fact that interpretation is not restricted to words but can encompass such disparate means of expression as sounds, brush strokes or body gestures.

However, it is not enough to agree that interpretation extends beyond the verbal domain. The concept of interpretation needs also to be differentiated from other cognitive activities within and beyond the verbal domain. The general position that an interpretation "attributes a meaning, more generally a property" to an object (Davies, 1995:8), or that one interprets in order to "make sense of something that didn't before make sense" and "seek understanding" (Stecker, 1992:291), or "to interpret a feature of a work of art is to explain why it is present there" (Goldman, 1995:6), or "to interpret X is to say what X means, that is, to assign X a meaning" (Zemach, 1997:115) is too general for most purposes. It certainly cannot be useful for the present theory. None of these general statements is sufficiently useful for the present theory. For example, some acts of creating or choosing new signs ("let X be the sign of Y") is obviously not an act of interpretation, yet it ascribes (new) meaning to X and it attributes a new property to it. Likewise, the presence of a certain feature in a work of art (or any other object) can be accounted for in many ways, not all of them necessarily constitute interpretations. Explanations are given in order to make sense of something that did not make sense before. Is the act of explaining, therefore, identical to the act of interpreting? If this is not the case, then what makes interpretation different from explanation? These and other related questions are not sufficiently answered by the above definitions.

Typically, the concept that is presented in the literature is either too wide or too narrow. On the one hand, it is widely inclusive: almost every cognitive activity can be (or in fact is) regarded as a form of interpretation; on the other hand, it is narrowly exclusive: it is almost entirely limited to verbal (or verbal-like) activity. The "too-wide-too-narrow" concept thereby creates some false problems that originate in its inclusive scope but nevertheless neglecting genuine problems of interpretation *per se*. It further does not distinguish sufficiently between general issues that are relevant to all forms of interpretation and problems that stem from the nature of a specific kind of object (literature, philosophy, music etc.).

These shortcomings have their grounds in the tradition of hermeneutics, which originated from trying to decipher hidden messages in Holy Scriptures and oracles. The general idea suggests that these verbal objects carry coded messages that are either purposefully hidden or simply inaccessible to the uninitiated. Lacking the required knowledge, the average reader or listener cannot decipher the message correctly. Like Hermes, who delivered the messages of the gods to mortals, the interpreter is the mediator between writer and reader (or listener). Hermes must first understand the gods and then articulate and explicate their intentions for the mortals. According to this view, the text constitutes a concealed message (its predetermined meaning), and the act of interpretation constitutes an intentional effort to explicate it.

The present analysis of interpretation departs in several ways from what I take to be the conventional position. My disagreement with the traditional position as well as with its postmodern development begins with some basic premises.

Interpretation: a distinct activity

There is a strong tendency in many of the hermeneutic discussions to amalgamate different cognitive activities and regard them all as interpretation.[1] It was Gadamer who stated that all understandings are interpretations, “Alles Verstehen ist Auslegen.” (Gadamer, 1965:366); Derrida (1972:264–5) went further, claiming that there are only “interpretations of interpretations”. What are the implications of such statements? We can, for instance, imagine a long chain of mirrors reflecting one another, but unless there is one mirror at the end of the line that reflects a “real” object, not just a reflection of it, the other mirrors do not reflect anything. (Note that a mirror reflecting another mirror is also a mirror reflecting a real object.) However, even if it were true in some sense (which I doubt) that all understandings are interpretations, the conceptual distinction between interpretation and other cognitive activities would still need to be drawn for theoretical purposes. Without such distinctions, Gadamer’s insight or any other claim regarding interpretation would be empty and meaningless. If one intends to argue, say, that explanation is a form of interpretation, one has to deal first with the concept of explanation as a distinct concept, otherwise it is not clear what is being argued.

It is a fact that our vocabulary suggests that we not only understand and interpret but also describe, explain, decode, translate, clarify, criticize, and so forth. Are all the concepts that underlie these activities dispensable, reducible or superfluous? I think not. Clearly, we do not regard these terms as synonyms and we normally know in a given case which concept to apply. The principal question here is not whether all actual cognition should be regarded as interpretation or not, but rather whether all cognitive *concepts* are identical with “interpretation”, sub-types of it, or reducible to the concept of interpretation in some way. A theory that does not draw clear (theoretical) borderline is of little use for understanding the act of interpretation. As Rorty puts it:

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[1] Shusterman (1988) sums up the main arguments of hermeneutic holism and argues against them. I agree with most of Shusterman’s arguments, although his overall view is different from that presented here.

> *interpretation* is an exciting notion only as long as it contrasts with something harder, firmer, less controversial—something like *explanation* or *natural science*.
>
> (Rorty, 1991:102)

Distinctions precondition order, and without order we cannot hope to understand anything. Asserting that everything is interpretation, like "all is water", explains little. Nonetheless, it should be stressed once again that clarity and distinctiveness on the conceptual level do not guarantee clarity and distinctiveness on the practical level. If I am asked about the conceptual differences between, say, description and interpretation, or between evaluation and interpretation, I can offer a fairly clear answer (as I hope to demonstrate in further discussions). But if I am asked to identify and separate, say, descriptive elements from interpretative elements in a given text, I doubt that I could give an equally satisfying answer. The classification of elements under a certain category is either a matter of norms (and norms do change) or a matter of interpretation (and these are open to disputes).

The gap between the conceptual and the actual is a matter of interpretation in itself. The fact that people may disagree about the categorization of a specific case does not undermine the conceptual distinction. On the contrary, only a mutual understanding of the categories in question allows a real argument about an actual case. Only when people agree about the differences between, say, clarification and decoding, can they disagree about a particular case being an instance of decoding or clarification. There are many reasons for actual discrepancies, but whatever these are a disagreement on the conceptual level cannot be one of them. Such a disagreement would be a proof that the parties are operating within different categories and this would annul the dispute over actual cases. How could I agree or disagree with my opponent about X being a case of interpretation if we were not to share some mutual understanding of what interpretation is?

Indeed, interpretation is always intertwined with other cognitive activities. Interpretation, for instance, may involve description and evaluation, but it does not follow that these are not distinct concepts. Criticism, for another case, is often associated with interpretation. In fact, criticism, especially in the aesthetic field, has almost entirely lost its original meaning and has become a general, open and vague notion for various activities, mainly interpretation. According to the literature, the critic does many things with the object under criticism: the critic describes, explains, clarifies, follows or ignores intentions, discloses linguistic structures or cultural symbols or psychological motifs, agrees or disagrees with the philosophical themes implied in the work, draws generic or thematic comparisons with other works and finally praises or condemns the work. Where exactly is the interpretative element in all these activities, and in what sense is criticism *per se* different from interpretation?

This is *not* to say that the concepts or their related activities are independent. This is *not* to say that evaluation is independent of interpretation, or that interpretation is independent of other cognitive activities. I may agree, say, with E.D.Hirsch, who regards the bond between values and interpretation as essential (Hirsch, 1978). Nevertheless, even if interpretation is always intertwined with evaluation or with any other cognitive activity, it does not follow that these activities cannot be theoretically differentiated. Only because one can differentiate between interpretation and evaluation, one may agree or disagree with an argument concerning their interdependence. Likewise, we cannot separate in practice color from shape since there is no such thing as a shapeless color or colorless shape. Yet the concept of "color" remains distinct from the concept of "shape" and these concepts can be discussed separately.[2]

Non-verbal objects and non-verbal interpretations

Most of the philosophical literature on interpretation focuses on verbal, written or oral texts as the main, if not the sole, objects of interpretation.[3] This attitude is obviously influenced by the origin of the hermeneutic tradition and reflects the understanding that interpretation deals with intentional messages, which are in most cases verbal or verbal-like. Taylor sums this up:

> Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of, an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue.
>
> (Taylor, 1985:15)

I disagree with the claim that interpretation is solely verbal. I question further the notion that the goal of interpretation is to clarify or "make sense" of its object.

In the traditional view non-verbal objects, such as non-verbal works of art, dreams, gestures, and so forth, are treated as verbal messages when subjected to interpretation. Thus, art is regarded as some kind of a language, and any problem in understanding works of art, interpreting them or evaluating them entails mainly semantic or semiotic problems. Dreams have their set of signs, their own "grammar", by which they are interpreted as messages that are sent from one department of the mind to another. It is no wonder that the bond between interpretation and semiotics has become so strong, almost to the point that the two appear indistinguishable.[4]

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[2] Conceptual differentiation sometime creates the illusion of separation in experience. Locke, for instance, regarded shapes as a primary quality and colors as a secondary quality. Kant, on the other hand, regarded shapes as the genuine object of pure taste and colors as an impure element. Both were misled by their distinctions into believing that shapes can be perceived independent of the perception of colors. Locke believed that future development in technology might allow us see blood cells as colorless shapes; Kant expressed the belief in pure aesthetic experience that to consists solely of form.

[3] Gadamer (1965), Ricoeur (1989), Barthes (1982) and Derrida (1972) are among those who explicitly make this point. There are many who do not insist on this explicitly but imply this by the fact that they discuss interpretation only in relation to verbal objects, and in many cases these verbal objects are fictional literature.

I do not wish to take issue with this view. Clearly, dreams may be construed as messages, and of course body gestures or political actions may be understood as signals. The question is rather in what sense do these understandings raise issues of interpretation *per se*. Signals may require *decoding,* or *clarification,* not necessarily interpretation. If interpretation is also relevant to non-verbal objects, as I claim, then an analysis of interpretation should not exclusively focus on verbal objects or even on verbal-like systems. An exclusive concern with verbal objects obscures the distinction between linguistic issues and problems pertaining to interpretation in general as a distinct activity. There are problems of interpretation common to all kinds of objects and there are problems unique to verbal, visual or other categories. The general understanding of "interpretation" should not be limited to any specific group of objects.

Spinoza argued that "the method of interpreting Scripture does not widely differ from the method of interpreting Nature—in fact, it is almost the same" (Spinoza, 1951:99). This analogy between verbal texts and Nature cuts both ways. It may suggest that Nature is analogous to verbal texts: God's hidden message to humans. But one can take this analogy in the opposite direction—a direction more consistent with the rest of Spinoza's doctrine that denies any force external to Nature—and conclude that texts (like Nature) do not have to be interpreted as intentional messages. Whether we should apply the same method of interpretation to both Nature and verbal texts, or whether there is such a method at all, is a matter of further consideration. One thing, however, is clear: there is no justification for regarding verbal texts as the sole object of interpretation, or for rendering non-verbal objects analogous to verbal texts in order to qualify them for interpretation. Consequently, there is no need to regard any branch of linguistics as an essential part of interpretation *per se*.

Interpretation is, first and foremost, something that one does with an object (verbal or other) for a certain purpose. And what is done with an object is not directly and solely determined by the object's category. We can do different things with the same object, and we can exercise similar activities with objects of different categories. Indeed, there are objects that are intentionally made for a specific use and thereby require a specific action: chairs are made to sit upon. Interpretation is different in this respect. As I shall further explain, I hold that interpretation aims at solving a certain type of problem. Man-made objects are normally created in order to solve problems, and not for the purpose of producing a problem and awaiting solution. I conclude, therefore, that there are no objects that are intentionally made to be interpreted.[5]

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[4] This is the case with Rolan Barthes, Umberto Eco, Ferdinand de Saussure, and others. Problems of interpretation are transformed into problems of reading a text and decoding its signals.

[5] This view contrasts, for instance, Danto's claim that works of art, by their very nature, are objects for interpretation. This issue is discussed in Chapter 11.

The traditional approach to interpretation not only focuses on verbal objects but also regards the *act of interpretation* itself as a typical verbal activity. Gadamer makes it explicit that interpretation is essentially a verbal activity and no interpretation exists outside the linguistic realm (see, for instance, Gadamer, 1965:426). By contrast, I wish to defend a concept of interpretation that not only admits the possibility of non-verbal objects for interpretation, but also includes non-verbal interpretations. If we accept the idea that musicians interpret scores and actors interpret the characters in the play, then, by the same reasoning, we should accept the idea that a chef interprets edible ingredients, painters interpret their models, and architects interpret concrete and physical space. The general nature of interpretation in all these cases should be the same, regardless of differences in materials and regardless of the fact that these are cases of non-verbal interpretations.

One immediate consequence of accepting non-verbal interpretations is that interpretations are not verifiable arguments (even if they may include or consist of verifiable arguments). Non-verbal interpretations, by their very nature, require a different approach, a different criteria for their evaluation. If this point is accepted then even verbal interpretations should not be viewed as truth-claims that are subject to normative truth conditions. This argument, as I will further elaborate, gives the question of the validity of interpretation a different perspective.

Methods of validation

The typical debates over the validity of interpretation may be illustrated by rotating the triangle *author-text-reader*. The paramount question is which side of the triangle decides the issue.

Those who view the text as a coded message regard the interpreter as a mediator between *writer* and *reader*. The disclosure of the original message requires the interpreter to possess a special knowledge in order to reach the *right* interpretation and deliver the *genuine* message. This knowledge might include biographical details, historical facts, psychological observations, rhetorical conventions, and so forth. The ideal interpreter becomes the author's contemporary or even privy to the author's soul.

This view, which has undergone various modifications, eventually produced a strong reaction, since it focused on the author rather than on the text. The famous *intentional fallacy* argument pleads for the autonomy of the text. The text, so the argument goes, is capable of carrying unintended meanings that remain vital beyond its original time and space. The author, as well as other "external" elements, such as cultural conventions, becomes thus inessential, even irrelevant. In this case, the interpreter functions as a mediator between *text* and *reader* and seeks to enable the reader to see what is *genuinely* inherent in the text, regardless of the writer's intentions. However, in order to see what is actually there, the reader, just as in the previous position, has to qualify by obtaining certain information, using certain tools and cultivating the appropriate sensibility. One of the interpreter's tasks is to define the attributes of such an *ideal reader* (or any *ideal conditions*) and supply the relevant information that is needed in order to fulfill the ideal requirements. The difficulties inherent in the search for the ideal reader gradually led to a relativistic pluralism, by eliminating the "ideal" and maintaining only a non-specified reader.

The autonomy of the text was gradually replaced with the autonomy of the reader. Deconstruction, for one, denies that the interpreter is able to disclose the genuine hidden meaning of the text. Such a meaning is long lost to us since the genuine bond between words and meaning is buried deep under layers of accumulated meanings, connotations and associations. The text has become, therefore, an open set that equally tolerates numerous readings. Thus, the interpreter cannot and need not attempt to mediate between either the writer or the text and the reader, but rather *recreates* the text. After all, what is a text except black marks on white pages? It is the reader who imbues these marks with meaning and thereby recreates the text in his or her mind. It is the reader, so the argument goes, who determines both context and perspective. In the very act of reading each reader becomes an interpreter.

Since the *author* has vanished in the previous stage, and since the *text* is reduced to mere marks on paper, the triangle now collapses into a vague line of argument. This development gives interpretation the whole kingdom, but at the same time empties it of all treasures.

Interpretations of philosophical texts have given a fourth side to the "triangle" that is, in most cases, irrelevant to literature. Dilthey (1958: Band V, 331), following Schleirmacher (1977), argued that in philosophical texts the intended *idea* and the explicit text are not always identical. Thus, since the idea is what really matters, the philosopher-interpreter should search for an understanding of the philosophical ideas behind the text, make them explicit and improve their presentation. The "genuine" idea is not necessarily what the author explicitly had in mind, but rather what s/he *should* have had. Kant similarly argues:

> It is by no means unusual, upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject […] to find that we understand him better than he has understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention.
>
> (Kant, 1956: B 370)

Let me repeat and emphasize this last sentence: *"As he [the author] has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention."* This view clearly does not distinguish between interpreting the text and criticizing it or improving it or pursuing an idea that has little to do with the original text. Kant apparently did not think of himself as criticizing Plato's philosophy. On the contrary, he expresses an agreement with Plato's ideas (as he, Kant, understood them and as Plato should have expressed them). It is Plato's text (and perhaps Plato himself) that is wrong; it failed to properly convey Plato's own genuine ideas (ideas that Plato may have not been aware of). In this view, the validity of interpretation is the validity of the ideas that the text allegedly attempts (or should have attempted) to express.[6] A valid interpretation is a critical analysis of the intended idea of the text or the right idea that should be expressed by the text, even if this idea opposes the explicit text.

This greatly extends the remit of interpretation. It allows the interpreter to disagree entirely with the text while reading into it the interpreter's own ideas in the guise of the "real" or "ideal" intention of the writer, or for that matter the text. Moreover, it is not clear why the "interpreter" (Kant in this case) needed the original text (Plato's dialogues) in the first place if he is interested only in *valid* ideas. Why make the effort to pull the "right idea" out of a text that does not express it clearly, or seems even to resist it? Why not rewrite it or ignore it altogether and create another, better text? After all, interpretation consumes time and effort, and if the objective of the interpreter is the true idea, why invest such energy upon a text that fails to capture it properly?

To sum it up, hermeneutic literature conveys four typical understandings regarding the task and nature of interpretation:

1 Interpretation is the disclosure of the writer's intention.
2 Interpretation is the disclosure of the genuine inherent meaning of the text.
3 Interpretation is any act of creating or re-creating the text (since the original meaning is lost).
4 Interpretation is the extrusion of the true idea from the text.

All the above views share the supposition that interpretation is a pursuit of truth—the true intention, the true meaning or the true idea. Indeed, some permit more than one true interpretation and struggle with the theoretical difficulties of such permission.[7] However, the struggle indicates the wish to preserve the notion of truth in interpretation. Even the postmodern notion of interpretation (option 3) that appears to desert the idea of true interpretation does not originate in a theoretical understanding that interpretations need not be examined via the notion of truth. Rather, the desertion of truth-claims originates in despair from achieving the goal of disclosing the lost, genuine meaning of the text. This despair is expressed in the view that if the true meaning of the text is impossible to attain, than anything (or almost anything) goes.

The following analysis expresses a basic disagreement with all four options and with the traditional bond between truth and interpretation.

Re-examining interpretation

The gist of my suggestion is that interpretation should be viewed not via the concept of truth but rather via the concept of problem solving. A proposed solution to a problem is neither true nor false; it is rather appreciated as a better or worse solution than its alternative. The appreciation of the solution depends very much on the nature of the problem and it is possible that different people observe different problems in the same object, having different goals in mind. I propose to regard distinct cognitive activities as having distinct functions; each aims at solving a different kind of problem raised by the cognized object.

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[6] De Man (1970) expresses a similar view by ascribing to the interpreter the role of disclosing the philosophical ideas of the text and criticizing them.

[7] Stecker's (1996) position as presented in many of his papers and his book *Artworks* is an example for pluralism that would not give up the notion of "true interpretation".

Distinguishing between cognitive activities

The nature of the problem and its solution that are related to interpretation must differ significantly from problems and solutions of other cognitive activities. What follows, then, is a brief examination of some related cognitive activities, focusing on those aspects that allow clear comparisons with interpretation and are helpful in delineating the conceptual borderlines and defining the differencia specifica of interpretation.

Describing

By "describing an object" we usually understand a detailed verbal account of the object's qualities, situation and context. In some cases we may even refer (either metaphorically or literally) to non-verbal images as forms of descriptions. The descriptive account is taken to be "objective" in the original sense: it is usually *intended* to be about the object independently of the particular beholder's perspective. It is meant to be an account of the facts; it is therefore subject to truth conditions, whatever these may be. Whether such an objective description is achievable is an issue that should not concern us here. The main function of description is informative: one usually describes in order to inform another person, or to present an object for discussion and to determine its relevant properties. Other purposes may be achieved as by-products. For instance, a description may also have a psychological effect (raise emotions, create moods or influence tendencies), although such an effect does not constitute the basic function of description.

The description of facts (or whatever is taken as "facts") serves as the basis for other cognitive activities.[8] All cognitive activities presuppose facts that exist independently of and prior to them and may be described with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The description of the facts preconditions other activities. For instance, in order to explain a phenomenon one has to be able to describe it first on some level, the level that one wishes to explain. If the explanandum is generated along with its explanation, then it is not at all clear in what sense the "explanation" explains something. One cannot explain, clarify, decode or interpret anything to anyone if there are no describable "facts" of some sort to explain, clarify, decode or interpret.

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[8] Margolis (1989), for instance, argues that true descriptions are the basis for plausible interpretation. Margolis is well aware of the problem inherent to "true" descriptions, but nevertheless stressed the necessity of this basis.

To be sure, the notions of "mere descriptions" and "facts" are explosive mines strewn in the field of philosophy. Goethe (*Maximen und Reflexionen* No. 575) reflected that "The highest thing would be…to realize everything factual as being itself theoretical". Nonetheless, "facts" *per se* are theoretically and pragmatically indispensable. The ontological status of these "facts" is a matter for further debate, but whatever the position, the assumption that one has some facts to relate to is indispensable.

For our present needs we may consider as *fact* that which is *expected* to be common to all relevant agents under certain conditions. Being common does not necessarily mean being free of theories, conventions or perspectives.[9] For instance, it is a fact, albeit a conventional one, that the sign "A" is the first letter in the Latin alphabet. It is a theory-dependent fact that H_2O is the formula for water. Being conventional or theory dependent does not undermine the status of such statements as referring to facts. These and similar statements play important roles in everyday life as well as in scientific research and condition other cognitive activities. The idea of "facts" in this restricted sense must be accepted as a *postulate*. Without it, cognition of any kind is impossible or vacuous.

Explaining

An explanation is a *verbal* manifestation of discursive order. It regards the *explanandum* as a particular case of a general principle (a law, a rule or a theory). One explains by indicating the ordering principle that prevails over the explanandum. Explanations are (or ought to be) systematic; they attempt to connect the relevant facts in accordance with a principle; they regard the particular as an instance of the general.

An explanation is usually needed when the facts *appear* random and disconnected and one wishes to unify them by disclosing their discursive order and by relating a given case to other, similar cases. Explaining how a machine works unifies the different parts of the machine and associates them with a purpose (the function of the machine); explaining how a social system works or how a mathematical problem is solved follows a similar pattern. The proposed explanation brings into play "hidden" elements that unify the apparently fragmented facts. The "hidden" element is the ordering principle which is not given, nor is it apparent. When it is apparent, there is no need for explanation. Descriptions, by contrast, address the apparent or rather that which is expected to be apparent under certain conditions.

An explanation is associated with a certain field of interest, such as psychology, physics, chemistry, and so on, and with a certain theory or method within that field; for instance, Freud's psychoanalysis, Jung's psychology, and so forth. "How would *you* explain it?" This question usually invites more than a difference in opinion; it suggests a comparison of theories or beliefs. However, compare it with the question: How would *you* describe it? This question is intended to confirm testimonies, get the facts right or catch the liar.

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[9] For a detailed analysis on this point, see Lewis (1956:90–116).

An explanation is neither true nor false in a strict sense since it does not depend on facts alone. It cannot be verified or disputed by mere facts. It may be "wrong" on two distinct levels: (1) the theory that supports the explanation may be wrong in some sense (it is too narrow or inapplicable, and so forth); and (2) one may hold the "right" theory but apply it incorrectly. Nevertheless, it may happen that one holds the wrong theory, applies it incorrectly and yet comes up with a sound explanation.

Clarifying

A clarification is typically a verbal activity that addresses a *verbal* object. A clarification *per se* is not informative; it is rather a *means of transmitting information*. Ideally speaking, it does not modify the original meaning; it substitutes an equivalent means for transmitting it.

When we clarify, we draw upon a wide range of verbal activities: variations in assertions, variations in the orders of presentation, synonyms, translations, explications of conventional symbols or technical terms, use of examples, and more. Clarification is typically verbal although it may be also non-verbal; it may be achieved through gesturing, tone of voice and other non-verbal demonstrations.

Clarification is not meant to be informative, that is, it does not aim at presenting new information, but rather it assists the transmission of a previous body of information. Yet, a clarification may carry "indirect", unintended information. Through clarifications one may learn new terms, new cases that function as examples, new linguistic structures, and so on. These are only the by-products of the clarification, not its principal function. Typically the perceiver is expected to "see through" the means of clarification. When the message is clear, the means of transmitting it, ideally speaking, should be forgotten or thrown away like Wittgenstein's ladder. Indeed, this is how Wittgenstein (rightly or wrongly) regarded the function of philosophy:

> Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not 'a body of doctrines' but an activity…[it] consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1961:4.112)

Wittgenstein opposes clarifications of propositions with propositions and doctrines. A proposition is informative and subjected to truth conditions; a clarification is not. It either achieves its goal by evoking understanding or it fails.

Decoding

Decoding is typically a verbal activity (like describing, explaining and clarifying) that regards its object as a set of signals; each signal carries a specific meaning determined by a certain code. The object of decoding may be verbal or non-verbal. However, the non-verbal object, in the process of decoding, becomes analogous to verbal objects, that is, it is viewed as a set of signals. Decoding an enemy's message begins with the belief that the apparently random signals conceal a coherent meaning. Likewise, a detective working on a murder case regards a selection of facts as clues ("signals") that carry vital information. In both cases, the signals are replaced with description of facts (or whatever is believed to be the decoded facts) according to an assumed code, and the apparently fractured or meaningless pieces of information transform into a whole meaningful set.

As is the case with explanation, decoding aims to unify disparate facts. Yet, there is an essential difference between these activities. Whereas explanation includes the particular under a general law or theory, decoding substitutes one element with another in accordance with a code that may be individual to the particular case: the enemy's second message may or may not be written in the same code as the first. The decoder cannot rely on seemingly similar cases to provide the right code—the apparent similarity may be misleading. By contrast, similar cases must be similarly explained, because explanations assume general, coherent rules common to all relevant cases.

Decoding, unlike explaining, allows for only *one* answer. One may invent as many languages as one wants, but if one wishes to decode the enemy's message there is only one code whether one succeeds in breaking it or not. The final product of decoding is an adequate description of the object, that is, its "true story." By contrast, there are many plausible explanations expressing different perspectives, different theories (or "stories") that are not necessarily compatible. Explanation is associated with pluralism; decoding is associated with monistic, objective truth. One may *choose* the theory according to which one wishes to explain a given fact; one cannot freely choose the code according to which a given object is coded. An archeologist, for instance, attempts to decode—not to explain or interpret—unknown, ancient symbols. S/he must assume that the carving on the stone is a meaningful text written in an ancient language. S/he may be right or wrong about this hypothesis. The decoded text may be further interpreted, but it cannot be interpreted before it is decoded, that is, translated into a modern language. The detective may have different theories or hypothetical "stories" in mind, but only one "story" can be true, and it is not always the most original or the most intellectually stimulating hypothesis that materializes. Reality is not homogeneous in this sense; it is sometimes banal and sometimes unpredictable.[10]

Decoding is the intentional attempt at breaking a *hidden* code. Not every case in which an object is apparently decoded is an act of decoding. When the code is already known there is no need for decoding, only for applying the known code. Applying a code and breaking an unknown code are different activities. For instance, a regular act of reading a text in one's native language is not an act of decoding, since the "code" is already known; the reading is thus an "automatic" act that does not require any particular attention to the code. This is a regular case of applying linguistic knowledge. A love letter written in a private language (known to the lovers only) may be decoded by the curious intruder. The intruder, in his effort to disclose the coded message, is aware of the fact that the text is coded and that the code is concealed. By contrast, a letter written in English is simply read, not decoded, by English readers.

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[10] It was Aristotle (1951:IX) who suggested that the poet, unlike the historian, need not relate "what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity."

There is, however, another level of understanding that may require decoding even if the text is written in a familiar language. This is the case in which described events or objects or certain words have meanings that the knowledge of language alone cannot disclose. Hitchcock, for one, has taught us to be suspicious of apparently innocent events or objects. Even a flock of birds, a lose end of a rope or a suicidal melancholic wife are not what they seem to be.

The issue of the author's intention is a typical case of decoding. One may assume that the text conceals a message and that there is a code (the author's intention) according to which the message should be disclosed. If the text was intentionally coded then the author's testimony (directly or indirectly) is probably the best source for decoding it; if the text was non-intentionally coded, one may turn to other sources in order to decode the true "intentions".[11] Some turn from the author's intention to cultural intentions or even to the particular reader's intention (see Shusterman, 1988). The question, "whose intention?" is a matter of norms, values and interests, yet the activity is the same; revealing intentions is the objective of decoding.

The debates over the question whether the author's intention should determine the text's interpretation and the association of interpretation with semiotics indicate a failure to distinguish between the two activities. Decoding the author's intention is one thing, interpreting the text, is another. One may or may not be interested in the author's intention for many reasons. One may know the author's intention and still suggest an interpretation that does not cohere with that intention. The following analysis strives to justify this claim and substantiate the difference between interpretation and decoding as well as other cognitive activities.

The objective of interpretation

Let us start with a typical case of a biblical interpretation. The Bible tells us that at the end of each day of creation "God saw that it was good." This pattern has one exception—this sentence does not appear at the end of the second day, but it is repeated twice on the third day. The break in the pattern creates a disturbance, a sense of disorder. The reader who notices the inconsistency in the pattern may feel that something is "wrong" here and wonder whether this variation is accidental or significant. The break in the pattern creates a disturbance, a sense of disorder. If accidental, this break indicates a failure in the text (whether such a failure is significant or trivial is a matter for further consideration). If, on the other hand, we believe that this break in the pattern is meaningful and carries information, then we must conclude that the apparent disorder conceals order. This belief opens the door for either decoding or interpreting. Decoding would attempt to uncover the original intention of the author; interpreting would seek possible ways of regarding the information that is implied by the broken pattern as an integral part of the text. In other words, interpretation is the attempt to offer solutions to the apparent problem of the object and salvage its unity.

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[11] Clearly, this is a paradoxical notion. "Unintended intentions" are non-existent entities. But since hidden, unaware motives are also considered in the literature under the category of "author's intentions", this paradoxical expression is functional.

One interpreter suggests that the break in the pattern implies that the creation of water had begun on the second day but was completed only on the third day. Another interpreter suggests that there is a connection between this break in the pattern and the story of the flood: since water is associated with the flood and the "wickedness of man", God (to whom the future is already known) regarded the second day's creation (the water) as less pleasing than the creations of the other days of the week.[12] Which of the two interpretations should we accept? Assuming that we cannot know the genuine intention underlying the text, we cannot evaluate these suggestions as successful or unsuccessful decodings. We cannot know which is more faithful to the original intention. We can, however, approach these suggestions as possible interpretations and determine which is more interesting, profound and illuminating, which preserves more successfully the unity of the text, but not which is more truthful. To my taste, the first account seems unimaginative but reasonable; it does not reveal much beyond the apparent, but settles the seeming inconsistency. The second is imaginative and goes far beyond the apparent, but then it is less complete, for it fails to account for the repetition on the third day.

Both interpretations imply that the break in the pattern is not accidental or meaningless, but rather an *integral* part of the narrative and as such carries vital information. However, it is far from evident that the break is indeed integral to the text. It is the interpreter's task to convince the reader that this is indeed the case, that the "incompleteness" is only apparent, and that the object (the narrative) is in fact complete and coherent.

What does it mean for an object to be "complete"? For one, this is not a claim of any objective state, independent of the observer. An object is regarded as complete when it satisfies the observer "as it is", that is, when the object appears whole, coherent, all of a piece. To put the matter negatively, the object is complete when it does *not* create a disturbing feeling of some kind of disorder. Such a disturbance or a feeling of incompleteness may take different forms within the object: inconsistency or disconnection among the elements, inconsistency with the reader's expectations or categories, redundancy, gaps in information, and so forth. The sense that something appears to be wrong with the object raises the question: is the object genuinely incomplete (disordered) or does it only appear to be incomplete? If the object is only apparently disordered, then there is a latent order inherent to it. In the case of an apparent incompleteness one turns to interpretation. The interpreter seeks to remove the apparent symptoms of disorder by "digging" into deeper, hidden layers of the object and thus bringing to light a latent order. The interpreter has to recognize and acknowledge the problem (the cause of the disturbance), distinguish between the apparent and the hidden layers of the object and finally show how the apparent anomalies actually obey a hidden order. The solution to the problem of incompleteness is thus inherent to the object.

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[12] Both interpretations appear in *Genesis-Rabbah,* 3. The first was suggested by Rabbi Samuel Bar-Nachman; the second by Rabbi Yossi.

In the case of the two interpretations of *Genesis,* it is obvious that both interpreters were responding to the same problem—the break in the pattern. This break initiated their interpretations. We may assume that they regarded the break in the pattern a significant feature, and, more than that, they hold that the biblical text is genuinely complete. They both operate under the assumption that normally a pattern should be consistent (persevere the same rhythm), and that a highly significant text such as the Bible should not exhibit any flaws. In other words, the effort that is put in showing that the flaw in the text is only apparent indicates a positive appreciation of the text.

Both interpreters were capable of differentiating between what is explicit in the text and what, according to their suggestions, remains only implicit, but nonetheless functions in removing the disturbing element and unifying the whole. Historical evidence tells us that they were also aware that other interpreters had offered different suggestions, and that their own interpretation was not the only possibility. They probably did not think of themselves as decoding the author's (Moses'? God's?) genuine intentions; they knew that they were speculating, suggesting possibilities. However, even if they considered their work to be an act of decoding, that is, revealing the true intention, I (or any other reader) could still refuse to accept their conception of their own work and regard their suggestions as interpretations. The difference is not in the content of the suggestion but rather in the perspective with which one chooses to view it. There may be a gap between the way one describes one's own activities and the perspective of another person.

As decoding, the objective of the biblical interpretation would be God's true intention; as interpretation, the objective is the completeness of the apparently fractured text. What is the principal difference? The disclosure of the genuine intention does not necessarily guarantee a complete object, and, conversely, the completeness of the object does not guarantee that it fits the genuine intention. The two may overlap but not necessarily so. Considering a suggestion under one category rather than another involves different strategies, different expectations, different justifications and, finally, a different evaluation. For instance, one may argue that a certain suggestion is false if it is considered a decoding of the original intention, but if it is considered an interpretation it is original and insightful.

Interpretation seeks to solve a specific kind of problem, not just *any* problem that occurs in the object. Only the problem of *apparent incompleteness* calls for interpretation; other problems call for different activities such as clarifications or explanations. Thus, it is self-evident that we do not need to interpret every object we experience, and that we do not constantly interpret all aspects of our surroundings. We interpret when we wish to complete what is *apparently* incomplete (or disordered). We interpret when we believe in the genuine coherence of the object and wish to demonstrate this coherence by struggling with difficulties on the object's "surface".

In modern fiction we often find a disruption in the chronological order—take for example, William Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom,* Juan Rolfo's *Pedro Pàramo,* and Yaakov Shabtai's *Past Continuous*. A narrative may jump back and forth in time without any apparent logic. Confronted with such writing, one may believe that the story is simply confused and therefore not worth considering further before it is re-written. Alternatively, one may suggest that the story obeys a different, non-chronological concept of narrative order. The interpreter who assumes the latter case will look for an alternative understanding of the apparent temporal randomness. For example, the story's events may follow the associations of memory rather than the chronology of calendars and clocks. The apparent disorder presents us with a problem; interpretative reasoning supplies a solution by "re-ordering" the object. This re-ordering is not acquired through changes made in the given structure of the object, but rather by pointing to its so far hidden elements. Since the "new" order is not apparent, and since for any given data it is possible to offer many different orders, interpretation, unlike decoding, is the domain of pluralism.

Interpreting an object, according the above, means offering a new way for completing an apparently incomplete object. Therefore, a repetition of an interpretation is not in itself an act of interpreting since the solution is already given. Imitating, repeating, copying or following rules and such like are alien to interpretation. When I put forward the above biblical interpretations, I was clearly not interpreting; I was simply conveying other people's interpretations. However, explanations, descriptions and clarifications typically welcome repetitions. I may explain, describe or clarify a matter that has been explained, described or clarified to me previously. I may do so ten times to the same person or to ten different people—the nature of the practice would not be affected. It remains the act of explaining, describing or clarifying. Decoding, by contrast, is closer to interpretation in this respect: once an object has been decoded, its "story" may be repeated, but these repetitions do not in themselves constitute the practice of decoding. However, the fact that an object has been interpreted once does not prevent or limit other interpretations, whereas a decoded object need not be decoded anymore.

In sum, the act of interpretation presupposes the following:

1 The object appears incomplete (or disordered) in some sense, thereby creating a "disturbance". There is a tension between its appearance (its surface) and the belief in its genuine completeness. This "disturbance" forms a "threat" to the alleged integrity of the object. The nature of the disturbing problem may vary: inconsistency, gaps in vital information, accidental or redundant elements, and so forth.

2 The object and its problem are significant and worthy of the effort of interpretation. Completing (or re-ordering) a worthless object is a waste of time. By attending to the object and attempting to remove its disturbing symptoms, the interpreter implies his or her belief that the object is inherently complete and worthwhile. This indicates a link between interpretation and evaluation.
3 The interpretable object is believed to contain hidden layers that carry the potential for realizing its completeness. Even if the interpreter uses external aids to "excavate" the object, the qualities thus found are believed to belong to the object.[13]
4 No single method or group of methods can guarantee access to an object's hidden layers. A measure of inspiration is always necessary.
5 Completeness can be regained through disclosure of the so-called hidden layers. The object is *re-ordered* when the interpreter raises the hidden elements to the same level as the apparent elements. The result is a presentation of the object in an informative, high order. This high order is believed to represent the object in its genuine completeness (or in one of its best possibilities).
6 Interpretation is intentional. The interpreter is aware of the problem and of his or her efforts to solve it. A non-intentional interpretation is inconceivable. One may regard a description given by another person as interpretation. In this case, it is the awareness on the observer's part, that is, the awareness of the person who argues for the interpretative nature of the so-called description in question. For example, one may take a child's innocent remark to express an interpretation of an object while the child may innocently believe that this is how the object really appears to all observers.
7 Interpretation is justifiable. Its justification lies in the conviction that the disturbing elements function as indicators of hidden layers that need to be brought to the surface. There has to be a direct link between the problem and its solution, that is, between the surface and the hidden layers of the object. The interpreter is expected to account for this link.
8 The justification is not subject to a priori principles. There are no fixed norms that necessarily determine the link between the apparent and the hidden. Interpretation is therefore singular; it cannot be generalized and applied further in other cases or expected to be the same for all interpreters. Reasons that are given to support one interpretation may be irrelevant or wrong for another interpretation. (This issue will be further examined in the next chapter.)

Accepting the above points, it follows that not every object calls for interpretation. Not every object necessarily appears incomplete and not every incomplete object is only apparently so. Indeed, everyday common sense tells us that not everything calls for interpretation. Life would be unbearable if we were really to believe that *nothing* is what it appears to be, that every object conceals hidden layers, that every situation presents us with a puzzle. The fact that in principle every situation or object of experience is *potentially* an object for interpretation does not mean that it *actually* is or should be interpreted. Even interpretations would require interpretations in an endless, Derridean *mise en abyme*. We could not even innocently wish our neighbor a good day, or ask for a loaf of bread at the bakery or drink our morning coffee peacefully. The blessed pragmatic forces of life compel us to view at least a significant portion of our experience as obvious, or satisfyingly understood or complete as it is. At the same time, it would also be naive to regard every disturbance or problem inherent in the object as being apparent. The world is not that perfect. Some deficiencies are genuine and do not motivate the observer to interpret them.

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[13] A similar distinction is presented by Danto (1986:47–67). Danto distinguishes between "surface interpretation" and "deep interpretation". However, I take only the latter as a form of interpretation. Understandings of the "surface" involve, according to my view, a complex of other cognitive activities.

Indeed, theoretically, everything may become (under certain conditions) an object for interpretation, but it does not follow that everything actually needs interpretation. Annette Barnes (1988:1–26) states that one does not interpret what one finds obvious. This is, no doubt, an analytical truth, but the reverse is not necessarily the case. Not every non-obvious object calls for interpretation on account of its being non-obvious. The theory of relativity, for one, is not at all obvious to the uninitiated, but it calls for explanation and clarification before it can become an object for interpretation.

Moreover, not every object that can be interpreted is also *worthy* of the effort. Precisely because every object has the potential for evoking interpretation, we are compelled to make choices and exercise our common sense. Although it may be true that a worthless score can be performed in many different ways, why waste time on it? Although a witty person may think of a perspective through which a poorly written novel is presented as a profound piece of art, the benefit of the enterprise is doubtful. Interpretation is an effort, an intentional effort (not to mention an investment of time and office supplies). Rational creatures, however, determine their priorities. Interpreting an object implies not only a trust in its concealed completeness but also a confidence in its worth.

The professional, academic practice has created the impression that every text or every work of art requires interpretation. This practice, I dare say, is often initiated by the demand for publication or the wish to exercise professional skills, and not necessarily by the intrinsic nature of the object in question. The professional interpreter may force an interpretation upon objects that do not raise genuine problems in the first place: a case of a solution in search of a problem. Interpreting an object merely because it is there (for professional reasons) yields a false appreciation. The object "demands" appreciation not because it is worthy of it, but rather because of the professional effort that has been put into its interpretation. For instance, if a student has chosen a mediocre novel as the subject of his thesis merely because nothing has been written about it so far, in the process of his work he may gradually convince himself (and others) that the novel is worthy of the effort.

But is there such a thing as a genuine need for interpretation? This question is not simple to answer. Given sufficient time and interest, one may detect in any apparently innocent object all kinds of problems and hidden layers. One may develop “interpretative skills” and regard almost every element as a possible clue to the existence of further information. In some cases we designate such behavior paranoia. How can the borderline be drawn? The answer I can offer is not a satisfactory one. There are no rigid rules or characteristics that qualify an object for interpretation. Much of it depends on the beholder’s expectations, beliefs, and context and, in Kant’s terminology, power of judgment.

In general, one may deny the need for interpretation for any one of the following reasons:

1 One does not notice any incompleteness in the object. The object appears satisfying as it is. This obviously means, that different observers may view the same object differently with respect to its call for interpretation.
2 The object is of no value to the observer. It is not worthy of the attention and the effort involved in interpretation.
3 The object is viewed not as one object but as an assembly of many sets that need not necessarily be unified. Distinguishing and separating the sets instead of unifying them solves its apparent incompleteness without interpretation. The order of each set is thus independent of the others. For instance, instead of resolving an inconsistency between the book of Genesis and the book of Chronicles, one may argue that these are different books, written by different writers and presenting different historical perspectives. As such, the inconsistency between the books is “legitimate” and does not call for an interpretation to resolve the discrepancy.
4 The apparent incompleteness is a genuine incompleteness (a genuine disorder). This indicates that the object in question is of low value in its given form. The object can only be made complete by some external force or addition. It calls for correction and modification, not for interpretation. Alternatively, it may be abandoned as a useless object, not worthy of the effort.

Recalling the two biblical interpretations, it is apparent that both interpreters believe in the significance of the biblical text (as most of us do), and also in its inherent completeness and unity (unlike some of us). The Jewish religious interpreter, for instance, believes that the whole Bible (the Old Testament) was written by one hand (Moses’), that it expresses one voice (God’s) and that it is therefore consistent, unified and informative even when it does not appear to be so. This belief in the Bible’s completeness provokes an interpretative effort to settle the apparent inconsistencies, to explain away disturbances, to fill in (apparently) missing elements and to restore the unity of the text. A Christian interpreter naturally includes the New Testament as an integral part of the Bible and offers interpretations to the apparent dichotomy between the Old and the New Testaments. A secular interpreter would not hesitate to resolve an apparent incoherence by renouncing the unity of the biblical text (Old and New) and splitting it into many different texts written by different authors in different periods.

This is, for instance, the case of the book of Isaiah. Secular scholars, analyzing differences in style, argue that there is more than one writer behind the text. According to the religious tradition, however, it is a single unified book. In each case, it is the a priori assumptions of the beholder that determine whether the object is to be interpreted and unified or not.

Interpretation is always directed to an object; one cannot offer an interpretation without acknowledging the existence of a pre-interpreted object, that is, acknowledging a pre-interpreted meaning. Whatever the case may be, the pre-interpreted object cannot be meaningless. One has to understand at least the surface of the object (its apparent facts) in order to identify its apparent problems or deny such problems. Different understandings may reveal different problems and solutions, but a meaningless object reveals nothing. The interpreter, like a geologist, goes beyond the surface and furnishes the apparent facts with *new* meanings by digging into deeper layers. The interpreter cannot invent or create something out of nothing: the surface must be informative and meaningful before it can call for an interpretation. However, being meaningful is not the same as being satisfying in all respects. The recognition that the object is disordered in some sense, and that this disorder is only apparent, indicates understanding and meaningfulness.

Interpreting an object is not the act of mending or modifying it. This point is crucial. A slip of the tongue may be considered an innocent mistake. As such, it does not call for interpretation but rather for a polite correction or for tactful silence. By contrast, this very phenomenon, rendered a “Freudian slip”, is no longer an “innocent” mistake; it is an “apparent” mistake. This is to say that it is not a mistake at all; it is a complete utterance that conceals hidden information. As such it does not call for correction but rather for interpretation or decoding—depending on the view one holds regarding mental phenomena and Freud’s doctrine.

A poorly written text needs correction or discarding. If the disruption of the chronological order of a story is believed to indicate “real” confusion and not an underlying order, the story calls for criticism or outright rejection, not for interpretation. It is one thing to mend a damaged object by adding or eliminating some elements, or change it in any way, and another to suggest that the resolution of the apparent problem is an integral part of the object. The understanding that an object is in some crucial sense genuinely incomplete forms the basis for criticizing the object and exposing its deficiencies. Needless to say, the religious interpreter does not criticize the Bible, nor does s/he believe that the Bible requires corrections. Likewise, a musician does not alter the notes that Mozart wrote nor does s/he criticize the composition when performing it. A score that needs correction is not worthy of being performed in the first place. Also, the performer does not normally “finish” an unfinished score by adding to it “missing” elements. Normally, a score is either finished by the composer or else it remains unfinished (like Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony*). The known cases in which one composer has finished another composer’s work are numbered and controversial (such as the dubious case of Mozart’s *Requiem*). Performing a poor composition or an unfinished one does not mend it, although in some cases a splendid performance may change our view of the original composition.

The fact that interpretation assumes the inherent completeness of the object creates a strong bond between interpretation and evaluation. Let us take this very argument as an object for interpretation. The reader may regard my argument as incomplete in some sense (a half-baked idea) or, worse, as inconsistent. The reader may wish to criticize me, argue with me, expose deficiencies or discard my arguments as insignificant or useless. However, no reader, I presume, would make the effort to *interpret* this text and resolve its "apparent" deficiencies without the conviction that there is a worthy and complete idea inherent in my argument. In this sense, criticism (in its original meaning) and interpretation express opposing directions.

The theoretical distinction between interpretation and criticism is often misconstrued. Criticism attacks and distorts the object's *apparent completeness,* whereas interpretation aims at dissolving *apparent incompleteness*. Criticism expresses mistrust in the object's coherence and worth; interpretation requires sympathy, appreciation and confidence in the potential of the object to reveal its concealed completeness. This is why I consider "critical interpretation"[14] an oxymoron.

Objects of interpretation

As already argued, interpretation is not limited to verbal objects or to any other specific categories. Any object that *appears incomplete,* but is believed to contain the potential for its own *completeness,* calls for interpretation. Under certain circumstances anything may become an object of interpretation regardless of its materials or origin. It is the observer's disposition that determines the candidacy for interpretation. A raw potato may be considered complete as a natural product (a botanical perspective); as such, all its relevant qualities may become apparent to all observers, even those qualities that require special laboratory equipment for their disclosure. However, as an edible object, a raw potato is incomplete—it has to be cooked in one way or another. A new potato recipe offers a new interpretation of the raw material, a new way of revealing its hidden qualities as an edible vegetable. It should be noted that *following* a recipe is certainly not an act of interpretation; only the creation of a recipe can be considered a form of interpretation, as I will further argue.

Some types of objects are more likely to be interpreted than others; some types are actually interpreted more often than others. A musical score typically calls for interpretation. In its written form it is incomplete in the sense that it calls for transformation into sounds; it "demands" a performance in order to realize it fully. Yet, a person blessed with a musical sensitivity, the right training and a particular taste may regard the performance redundant since s/he can read a score and enjoy it in the way that most of us read a novel—as a complete object of its kind. Such a person experiences the musical composition via an “inner ear”. Likewise, one may regard a play as complete in its written form and enjoy reading it as such, independent of any performance on stage.

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[14] This term is typically applied to works of art. It denotes a whole range of activities related to the understanding and appreciation of art (see, for instance, Barnes, 1988:158–68; Stecker, 1995).

Is every performance of a score or a play an act of interpretation? Not necessarily. We can imagine a score dictated on the phone, or a melody hummed in order to remind someone of it, or a first year piano student who is still struggling to play the score without hitting false notes. Likewise we may imagine a student reading *Hamlet* in his or her preparations for a literature exam. These are obviously not instances of interpretation, although there is arguably some kind of performance involved in each case. A music student may recognize the notes and indeed “perform” them in his attempt to follow the rules, but this student may not necessarily perceive the whole in a meaningful way. The “performance” may be fractured, concentrating on separate sections, and so forth. When the student masters both the musical language and the instrument, this is the point where interpretation may begin and differences in quality of performance occur Likewise, one can easily tell when a student is reading a text that s/he does not quite understand: the meaninglessness of the “performance” is evident. Yet, it all depends on the beholder’s disposition. The King of Siam, so the story goes, was invited to a concert in Vienna. When it was over, his hosts asked his opinion about the performance. The king’s reply was that he liked most the very first piece; the rest was quite boring. Further discussion revealed that by the “first piece” he was referring to the tuning of the orchestra. One person’s meaningless noise is another’s exciting performance.

The object of interpretation, as already noted, must consist of some “apparent” facts. These facts function as indications of the concealed layers. The written score or play, the given text, the raw potato, the political event—all provide facts for interpretation. Without such facts there is nothing to interpret. However, the requirement for “facts” as the basis for interpretation does not necessarily mean, as Hirsch argues, that the object is “an entity that always remains the same from one moment to the next” (Hirsch, 1967:46). Hirsch actually suggests that the text (or rather its pre-interpreted understanding) is *entirely indifferent* to changes in context. Such absolutism cannot be achieved for both theoretical and practical reasons. As already argued in the previous chapters, total indifference, just like total sensitivity, form total disorder, an inconceivable state. In order to protect the stability of an object, there is no need for such severe demands. One may adopt a flexible view that discerns in the object a relatively stable “core.” Such a core may not be common to all viewers at all times; but only those who recognize a common core may agree or disagree about its proposed interpretation. Those who do not share the recognition of the same core have no common grounds about which to argue.

The view that opposes Hirsch’s, when taken to the other extreme, suggests that the text (or any other object of interpretation) is *totally sensitive,* and keeps changing with every new context and reader, never the same text twice. For similar reasons, this view cannot be accepted either. According to this argument, all readers read a different text upon reading the same text. Stanley Fish’s question, “Is there a text in this class?” (Fish, 1980: p. 303–21) implies that there are no basic textual facts common to different readers. If it were true that there is no *one* text in the class, how could *it* (or *they*) be compared and discussed in any way, let alone be interpreted in different ways? How would we know that they are different interpretations of the same text? Indeed, there is more than one understanding of any text. But a variety of understandings does not eliminate the “common core”; on the contrary, it demands such a core. The common core may be composed of conventions and shared perceptions, common cultural associations and alike. There is no reason to accept a rigid solipsism when it comes to interpretation if one is not otherwise committed to it. If Fish assumes that readers are capable of understanding his question, let alone, the whole discussion of it, he is probably not committed to solipsism.

The argument that “all readings are misreadings”, clearly works against itself. One may *mis*read only what can be properly read. So, even if every reader sees different things in *the text,* there must be a text in the class that is agreed upon on some level and disagreed upon on another level. Assuming total sensitivity amounts to assuming an inconceivable state of total disorder.

In sum, interpretation requires a common, factual, meaningful pre-interpreted object; *if* there were no such pre-interpreted object, there would be no interpretation of *that* either. If there is no agreement whatsoever about the pre-interpreted object, there can be no dispute over *its* interpretation. If the object is meaningless it raises no questions and awaits no answers.

Margolis describes the conflicting tendencies as to interpretation in terms of *stability* and *productiveness:*

> One [theory] holds that interpretation is practiced on relatively stable, antecedently specifiable referents of some sorts [...] and that the requisite account identifies the practice by which distributed claims about them are responsibly assigned truth-like values of some sort; the other holds that interpretation is a productive practice.
>
> (Margolis, 1989:237)

Margolis argues further that the second depends on the first. I agree with Margolis but go a step further: not only does the second depend on the first but the two cannot be actually separated—they are mutually dependent. Productiveness in interpretation requires the stability of its object, whereas the restoration of the stability of the object, that is, the effort to maintain its stable completeness, produces a new observation. Interpretation always offers a new insight (the value of this insight may vary), or else it is not an interpretation. In other words, interpretation is always productive since it offers solutions to the object’s apparent incompleteness. However, there is no new insight or new solution unless there is some given, “old”, “stable” object to observe and relate to. There is no new understanding if there is no old understanding. The “old” raises the question, whereas the “new” and “productive” supplies the answer. When separated, both tendencies lead to dead ends: total disorder or solipsism. Neither tendency provides much of an explanation.

The logical status of interpretation

The question of validity in interpretation is usually presented in terms of monism versus pluralism or absolutism versus relativism (see Barnes, 1988; Stecker, 1995). The underlying common assumption is that interpretations ought to have truthvalue, or else there are no limits to the range of interpretations of a single object, and the absence of limits entails disorder. The idea that interpretation should be constrained is guided by the healthy instinct that recoils from the disorder of "anything goes". The opposite view—which refuses to recognize constraints—reflects and fosters the practical tendency towards pluralism in interpretation. Both views may be partly justified, yet both are somewhat misleading. The first confuses decoding with interpretation; the second leads to a destruction of the pre-interpreted object—it confuses the act of interpretation with the act of constituting an object. There are many who choose a third, compromising option that denies monism but wishes to limit pluralism. However, this third option, which I wish to defend, faces many theoretical difficulties.

Intentions

One of the arguments used in favor of regarding the creator's intention as the sole criterion of a valid interpretation is that this is the only certain way to validate interpretations. Hirsch, for instance, argues that

> To banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.
>
> (Hirsch, 1967:5)

Indeed, there can be only one true answer to the question concerning such intention, whether it is a conscious or subconscious intention. Problems relating to the methods of achieving the relevant information and validating the true intention should not decide the theoretical issue. Even if the proposed hypothesis regarding a specific intention cannot be verified, there should still be one true answer to the question regarding the original intention. However, if we accept that interpretation is a resolution of the apparent incompleteness of the object, we must also accept that the true intention is not the only possible resolution and not necessarily the most satisfying one. Moreover, other possibilities are not eliminated even in cases where the original intention is indeed the best solution to the interpretative problem. Other possibilities may be equally or less satisfying, but even the worst possibility is still a possibility.

The question of whether one *ought* to follow the author's intentions is, more than anything, a *moral* issue. One may argue that by ignoring the intentions of the creator one expresses disrespect to the person who actually produced the object in question. Morally, so the argument may go, an object belongs to its creator, even if presented to the public or legally sold to another person. By interpreting it as we wish, we trespass on the territory of another person. Be that as it may, moral dilemmas require considerations in the realm of ethics. The conceptual analysis of interpretation cannot settle such moral issues. The moral verdict, in turn, even if it supports the authority of the original intention, cannot change the fact that an object may be interpreted in more than one way and that the creator's perspective is not necessarily the most insightful. In the light of this understanding, the debate over the role of the author's intentions is irrelevant to the conceptual analysis of interpretation; it is relevant to the moral, normative question of how one should deal with works created by others.

Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) argue that since intentions do not always fully materialize, it is the meaning of the work, as given, that should count. After all, the work consists of whatever is actually included in it, and not of what was intended to be included (which may or may not be a genuine part of the object). This is why Wimsatt and Beardsley find it difficult to explain away a printer's error in a literary work—one normally turns in such cases to the original intentions and views the matter as a typical case of decoding. Although I agree with Wimsatt's and Beardsley's conclusion that the original intentions should not determine or limit the range of interpretations, my argument is somewhat different. It is clear that, like many others, Wimsatt and Beardsley understand the act of interpretation as an attempt to reveal the *true* meaning(s) of the object (the text). By this understanding, even clarification of words, corrections of typing errors and decoding of symbols are considered interpretative acts—they all contribute to the unveiling of the object's (true) meaning.

My argument is directed towards a different objective. I distinguish between the debate over the definition of the given object and the debate over its interpretation. The first is about establishing the object's apparent layer (the "facts"); the second aims at the hidden layers. These two different levels may be hard to separate in actuality, but if we accept that every object precedes its interpretation, we have to acknowledge that there is a difference between determining the relevant facts of the object and offering an interpretation of these facts.

There may be a debate over the range and nature of the elements of which an object consists. In the process of "constituting" or "defining" an object we may or we may not include among the object's relevant elements the fact that it was created in 1728, or the fact that it is categorized by the author as a comedy, or the fact that the author was Anglo-Irish. One may thus interpret a text with or without the awareness of such facts. Interpretations that do not take into account those facts that seem relevant to a certain observer fail to satisfy that observer, but they are interpretations nonetheless. Non-satisfying interpretations are still interpretations just as non-satisfying works of art are still works of art. Dickie (1974, 1984) rightly stressed this point (see also Chapter 11, pp. 253–256). This point is mainly logical: non-satisfactory interpretations fail to satisfy as interpretations, and non-satisfactory works of art are those objects that fail to satisfy us as works of art.

In some cases it seems that the information regarding the creator and his or her era is vital for the process of establishing the apparent layer of the object. This is very clear when the object or some of its vital elements do not make sense when taken out of their original context. In the same sense, there is no use reading a German poem as if it were written in English, although I can imagine that some German words can be read as English (the rest I would regard as typing errors). In general, I believe that it is more sensible to approach an object in its "natural" or conventional context, although one cannot rule out the possible benefit of ignoring the original context in some cases. However, there is no need to demand consistency with respect to this approach. In some cases, ignoring the original context brings about absurdities, in others it may generate a refreshing insight. For instance, in modern Hebrew *chashmal* means electricity. This word originated in the Bible (it appears only three times in the book of Ezekiel, 1:4, 1:27, 8:2). There have been many attempts to decode the original meaning of this word, but whatever the meaning is, it clearly cannot be electricity in the modern sense. Ignoring this fact and reading the book of *Ezekiel* as if it were written in modern Hebrew would result in a very esoteric reading. One may prefer such an esoteric reading for some reason, or one may reject it. The process of defining the pre-interpreted object involves decisions of this kind. However, the mere act of establishing the relevant facts about the object is not in itself the act of interpretation, although this act is bound to influence the overall interpretation of the object. Only when the object is defined and the relevant facts are determined may the interpreter point to the apparent problem raised by the relevant facts and suggest a solution to it.

Two interpreters may differ with regard to their initial understanding and knowledge of the pre-interpreted object and consequently offer different interpretations. Each case may raise different problems and, as a result, different solutions. One may find a dichotomy between the original intention and the apparent object and offer an interpretation that resolves this dichotomy. A person who avoids the original intention may face different interpretative problems or deny the need for interpretation altogether. The debate over the relevant facts is analogous to the case in which two detectives argue about the relevance of certain details at a murder scene before they have solved the case. The fact that the window was open when the body was discovered may or may not be relevant to the case. However, since solving a murder case is more like decoding than interpreting, once the case is successfully solved the debate over the relevance of the window should be concluded. In the case of interpretation there is no such final conclusion. The relevance or irrelevance of a certain detail remains a matter of interests, norms and personal tendencies.

Truth, facts and interpretation

As already noted, decoding and interpreting are often confused with regard to their logical status. Decoding aims to reveal the truth inherent in the coded object: the true murder story, the enemy's message, the author's genuine intention or subconscious motives. The decoded product, therefore, may be proven false: this is not the true murderer, not the real message, not the genuine intention or motive. According to the biblical story, Joseph decoded Pharaoh's dreams; he did not interpret them. Pharaoh wanted access to the information that was coded and concealed in the oneiric imagery of fat and lean cows. As it happened, the ensuing events in the kingdom validated Joseph's decoding. Had Joseph offered Pharaoh an enticing, alluring and imaginative interpretation rather than precise decoded information, he would not have survived to see his brothers again.

Interpretations present *possibilities* that are, by definition, neither true nor false, but differ in their values as better or worse solutions to their problems. It is one thing to argue that in *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy intended his depiction of Levin and Kitty to be ironic (he probably did not). It is another thing, irrespective of Tolstoy's intentions, to suggest that the story *may be* ironically viewed; that an ironic view resolves some essential puzzles and presents an integrated literary work. The first claims *truth,* the second claims *possibility*. Facts are connected to both in different ways.

Facts determine the problem to which the interpretation offers a solution; they cannot determine or limit the scope of the possible solutions. Lauren Stern (1990:205) argues that interpretations "are rejected, if they are contradicted by facts that are considered relevant". By contrast, I argue that only decoding may be contradicted and refuted by facts. Interpretations, like explanations, cannot be refuted by facts since they present possible ways of organizing and uniting facts. It is not unusual to find interpretations that in some sense deny the apparent facts of the object or entirely change their apparent meaning. Psychoanalytic interpretations do that quite often. They suggest an understanding that seems to contradict the apparent behavior or motives. Facts and interpretations do not really contradict each other because they exist on different logical levels: facts provide the material, the object of interpretation; interpretations express something that is done with the given facts (the material) and thus goes beyond them. The material cannot contradict the product; it can manifest its resistance by generating a poor product.

Facts, however, are used to support and *justify* the solution, but not *validate* it in the strict sense. The difference between these two categories is crucial. Justification involves values of different kinds; it expresses interests and choices rather than a submission to truth conditions. Validation (ideally speaking) expresses coherence with facts and truth conditions and is supposed to be free of personal values and interests. Justification, as the etymology of the word suggests, always involves values.

Facts and possibilities not only have a different logical status but also the idea of them affects us differently. We do not tolerate contradicting facts, but we accept "contradicting" possibilities. This acceptance echoes basic logical axioms: "P and not-P" is a form of contradiction, but "P or not-P" is a form of tautology. Different or contradicting possibilities cohabit in the realm of possible worlds. The possibility that it will rain tomorrow and the possibility that it will not rain tomorrow may be equally plausible. Only when we turn from possibilities to actuality (facts) do we not tolerate such oppositions.

Once the code is broken, we do not look for other possibilities, unless we doubt the results. The detective will look for further evidence only if s/he suspects that the confession of the murderer is false; otherwise, the case is closed. By contrast, even if one admires a certain performance of Bach's *Magnificat* and believes that it captured the "real" spirit of the composition, one is normally ready to accept that this is not the last word, or rather the last note on the matter. Musical performances do not have to follow the original performance or the composer's intention; they may present opposing conceptions. An audience is willing to watch a new performance of *Hamlet* without necessarily expressing thereby dissatisfaction with former versions. By the same reasoning, people accept that different paintings of the London fog may express different perspectives; some of them may be more interesting and enlightening than others. No painting, brilliant as it may be, eliminates forever all other paintings of the same subject matter. Likewise, there is no ultimate way of preparing potatoes, and people normally accept more than one recipe and are willing to try new ones without necessarily recoiling from the old ones.

An interpretation may even be based on false grounds, that is, when the relevant facts of the object are not correctly perceived. For instance, the two horns on the forehead of Michelangelo's Moses originate from the inadequate translation found in the Latin Vulgate Bible, the translation of *Exodus* 34:30 where Moses is described. The Hebrew word *Karan* means "irradiated" or "shone". Indeed, the King James Version expresses this understanding by translating the phrase as "the skin of his face shone." However, the Hebrew word *Karan* has an affinity to the word *Keren* (or *Karna' im* in plural), which means, "horn" or having horns. The Vulgate translation was probably misled by this affinity: "cornutam Mosi faciem timuerunt prope accedere". *Cornutam* means having horns and this is the understanding that guided Michelangelo. Indeed, Michelangelo's powerful sculpture does not stand or fall on this detail alone, and some critics do not even mention it.[15] However, one could imagine that this detail would be the seminal cause for some observers' rejection of Michelangelo's interpretation of Moses. It might be argued, for instance, that the horned image portrays Moses as a diabolic figure. But this disapproval does not make Michelangelo's interpretation false in the strict sense. The sculpture, as a form of interpretation, is not expected to portray Moses as he really was. For one, we cannot be certain about the historical facts; this, however, is not the main point here. A work of art conveys an interpretation not a mere depiction of reality.[16] Therefore, even if it were an incontrovertible historical fact that Moses had no horns, Michelangelo's sculpture is still a "legitimate", meaningful interpretation. By similar reasoning, we do not reject a caricature (which is also a form of interpretation) just because the nose of the person in question is disproportional or his arms are longer than his entire body. Disproportion, exaggerations, mythological insinuations and alike are legitimate interpretative means; they carry meanings that the interpreter may wish to relate to the object of interpretation regardless of the "brute facts".

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[15] It is interesting to note that Freud's essay *Michelangelo's Moses,* which analyzes various details of the sculpture, entirely ignores the fact that the biblical leader has two horns.

[16] I fully agree with Goodman's (1968) rejection of the imitation theory, although I do not agree with his view that art is a language. See further discussion on this in Chapter 11.

Possibilities

If the above analysis is accepted, then the notion of possibility, not the notion of truth, is central to the understanding of interpretation. The notion of possibility, which is relevant here, has two angles: logical and evaluative. The first is binary and the second is quantitative. Leibniz has taught us that anything that conforms to the logical axioms is possible, if not in one world then in another. Conformity to logical axioms is binary: X either conforms to logical axioms and is therefore possible, or it does not conform to logical axioms and is thus rendered impossible. If X and Y are both logically possible, then X is no more or less possible than Y. This means that the logical aspect is not quantitative, it cannot justify a choice between alternatives, and it cannot supply the grounds for evaluating a possibility as better or worse than another.

Basically, one may construe the idea of *logical possibility* in two ways: (1) the position of Leibniz—creating numerous possible worlds, or (2) the position of Spinoza—accepting only one possibility for each case. According to Leibniz (1951), all possible worlds are equally logical and thus equally possible, but not equally good for God's purpose (or generally for any purpose). Since logical axioms cannot provide the grounds for an evaluative differentiation among possibilities, Leibniz introduces the principle of *sufficient reason*. There has to be a sufficient reason for preferring one possible world to another and this reason cannot be reduced to the logical axioms; rather, it complements them.

Spinoza does not have to justify the choice among possibilities since he denies not only the very act of choosing, but also that there is anything to choose from. The possible is identified with the necessary and the actual: whatever is possible is also necessarily actualized. The idea of non-materialized possibilities rests, according to Spinoza, on a fundamental mistake. It fails to realize that if an apparent option does not materialize it is because something *prevents* its materialization and thus renders it, in the last analysis, impossible. A non-materialized possibility is, therefore, a self-contradictory idea. In fact, by this reasoning Spinoza empties the concept of possibility. Leibniz, by contrast, is well aware not only of the conceptual differences between *possibility, necessity* and *actuality,* but also acknowledges the benefit of preserving these differences.

It is Leibniz's understanding of "possibility", not that of Spinoza, which is reflected in the common use of the term. Moreover, the common use not only differentiates between better and worse possibilities (a differentiation that is vacuous in Spinoza's philosophy) but also demands that the linkage between a certain possibility and its realm can be properly justified and demonstrated in terms of potential and its realization (sufficient reason). For instance, it is not enough that the possibility that I will become a gifted piano player does not seem to violate any logical axiom. In order to substantiate this (non-materialized) possibility, I need to show that I had some musical talent in my youth, or that at some point in my life piano studies were seriously considered, and so on. One may deny a possibility, or render it "implausible", if sufficient linkage to the relevant realm cannot be demonstrated.

Viewing an interpretation solely through the logical perspective renders all interpretations equal. Since the violation of logical axioms also depends on how the elements in question are viewed, there is actually nothing substantial to limit the range of possibilities or, for that matter, the range of interpretations. By this logical perspective (almost) anything goes; (almost) anything can count as an interpretation of anything, and thus no reasonable connection is demanded between the object and its interpretation. By contrast, viewing interpretations through Spinoza's monism leads to the conclusion that there is only one true interpretation for each object, eliminating all other options as false (as indeed Spinoza consistently argues in *A Theologico—Political Treatise,* Chapter 7). The true interpretation becomes a matter of revealing the right code, and thus the act of interpretation is in fact identified with the act of decoding.

If we were to follow either of these two directions, ignoring the evaluative aspect, we would avoid most theoretical problems of interpretations. "Anything goes" is certainly an easy escape from the problem of constraints and choices, just as allowing only one true interpretation is a safe path that avoids the problems raised by pluralism. However, both are too good to be true: they bypass the genuine practice of interpretation and render its concept empty. Interpretation is not just anything that does not contradict the object in question, neither is it the single true understanding of the object. The first obviously leads to all kinds of absurdities and the second denies aspects and variation in values. Interpretation, as I understand it, is a solution to a problem to which there can be more than one solution. But this does not mean that all solutions are equally good or that anything whatsoever may function as a solution to a given problem without any constraints.

There are problems that stem from a fixed, defined framework and their solutions are subject to some truth conditions. Such solutions, when they are proven true within their framework, are *necessarily* true. Solutions to mathematical problems belong to this category. The case of Fermat's theorem, for instance, expresses the belief that if a mathematical problem was once solved (by Fermat) it could be equally solved (in principle) by any rational creature, since the true solution is a necessary conclusion within its defined framework. The fact that such a solution was not found for a long time does not undermine this belief. (In fact, a solution to Fermat's problem was announced recently.) Interpretative problems are open, however, to different solutions because their framework is flexible. Everyday life problems are also of this kind, since there are no fixed, well-defined conditions that have to be satisfied. As the popular song has it—there are "Fifty ways to leave your lover", and one may always think of an additional two or three ways.

It has to be further stressed that *possibility* should not be confused with *plausibility* (see, for instance, Stecker, 1992). *Plausibility* is a sub-type of possibility. It is an evaluative term that indicates a clear, non-problematic linkage between a specific possibility and the relevant realm. Notions like “plausibility”, “aptness” and “being reasonable” indicate our accumulated experience, conservative beliefs and expectations. A mere possibility need not be directly taken as an indication of past experience.

Although plausibility implies a positive value, it is not necessarily the good-making feature of interpretation. The most reasonable may be banal; the highly plausible carries low informative value in the sense that it is highly predictable. It is highly plausible, for instance, that the sun will rise tomorrow or that the rich will get richer; it is implausible (but not impossible) that it will snow in Jerusalem tomorrow or that the poor will get richer. These kind of assertions have very little to do with what determines the value of a good interpretation. In a sense, they are opposed to it. Evaluating an interpretation as “reasonable” or “plausible” is hardly a compliment. In praising a musical performance, we might say that it is surprising, imaginative, enlightening, insightful or moving; it would be almost an insult to describe a good performance as “reasonable” or “plausible”. A good interpretation is not a mere logical possibility; it materializes something that was unknown so far and therefore could not be deduced from past knowledge. (This point will be further elaborated in the next chapter.)

Potentials

An interpretation is expected to be informative, that is, to teach us something new and significant about the object in question, to present the object as complete. In this sense it is not just any possibility but a significant or essential possibility. Revealing the hidden layers of the object and reunifying it, an interpretation implies claims about the object’s essential potential(s). Touching upon marginal, trivial or accidental features of the object results in a poor, trivial, uninteresting interpretation. The essential feature is not necessarily what the creator of the object had in mind, since the elements of the object (the materials) may have potentials unknown to the person who has worked with them.

The logical aspect of possibility does not distinguish between essential and accidental qualities of an object. The appearance of an accidental feature is no less a possibility than that of an essential feature. There are possibilities that indicate essential, necessary qualities of the object, just as there are possibilities that reflect accidental qualities. A potential, unlike a mere logical possibility, has an intimate bond with the object; it is part of the object’s identity. Although it is logically possible that a jazz band can play Bach’s *Magnificat,* it is doubtful whether this kind of performance reveals essential qualities of the work; at any rate, it is a matter for further debate. One thing is certain, concepts like possibility, essential potential and materialization are “stubborn” and elusive concepts. They indicate claims about the hidden, the as yet unknown qualities of an individual object, claims that are difficult to substantiate using any conventional, systematic method.

A potential may materialize in various degrees, or it may not materialize at all—this forms a major theoretical problem. Since potentials may materialize in various degrees or not materialize at all, not every occurrence of a quality reflects the object's essential potentials. It is not uncommon to hear about a certain person that she has wasted her talent, which means that her actual (apparent) achievements do not reveal her "true" potential. It is not uncommon to hear that a certain person has wasted their talent, which means that their actual (apparent) achievements do not reveal their 'true' potential. The problem is, however, how does one know that there was potential (a talent) in the first place if it has not materialized. A satisfying answer is not always available. The main question is, therefore, how do we know that X is essential to Y if it does not materialize, or if it materializes only partially? Logical axioms are useless for answering this question, and since accidental qualities may sometimes overpower the essential ones, actuality is not a reliable source either.

Aristotelian Nature consists of generic essences. Natural entities are classified into species; each specimen carries essential (necessary) and non-essential (accidental) qualities. A calf that is born with two heads is an "accident", a freak of Nature that exhibits an implausible possibility. This accidental possibility teaches us almost nothing about the generic essence of a calf. Likewise, the fact that a person has blue eyes teaches us nothing about being human. The value of a specimen as such is determined by the degree of materialization of its *essential potential,* not just any qualities. The generic potential is the same in all relevant cases despite differences in their actualization. An acorn has the potential (the possibility) to grow into an oak tree, but it may fail to do so for many reasons; nonetheless, its potential is the same as that of any other acorn.

One does not have to accept Aristotle's ontology or theory of Nature in order to benefit from its concepts and observations. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the Aristotelian conception of potential and the kind of potential that is revealed by interpretation: natural potential is *generic,* but the potential that interpretations deal with is *individual.* This difference is crucial. The Aristotelian conception of generic potential allows for comparisons among individuals on both levels: the potential and its materialization. On the basis of analogy with other cases, we know what to expect and how to evaluate the new development. We similarly learn to distinguish between the generic and accidental (private) qualities of natural objects. We know that it is accidental for a calf to have two heads, because it is a rare phenomenon and also because such a calf does not survive. However, when it comes to the domain of interpretation, things are far more complicated.

Interpretation presents us with the difficulty of determining an *individual essence*. Individual essences do not have logical grounds for comparisons; they are not based on a priori principles or analogies. An individual score can be compared with other scores in many ways, but its pleasing performance is not a deductive or inductive conclusion. A new performance is expected to reveal something that is *unique* to the individual composition and has not yet been revealed in previous performances. Otherwise the performance is redundant, repetitive or boring. The requirement for *individual essence,* by definition, cannot be achieved through analogies. The main problem then is how to determine the essential individuality of an object; how to distinguish between the essential features and accidental or marginal features without relying on general categories.

Let us consider the following, “It is logically possible that Madam Bovary could have become an opera singer”. What does this mean? Only that the possibility does not seem to contradict other observations in the relevant realm. But this is not what we actually intend by stating such possibilities. We intend to be informative, to reveal something that is not banal regarding the individual object of our observation. The above logical statement may be made about almost everyone without creating a contradiction (in Leibniz’s sense but not according to Spinoza’s view), but this empties the sentence of any real or meaningful observation. It tells us nothing in particular about Madame Bovary; it can be equally correct about any of the readers. A meaningful observation about Madame Bovary would contain information that illuminates her character or fate as a unique individual. Indicating a potential of a person—fictional or non-fictional—is expected to teach us something important about the person in question.

People sometimes say, “I did not know she had it in her.” But also, “I know she did it, but it is not like her.” How do we validate such observations? Via experience? With reference to facts? If it is possible that “she had it in her”, although nobody knew this, how can we be so sure that another actual quality “is not like her”, that is, that this actual quality is not one of her essential qualities? How do we distinguish between an essential quality and an accidental occurrence in an individual case? How do we distinguish between a non-realized possibility and an impossible option when there are no fixed rules or grounds for comparisons with other cases? What does determine the limits of individual possibilities? Which interpretation does offer an insight into the “real” essential qualities of the object and which confuses these with accidental qualities?

As they occur, facts are not a reliable source. The apparent quality is not necessarily an indication of an essential one. In some cases, it is the least plausible possibility that materializes; in some cases, the genuine qualities require effort and work in order to become apparent. And then there is the question of method and interests that may affect the results in different ways. A wide consensus cannot be the determining factor either. The fact that a certain quality is widely considered essential does not prove much; it only indicates common values and perspectives that may change with further cultural, political or scientific development. As Bacon has taught us in his *Novum Organum,* the idols of the market or the cave may obstruct our perception of Nature rather than reveal it.

Knowledge of an individual essence, if we may call it knowledge, is based mainly on direct observations that are influenced by past experiences but not systematically deduced from them. It is a type of intuitive knowledge that cannot be verified by conventional methods. Being hidden, the potential is not directly experienced; when materialized, there is always the option that it indicates an accidental and not an essential quality. One cannot define the conditions that would guarantee the realization of an individual potential, nor can one define the general differences between essential and accidental qualities in an individual case.

The status of interpretation is the problematic status of individual possibilities. The main theoretical problems of interpretation originate in the nature of this status. An interpretation has to *link* the apparent with the hidden by a justifiable reasoning that cannot be generalized. A complex of beliefs, values and personal sensitivities rather than general rules and definable conditions determines such a "justification". In the absence of stable and clear rules the border between essential and accidental qualities in an object is indecisive; it depends on the insight of the individual observer. Consequently, the limits of interpretation are undetermined. This indeterminacy creates the false impression of the absence of all limitations: the impression that anything goes. However, the practice of interpretation shows that this is not the case; we do not equally accept just anything as an interpretation for a given object. Indeed, we do not have rigid norms and methods to determine the limits, but we still act not only as if such limits exist but also as if they are essential to the matter.

Some interpretations seem to convince us that they reveal the "true", essential potential of the object, some interpretations seem to uncover marginal aspects of this potential, and others may seem entirely mistaken, addressing accidental elements. The proof is in the completeness of the final product, which in turn depends, among other things, on the observer's perspective. One may say that it is the beauty obtained by the proposed interpretation which "validates" it, that the most beautiful interpretation is the most just and right. Eddy Zemach (1990), for one, holds this view. As much as I may sympathize with this position, I cannot consider it a satisfying answer to the problem of understanding interpretation. Indeed, a good interpretation expresses beauty, but this, I hold, is an analytical truth. Beauty, as I shall attempt to show in the following chapters, consists of a good interpretation (albeit a special kind of interpretation). The issue cannot be settled by substituting one complicated and elusive concept for another.

In sum, interpretative possibilities call for pluralism, but not for a radical relativism that renounces the distinction between essential and accidental qualities in the object. Although determining the status of interpretation as an individual possibility raises many difficulties, this view is faithful, I believe, to the nature of the practice. The fact that there are no well-defined methods or conditions for determining the limits of interpretation and validating its observation need not intimidate us. A theory should not sacrifice the phenomenon in order to satisfy methodological demand and resolve theoretical difficulties. The issue of evaluating and limiting interpretation is discussed further in the next chapter.

Summary

1. The hermeneutic concept of interpretation is too wide because it includes different cognitive activities under the category of interpretation. It is also too narrow because it is concerned mainly with verbal activities.
2. I will examine interpretations in terms of problem solving rather than in terms of truth-claims. Different interpretations offer different solutions to the same problems (some are better than others) or address different problems.
3. Describing, explaining, clarifying and decoding are distinct activities; each is based on different axioms and has different goals.

4 Interpretation is a distinct cognitive activity, relevant to verbal and non-verbal objects.
5 The object of interpretation is viewed as a complete object that on its surface appears incomplete.
6 Interpretation offers a solution to the apparent incompleteness by referring to hidden layers and hidden potential within the object.
7 Interpretation is an intentional effort to unify the object. It implies the belief in the object's positive values and inherent completeness.
8 Interpretations involve various cognitive activities but their justification does not stem directly from the values and justifications of these activities.
9 The logical status of interpretation is the status of a quantitative possibility; it is neither true nor false. It is a materialization of a potential found in the object.
10 The concept of individual essential potential faces problems that cannot be answered by logical tools. It cannot rely on comparisons and general rules. It assumes a different, intuitive kind of knowledge.

8 Aesthetic order

Qualitative analysis (II)

In the previous chapter I argued that aesthetic order consists of interpretative relations. However, there is a need for a more detailed characterization of these relations and the kind of interpretation involved. The second part of this qualitative analysis is, therefore, concerned with a general typology of interpretation and the specific type that is typical of aesthetic order—*complementary interpretation*. The qualitative analysis concludes with an examination of problems inherent in evaluating interpretations and their relevance to aesthetic evaluation in general—art and non-art.

Types of interpretation

The issue of typology of interpretation has not attracted much attention in the literature. One of the few articles on this matter is Stuart Hampshire's *Types of Interpretations* (1979a). Hampshire distinguishes six types. These are characterized partly by disciplines (such as political, psychological or philosophical interpretations), and partly by their subject matter (motives, oracles or art performances). This typology seems rather arbitrary and can be of little use for the purposes of the current analysis. For instance, it is not clear how interpreting an oracle (fifth type in Hampshire's article) is essentially different from interpreting dreams (third type), besides the differences in the subject matter. In both cases the object is regarded as a set of *signals* bearing concealed information. Now an oracle is by definition a set of signals, whereas a dream may or may not be so, depending on the theory one chooses to follow. However, when a dream is understood as a set of signals its interpretation (or decoding) belongs to the same type as that of an oracle or any coded message. Although some kinds of objects are more likely to appeal to a certain type, it is not the subject matter itself that determines the type of its interpretation. For instance, musical scores normally need to be performed, but there is also room for analyzing the score in the way we analyze literary texts and for examining its components and their interrelations or contemplating the category (the genre) to which the score should belong, and so forth. All these operations express different types of interpretation related to the same object. If differences in subject matter formulate a typology, we would not stop at six or even a dozen types. We would have to accept a long list of types that ultimately would not teach us much more than what we already know about the differences among the subject matter. The differences among types of interpretations, if indeed there are different types, must be based on a more acute principle.

The typology presented below is concerned with various logical relations between an object and its proposed interpretation. The main question here is *how does the interpretation in question relate to the pre-interpreted object*? For instance, an interpretation may relate to its object as the general relates to the particular (i.e. interpreting an object as belonging to a certain category). An interpretation may relate to its object as the whole relates to its constitutive elements (i.e. interpreting the role of the elements in a given whole) and so on.

It should be noted that the relations that distinguish among the different types of interpretation are not, in themselves, unique to interpretation. These relations might also be obtained in non-interpretative matters. Not every relation between the general and the particular is an interpretative relation, but some interpretations are based on this relation. Therefore, all types, being types of *interpretation,* share the general characteristics of interpretation as presented in the previous chapter. They suggest possible solutions to the apparent incompleteness of the object and differ only in their logical relation to their subject matter. Furthermore, each of the following types is associated with traditional debates about the nature of art and its relevant method of evaluation. I will comment briefly on these associations and relate each type to certain central questions concerning art. Further elaboration on matters of art is presented in Chapters 10 and 11.

Signs: X indicates Y

The interpretative argument of this type is that X (the pre-interpreted, given object) is best completed when viewed as a sign of Y (a non-given object). This relation between X and Y is, by the interpretative argument, an essential relation; it is not merely an external, conventional connection. It is supposed to reveal a genuine quality of X (and Y). Mere conventions, by contrast, are external and do not attempt to disclose the object's genuine qualities. For instance, the fact that the hand image in the road sign indicates "stop!" does not mean that "stop!" interprets the meaning of hands in general. The sign is a convention and as such it does not imply a claim concerning the inherent qualities of the image (although, in some cases, it can be associated with such interpretative claims).

It is important to differentiate here between decoding a sign, where the object is considered a coded set of signs, and interpreting an object as a sign. The first establishes the fact that the object is indeed coded (intentionally or otherwise) and aims to reveal the meaning of the object according to its true code. The second attempts to offer the code that supposedly presents a more unified whole. Sign interpretation suggests that the object (or part of it) would be better completed when approached as a set of signs, whether it was purposefully coded or not. For instance, a facial expression may intentionally or non-intentionally indicate different feelings or modes or situations. If one aims at revealing the exact feeling of the person in question then one attempts at decoding this expression. By contrast, if one is merely speculating about possible meanings of the facial expression and suggests an understanding that in his or her view better unifies the whole, one is engaged in interpretation. In some cases the nature of the activity—decoding or interpreting—is a matter of choice; in some cases one cannot decode the expression, only interpret it. For instance, the Mona Lisa smile (if indeed it is a smile) has received many interpretations; it is quite obvious that in cases like this, one cannot hope to decode the expression, that is, to reveal the true emotion or state of mind behind that expression.

It is one thing to argue that X is a sign of something (within a definite framework) and another that X is best understood as a sign. The actual differences may be so subtle that one can hardly tell what is the case: decoding or interpreting. This is especially so in cases where the code is believed to be natural and not conventional. Do we decode Nature or interpret it? The theoretical difference is decided by the belief of the interpreter: Is s/he concerned with the *truth* or with the *best (most useful) possibility*? St Augustine viewed the whole natural world as a sign of supernatural reality. Was he decoding or interpreting? Augustine probably believed himself to be engaged in the former activity. However, a person who does not share St Augustine's beliefs may take them metaphorically. Does science regard Nature as a set of coded signals or as an object for interpretation? If Nature is a set of coded signals, then natural sciences attempt to disclose the true code, *the* law of Nature. If the natural sciences are interpreting Nature, then they do not lay claim to any ultimate truth but can only hope to entertain tentative understandings of Nature (possibilities).

Signs are almost everywhere and almost anything can become a sign of some sort. Signs may be natural or conventional, cultural or individual, abstract or concrete. Not every sign requires interpretation, and not every sign is a product of interpretation. Road signs are typically determined by conventions. As such, they do not call for interpretation but rather for familiarity and obedience. Their function as signs is external to them and does not suggest any hidden meaning, either in their shape, in their color or in any other quality. As mere conventions, their colors and shapes are arbitrary or practical, capricious or reasonable, but in any case other colors and shapes could have served the same conventional purpose equally well. Therefore, one does not normally interpret road signs; one simply applies their conventional meaning. A person, who would argue in court for a different (possible) reading of the red traffic light, would be held in contempt of court or placed under psychiatric observation. Road signs may, however, become objects for interpretation in a different, unconventional way. They may serve, for instance, as elements in a design or a poem, or they may become cultural symbols (such as the international "forbidden" sign, the circle with a diagonal slash). As such, they acquire non-conventional meanings that are based on their conventional meaning. A non-conventional use of road signs may be interpreted as signifying feelings, ideas, political situations, and so forth.

The fate of words is similar; they are basically conventional symbols that we must apply according to definite linguistic norms. When words function in their merely conventional role, they do not call for interpretation. However, the function of any specific choice of words may in itself be a matter of interpretation, since linguistic norms do not account for each combination and use of words. The conventional entities acquire, as it were, a life of their own and thus evade regulations.

The role of a conventional symbol, say, a cross, within a work of art may not be exhausted by its conventional function. A person may be unfamiliar with Christianity and thus ask about the convention itself regardless of its specific role in the painting; being familiar with the convention, a person may ask about the role of the cross within that particular painting. The first question calls for historical, conventional information; the second invites either decoding or interpretation. If one is interested in a useful hypothesis about the integration of the cross in that particular painting, one asks for an interpretation.

Dreams are often viewed as signals. They allegedly signify past or future events, or inhibited wishes. I have already mentioned the decoding of Pharaoh's dream as an example of a message coded by heavenly powers. This approach is more common in religious circles. Coming from a different perspective, but using a similar logic, the orthodox Freudian analyst decodes dreams and does not toy with possibilities. The Freudian analyst believes that basic mental forces fix the code. However, what one person regards as decoding, another might well consider interpretation. The decoder believes that dreams have true, definite references (psychological, religious, historical or other), whereas the interpreter "plays" with hypotheses in order to show what can be done with the materials (the apparent facts) of a given dream.

The idea that works of art indicate the intentions, feelings or subconscious motives of the artist, or that works of art should be viewed as cultural documents, construes art as a set of signs that refers to certain facts in reality. Psychological analyses, as well as historical or anthropological analyses of art, construe works of art as such signs. This approach regards art as a means for transmitting information that could have been conveyed by other means as well. As a psychological document, art supplies the same kind of information one finds in dreams or personal diaries. Such an approach fails to recognize art as a distinct human product with a unique function. The recurrent cry of *art for art's sake* is a protest against all tendencies to regard art as a set of signs—means of reference to something beyond the work. However, denying that art essentially functions as a sign does not mean that art has no other functions, and that *art for art's sake* is the only alternative.

Substitution: Y functions as X

This type of interpretation is relevant to cases in which a given object, for some reasons, cannot fulfil its function and has to be replaced by another. The interpretative argument is that under the given circumstances Y is the best substitute for X (the pre-interpreted object), that it successfully fulfils X's essential functions. This argument is supported by sub-arguments concerning the essential function(s) of X and the qualities of Y as a substitute. Although Y is different from X, so the interpretative argument implies, it functions better then any alternative substitute.

Substitutes, by definition, are second best. "Second best", however, is quite frequent in everyday life: electricity replaces sunlight, a knife sometimes replaces a screwdriver and instant coffee replaces the real thing. These substitutions, being well known and repeatedly used, indicate *solved* problems: the problem of darkness, the problem of not finding a screwdriver when it is needed or the problem of not having time to prepare "real" coffee. In some cases, the substitute acquires the status of the real thing. For instance, people who are used to drinking instant coffee may not like real coffee anymore. Likewise, one may prefer the translation of a poem to its original version or the reproduction over the original painting. Once a substitute becomes common, adopted and further applied it loses its initial status. New substitutes, however, present interpretative arguments since they attempt to reveal new possibilities. They imply arguments concerning the essential nature of the original and its function, claims that cannot be substantiated by mere facts. One has to be imaginative and creative in order to suggest a *new* substitute when the old, familiar ones are not available. A new substitute is either a "ready made", that is, a familiar, object that functions in an unfamiliar way or a creation of a new object that did not exist before.

Artistic translations may serve as a paradigm for interpretative substitution. The translator substitutes the original poem or novel with a similar one written in a different language. Translation is, in part, a "mechanical" act that relies on knowledge of the conventions and vocabulary of both languages. When terms of the two languages are known to function similarly, translation poses no problem (and thus no solutions are required). This is usually the case with translations of "technical" texts or simple, basic utterances. "Is there a text in the class" is obviously translated into the German as "gibt es einen Text in dieser Klasse". This translation, I believe, does not raise any interpretative problems.

The case is clearly different when it comes to poetic language. Although each word in a poem can, in most cases, be literally translated into its equivalent meaning in another language, the translation is not obvious. A word in a poem has multifarious functions: literal meaning, sound, rhythm, rhyme, cultural connotations, etc. In most cases it is impossible to find a linguistic substitute that maintains *all* of the original functions. The translator has to decide, therefore, which of the original functions is essential and which is marginal, which must be kept, which can be sacrificed without seriously affecting the integrity of the original poem. Two translators working on the same poem may disagree either about the main functions (the problem) or about the value of a proposed substitute (the solution). They express thereby different interpretations of the poem.

The idea that art imitates or represents reality conceives of art as a kind of substitute for reality. Art, as a substitute, is supposed to evoke feelings or generate experiences similar to those of reality. Virginia Woolf, as quoted by Nelson Goodman (1984:3), disagreed with this view: "one of the damn things is enough". However, the idea of art as a substitute for reality has been quite common ever since Plato and Aristotle. Representation is, by definition, a kind of substitution. Those who theorize that art represents reality must account not only for the means and ways of this representation but, more fundamentally, for the function and purpose of this substitution. We do not substitute X for Y if X is available. We do not normally create substitutions without sufficient reason.

Goodman (1984) is right to argue that representation *per se* does not require resemblance. It does require, however, the ability to *function similarly* to the represented object in the relevant context. This functioning sometimes requires a resemblance of a certain kind, and sometimes not. If the nature of the representation is conventional, any convention may replace another convention and function similarly since conventions are basically arbitrary. So far Goodman is right. But when it comes to non-conventional functions, it is not true that anything may equally replace anything. Genuine qualities do play an essential role here. A knife, for instance, does not have to resemble a screwdriver in many of its features in order to replace its function. In fact, many objects that resemble a screwdriver far more closely than a knife does do not fulfill the function of a screwdriver as well as a knife does. But then again, we would not use a knife when the screwdriver is available. How does this line of reasoning work in respect to art and reality?

Plato's criticism of art is based on the assumption that art attempts to substitute for reality or create an illusion of such substitution without any purpose. If this were true, Plato would be justified in his negative position towards art. After all, we all understand that an apple in a painting cannot nurture the observer and that a table in a painting is useless for most practical purposes.

Art is not a mere substitute for reality even if it may so function in some cases, just like a knife may substitute for a screwdriver although it is not its main function. The difference between the case of art and the case of a knife as a substitute, however, is quite apparent. To lose a sense of reality is not entirely similar to losing a screwdriver. Substituting reality with fiction indicates a pathological problem rather than a solution to a problem. If, say, for the lack of intimate relations one substitutes fictional characters for real friends, one then has a problem, just as the person who intends to join the wedding feast depicted by Pieter Brueghel the Elder when a real meal is not forthcoming. This mode of action may create some positive psychological effect for a while, but it cannot solve the real problems of loneliness or hunger. The occurrence of such cases does not make art essentially a substitute for reality, just as a knife is not essentially a substitute for a screwdriver. A knife has its own distinct function, and so does art. Furthermore, we must distinguish between (1) the claim that art uses all kinds of substitutes for its materials, (2) the claim that art *can* sometimes substitute for reality, and (3) the claim that such substitution is art's essential feature or purpose.[1] Using representations (substitutes) among its elements is typical for many forms of art. Paintings represent objects by visual means, novels represent situations by describing them, dances represent feelings or a situation by using body gestures, and so forth. Yet, the nature of the constitutive elements does not determine the nature of the final product, just as a wooden table made of pine wood is a table and not a pine tree.

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[1] Gombrich (1963) has shown in his *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* how an object may substitute another for a particular function, yet he does not argue that this is the essential purpose of art. Likewise Walton (1990) analyzes the function of make-believe in art without arguing that this is the essential feature of art.

Implementation: the general and the particular

This type of interpretative argument concerns the mutual relations between the general and the particular: (1) the general is interpreted by its newly proposed instances, and (2) the particular is interpreted via its newly proposed classificatory category.

The general is interpreted by the particular

X (a given general concept) is best implemented and thus exemplified by Y (a particular, non-given case). This argument concerns new and non-conventional cases, otherwise it would not involve an act of interpretation. The particular case that is offered as a paradigm for the general category thereby induces a new understanding of the category. Each proposed paradigm emphasizes different features of the concept and thus implies different views of its essence.

A classification can be regarded as being natural, conventional or interpretational. Natural classifications, such as those of Aristotle, are taken to be matters of fact and, therefore, subject to truth conditions. Conventionalism regards all classifications as mere conventions; as such, they are neither true nor false in the strict sense. However, even a conventional classification gains the status of "truth" if it is widely accepted and put to common use. The status of *Oedipus Rex* as a paradigm for tragedy is traditionally accepted as a "true" classification and as such it does not offer any *new* understanding of "tragedy". Likewise, classifying lemon and grapefruit as citrus fruits is considered to be true. These cases are therefore non-interpretative classifications.

An interpretative classification is a classification that goes beyond apparent facts or commonly accepted conventions. It gives the category in question a new perspective. One may convey one's interpretation of "humanity" by praising or condemning certain deeds as "humane" or "inhumane". One may express a whole new conception of "tragedy" by presenting, say, Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* as a specimen of tragedy. This new conception may be accepted or rejected for various reasons. One may respond, "if you classify this play as tragedy, you have no idea what tragedy really is". But it is also possible that this non-conventional suggestion can be illuminating and make us see tragedies in a somewhat different way. Shakespeare, for example, offered an original interpretation of "tragedy"—original, that is, in his time—compared with the classical Greek notion.

A theory is interpreted by its implementations. The question, "how do you suppose Aristotle would conceive of conceptual art?" is an invitation to interpret Aristotle's conception of art by applying it to a form of art that post-dated him. We cannot be certain about Aristotle's understanding of conceptual art, and therefore any answer displays an interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy of art, rather than Aristotle's genuine standpoint. Each answer to the above question offers a different understanding of Aristotle's philosophy.

The particular is interpreted by the general

The form of this interpretative claim is that X (the given particular case) is best categorized by Y (a general concept). Since the same object may be classified in various ways, the argument concerning its proper classification is an argument concerning the "real" or "essential" nature of the particular object. The general thus becomes a means of referring to new potential of the particular. For instance, it is considered conventional to classify *Hamlet* as a tragedy. But when a critic labels this play a family melodrama, or an existential comedy, s/he shatters the conventional, almost "mechanical" approach and raises new questions, new answers—that is, new interpretations. Locke's philosophical system is traditionally presented as a typical case of empiricism. Classifying it as *rationalism* or *pragmatism* would throw a different light on it, since it would attract attention to qualities and aspects that were considered marginal in the conventional classification.

The idea that works of art should be viewed as instances of genres regards implementary interpretation as being essential to art. Works of art, according to Aristotle, reflect essential human situations and belong, accordingly to different genres, namely comedy, tragedy, and so on. As such, the rules of a genre, like the rules of any natural type, are not free creations of the artists; artists (should) follow generic rules and create good instances of them (as Aristotle demonstrates in his *Poetics*). In this sense, art has an affinity with philosophy; it is concerned with the general, albeit by means of the particular. But the problem with this view is that it is too confined. It implies that once we have understood a genre, there is no reason for taking interest in further instances of it. Once we understand what a tragedy is (via two or three good instances), we would not need any further examples of it, and thus, there would be no point in creating more instances of this genre. However, the role of art is obviously not restricted to implementing general types or ideas. We are intrigued by new interpretations (new instances) of the familiar genre for many reasons that go beyond the satisfaction of a theoretical understanding of the genre. If it is theory that we want, philosophy, or any scientific discipline, is more likely to answer our needs.

Analysis: the whole and its components

The interpretative argument of this type holds that the implicit completeness of X (the pre-interpreted object) is best demonstrated when disassembled and reconstructed in a proposed way—Y. The analysis determines the nature of the components, their interrelations and their different roles within the complete whole; it aims at revealing the unifying structure of the object by breaking it up and examining its constituting components.

The proposed interpretative analysis has to dissolve the apparent incompleteness of the object and sufficiently account for all (or most) problems provoked by the object's surface. However, not every analysis *per se* is an act of interpretation. A methodological analysis that addresses the object as a member of a class and ignores its individuality is not an interpretative analysis, but a mere mechanical operation whose conclusion is determined a priori. In other words, such an analysis is conducted not in order to resolve the unity of the object but to demonstrate that the object has indeed the required elements and thus satisfies a certain category or genre. For instance, analyzing a flower in order to establish its generic type is not an interpretative analysis, but rather a methodological account of certain features. Likewise, analyzing a work of art in order to demonstrate the features of its genre is not the same as attending to the work as an individual whole. By analyzing the mere generic characteristics one does not say much about the qualities that differentiate the given work form others within the same genre. Such a "mechanical" analysis may play a role in interpreting the work, but on its own it does not present an interpretation of the work.

Indeed, analyzing the individuality of an object involves all kinds of cognitive activities as well as a priori assumptions, but there is no one definite method or body of knowledge effective for all cases, even if these are cases of the same genre. This is one of the problems encountered when teaching literature or art in general. First year students often get confused because they do not know how to proceed, which step to take first, which question to ask first, which way to look at the poem or painting in question. No single method gives us a magic key to discovering the individual essence of an artwork, just as no single method guarantees the capturing of the individuality of a person. Upon analyzing a poem, does one start with "technical" matters such as rhythm and rhyme? Does one begin with the emotional experience expressed in the poem? Does one initially search for the poet's style by comparing this poem with other poems by the same poet? Each poem may call for its own unique approach, not only because every poem is different, but also because every interpreter's concerns are different.

Interpretative analyses of the same object may differ in many ways. They may attempt to answer different questions. They may consist of different perspectives and address different levels of the object. They may differ not only in their account of the overall structure of the object, but also in their account of the basic components. What are the basic components of, say, *War and Peace*? Are these the *words*? The historical or private *events*? The *personalities* of the characters? The *philosophical reflections* concerning human nature? Clearly each level of analysis leads to a different interpretation and involves different methods. If the characters are the essential components then one may suggest a psychological or social analysis. A psychological approach opens certain options in accordance with different psychological theories, and so on. If the components are philosophical ideas, this again allows for a range of different interpretations inspired by different philosophical doctrines.

Interpretative analysis is often associated with the view that works of art are organic wholes and their analyses may reveal their inner structure and inner completeness. In order to view the work as a whole, so the argument often goes, one needs to disassemble it, study its components from various aspects and then reunify them, thus gaining a better grasp of the whole. Arguments countering the idea that an analysis provides a better understanding of the whole are presented mainly by intuitionists like Bergson and Croce. They postulate that there is no direct passage from the segregated components to the complete whole. An analysis, so the argument goes, creates an obstacle to the immediate comprehension of the whole since it attracts attention to the segregated elements and their categories.

The evidence of experiences with regard to analysis may vary. Some students complain that their ability to enjoy literary works has been seriously damaged by the practice of analyzing texts. By contrast, others claim that they have gained a better and deeper understanding of the text and consequently derive greater enjoyment from the whole experience of reading (or for that matter, watching or listening).

Complementary interpretation: materials and product

Complementary interpretation is concerned with the relation between the *raw material* and the *final product*. It opposes interpretative analysis in the sense that it is the construction of the whole out of segregated materials, rather than the disassembly of the whole. The pre-interpreted object serves as the raw material; the proposed interpretation is the final product. The raw material is incomplete by definition; being *raw* it conceals potential which can be processed and materialized in many ways. The final product demonstrates this materialization and thereby implies claims concerning the hidden potential. Personal events, feelings and observations often serve as raw materials for a novel, and body gestures in various situations supply materials for creating a new dance.

What is the whole that would best realize the hidden potential of the given materials? This is the central question of complementary interpretation. The product (the interpretation itself) proposes itself as the optimal solution, the best realization of the hidden potential. The proposed product also claims to have identified the *essential* potential of the given materials and that it is worth the effort to realize it. Its evaluation is accordingly judgmental. An approval or disapproval of the proposed product reflects on one level an evaluation of the materials themselves and on another level the evaluation of the product, the degree of realization of the potential. One may disapprove of a product either because the materials themselves are worthless or because the realization of the materials' potential is a failure. For instance, one may not like a cake (the final product) because it contains cheese and one happens to dislike cheese, or one may like cheese but disapprove of a certain cheesecake because it has failed to utilize the full potential of the ingredients.

It is important to note that the relation between the raw material and the final product is different from the relation between the means and the end. The material is not exactly a means for its product and the interpretative product is not entirely an end in itself. What is the difference? Considering X as the means for Y implies that X can be replaced by other means—means that functions similarly (or better) and result in a similar end. Once Y is achieved, X (as the means) is redundant. Tools are means for getting the job done; they may be replaced by other, better tools without loss of the initial purpose. Tools are not components of the final product. By contrast, in material-product relations (complementary interpretation) the materials are not external to the product and are therefore significant not only as means for achieving an end but as the constitutive components of that end. The ingredients of a cake are obviously not redundant once the cake is ready—they constitute the cake (the end). Likewise, the materials of an artwork are both means for achieving an end and its very constitutive components; they do not become dispensable once the product is achieved.

The interpretative product is indeed an end in some sense, but not an "end in itself. The significance of the final product is not only in its existence as such, but also in the new information it supplies about the materials. The product *interprets* the materials by demonstrating what can be done with them, by revealing their hidden potential. In this sense, the product is not only an end but also a means for a new and better understanding of the materials. Thus, the materials that serve as means serve also as ends—the realization of the materials is the end that is achieved by the resulting product. The events that function as materials for a novel are interpreted in the novel; their new understanding is both the constitutive elements and the purpose of the novel. This kind of mutual relation between means and end in an artwork cannot be reduced to the elements. Therefore, means and ends cannot be separated and clearly distinguished in artworks as they can in discursive contexts.

The main difference between complementary interpretation and the other types of interpretation is that in all the others the pre-interpreted object and its interpretation are separated. The sign is a separate entity from its reference; the original object is different from its substitute; the general is distinct from the particular. Even the whole disappears when disassembled and analyzed, and in this sense it is separable from its isolated elements. However, the final product of a complementary interpretation includes its pre-interpreted materials as its components. The processed product cannot exist separately and independently of its raw materials. A performance of a symphony does not exist apart from the symphony; a performance on stage does not exist apart from the written play or the actors, and a cake does not exist apart from its constituting ingredients. A variation in materials results in variations in the product.

To illustrate the nature of these relations we may start with simple, everyday examples such as cream cheese and ice cream. Both are dairy products, yet each one realizes a different potential of the milk; each case involves different ingredients and different techniques by which milk is processed. We may say that both products demonstrate interpretations of milk. When we compare cream cheese with ice cream, we may ask which of these products realizes the best or most essential qualities of milk? The comparison between different products is a comparison between *different potentials*. By contrast, a comparison between two kinds of ice cream may be concerned with the *degree of realization* of the *same potential:* which version makes the best of the ice-cream potential?

The processing of food out of natural materials may indeed manifest the relation between materials and products. But is food a proper metaphor for interpretation? There are three main reasons that prevent cream cheese or ice cream (or food products in general) form being regarded as typical forms of interpretations:

1. The fact that cream cheese and ice cream are made from milk is already common knowledge, not a revelation of a new, hidden potential. There are known methods and recipes for these products.
2. Food is associated with everyday basic needs; interpretation is not associated with such urgent needs.
3. Food is associated with repetition and *applications* of the same knowledge over and over again (because it answers basic needs). Interpretation is quite the opposite: it loses its status as interpretation when widely repeated and commonly accepted.

Indeed, we usually do not learn anything new about the potential of milk upon eating vanilla ice cream. We may, however, occasionally discover a better vanilla ice cream or a new kind of ice cream. We may also believe that the *gelato* we had in Florence last summer was the ultimate in ice cream. But surely somewhere, at some definite point in the history of dairy products, someone discovered this amazing potential of milk and made ice cream for the first time. That person suggested an interpretation of milk; his interpretation was widely accepted and gradually lost its novelty and significance. But even well-known products may occasionally be interpreted anew. That ice cream shop in Florence last summer offered me a new performance of a potential I thought I knew all about and informed me about new possibilities inherent in milk. I would not hesitate to compare it to a new performance of a musical composition (this is not an evaluative statement: some may argue that musical interpretations are, in general, of a higher value than food interpretations, others may disagree).

The fact that our main interest in food is primarily dictated by our biological needs indicates that *interpreting* food is not our primary interest. Our primary interest is to be properly fed. Looking for new "performances" of food materials is a "secondary" interest. Indulging ourselves in revealing new potential may become an end only in a well-fed society, when basic nutritional needs have been met. Indeed, viewing food as a form of interpretation is less common than other forms because of the vital, everyday purpose it serves and the moral significance it carries on a planet where a large percentage of the population goes hungry.[2] Basic, everyday nutritional needs call for discursive knowledge that is repeatedly applicable; the joy of interpreting food invites new and unique discoveries that do not differ in their logical structure from new performances of music, theater or any other form of complementary interpretation.

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[2] This demonstrates one of the many connections between aesthetics and ethics. A more detailed discussion is presented in Chapter 9.

Following a recipe, one does not reveal anything new about the materials' potentiality but rather applies what has already been discovered—the results are anticipated. However, inventing a new recipe can certainly count as a form of interpretation. A new recipe (a good one) is not just an arbitrary mixture of whatever comes to hand. An arbitrary mixture of ingredients seldom results in an edible dish, just as an arbitrary assembly of words rarely results in a meaningful poem. A good recipe expresses the intuitive knowledge of the materials. There are many schools that teach cooking, yet there is no cooking school which can give us the formula for disclosing unknown qualities of the "old" known materials, just as there is no school that can provide us with the formula for creating good works of art. From this perspective, food materials can be compared to sounds, rhythms, colors, words, ideas, feelings or body gestures. The general relation between material and product is the same in all cases.

The final product is always a *complex* of processed materials; it never consists of one single element. A single element cannot reveal anything different from what it revealed prior to the process; alone, it is the same element as before. It needs at least another element to cause changes in its disposition. This is very obvious with food ingredients as well as with colors or sounds. A patch of blue, on its own (if this is possible to imagine), expresses a certain color tone. It expresses different tones when juxtaposed with other colors. The tone of the blue patch is affected by surrounding colors, but at the same time it also affects their tones. The influence is mutual: the various materials that partake in the final product mutually process each other, and thus mutually "interpret" each other.

Mutual interpretation does not imply that all materials are equally essential for constructing the final product. This point touches upon the heterogeneity of the role of the elements in aesthetic order. Although the blue patch is affected by the red one just as the red is affected by the blue, we may regard the blue patch as central and the red as marginal, depending on our grasp of the whole. Likewise, salt, although it is a very important ingredient in many recipes, is usually regarded as a marginal element. The naming of the recipe reflects this: a dish is unlikely to be named "salt bolognese". Sometimes it is the quantity that counts, but not always: we do not refer to vegetable soup as "flavored water" just because water is a major component. Although each recipe for soup shows us not only what can be done with various vegetables but also what can be done with water and salt, the water and salt elements seem obvious, common to most soup recipes and therefore non-essential to the individuality of the specific recipe. We can imagine, just for the sake of argument, a different culture on a different planet, in which water or salt is the precious ingredient; the same soup would be viewed entirely differently in such a culture, although it may taste (almost) the same. This line of reasoning applies also to musical compositions and paintings and other forms of complementary interpretations; some elements are central and some are marginal, although they are all necessary within the whole.

Whether an object functions as a material or a product is also a matter of perspective. The same object may be a complete product from one perspective, and a raw material from a different perspective. Potatoes are indeed complete products of Mother Earth, yet they are regarded as raw material when considered as food. Raw materials are open to various combinations with other materials subject to various techniques. Folk music is a complete product of its own kind, yet it may function as a raw material in another kind of music: Bartók not only transcribed folk music for the piano and other instruments but incorporated into his music the melodies, rhythms and other elements of peasant music. Offenbach used the tales of E.T.Hoffmann, the German writer, as material for *The Tales of Hoffmann,* and Tchaikovsky made a similar use of another tale by Hoffmann in his music for the ballet *The Nutcracker.*

It is important for the understanding of interpretation to distinguish between arbitrary discoveries and intentional interpretations. If one encounters a new type of fruit one may try it in different ways, analogous to handling other fruits, in order to get acquainted with it. Only when one already knows some of its qualities can one interpret this fruit by offering new recipes. One cannot do this with a completely new and unknown fruit, just as one cannot interpret any object that is entirely alien. It is necessary, for theoretical purposes, to distinguish between accidental discoveries and intentional interpretations, even if the result may be the same. We respect the ability to create new recipes because it is a consequence of an intuitive knowledge. An accidental discovery has no such significance.

Accepting that a recipe (its invention, not its many applications) is a form of interpretation demonstrates once again that interpretation may be non-verbal and therefore neither true nor false. Avocado ice cream is an interpretation of avocado (as it is also an interpretation of the conception of ice cream). Whether it is a tasty interpretation or not, whether it is an excellent materialization of the avocado's potential or a sheer waste of it—the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Constructing a theory (in any field) is analogous to inventing a new recipe. A new theory offers an interpretation of "old" concepts. The concepts that are known from previous theories (the "raw materials") are given new meanings by relating, connecting or disconnecting the relevant concepts in a new way. Sometimes, new concepts are born through this process of re-ordering the "old" ones. Theories, therefore, are aesthetic sets before they are considered discursive principles. They are born like new recipes: through previous knowledge, intuition and new insights. The application of a theory is analogous to the application of a recipe. Once it is known, it can be applied (if it is applicable) and thereby many instances of it can be created; it functions as a discursive ordering principle. An immediate conclusion to this extended comparison between a recipe and a theory is that theories, as any form of interpretation, cannot be proven false in the strict sense (I disagree here with Popper). They present better or worse possibilities that are usually judged according to their useful applications or explanatory power.

A musical performance is another typical case of complementary interpretation. The composition itself is already a final product proposed by the composer, just as a vegetable is a product of the earth. The complete composition, the score, functions, however, as a raw material that is processed into another kind of product, the performance. The performance-product materializes potential qualities of the original score by utilizing the qualities and techniques of the instruments, the performer's concepts, values, feelings, and so on. Each performance emphasizes different qualities and brings into play different ingredients apart from the original score.

Although the pre-interpreted object, the score, exists prior to its performance, it is affected in some sense by its performance. An influential performance may change the original understanding and evaluation of the composition, and this new view, in turn, may influence other, new performances. Since its inception, the art of jazz has largely evolved in precisely this way, through adventurous re-interpretation of popular melodies, or "standards."

Take the case of films adapted from novels. A film adaptation of a novel is an art product that uses, among other materials, another art product—a novel. The product interprets the materials, and the materials partly determine the value of the product. A person who sees the film before reading the novel is bound to read the novel in the light of the film interpretation. However, watching the film after reading the novel must raise certain expectations that influence the appreciation of the film. When I first read *Anna Karenina* I focused on the moral and social aspects of Russian society in Tolstoy's time. Only after seeing the Hollywood production with Greta Garbo did I realize the novel's potential for sheer melodrama—a realization that to some extent modified my previous appreciation.

Complementary interpretation is relevant to understanding not only interpretations of works of art, but also the very nature of art. It is my view that art, any form of art, expresses complementary interpretation. A work of art is a new product of materials taken from various levels and aspects of experience. It is therefore informative, at once a means and an end, and stands in various relations with other forms of interpretation and knowledge. My thesis that art is a form of interpretation will be developed further in the concluding chapter.

Evaluating interpretation

Interpretations are quantitative in the sense that they are subject to evaluation. Interpretations of the same object may differ, for various reasons, in their value. Different performances of the same music or play, just like different types of cheesecakes or vegetable soups, differ in their values as final products. In this sense, interpretation is closer to explanation than decoding. Explanations too are subject to evaluation—there are better or worse explanations, depending on context and framework of each explanation. By contrast, decoding is not quantitative since it is either true or false. Yet, the problem of evaluating an interpretation is different from that of evaluating an explanation; the latter, being general, is pragmatic and its evaluation is functional. We prefer an explanation that is more applicable and relevant to further cases. What is the reason for preferring one interpretation to another?

The problem of evaluating interpretations is actually the problem of evaluating aesthetic order and art in general. As already argued, the fact that interpretation is about *individual* potential creates its own problem: the evaluation of an individual materialization cannot rely on analogies, generalizations, further applications or any a priori grounds, even if general concepts and principles are involved in the process of interpretation. We need to distinguish (at least theoretically) between two levels of evaluation: (1) the appreciation of the *problem;* and (2) the appreciation of the *solution*. This involves (1) the appreciation of the pre-interpreted object, the given materials; and (2) the appreciation of the proposed interpretation, the product. Only the second level is actually the level of evaluating interpretation, but it is interlocked with the values of the pre-interpreted object. A good question does not always result in a good answer, and a good answer does not necessarily indicate the significance of the question or the importance of the object that raised the question. Let us examine each of these levels separately.

Evaluating the problem

The evaluation of the problem may be further divided into (1) the value of the given object and (2) the value of its suggested problem. These may differ, since it is possible for an object to raise more than one problem, not all of them of the same significance.

1 Each object brings into play the values of its categories. One may hold that music in general is more worthwhile than dance, or that rock music is more valuable than jazz. Regardless of their status—objective or subjective, cultural or personal—these values are bound to affect the overall value of the proposed interpretation. An object may be good of its kind and receive an interesting interpretation; and yet, owing to the low value of the kind (category), the whole endeavor is not highly appreciated. A similar point is suggested by Walton (1979). A popular love song may be good of its kind; its performance (the singer's voice, diction, musical arrangement, and so on) may also be excellent, yet the whole performance may be dismissed as "low art". A performance of Bach, even if it is not an impressive performance, is often taken more seriously than a good performance of a musical. A cheap novel may result in a good film, although not necessarily so. Objects that belong to categories of high value (from the perspective of the beholder) do not always evoke good interpretations, but they may evoke serious interest in their interpretation owing to the value of the pre-interpreted object. A good interpretation, however, may change the previous view of the object by showing its better aspects.

2 The interpreter is expected not only to give an imaginative, revealing solution to the apparent problems but also to deal with *essential* problems. Not all problems are equally significant nor do they all touch upon the object's essence or whatever is believed to be its essence). An interpretation may be criticized for the marginal, non-essential aspect with which it deals. If the "real" problem is avoided, no matter how imaginative and sophisticated the interpretative solution is, it is still a solution to a marginal problem and

therefore insignificant. For instance, the question concerning the meaning of the protagonist's name may be a key question in one novel and entirely trivial in another. In Steinbeck's *East of Eden,* the name Adam is, no doubt, significant; however, it is doubtful whether the name Isabel in James's *The Portrait of a Lady* is worth dwelling upon.

A question that seems marginal at first may become important as a result of a convincing interpretation. Even if I believe that the name Isabel is insignificant in James's novel, I cannot rule out the possibility of an interpretation that would convince me otherwise. A political interpreter may regard the yellow tie worn by the President in a press conference as significant, although most observers may dismiss this fact as being worthless of attention. It is the onus of the interpreter to convince the observer (or reader) that such an apparently insignificant detail is an indication of an important hidden meaning, or otherwise the interpreter may be accused of dealing with peripheral, pointless issues. One may regard a psychological interpretation of *Hamlet* as missing the main point, and yet one might be surprised by what such an interpretation reveals.

It may also happen that although the observer does not detect any problem in a given object, and is thus satisfied with its apparent layer, the observer may become aware at once of a problem and its solution upon encountering an interpretation of it. Thus, an interpretation may reveal not just the hidden layers of a given object but also teach the observer, indirectly, how to observe things and how to question them. In this sense, the benefit of a good interpretation goes beyond the mere understanding of the particular object. The simultaneous acquaintance of the materials and their hidden potential, the presentation of the problem and its solution, is typical of many forms of art. For instance, one may learn about an unfamiliar situation through a film or a novel, and at the same time sense that the situation is well described. One may read about a familiar, apparently non-problematic, everyday situation and become aware of the depth and complex meanings of the situation via its artistic presentation.

A good interpretation teaches us something new about its materials, and through it, about ourselves, or else it fails as an interpretation. Oscar Wilde observed this phenomenon and expressed it succinctly:

> After playing Chopin, I feel as if I have been weeping over sins that I have never committed […] Music always seems to me to produce that effect. It creates for one a past of which one has been ignorant […]! can fancy a man who had led a perfectly commonplace life, hearing by chance some curious piece of music, and suddenly discovering that his soul, without his being conscious of it, had passed through terrible experiences, and known fearful joy, or wild romantic love, or great renunciations.
>
> (Wilde, 1982:343)

Chopin's music, according to Wilde, presents the solution: his musical interpretation of certain emotions; at the same time the music evokes these emotions (the problem) as if they were raw materials for his work.

This last point is relevant for understanding our view of natural objects and the environment in general as objects for aesthetic appreciation. Natural environment, in many cases, is not a product of (human) intentional act. The question arises, then, how can natural objects fall under the category of interpretation? One may argue that the joy over, say, a beautiful landscape does not involve any interpretative procedure; it is a mere response to beauty without the attempt of solving any problems, and even without the sense of having a problem. After all, what kind of problem is solved (unintentionally) by an "innocent" landscape or for that matter a beautiful face or a flower? Indeed, while admiring a landscape, one may not think explicitly in terms of interpretative problems and solutions, and yet I argue that the experience of natural objects is better explained using these terms.

It is a fact that we do not equally appreciate every natural object that we encounter, and that the differences between the cases require explanation. If two landscapes are equally natural, what does determine the evaluative difference? In what sense is one natural scenery more pleasing or more beautiful than another? I argue that the paradigm of interpretative problem and solution is useful here.

Natural objects, like works of art, are capable of raising simultaneously in the observer the sense of problem and its solution as Wilde suggested. The "problem" originates in a comparison of various similar cases, and the sense that some values or qualities are better materialized in one case rather than in another. We have all seen trees, mountains, hills, lakes, meadows or rivers of different shapes and sizes. It is not the single element that gives the landscape its overall meaning and value, but the interrelationships among the elements and the meanings they carry in the eyes of the beholder. Each element brings into play its previous meanings, associations and categories. The implied interpretative question is about the hidden qualities of the elements, their potentials, their values and meanings. Landscapes, like works of art, are capable of evoking in the observer the feeling that their order is right and insightful (informative). We do appreciate a landscape that seems to "reorganize" the familiar elements in a different, new way that at the same time seems just right to us—it gives the familiar elements a new meaning; it brings out the not yet known best qualities of the constituting elements. The same mountains that seem dull in daylight may seem glorious at sunset; the same beach may appear different in winter or summer, and so forth. The "real" power or quality of a natural object may be better realized in one context than in another, and the beholder appreciates these differences.

Values, previous experience, knowledge and everyday habits affect the appreciation of landscape no less than they affect the appreciation of artifacts. It is a well-known phenomenon that a tourist tends to be more enthusiastic about a local landscape than the native inhabitants. Consequently, the tourist and the native inhabitant face different components (materials) and thus different problems in the same landscape. For the native inhabitant the environment is loaded with meanings that escape the tourist. For instance, my hometown, Haifa, is blessed with natural beauty-making features. It stretches out across Mount Carmel, looks over the Mediterranean beaches and has a spacious bay to boot; rocks, trees, wild flowers and beautiful sunsets decorate the town. Yet, many of the inhabitants are not very impressed and take all that for granted. Their appreciation of the natural beauty of their own town is marred apparently by their awareness of pollution and all kinds of municipal problems, high taxes and above all insufficient cultural activities. In addition, there is the boredom effect of a too familiar, overexposed environment in everyday life.

Evaluating the solution

The value of the solution is not easy to establish. On the one hand, we want the apparent problem to be solved by excavating hidden layers; on the other hand, since these layers are hidden, how do we know that the proposed solution is indeed based on genuine layers of the object and not on external ones? This may remind us of Meno's puzzle: how is new knowledge possible? How do we know that the interpretation touches upon the essence of the object? Moreover, what is it that would convince the observer that the "hidden layer" revealed by the interpreter is genuine? What is it that convinces one observer and does not convince another?

Being *individual* and *quantitative* at the same time, an interpretation creates its own difficulties; it requires that the possibility it offers be evaluated on its own individual basis. One may argue that this requirement creates a vicious circle. We accept an interpretation because it confirms our understanding, but our understanding, in turn, depends on interpretation. The hermeneutic circle is indeed there, but it is not a complete circle and it is not vicious. If it were, we could never distinguish between an object and its interpretation. Consequently, we would not have an adequate understanding of what interpretation is. It is a fact that in many cases we do distinguish between the object "as given" and its interpretation. This is very clear in the case of interpretative performances, but it is also quite clear in cases in which we examine and compare different interpretations of the same object. If the circle were indeed vicious, we could not compare different interpretations of the *same* object preferring one to another.

In order to break the circle, we may adopt Socrates' strategy (although not necessarily his beliefs). This strategy bridges the old and the new and regards the new understanding as a continuum of the old. An interpretation, we may argue, completes something that has been already hinted at on the surface of the object; it brings into light something that is *implied* in the apparent. If the observer cannot regard a proposed interpretation as a completion of pre-existing hints, s/he rejects the interpretation as irrelevant or poor. In order to accept an interpretation as effective one has to have a clue, a *premonition* of the object's completeness, even if the premonition is vague or chaotic. The observer has to have some vague feeling, some obscure sense of what the complete object might be. It is not a clear and full understanding, it is more like a forgotten Platonic idea; in some sense it is there, yet it is not clearly known. We identify it when we see it, although we cannot say in advance what it is.

A good interpretation therefore does not come as a complete surprise; it has to respond to the implied intuition of the observer. Excavating the hidden layers of the object, the interpreter also uncovers these vague, incomplete, undefined, raw premonitions of the observer. By showing the product as a complete object, the interpreter realizes and confirms the observer's premonitions. A good interpretation may often be greeted by a sense of recognition and affirmation—the observer may feel as if this interpretation has always lurked beneath his or her own awareness of the object. An interpretation that is disconnected from these premonitions and comes as an utter surprise is often too strange to strike a chord and therefore fails to enlighten the observer.

This is not to say that all observers share the same premonitions; at this point the analogy with Plato's theory breaks down. After all, it is apparent that people react in more than one way to a given object, and, as a result, they accept its proposed interpretation differently. Observers differ in their beliefs, sensitivities, interests and expectations, and therefore not all of them detect the same qualities or problems in the given object. Moreover, an observer may not accept an interpretation at a given time, but appreciate its value at a later time because of changes in perspective and, as a result, changes in his or her premonitions.

Is there a way to judge which premonitions are better justified? Is there, consequently, a way to decide which interpretation is better justified? This question has occupied critics and philosophers more than any other question concerning interpretations. Having rejected the creator's intention (on the basis of the distinction between decoding and interpreting), is there any reliable ground left?

The argument that the object itself limits the scope of its interpretations and directs the observer sounds better than it really is. This is, for instance, the core of the New Criticism standpoint: the text determines its true interpretation. However, since interpretations always go beyond the apparent text, the object "as it is" is not a sufficiently reliable ground for substantiating the validity of the interpretation. Interpretations convey possibilities that go beyond the actual surface of the object, and the apparent qualities and meanings of the object are not enough to validate or even limit an interpretation. The apparent may be misleading. A poem entitled "love" is not necessarily a love poem in any conventional sense, and a painting of a bowl of fruit may be interpreted as meaning something different from fruit. Medieval Jewish thinkers interpreted the apparently erotic and secular *Song of Songs* as an allegory about the relations between God and the nation of Israel: the man represents God, the woman represents the nation of Israel. Every detail is consistently interpreted in this light, and erotic details are loaded with religious meanings. This is one of the peculiarities of interpretation: since it is exactly the apparent qualities that the interpreter wishes to go beyond, the suggested meaning of the object as a whole may be very different from the meaning of the apparent layer.

The final interpretative product may be very different from what the observer may have imagined. It is apparent that the baked cake looks and taste very different from its raw ingredients, and judging by the raw materials themselves one cannot guess (unless from previous experience of baking) that these materials will integrate into an inviting cake. The question of how best to determine the direction of interpretation is hardly solved by pointing to the object "as it is". We learn very little about directions to an unfamiliar destination by defining our current location. We must have, in addition to the current location, a sense of direction (a hint, a premonition of it). This sense of direction may differ from one interpreter to another.

External elements cannot guarantee a good interpretation either. An interpretation of one poem cannot depend on the meaning of another poem, even if it is written by the same poet or belongs to the same genre. Analogies can mislead us: one love poem does not necessarily carry the same meaning as another love poem, just as one performance of *Hamlet* is not determined by another. An interpretation that consists of such analogies may result in a poor, unsatisfactory interpretation that fails to respond to the uniqueness of the object and present it at its best.

The allegorical interpretation of *The Song of Songs* was motivated by the belief that the holy book would never concern itself with profane love. Approaching *The Song of Songs* as a mere love poem between a man and woman is a threat to the unity of the Bible as a holy script. Can "facts", the text "as it is" or any other external fact undermine this belief? The medieval interpretation does not deny that the text "as it is" is about mortal love; it only argues that this is simply the apparent meaning of the text, and not the complete, genuine meaning of it. Moreover, the allegory acknowledges the "facts" of the text by exploiting them as a key to the hidden meaning.

One may claim that the medieval interpretation contradicts the object's given "surface"; one may use historical facts concerning the author and his era in order to show that the medieval interpretation contradicts the spirit of the original intention; one may argue that the allegorical interpretation results in a banal text and demolishes the beauty of the original. One cannot, however, prove the medieval interpretation to be false. The allegorical interpretation may sound funny, disconnected, irrelevant and implausible in a secular, twentieth-century context; it is, however, held to be "correct" and indeed revealing in Jewish orthodox circles for reasons that are relevant to these circles. There are even those who innocently believe that this is not an interpretation but a valid decoding of the original intention. One may confront the values and beliefs that inspired this interpretation (or alleged decoding) with a different set of values and beliefs, but then it would no longer be a dispute over a particular interpretation, but rather over a whole worldview.

But are there no limits to interpretation? Does anything go? Yes and no. I would say that the question limits the answer, and the factors that determine the question and its value also determine the scope and value of the answer, since the problem and its solution are constructed on the same foundations. This means, that in order to accept an interpretation as a satisfactory solution one has to recognize the initiating problem and accept it as a significant problem to start with. If one regards the initiating problem as irrelevant, absurd or uninteresting, one is bound to reject the interpretative solution for similar reasons. A secular reader may not see any problem in the fact that a love poem is included in the Bible, and thus see no need for any kind of interpretative solution of this alleged problem. Even if one agrees that the medieval interpretation is consistent, witty and imaginative, one may still reject the interpretation as being a solution to a non-existent problem. Likewise, one may reject a psychological interpretation of *Madame Bovary* on the account that the real problem of the novel is concerned with moral issues, or social conventions, family values or even a structural conception of a novel, etc. An agreement on the principal interpretative problem of an object renders insignificant or even rules out many possible interpretations that address other problems. This agreement limits the range of interpretations by defining the prerequisites to the optimal solution.

There are "quantitative" factors that estimate the "distance" between a proposed interpretation and the object in question. How far does the interpretation go? One may argue that the above medieval interpretation goes too far from the original text and thus fails to enlighten the reader about its meaning. One may argue that the interpreter actually creates a new text that has nothing to do with the original, that the connection between them is vague. If, for instance, one argues that Ophelia (in *Hamlet*) committed suicide because she was pregnant, it is the interpreter's mission to "cover" the distance between the information that is supplied by the apparent text and this suggestion. This might be done by showing step by step how the interpreter arrived at this conclusion or by demonstrating the benefit of this suggestion for the understanding of the whole in comparison with alternative interpretations.

Arguments concerning the "distance" between the object and its proposed interpretations are not easy to substantiate or, for that matter, repudiate. For instance, how do we define the borderline between an interpretation of a musical work, a musical variation on the same piece and a creation of a new work that is inspired by the original (but is not an interpretation of it)? In some cases it is a quantitative matter. How extreme is the modification? But how far is "too" far? The answer may depend on a personal or a cultural perspective, but there is no definite answer. It may be a matter of taste, like the question "how much salt is too much?" And how is taste determined?

Redundancy in interpretation is another aspect of the same problem. It indicates "waste" of effort, materials or techniques. It means that some elements of the interpretative product do not really affect the meaning of the object; they contribute nothing. Such elements have no role in completing the object and solving its interpretative problem. In some cases they may create a confusing effect. The degree of redundancy in interpretation is directly proportional to the degree of benefit that the interpretation would gain by removing or ignoring certain elements.

The quantity of elements "covered" by the interpretation is another quantitative factor. Does the proposed interpretation clarify all or most cases of incoherence in the object? Does it unite more elements than another interpretation? How much "external aid" is used in order to substantiate the interpretation in question? Each interpretation may "cover" different facets of the object. Which facets are more significant and therefore should be covered by the proposed interpretation? Furthermore, there is the "economical" consideration. Is the result, the meaning obtained by the proposed interpretation, worth the "cost"? If the cake is quite tasty, but the amount and cost of its ingredients, the complex preparation and the time it consumes exceed the value of the result, then one may argue against it. Interpretation, although it does not subsist on a priori principles, is still a product of a rational act: the cost should not exceed the benefit.

The medieval interpretation of *The Song of Songs* needs to be convincing in its general idea, and it has to convince the observer that going *so far* beyond the apparent is justified by the resulting interpretation. A religious reader may feel that the allegorical interpretation reassures his or her belief, hopes and lifestyle, and in this sense the cost is worthy. A secular reader may think of the allegorical interpretation as a waste of a beautiful love poem.

There are many methods of interpretation, but none guarantees the optimal result. What is the magic key to an illuminating, brilliant and convincing interpretation? Interpreters may try different techniques. One way is by paying attention to details that previous interpretations have dismissed as insignificant or inconsistent and then transfer these details from the periphery to the center of attention. Another way is by importing an interpretive strategy from one area of study to a completely different one. Still another way is by being among the first to apply a new ideological or philosophical approach; for instance, by interpreting Shakespeare in the light of, say, Marxism. However, none of these "methods" guarantees an enlightening and convincing interpretation. Perhaps one should resort to T.S.Eliot's advice that the only method in literary interpretation is to be extremely intelligent.

The very fact that there are no formulae for constructing a good interpretation contributes greatly to our admiration for this practice. We cannot expect that given the object, every rational creature will arrive at the same interpretation. Interpretative observations are personal in a sense, and yet many interpretations strike us as necessary, convincing insights that ought to be generally accepted. The process of interpretation, like any act of creation, remains an enigma. How does the interpreter of the Bible, the musician, the actor, the director and the literary critic come to see what they see in the object of their interest? How do they enable us to perceive things we have not seen before when contemplating the same object? Can one person learn from another how to observe things? There is no simple "yes" or "no" answer to this.

A good interpretation has to exceed the limits of the individual observer and touch upon something that is basic and common to many others (at least for agents of the same cultural category). It takes an observant eye and an imaginative mind to see hidden layers, which are also there for others to see. It is a fact that in many cases we do come to see hidden layers through interpretations offered by others. This indicates common values and common perceptions, and it gives interpretation a seemingly “objective” status. A good interpretation convinces us that the hidden layers we failed to notice before are “really” there, that they constitute the essence of the object and its unifying principle. Good interpretations compel us to accept the idea of an immediate, intuitive knowledge that cannot be verified by discursive methods.[3]

To interpret one needs a “relatively stable” object, as Margolis (1989) puts it, and creativity. Being creative, interpretation brings about new knowledge but escapes the constraints of fixed rules or patterns; it shows us some truth about the object without being, in itself, subject to truth conditions. It is not a science; it is an art. Indeed, it is my view that art itself is a form of interpretation. A good work of art, like any good interpretation, exposes the perplexities of experience and responds to our vague premonitions. It processes the raw materials of experience and attempts to present a complete product, a meaningful experience. Art reveals to us unknown elements of previous experience; it teaches us to question the apparent and go beyond it in order to realize new potential and contemplate the possibilities of our world.

Aesthetic relations as complementary interpretations

We now arrive at the conclusive argument of the qualitative analysis: aesthetic order consists of complementary interpretations. The elements of aesthetic order mutually interpret each other; they complement each other and thereby reveal each other’s hidden potential in various degrees. The mutual interpretation of the elements forms an order that unifies the object to a certain degree. The necessity of this order is conditioned by the essential qualities of the elements; the degree of necessity is proportional to the degree of essential qualities of the materials (the elements) that the order reveals. An inner necessity creates in the observer the feeling that things are ordered as they “should” be, that the order is right and that the hidden potential is materialized at its best. A poor interpretation takes the form of either a (discursive) formula that fails to reveal any new aspect in the object or disorder—a consequence of the clash between the proposed interpretation and the “true” nature of the object.

As argued above, aesthetic order, unlike discursive order, has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The qualitative aspect is reflected in the mutual interpretation of the elements. Through these relations the elements express their qualities. Aesthetic order has all the characteristics of interpretation in general and *complementary interpretation* in particular. The elements of the set that make up the raw materials of the order constitute their own interpretation by their interrelations. These interrelations are exemplified by, say, a new building that changes the overall outlook of its surrounding and gives it a new meaning, or a new performance that reveals so far hidden qualities of the original composition. It is expressed in words that are integrated into a love poem and offer a new interpretation of "love", and it is expressed in new fashions in design which offer new combinations of colors and shapes and thus re-interpret old motfs. The final product presents the constituting elements in their new, interdependent meaning and create thereby a new aesthetic order.

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[3] This may come close to the kind of knowledge Croce had in mind when he wrote that “Knowledge takes two forms: it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge.” (Croce, 1992:1).

A good interpretation creates a truth-like impression, a high aesthetic order, that is, a high internal necessity. Yet, good interpretations, like any two individual aesthetic orders, do not exclude each other. Two different interpretative performances of the same play may be equally good, equally truth-like and equally convincing.

Interpretation also exhibits the quantitative features of aesthetic order. It is, by definition, *informative* and *unpredictable*. A good interpretation not only teaches us something new about the object but also, indirectly, how to observe things and how to see beyond the given. The process of revealing the relevant and right complementary interpretation is basically a trial-and-error process. As Wittgenstein expressed this understanding of aesthetic correctness:

> You design a door and look at it and say: "Higher, higher, higher…oh, all right."
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1970: II, 9)

Summary

1 Types of interpretation differ in the logical relations that exist between the interpreted object and its proposed interpretation.
2 I distinguish five types of interpretation: interpretation of signs, substitutional interpretation, implementary interpretation, interpretative analysis and complementary interpretation.
3 Aesthetic order consists of complementary interpretation. It expresses the relations between the raw materials and the final product. The elements form the raw material; their individual order expresses their mutual complementary interpretations. The set and its aesthetic (individual) principle cannot be separated, just as the product and its raw materials cannot be taken apart.
4 The evaluation of the interpretative product consists of two levels that influence each other: the value of the materials—the value of the problem, and the value of their order—the value of the solution.
5 Interpretation presents a direct, intuitive form of knowledge. It teaches us not only about the qualities of the individual object but also about observing objects and questioning them in general.
6 The quantitative aspect of aesthetic order is a reflection of the relations between the interpretative problem and its solution. Interpretation is individual, sensitive to context, informative and unpredictable in varying degrees. The value of the interpretation is the degree of aesthetic order.

9 Relations and interactions

Like pure elements, discursive order and aesthetic order can be examined separately; they do not, however, exist independently of each other. Moreover, both orders are interrelated with the various types of disorder. There is no pure experience that consists of one type of order only, or that is entirely detached from disorder of some form. Each element plays its role in every particular case. The complexity of experience can be described as a net of interrelations between the two types of order and the various types of disorder; each particular case expresses different proportions and interrelations between the constituting elements. Therefore, the analysis of aesthetic order would not be completed without an illustration of this "net" and an examination of some of its typical intersections.

Between the two orders

According to Bergson (1944), vital and geometrical order express opposed tendencies. Thus the two orders do not have positive interactions; each exists in the absence of the other. As already argued in Chapter 5, Bergson pushes the disparity between the two orders to an unnecessary and problematic extreme. His position suggests that two major components of human experience remain alien to each other. Such a schism between two unrelated components would fracture and obscure the mental experience instead of explaining it by means of unification.

According to my theory the two types of order not only have *positive interactions* but also are *mutually dependent*. Neither of the types exists independently, nor can one be perceived in the absence of the other. Each order consists of "materials" definable in terms of its alternate order. The strong linkage between the two orders enables the mind to move back and forth without predilection for either discursive or aesthetic order. The focus on one order rather than another in a given context, and accordingly the movement from one order to another is decided by factors of the relevant context and not by a priori disposition. Each of the orders has its indispensable role to play in personal as well as cultural developments. Yet, the movement between the orders is not symmetrical; it is not the same and need not be the same in both directions, since the differences among the two orders are effective. These differences not only correspond to different needs but also evoke and require different mental operations.

Just as he denies the interactions between the two orders, Bergson also denies their mutual interdependence. He posits a hierarchy of types of order that values "vital order" (aesthetic order) above "geometric order" (discursive order). Bergson is not alone in preferring aesthetic order to discursive order and placing it at the top of the hierarchy. According to George Santayana (1955:19), "All values are in one sense aesthetic". Eddy Zemach (1986, 1989), for another, argues that not only values but also truth and therefore scientific knowledge are based on aesthetic principles. Aesthetics, according to Zemach, is the foundation of rationality.

If indeed the two orders are mutually dependent, as I take them to be, the two orders must also be equally genuine and equally significant, even if in each given case one of the orders overrides the other. Bergson's straightforward preference of the one (vital order) over the other (geometric order) is rejected here as an ideological preference from which the theory of order cannot benefit. If one admits that both orders are necessary for the very apprehension of experience, one has to accept that both are equally "real", at least in the sense that they both reflect, as Bergson puts it, the operation of the (same) mind.

The coexistence of the two orders

As already stated, the distinction between the two types of order does not induce a typology of objects. There are no *aesthetic objects* in the sense that they always and exclusively express aesthetic order; similarly, there is no such thing as a "non-aesthetic object" that is deprived of aesthetic order whatsoever. The commonly used category "aesthetic object" indicates the cultural or individual interests in certain objects during a given period of time. According to Mukarovsky (1979) an object has the potential to function in different ways and to satisfy different needs. No object can ultimately be defined by a specific function, because we cannot rule out that it might be enlisted for another function, in a different context. The *aesthetic function,* like any other function "can accompany every human act, and every object can manifest it" (Mukarovsky, 1979:95). I fully agree here with Mukarovsky.

Any object may reveal various kinds of order, which reflect different layers, aspects or perspectives. Yet there is an important difference between the two types of order in this respect. When it comes to discursive order, it is quite obvious that an object can be classified according to different categories. An apple, for example, is food for the hungry, an object of study for the botanist, a source of income for the farmer and a symbol of Man's fall for the priest. One may be simultaneously aware of the different categories (ordering principles) without confusing them or their relevant applications and associations. One can easily accept that an object falls under various categories at the same time and that some of the categories are better exemplified by that object than others.

This is not the case with aesthetic order. One cannot perceive more than one aesthetic order of a given object at a time. The perception of an aesthetic order is, in some sense, like the case of "seeing as" in Wittgenstein's famous discussion (1976: part II, §XI). One can see the drawing as either a rabbit or a duck, but never both simultaneously. Although one may *understand* that different people may perceive different aesthetic orders in the same object, one cannot perceive more than one aesthetic order at a time in the same object. Each aesthetic order, like the rabbit/duck drawing, "demands" the whole territory. Discursive order, by contrast, expresses an abstraction of the object, and does not demand the "totality" of the object, it regards some features of the object as redundant or irrelevant for the category in question. It therefore permits other kinds of order (other abstractions) to share the same territory without necessarily creating a conflict. Aesthetic orders are exclusive: they do not share the territory, or for that matter, the observer's attention.

There is, however, an important aspect in which aesthetic order is different from "seeing as." One may switch back and forth from the rabbit to the duck; it is always the same rabbit and the same duck. In this sense, "seeing as" is like switching between categories (discursive orders); they do not affect each other; they remain the same, indifferent to each other and to their changing context. Aesthetic orders "respond" differently. One cannot go back and forth from one aesthetic order to another without affecting the nature of the orders in question. If one finds an object beautiful, and after a while the object becomes banal and boring, one cannot simply decide to erase the present sense of banality and switch back to the previous sense of beauty. One may remember the previous experience, yearn for it and regret its loss, but one cannot simply return to the initial experience. This is a reflection of the sensitivity of aesthetic orders. Past experience shapes the present experience and one cannot return to a previous aesthetic order as if nothing has happened in between. Although we may remember our previous impression, we cannot revive it fully, nor can we see the object exactly as we saw it prior to "discovering" its beauty or for that matter its banality or ugliness.

As adults, we may remember our childhood fascination with a story, a place or a picture. But remembering is not the same as actually experiencing the fascination. One cannot pretend not to know what one already knows, or never to have seen what one has already seen. The image of our past is influenced by our present situation, and memories are often misleading. To reconstruct accurately an aesthetic order of the past we would have to *erase* our memories, to forget everything we have learned and felt subsequently to that particular experience. An accurate recollection of an aesthetic order is therefore rare.

By the same reasoning, one can understand the motives, attitudes and ideas of another person without accepting them, but one cannot see the aesthetic order perceived by others without actually seeing it as *the* aesthetic order of the object. One can attempt to imagine how a work of art was perceived by its contemporaries; one may learn about the era of the work, the school of the artist, and so forth. This learning is bound to affect one's original view; it does not mean that one can thus experience the work exactly as its contemporaries did. The perspectives, associations and values of people living in different periods cannot be the same. A change in the experience of an aesthetic order is not just a matter of decision. It is not just a question of altering one's position or moving one's eyes from one corner of the drawing to another. It involves the whole personality, beliefs, previous experience and knowledge.

We may switch between theories, categories or norms for the sake of argument without really accepting them. We can learn the "game" of a different theory and "play" it correctly without being convinced in the validity of the theory. However, we do not know an aesthetic order before we actually experience it as such. All we can do is *pretend* to admire what in fact we find ugly or dull, or pretend to dislike that which we find attractive. We may *behave* as if we experience beauty, but this is not the same as actually experiencing it.

Two people looking at the same object may experience quite different aesthetic orders without realizing it and without being able to convey to each other their conceptions of orders. We often see people coming out of the theater exchanging impressions and evaluations of what they have just seen. We may assume that they are referring to the same performance, and thus to the same aesthetic order. This, however, is not necessarily the case. The impression of sharing exactly the same aesthetic experience usually occurs when aesthetic appreciation is articulated in similar terminology or when the same elements are singled out as playing a central role in the whole. But even if two people agree that the object is beautiful, and even if they give a similar description of it, it is not necessarily the same beauty for both. Hume has already observed that:

> The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same.
>
> (Hume, 1985:227)

When it comes to "matters of opinion and science" (discursive orders), Hume observes the opposite, "the disputants are surprised to find, that they had been quarrelling, while at bottom they agreed in their judgement." I am not sure whether the distinction between the two cases is that sharp and whether Hume meant it to be as sharp as it sounds, but in principle I believe Hume to be right. Actual cases, however, are more complex since no order is experienced in its purity. There are ingredients of aesthetic order in "matters of opinion and science" and there are discursive orders involved in every aesthetic experience as the following analysis attempts to establish.

Center and background

Although we may perceive only one aesthetic order at a time, we do perceive both types of order simultaneously—discursive as well as aesthetic order. When one admires the beauty of a garden, one does not forget that it is a "garden" or even more specifically an English garden. This category shapes the aesthetic experience of the garden and has a role in the overall appreciation.[1] Discursive order and aesthetic order are not mutually exclusive in this respect; on the contrary, they coexist and interact. The awareness of one type of order influences our attention and appreciation of the other order in the same object. This is effective mainly with aesthetic orders since they are highly sensitive. We may appreciate more the beauty of the garden because we know that most of the plants are rare species; our appreciation may decrease if we know that the garden served as a meeting place for Nazis.[2]

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[1] Walton (1979) emphasizes this kind of dependence between aesthetic evaluation and generic characteristics (see also Chapter 10, p. 245).

The two types of order coexist but they do not dominate our attention equally. In every object of experience, only one type of order occupies the center of attention while the other is relegated to the background. A complex of forces settles the question of which order determines the primary category of an object in a given context, namely natural, cultural and individual forces. Many objects are defined according to their main intended function even if they have other functions and even if their main function has not materialized in some cases. For instance, a bottle is meant to store liquids, and different bottles are shaped in accordance with the specific kind of liquid that they are made for. We thus may recognize a soft-drink bottle and differentiate it from an oil bottle, even when the bottles are empty. This kind of function, even if it is well rooted in a certain culture, may not be effective in another culture, and thus the same object may be categorized according to a different "main" function and as result express a different aesthetic order. The film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (directed by Jamie Uys, 1981) portrays the first encounter of a Bushman with Western civilization, when a bottle of Coca Cola is thrown from an airplane. This "strange" object immediately acquires a new category; it is taken as a gift sent from heaven. The Bushman's family explores this "gift" and discovers many new uses, none of them associated with the object's original function as a bottle (a function that is unknown to the Bushman's family). The new category modifies the status and value of the object both as a utility object and as an aesthetic object. The discursive orders involved in the appreciation of the heavenly gift are entirely different from those of a soft-drink bottle, and yet in both cases there are discursive orders that interact and influence the appreciation of the whole.

According to Kant (1951a), aesthetic perspective and discursive interest cannot coexist; one defeats the other. An object is viewed either as an aesthetic object or as an object that falls into a different (discursive) category. The question remains whether the relationship between the categories is a center/background relationship or a relationship of mutual exclusion. Kant's explicit position is more likely to support the latter, but his following example may be interpreted both ways:

> Hardly anyone but a botanist knows what sort of thing a flower ought to be; and even he, though recognizing in the flower the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no regard to this natural purpose if he is passing judgment on the flower by taste.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§16)

The botanist, although admiring the beauty of the flower, so Kant observes, "pays no regard" to its natural function (discursive order). What does this mean? It certainly cannot mean that the botanist's knowledge simply vanishes while admiring the beauty of the flower. If the botanist can return to his professional interest within seconds (and we must assume that he can), it implies that the knowledge is there in the background of his "aesthetic experience". By the same token, the beauty of the flower does not pass entirely unnoticed when the botanist is engaged in professional observations. If the aesthetic order of the flower was entirely absent from the botanist's attention while s/he examined it scientifically, it could not suddenly appear out of nowhere. Although it may happen that a person is so entirely taken by a momentary interest that s/he becomes completely "blind" to any irrelevant feature, such an extreme experience is rare. We may assume that some "irrelevant" impressions remain in the background, even if they are very weak and vague, "waiting" for the right moment to reoccupy the center of attention. Likewise, we may assume that, while at work, the X-ray technician is not entirely blind to the aesthetic aspect of the whole body in front of him, although the whole is "irrelevant" to the professional operation. Attention may be concentrated, it may be centered, but it is not necessarily *total.* This point also suggests that aesthetic experience is never disconnected from other kinds of experience as, for instance, Bell (1961) explicitly argues.[3]

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[2] This clearly goes against Kant's observation that beauty is non-conceptual. See further discussion in Chapter 10, pp. 221–231.

Strong orders (see Chapter 1, pp. 15–16) play an important role in determining the center of attention. Strong orders, to remind the reader, are not necessarily high orders or highly valued orders, but rather those that command our attention and are easy to grasp for different reasons; these are mostly well-known, relatively simple or pleasing sensory elements. The alphabet of one's own language, for example, forms a strong order not because it is simple, but because one learns it in early childhood. More complicated orders find their way to the center of attention via learning, training and deliberate effort. We are used to *reading* letters as symbols that combine into words, but if we are asked to ignore their conventional function and pay attention only to their shapes, it requires an effort, a deliberate control of attention.

The center/background relation is not the same for both types of order. Discursive orders tend to be less sensitive and less affected by this relation. The beauty of the flower should not, ideally speaking, affect the method and conclusions of its research as a "reproductive organ." A judge in court is expected to ignore the appearance (ugliness or beauty) of the accused and conduct the trial only according to evidence and laws of justice. It is not that aesthetic order does not influence discursive thinking, but rather that it is expected in such cases not to do so. Whether one can really ignore the "irrelevant" aesthetic order and avoid its effect is a question that I cannot answer. I believe that people do make an honest effort in such cases, but I also believe that one might be thus influenced without awareness. The case is clearer regarding the influence of discursive knowledge over aesthetic appreciation. The botanist's knowledge must influence his or her aesthetic appreciation, since aesthetic order is sensitive. The aesthetic experience of the layperson is bound to be different from that of the professional, even if both enjoy the beauty of the same flower. Knowing how different parts of the flower function, being able to compare the particular flower with others within the same species as well as with other species is not without consequences. Cultural and individual values are also reflected in the priority of one order over another. In ancient Greece, for instance, there was a strong focus on bodily virtues; in traditional Judaism these virtues were pushed aside from the center of attention. As expressed in *Proverbs* 31:30, "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Mukarovsky writes in this spirit:

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[3] On the purity of aesthetic evaluation see also Novitz (1990) and Lorand (1992).

> We have all encountered people for whom anything can acquire an aesthetic function and, conversely, people for whom the aesthetic function exists only to a minimal degree [...] As soon as we change our perspective in time, space, or even from one social grouping to another [...] we find a change in the distribution of the aesthetic function and of its boundaries.
> (Mukarovsky, 1979:3–4)

It should be noted that not only major factors, such as cultural and personal tendencies, affect the aesthetic experience. Even a passing mood may overpower cultural forces and suppress natural tendencies. A passing mood may cause a short-lived effect or it may generate a new chain of effects that eventually becomes a dominant long-term attitude.

Changing orders

Changing circumstances may result in shifting focus from one order to another within the same object. The process of changing orders is sometimes a gradual development, and sometimes sudden and disruptive.

Objects have their own history that may be described in terms of shifting orders. It is a "natural" process for objects to exhaust one order and acquire another (in the eyes of the beholder). Sometimes this involves a change from one discursive order to another—changing classifications or changing interests concerning the same object. A building may function as a palace in one period and as a museum in another. In some cases it involves a change from one type of order to another, that is, from an object of utility to an object of aesthetic value, and vice versa. When a utility object becomes obsolete, our attention is free to focus on its aesthetic order. Huge old radios, Model T Fords, antique sewing machines, and such like, have gradually gained a certain charm as aesthetic objects. An object may also metamorphose from one aesthetic order to another, although this change may not be noticeable. Classical paintings reproduced on T-shirts gain a new status and a different aesthetic value—their aesthetic order is, no doubt, different from that of the original paintings. The popularization of classical art reflects, among other things, changing socio-economic values, which in turn causes changes in the aesthetic order of the works in question. The work may still be highly appreciated as before, but for somewhat different reasons; gaining new meanings and even new social functions in the new context, the work is bound to exhibit a modified aesthetic order.

Changes in aesthetic orders also occur when objects are transmitted from one culture to another, as in the case of African masks or church music. Sacred objects belonging to African tribes have been presented in modern Western culture as works of art while losing the vitality of their original function. Were they originally created as works of art? Possibly, but not necessarily. I am more inclined to think that originally these were not works of art in the sense advocated in this analysis, but rather they functioned as sacred utility (discursive) objects in religious ceremonies. In Western culture these masks have lost their original function, they have been turned into decorative objects, and generated an industry that produces kitsch.

Primitive drawings found in prehistorical caves are presented as "prehistorical art". However, we can only guess at their original function. I find it hard to imagine that prehistorical hunters, living a short and hard life, would occupy themselves with *per se*. It is more likely that the drawings were made for ritual or communicative purposes and thus were governed by discursive orders. But even if we assume that the caveman had a concept of art similar to our conventional concept, it is quite clear that the cavemen had a different understanding and appreciation of these drawings. For one, they surely did not view these drawings as "primitive art".

Greek mythology originally functioned as a discursive order; it offered explanations for the origin of the universe and its order. Explanations of natural events as well as human social life were given via stories about the gods' intentions and their methods of interference with actual events. Along with the development of science, mythology lost its original function and was viewed as a collection of beautiful stories. However, modern psychology has revived the original discursive function, although not entirely in the same sense. Thinkers like Freud and Jung used mythology to explain matters that it never consciously intended to address.

In some cases the process of changing orders is not gradual but a sudden shift that is forced upon both the object and its observer. This kind of change is typical of modern art (although in the past few years it has lost its shock value). Duchamp's over-utilized *Fountain* may serve as a paradigm here (as in so many other contexts). The kind of object that Duchamp placed in the museum was not placed there because it has lost its original function—unlike coal irons and old radios, urinals still maintain their everyday function. There was no "natural" reason (no gradual development) why the focus on this discursive order should have shifted to aesthetic order. As a utility object the "fountain" is one of millions that are still in use. From this perspective, Duchamp's particular urinal has nearly zero informative value. However, as an aesthetic object that is put in the museum under its new title as a work of art, it is (or is expected to be) highly informative. All kinds of details that were redundant in the original use become significant for its new status: the particular shape of the urinal, its color, its location in the museum, its mode of placing, and, above all, the drama it generated by its unexpected occurrence at a specific point in the history of art (unpredictability). The observer was asked, by implication, to shift attention *artificially* from one type of order to another within the same object, without any of the usual, "natural" reasons. The average observer could not respond. After all, a urinal is a urinal, no matter where one places it and how one names it. Since its original discursive function is still effective and continues to dominate its aesthetic order in everyday life, the average viewer cannot simply replace one order with another. This difficulty too, I assume, is one of the intended features of the work. In fact, the urinal seems to be carefully chosen as an object whose functionality and association with "low" bodily functions seems deliberately *opposed* to all the values traditionally associated with art.

Objects may also change from aesthetic to discursive orders. As already noted in previous discussions, an oft-repeated aesthetic object acquires the status of a pattern or a blueprint—a prerequisite of discursive order.[4] A work of art that functions as a blueprint for its performances does not cease, on this account, to exist as a work of art. However, in its function as a blueprint it is not perceived and evaluated as a work of art. The interest in the aesthetic order is shifted from the original composition to its performances. The relevant discussion in such cases is not whether Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* is a good work of art but rather if a particular performance is a good work of art (a good interpretation of Beethoven's original work).

A piece of music played as an opening for a daily radio program becomes a mere signal, a conventional representation of that program and "loses" the centrality of its aesthetic order. While listening to it, one is more likely to be reminded of what comes next than focus on its aesthetic order. The same can be said about music played in airports or supermarkets. It is supposed to create a calm atmosphere—although to the taste of many it is rather irritating. It is the new and inappropriate discursive function that creates the irritation, not the original aesthetic order of the music. Similarly, a combination of colors that seems beautiful at first is bound to lose aesthetic attraction when used for, say, school uniforms. National flags and national anthems likewise "lose" aesthetic attention, which does not mean that they cannot re-attract attention to their aesthetic order under different circumstances. They commonly function as symbols not as aesthetic orders; they produce national pride (or anti-nationalistic feelings) rather than aesthetic appreciation. One may intentionally create a new circumstance in which a banal object is viewed afresh and thus regains its aesthetic attention. For instance, one may play the national anthem in an unusual way, such as Jimi Hendrix's violent and explosive rendition, on electric guitar, of *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

Mutual dependence: form and material

The two orders coexist and complement each other, and they are also mutually dependent. Their mutual dependence is a reflection of the linkage between unity and diversity, between internal and external relations, and between the general and the individual. One is not conceived without the other; each preconditions the other. The debate regarding the genuineness and priority of one over the other is settled here (though not solved) without an inclination to either of the extremes. A set that maintains one type of order exclusively is inconceivable, and since none of the orders can exist exclusively on its own the question of priority dissolves itself. Furthermore, since each type of order preconditions the other type, both orders are equally genuine.

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[4] Walton (1998) expresses a similar view.

The mutual dependence of the two orders can be expressed in terms of form and material: the materials of each order, that is, the elements, are taken from the domain of one order and given the form of another. No order supplies its own materials. As I will show below, discursive order consists of aesthetic sets and aesthetic order consists of discursive sets. Each order contributes the qualities that the other order lacks: the discursive order of the elements provides aesthetic order with the stability (indifference) that it lacks; and aesthetic order enriches discursive order with sensitivity and variety. The mutual dependence prevents each order from fully maximizing its own qualities (sensitivity or indifference) and thus collapsing into states of disorder.

The materials of discursive order

The basic elements of discursive order—the set and the principle—both depend on aesthetic order. A discursive set must have an individual identity that is attained by its aesthetic order; an ordering principle is in itself a set of aesthetic order.

THE AESTHETIC ORDER OF THE DISCURSIVE SET

Sets, even those that belong to the same category, must differ, by definition, as individual sets. Sets differ in their degree of coherence with the ordering principle and in qualities that are irrelevant to their classifying category. In other words, no set can be reduced to its ordering principle; it has an individual identity. These individual differences can be explained only on the basis of aesthetic order.

This point can be exemplified in moral evaluations. According to Kant, the imperative category is universal. The coherence between a maxim and the imperative category is a matter of reason (which is the same for all rational agents). And yet, two people confronted with the "same" situation may reach opposing moral conclusions. What does account for these differences in evaluation? In order to decide which maxim is relevant to a specific situation one has to "carve" the case, to define its relevant elements and context, and differentiate it from other cases—one has to form a set. The particular case has to be a "closed" individual set before one can relate to it a maxim that coheres with the categorical imperative. However, there is no principle that tells us how to go about it—how to decide which elements should be excluded or included in the relevant set. Each person may "carve" the case differently, that is, "create" a different aesthetic set and define differently the relevance and role of the elements within the set. For instance, parents may believe that insisting on knowing exactly where their son or daughter has been the previous night is an expression of their concern and moral obligation as parents; their children may regard the same as an intolerable interference and violation of privacy. Each of the parties "designs" a different case by including and excluding different elements; each party tells a different "story" about the same event. Although morality, according to Kant, depends on reason, its practice is determined, in the last analysis, by aesthetic order. Or, to put it in Kant's words, it depends on the power of judgment, the power to think "the particular as contained under the universal" (Kant, 1951a: Introduction, IV). The particular is aesthetic; the universal is discursive.

Moreover, the fact that the same case may be related to different discursive principles implies that the individual cannot depend on any specific principle for its identification: its individuality expresses an integration of many principles. "But", as Kant (1951a: Introduction, IV) puts it, "the forms of Nature are so manifold, and there are so many modifications of the universal transcendental natural concepts left undetermined by the laws given, *a priori*."

Therefore, although individuality depends on general categories, the individual can never be exhausted by discursive principles. There is always something irreducible that defines the identity of the individual object and differentiates it from others. This irreducible component is the aesthetic order of the case.

DISCURSIVE PRINCIPLES AS AESTHETIC SETS

A theory, a law or a pattern functions as a discursive principle in the sense that it is applied or manifested in its instances—the particular sets. However, on its own, the theory, the law or the pattern also exhibits qualities of an aesthetic set. This point has already been raised in Chapter 4 while discussing the nature of primary laws. The elements of a principle are neither indifferent to each other nor redundant. They are highly informative. Differences among theories concerning the same subject matter may be compared with differences among novels or paintings that have a similar subject matter. Each theory (or law, or pattern) offers a different interpretation of its subject matter, just as *Madam Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* offer different perspectives and understanding of similar situations. This is one of the major links between science and aesthetics.

It is not in vain that many scientists have expressed their views concerning the interdependence between science and aesthetics. However, many of these observations have not been sufficiently substantiated. Poincaré (1908:59), for instance, remarks that "the useful combinations are precisely the most beautiful". What does this mean? It may mean that the applicability of a theory (its functioning as a discursive principle) depends on its aesthetic features—sensitivity to details, high informative value, closed set, and so forth. A theory that exhibits a low informative value and high redundancy is ineffective or confusing. If some elements of the theory are redundant and one does not clearly know which elements these are, one may apply the theory or the formula in a useless fashion. If one knows which elements are redundant one may simply remove or ignore them. A theory that has a low informative value is a theory that fails to illuminate the relevant realm in a new way (compared with previous theories); as such, it has no advantage over other theories. Poincaré does not elaborate on this issue and from what he does say it is not clear whether there is a safe method to identify the "most beautiful combination", and what are the implications of his observation if such a method is not available.

Many scientists and mathematicians are fascinated by the idea that "beauty is truth." G.H.Hardy, for instance, believes that

> The mathematician's patterns, like the painter's or the poet's, must be *beautiful;* the ideas, like the colours or the words, must fit together in a harmonious way. Beauty is the first step: there is no permanent place in the world for ugly mathematics.
>
> (Hardy, 1992:85)

Dirac (1963:47) remarked that "it is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit experiments." One of the cases Dirac had in mind is probably the case of Schrödinger. Schrödinger's wave equation did initially give rise to experiments because at that time it was not known that the electron has a spin. Afterwards, when people learned that electrons have spins, Schrödinger's (beautiful?) equation could be coherently applied. Einstein's theory, to add another famous example, has been praised as "supremely beautiful" (Penrose, 1989:153), to which Dirac (1982:83) adds that "Einstein seemed to feel that beauty in the mathematical foundation was more important, in a very fundamental way, than getting agreement with observation."

One may go on quoting intuitive observations of a similar nature made by leading scientists and mathematicians.[5] The philosophical argument, however, needs a systematic reasoning to substantiate these observations; it cannot be based on impressions or enthusiastic praises. Indeed, the theory of aesthetic order supports the claim that the most beautiful theory is the more truthful one. However, this claim is limited; it cannot serve as a methodological device since it expresses an analytical truth: the beauty of the theory is in fact the value of the solution it offers to its initial problem. Beauty cannot be considered apart from what is (already) taken to be true and significant. The best interpretative solution (for whatever requires solution) is the most beautiful theory and vice versa. Therefore, beauty cannot serve as a *criterion* for evaluating the truth or applicability of the solution.[6]

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[5] See, for instance, Chandrasekhar (1987), Wechsler (1978) and Bohm and Peat (1987).

[6] McAllister (1998) arrives at a somewhat similar conclusion but for different reasons. He regards beauty as an *insufficient* criterion that does not work equally well in all cases: it is misleading if it contradicts or avoids empirical evidence but it is useful in cases in which empirical evidence is not available. My plea for the mutual dependence of beauty and truth is inclusive, that is, it holds equally for all cases.

It is interesting that Bergson's claim concerning the priority of the intuitive, vital order finds indirect support in these observations. As already stated, I disagree with Bergson, and by the same token I do not share the enthusiasm with which certain scientists and mathematicians are willing to stake the validity of science on sheer beauty, as if beauty is an independent factor.

I suspect that this enthusiasm, which originates in the fact that beauty can be found in a typical discursive territory (theories, equations, etc.), results in imbalance between the two orders. It seems that when perusing coherence and harmony in a theory, one tends to forget that coherence, harmony and other aesthetic features depend on the nature of the materials in question—in other words, the dependence is mutual. One cannot evaluate the redundancy of an element or its coherence with other elements without taking into account some facts (truth) concerning the nature of the elements in question and the purpose (discursive order) of the theory. One cannot evaluate the applicability of a theory without considering non-aesthetic matters.

After all, what is a theory? It is basically a network of interrelations among concepts of a certain realm. This network interprets the concepts in question and gives them a new meaning, a new way of applying them in the relevant cases (the same concepts may have had different implications in a previous theory). The informative value of a theory lies in the new interpretation it offers, that is, in the new solution to the initiative problem. Sometimes new concepts emerge from the interaction among the "old concepts"; sometimes an "old" concept is excluded, and this exclusion in itself functions as an element in the new theory; sometimes it is a change in focus—a marginal concept in a previous theory becomes a central concept in a new theory, and so forth.

The beauty of a theory lies in its new interpretation, in the attempt to solve problems raised by previous theories or by new experience. A theory is beautiful if it reveals vital information with minimum (low redundancy) means. But in order to realize that the information is indeed vital and that there are no redundancies in the theory (or the formula), one has to consider the facts concerning the relevant materials, to understand the implications of the relevant concepts and the problems they are supposed to solve, and to understand the alternatives. In other words, the value of the theory (the interpretation) cannot be detached from the knowledge of pre-interpreted "facts" that are independent of the newly proposed interpretation. These facts condition the beauty of the theory; they are not determined by it.

Zemach (1986:21) boldly claims that "science is constrained by aesthetic, not by alethic, criteria". Thus, *beauty is truth*. To the question: how do we choose between scientific theories? Zemach replies, by their beauty, to which Dirac and many others would concur. Let the constraints of science be aesthetic, but what about the constraints of aesthetics?

To be sure, the beauty of a theory is not a marginal, exotic feature. It reflects the value of the interpretation it offers. A beautiful theory is a theory that offers a good solution to the initiating problem. A theory that lacks high aesthetic qualities, that is, its elements do not integrate well and are highly redundant, cannot be effectively applied. However, without certain knowledge of the relevant facts and without considering the purpose of the theory (its discursive function), it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the theory, and thus impossible to state whether the theory is beautiful or not. A person that does not understand what the letters E, m and c stand for in Einstein's formula, and does not know the problems that are solved or evoked by this formula (which involves an extensive knowledge of previous theories, facts and problems), cannot sincerely claim that s/he finds the formula beautiful. The layperson (as in the case of art) may repeat the verdict of the professionals, but this does not mean that s/he is able to justify the verdict or account for its meaning. A layperson that finds $E=mc^2$ beautiful may equally agree that $m=cE^3$ is beautiful too.

The dependence between the orders must be mutual in spite of the endless regression it may create. There is no simple solution to this problem. The idea of beauty in science is appealing because it seems to offer a criterion, a way out of the problem of evaluating scientific theories. It creates an illusion that we can begin to solve the problem of preference for one kind of theory over another. However, the escape from contingency and uncertainty to the sanctuary of beauty is bound to lead us astray. Aesthetic appreciation depends on what we know to be true and significant; these are the very components of our appreciation. We cannot avoid dealing with facts and truth, even if these involve uncertainty, arbitrary choices and inaccuracy. In the temple of beauty the unavoidable revelation awaits: not only that *truth is* (dependent on) *beauty* but also that *beauty is* (dependent on) *truth*.

The materials of aesthetic order

Looking out of the window and admiring the view may seem a very elementary experience that does not demand any previous knowledge of facts and concepts. However, this is far from being the case. The natural object of our admiration involves all kinds of concepts: concepts of shapes and colors as well as more complex concepts of natural objects, cultural conventions and associations and personal inclinations. In most cases we take this kind of knowledge for granted; we all have some notion of Nature in general (as opposed to artifacts), and we all know something about the moon and the sun, mountains and valleys, trees and flowers, and so forth. We all have previous experiences to compare with, and we all have some notions of what is regular and what is unusual. It does not mean that we all share the same concepts: some concepts are culturally dependent, some reflect differences in personal experience. Yet, such concepts are always involved when one looks out of the window. These are the discursive elements of the aesthetic order "framed" by the windowpane.

The elements—natural or cultural—cannot interrelate and create an aesthetic order unless each element is defined by a discursive principle and known to the observer from previous experience. Although aesthetic order is sensitive and unique, it consists of relatively stable elements, that is, discursive categories that partake in other orders. The individuality of the aesthetic order is the individuality of the network of relations among the elements, but the elements themselves ("on their own") express discursive orders. The observer has to know the general meanings of such elements before s/he can conceive of a new net of interrelations. The discursive components constitute the "stable core" that remains (ideally speaking) intact regardless of the particular aesthetic order that they share: a mountain is a mountain and a river is a river. Likewise, one has to have prior notions of forms and colors before one can evaluate a painting; and one has to have notions of sound and rhythm before appreciating music. The level of acquaintance with these elements may vary, and, accordingly, the perceived aesthetic order. However, a non-categorized, unfamiliar element brings nothing to the new net: "a hundred thousand nothings" as Leibniz has put it, "cannot make something" (Leibniz, 1951: preface to *New Essays on the Human Understanding*).

The stable core is not necessarily conventional and does not have to have a conventional definition. As already stated in the first chapter, anything may function as a discursive principle: a color, a shape, a rhythm, or any arbitrary combination of qualities that has gained the status of a concept in past experience. A familiar color carries its stable category, even if it cannot be accurately expressed in words; one cannot define a color; it is a simple notion. Nevertheless, one recognizes it as "that specific color", meaning that it is known, identified and carries some (relatively) stable impressions and associations from past experience. In other words, the element is recognized as a token of a type. It brings its type qualities into each combination. Sometimes a specific combination of colors earns a name, like the "tricolor", which usually refers to blue, red and white, but the naming is not crucial.

An element may bring into play more then one category, that is, more than one discursive order. Each word in a poem, for instance, may carry, besides its literal meaning, all kinds of associations related to a variety of categories. The number of categories related to an element that eventually participates in the aesthetic complex depends on the observer's knowledge and awareness. A poem that contains unknown words, or a melody that is based on strange rhythms, is likely to appear meaningless and disordered.

The appreciation of a poem is preconditioned by the knowledge of the language. Each word has its "relatively stable", defined meaning that is the basis for its specific role within the poem. A melody, like a poem, consists of interrelations among its notes; the isolated notes regardless of the melody they constitute are governed (like isolated words) by a discursive principle—the musical key. However, unlike the case of a verbal language, one may not know the musical conventions and yet recognize the notes as a result of a previous experience and natural musical talent. The sound quality of C major does not depend on its name or on the system that classifies it, although the knowledge of the system influences the perception of the sound. One may likewise distinguish prose from poetry even if one does not have a definition of prose (as Molière has demonstrated in his *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*). One cannot appreciate a good poem before having a sense (not necessarily a definition) of the difference between prose and poetic language.

The problem of limits

The mutual dependence between the two orders creates an endless regression of layers. If, as Keats's famous line has it, *"Beauty is truth, truth, beauty"*, there is no one-way solution. Discursive order consists of aesthetic order, and aesthetic order consists of discursive order—this regression does not have a logical limit. A poem (aesthetic order) is composed of words that have lexical meanings (discursive order) that consists of sounds or shapes (expressing aesthetic order) and are further divided into separately defined symbols (discursive order) and at the same time, each symbol has its own shapes or sound (aesthetic order) and so on. Theoretically, this can go on forever without ever arriving at the primary level that precedes all; in practice, this progression is limited.

Usually one is not aware of moving from one layer to another while reading a sentence in one's native language. Nonetheless, when we learn to recognize and pronounce sounds and words in a new language, we may be made more aware of this process. When reading a sentence in a well-known language, we do not read each letter separately and we pay no particular attention to the shapes or sounds of the letters. We know them, but we do not focus on them. In some cases, we even read whole sentences without focusing on the separate words. However, at some stage we must have gone through a process of learning to distinguish among different shapes and sounds and basic meanings to be able to recognize and perceive each shape or sound as a component of a meaningful symbol.

The layers of orders may never exhaust themselves: in order to perceive a higher level, we would have to perceive the lower level on which the higher level rests, and so on, endlessly. But if the endless infrastructure could indeed unfold itself in actual experience, we would not have any experience at all. Only a level of simple, indivisible elements can put an end to this endless process. If such elements existed in actuality, they would constitute the definite starting point. However, as we have already concluded, genuine simple entities are beyond experience. The issue of simple entity has no satisfactory theoretical solution. Fortunately, we do not depend on theoretical considerations alone: the mind, apparently, has the required *pragmatic* mechanism to put an end to a theoretically infinite procedure.[7]

Pragmatic or natural forces determine the elementary (relatively simple) layer. We either truly believe that the elements of a certain level are simple (although this cannot be verified), or we conventionally regard them as such (although we know that they are not really simple), or we are unable to go beyond a certain level owing to the natural limitations of our cognitive capacity (which does not prove that nothing exists beyond the boundaries of perception).

When counting apples, we regard each apple as an equally simple indivisible entity, which does not mean, of course, that we fail to notice that the apples are not really simple or identical to each other. This is a *pragmatic* attitude of which we are usually aware. The natural limit of perception creates another type of simplicity—there is a limit to the degree of things we can see, hear, feel or notice in any other way. We are usually not aware of this limitation, since we cannot perceive what we are unable to perceive. Leibniz (1951: preface to *New Essays on the Human Understanding*) believed that *minute perceptions* affect us, although they are beyond the threshold of our consciousness. Even if we assume that this threshold is flexible, and that we may improve and enlarge the capacity of perception by practice or via technology, there is always a limit beyond which we cannot go further.[8]

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[7] This point has already been raised in Chapter 1, pp. 10–11, and is also referred to in Wittgenstein (1967:§231, 42e).

There is no simple correlation between the layers. The upper layer may be highly ordered while the lower is not and vice versa. For instance, one may accurately use grammatical patterns (high discursive order), but the result may still be a poor poem (low aesthetic order). Likewise, a beautiful object is not necessarily the best instance of its category; it may be irregular. We may conclude that each order supervenes on its alternate order, but it is not reduced to it nor is its degree of order determined by it.

The old and the new

Interdependence between the two orders may also be described in terms of the tension between the *new* and the *old,* between the *surprising* and the *familiar*. To perceive a set as new, one has to have previous expectations and notions concerning the elements, otherwise the novelty of the set would escape the observer. Novelty is a relative and comparative concept. One can appreciate novelty only in relation to some expectation based on past experience. Novelty requires familiarity. Familiarity, in turn, depends on novelty: we describe an object as familiar only when it is put in a new context. If it is the same object in the same context and nothing has changed whatsoever, there is no point in describing the object as "familiar." Familiarity and novelty, predictability and surprise, information and redundancy—they all precondition each other and reflect the above problem of an endless regression.[9]

According to Berlyne (1960), aesthetic pleasure is caused by the tension created between the familiar and the unfamiliar. The surprising elements cause a disturbing arousal of emotion; the familiar balances the arousal by decreasing tension. Aesthetic pleasure is thus explained in terms of balancing our emotions and decreasing tension. Indeed, Berlyne touches upon an important point, but his explanation is partial; he does not define the specific status and function of the

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[8] Locke (1964), for one, believed that technology may remove sensual limitation. For instance, he believed that a highly developed microscope might allow us to see shapes (primary quality) without colors (secondary quality). Needless to say that I do not share this optimistic opinion for theoretical as well as pragmatic reasons.

[9] This may take us to the crucial debate between Locke and Leibniz concerning the origin of knowledge: *tabula rasa* versus *innate ideas*. Fortunately the resolution of this debate is not a necessary condition for the understanding of my argument.

"old" and the "new" in the aesthetic experience. One may be left with the impression that the formula of beauty consists of a proportional mixture of old and new elements, and that the nature of the qualitative relation between them is immaterial. A mixture of old and new elements, even if proportional in quantity, may still be meaningless and arbitrary. One can calculate the proportion between the old and the new elements in a given object, compare it to another and arrive at all kinds of statistical conclusions without thereby attaining any understanding of what makes one object more beautiful than another. The fact that one object contains, say, more familiar elements than another cannot be the answer. Ugly objects may shake our expectations no less than beautiful objects, and they may consist of a similar proportion of old and new elements.

The novelty admired in beautiful objects is not simply the novelty of new elements, or a certain proportion between the old and the new elements. It is rather the novelty of the interpretation, the solution to the problem, the new order that is appreciated. The elements themselves must be familiar and recognizable otherwise their new order (their interpretation) cannot be recognized and appreciated. This is similar to the case of a new theory: the concepts and their problems have to be familiar before one can appreciate the solution offered by the new theory. The relation to the "old" indicates that aesthetic order cannot free itself from dependence on discursive orders, but this dependence cannot be specified in terms of measurable proportions. The "old" is presented in discursive terms; the "new" is the aesthetic solution that reorders and resolves the "old" by giving it a new meaning.

Between order and disorder

The link between order and disorder is manifested in all aspects of life. We need not go as far as creation myths, thermodynamics or chaos theory in order to realize this link. Wars, accidents, confusions, plans that go wrong and children's rooms are evidence that orders may collapse; social systems, technology, everyday routines and children's rooms (again) reassure us that order may occasionally win. Disorder, no less than order, is a vital component of all aspects of life. There is no need to tire the reader with the obvious, or to go into philosophical problems that will take us far from the current central matter. The following therefore focuses solely on aesthetic order and its formation from various types of disorder. This examination draws attention to some typical patterns by which disorder is transformed into aesthetic order.

Randomness and aesthetic necessity

We have already established that (1) almost anything may become a discursive principle, even an arbitrary, capricious combination (see Chapter 1, p. 12), and (2) that discursive principles are in themselves aesthetic sets. These two points create a bond between randomness and aesthetic order. A random assembly of elements, under certain conditions, may transform into an aesthetic set and gain an inner necessity of some degree without any apparent change in its “stable facts”, that is, without adding or eliminating elements. Many of the useful and common principles are arbitrary or conventional sets that have no justification apart from the conventional or historical force that has generated it. Yet they seem necessary and “natural” to us because they are part of our culture, history, everyday activity or traditional way of thinking.

Languages consist of arbitrary sets that have gained, over the course of history, the status of necessary rules and constituting patterns by which particular cases are determined.[10] Could our native language have developed differently? Theoretically, yes. Might we have called tables “chairs” and chairs “pencils”? Theoretically, we could. Could Moses (the prophet) have been named Aaron? Theoretically, he could have. After all, “what’s in a name?”[11] However, it seems to us highly necessary, almost a natural law that chairs are “chairs”, a rose is “a rose” and Moses is named “Moses”. The feeling of necessity overpowers the theoretical acknowledgment that vocabulary or naming is basically a convention. What gives an arbitrary convention such a power?

Let us consider the alphabetical order. This order has established itself as a very common basic order that governs many systems. But is it imperative that alphabetical order starts with A and ends with Z? The confidence in the necessity of this order is not based on a historical, linguistic or other explanation. Even if such an explanation is available, most of us are unaware of it. We learned and memorized this order as given. The multiplication table is another system we needed to memorize, but in contrast to the alphabetical order, it was accompanied by the sense that its necessity is inherent to it. Although the alphabetical order does not express such an inherent necessity, it has, nonetheless, gradually acquired it. Extensive use in everyday matters nurtures this feeling of necessity.

Great love stories often impress us by the necessity they seem to express. “That man and woman” people would say “were *meant* for each other”. Indeed, there are all kinds of legends that establish such beliefs. According to a Jewish legend, forty days before birth the match between a man and a woman has already been determined in heaven. However, from the innocent perspective of the layperson who is not aware of God’s preconceived plans, arbitrary elements are bound to dominate every love story.

The fate of scientific theories may, likewise, depend on contingencies. Mach (1974), to take an example, warned in his influential study, *Science of Mechanics,* against rendering historical contingency philosophical necessity. In order to avoid the “false” philosophical necessity (metaphysics), Mach’s operative conclusion is to replace *theories* (since they are contingent) with strict *descriptions* of *facts* and *classification*. This conclusion is somewhat naive because it assumes not only that systematic descriptions and classifications can do without theoretical grounds (arbitrary as they may be), but also because of the assumption that the contingent element in science can be reduced.

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[10] It is necessary to distinguish here between basic linguistic patterns that may be natural and common to all languages and the specific vocabulary and rules that distinguish one language from another. My example refers to the latter.

[11] This may remind us of the suggestion that it was not really Shakespeare who wrote Shakespeare’s plays, but rather another person by the name of Shakespeare.

The same, I believe, is true about art. The fate of an individual work is determined not just on its own merit; its role in cultural developments is also determined by arbitrary elements. It is not always clear whether a work had a great impact because of its genuine qualities or that arbitrary circumstances bestow on the work a power it would not have in a different context.

Atomistic disorder and meaning

The transformation from an atomistic disorder to an aesthetic order is the transformation from a disconnected, meaningless assembly of elements to a meaningful set. An assembly of elements may remain meaningless even if the elements themselves carry meaning. We may understand every single word perfectly, but fail to grasp the meaning of the whole sentence. A meaningless, assembly of elements may maintain a discursive order, yet remain meaningless as a whole. For instance, words may be arranged in the form of a sonnet, strictly following the traditional pattern, and yet remain meaningless as a poem. Lewis Carroll's absurd poem "Jabberwocky" in *Through the Looking Glass* may serve as an example. It has a clear form, but contains only a few meaningful words. Indeed, its meaninglessness as a whole plays a meaningful role in that specific context; it serves to make a point. Such is the case of an argument presented by meaningless symbols: one can see through the logical structure and evaluate it as a valid or an invalid argument without having any idea about the content of the argument. It is interesting to note that in the context of a clear discursive pattern (the sonnet, the logical argument) the meaninglessness (the deficiency of its aesthetic order) is amplified because the high degree of discursive order emphasizes the imbalance between the two orders.

Unlike the former case (from randomness to aesthetic order), the metamorphosis from atomistic disorder to aesthetic order is not a gradual development: it has a turning point. The nature of the turning point is similar to the turning point in the case of "seeing as": it may take some preparation in order to see the drawing of the rabbit as a duck, but the "seeing" itself is not gradual; you either see it or you do not. The popular "magic eye" pictures may demonstrate this point: at time t_1 you look at a meaningless assembly of colorful dots and at a later time t_2 you see a three-dimensional image. There may be preliminary attempts and preparations, but the image does not reveal itself gradually.

Modern poetry may supply many similar examples since it tends to avoid most traditional conventions and often creates the impression of disconnected, arbitrary words assembled in short lines. It takes certain training, knowledge and sensitivity to experience the transformation and "see" the poetical meaning through the apparently disordered words. Yet, since atomistic disorder in its strict form is rather theoretical, it is almost impossible to give a good example of it and describe a *totally meaningless* combination (as it is hard to give an example of any other total disorder). Any two apparently unrelated elements, when put together, may create some meaning, even if it is a weak one. Let us look at the following group of sentences, which was found in a philosophical paper. Each sentence was meant to demonstrate a different logical point. The group as a whole had no purpose: it was obviously (judging by the context) not formed as an aesthetic set, and the reader was not supposed to look for any integrating meaning for the group as a whole:

1 All humans are mortal.
2 All ravens are black.
3 Everything is identical with itself.
4 Do something!
5 Come to me tonight.
6 If anybody here knows of any reason why these two people should not be joined in a holy matrimony, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Upon reading the paper my thoughts drifted away. Suddenly this group of unrelated sentences went through a metamorphosis before my eyes: there it was, a poem! Indeed, not a very good poem; still, it had a point, and a quiet, gloomy tone of unfulfilled love. I can easily imagine it published in a literary journal evoking interpretations and debates over its worth.

Tony Oursler's *Trash (Empirical)* (1998) present photos of trash. His work intends to illustrate how a grouping of unrelated objects thrown by different (unrelated) people for different reasons creates a meaningful composition. This composition is not realized when looking at the accidental pile of objects. We call it trash, meaning that there is nothing to it, that it is insignificant or even meaningless. It takes an observant eye of an artist to transform the apparent atomistic disorder into a meaningful aesthetic order. The new order is not the mere pile of trash, but the photo that depicts it in a meaningful fashion. In other words, the work of art consists of something that was done with the disordered trash: the frame, the angle, the light, and so forth. The arbitrary, unrelated elements "miraculously" create a bond that evokes a sense of necessity within the artistic frame.

A short story entitled *The Poet* by Karl Capeck (1990:272–7) portrays how apparently meaningless details may nourish poetic sensitivity. The story tells of a poet who, having witnessed a hit-and-run car accident, cannot remember any detail of the colliding car. Indeed, details like—color, plate number, make or year of production—seem entirely incidental from the perspective of a passer-by. The facts appear unrelated; it could be any car of any color, any number, and so forth. The poet, in his attempt to be a helpful witness, shows the policeman the poem he wrote shortly after the accident. The policeman realizes that the poet has in fact remembered the relevant details of the accident, including the number of the reckless car, but he remembered them not in their original arbitrary mode but rather as "lyrical" poetic images. For instance, the number 2 has become a "swan neck" and the number 5 "drum and cymbal" and so on. The poet saw an aesthetic order; the policeman "fragmented" it into the original atomistic disorders, namely the unrelated digits. The case was solved.

There is an important difference between mere sensual perception and aesthetic perception. In the case of the "magic eye" images, one may go back and forth: now you see it, now you don't. This, as already noted, is not the case with aesthetic perception. Once the assembly of sentences form a poem, it does not easily lose its meaning; it does not fall apart nor does it have to be reconstructed with every reading. On the contrary, it takes either dramatic changes or a long, complicated development to take apart what the aesthetic perception has already united.

The birth of aesthetic order out of a conflict of orders

A conflict of orders may generate a new aesthetic order. Conflicts among styles and conventions may give birth to new styles; conflicts between ideas may generate new ideas and new concepts. The history of art and the history of philosophy are strewn with such cases. This is not to say that every conflict gives birth to a new aesthetic order: not every war results in a redefinition of borders. Some conflicts are resolved by the retreat of each party back to its original position and the conflict thus becomes a forgotten episode; some conflicts lead to distraction and to the ruin of all parties without any clear beneficial results. A complex of forces within the history of a culture decides the question about which conflict proves fruitful and which remains a forgotten or a disastrous episode.

A conflict between languages, for instance, often results in new expressions that enter one language via the influence of another. Ideally, languages should not mix: each language is a separate "game" and each game should be played according to its own rules. Languages, therefore, exclude each other: you either speak French or you speak Italian; you cannot (or rather should not) mix them or speak both simultaneously. However, history creates many occasions for cultures to influence each other, and consequently, languages do mix, borrow from each other and give birth to new linguistic forms, in spite of the efforts of orthodox language guardians to prevent such integration. The new expressions that emerge from the conflict between two languages are not equally appreciated. Some serve a momentary purpose and then become obsolete, and some acquire an influential role in the living language.

Metaphors originate in a clash of orders within the same language. Their literary meaning expresses a conflict since their isolated components belong to different categories and realms that do not normally integrate. Describing a person as "chicken", for instance, literally means that the creature in question is both human and inhuman (a chicken) at the same time. The merging of the two categories—man and chicken—creates a metaphorical meaning; the conflict is thus "resolved" by creating a new expression, a new aesthetic order. This new order does not indicate either of the meanings of the original components (the literary meaning), but a new one. Obviously, not every conflict results in a new, meaningful combination and not every pair of contrasting words creates a good metaphor. Some combinations "resist" integration and others result in an ineffective merge.

The reasons for this may differ, just as the reasons for winning or losing a war may vary.

A conflict of orders may occur on different levels and it may carry positive values or negative values. Racism, for instance, is an attempt to prevent a conflict of social orders: mixed marriages, integrated schools or neighborhoods and, ultimately, a multicultural society. Racists argue that every ethnic group should maintain its own order and that any attempt to integrate different races or cultures creates disorder. Such arguments assume that a conflict between orders is necessarily negative. However, this is not the case: disorder has many positive aspects, and conflicts of orders are often a necessary step toward a new and, hopefully, better order. Conflicts between orders (linguistic, social, philosophical, and others) are unavoidable results of the dynamics of natural forces; deliberate attempts to prevent such developments also create conflicts: conflicts with natural tendencies. This is also true for art. Artists often trespass well-defined territories of styles, conventions and rules and "violate" stable orders. The result may be a new style, new school or a new conception of the subject matter or none of the above.

The new order that is created out of a conflict is not necessarily better then the old orders. The value of the new order is not directly determined by the value of the old orders. Pickles taste wonderful and so does chocolate, but it is doubtful that chocolate-coated pickles are equally desirable. To overcome a former conflict and accept the new combination, one has to be willing to revise the relevant standards and beliefs. One may decide to tolerate ideological, cultural or linguistic conflicts, although one cannot simply decide to accept the taste of chocolate-coated pickles, or for that matter, a jazz version of Mozart's *Requiem,* or a comic interpretation of *Hamlet*. Openness and tolerance may help to overcome old conflicts, but they do not guarantee the appreciation of every new order.

Breaking conventions mostly involves an intentional act; its general acceptance, however, usually evolves as a gradual process. The process typically goes through two stages:

1. As with the move from atomistic disorder to a meaningful set, here too there is a sudden turn. The meaning of the new combination is comprehended at once (or not at all), like the new taste of a chocolate-coated pickle. One either grasps the meaning of the new metaphor or one still perceives the elements' resistance to integration. There is no gradual development in achieving the meaning of the new combination.
2. As with the process of randomness transforming into order, *the acceptance* of the new order is gradual. A metaphor like any new linguistic expression gradually becomes an everyday coin, or, if its fate is different, it is gradually abandoned and disappears from the cultural scene. When the new combination has established itself and become a "natural" part of cultural life, only professionals (historians, linguists, anthropologists, and so on) will be able to trace the origin of the elements. This is also true for new social orders or artistic styles: they (or rather the ideas of them) may be born in one stroke,

but their wide acceptance is gradual. When accepted, as in the case of Impressionism, it seems natural and gains necessity in the public's awareness; it is then hard to see (without professional aid) the traces of the old conflict.

Chaos and creation

Chaos is a state in which the distinctions among the elements are vague or undefined. It conceals a latent order that may be revealed by a deliberate separation between the elements, such as heaven separated from earth. The order that can be developed out of chaos is a result of an intentional effort and it takes time (six days, in some cases). It is not a mere product of cultural or natural forces; it is the product of an individual intention.

The aesthetic order that is created out of chaos is a product of a deliberate act, but this does not mean that the resulting order is clearly known a priori. Knowledge of this kind develops from an obscure knowledge, a vague intuition triggered by the chaotic object. It is a knowledge that grows and becomes more vigorous as the work progresses, and therefore the process of creation itself, not just the final product, is informative. The work goes through different stages (drafts) before it becomes a satisfying, final product. Even God, according to the book of *Genesis,* did not have a priori knowledge of the new order he was about to create. Although the raw materials (heaven and earth) were there, God had to examine directly the results of each day before approving of it, "and God saw that it was good".

The story of Michelangelo "releasing" the figure from the marble by removing unnecessary parts may not be literally true. Nevertheless, it is an appropriate metaphor for the creation of order out of chaotic materials. It indicates that the aesthetic order that grows out of the chaotic object is not forced upon the materials but rather hidden in them as a potential. This also suggests that materials have their own "will" and their own inclinations; they may merely cooperate with the hand that knows how to coax them gently and attentively. An attempt to force an inappropriate order on recalcitrant materials results in a useless, ugly or unreliable product that is unable to overcome the conflict between its own latent order and the order imposed on it. Such is the criticism over a misuse of materials: it is as if the new order (the new function or the new meaning) imposed upon the raw materials does not do justice to the true nature of the materials.

The idea of latent order may be useful for explaining why the audience who, in most cases, is not familiar with the process of creation, only with its product, and may respond positively and "confirm", or for that matter disapprove of, the new order. The explanation is that the audience, like the creator, vaguely senses the latent order hidden in the materials. The observer's obscure knowledge becomes clear and vivid when the artist reveals the hidden order. The feeling of truth, revelation and reassurance that a good work of art evokes is the feeling that something that was latent is now manifested. By contrast, bad works of art that do not convince the observer in the authenticity of their proposed order evoke a sense of violation, artificiality or disloyalty. Matters may become more complicated when artificiality and disloyalty to natural qualities are deliberate. That is, when the artist makes it the point of the work to express, say, the conquest of Nature and its re-creation by man. In such cases, the "failure" becomes a merit, and disloyalty to Nature transforms into loyalty to a different kind of value. Is the object ugly on account of its artificiality, or is it beautiful because of its expression of overpowering Nature? The issue is decided according to the values that prevail in a certain culture or to personal preferences. Fashion sometimes gives rise to the value of loyalty to Nature and sometimes sets free the human imagination and the ability to exercise its capricious volition.

From symmetry to asymmetry

A symmetrical set seems perfectly organized because sections and elements of the set are highly predictable: in a highly symmetrical system the sections are (almost) identical. However, we have already established that from a certain point of view symmetry may be rendered as a form of disorder. It may create a sense of confusing homogeneity. But even if one does not accept that symmetry is, in some sense, a form of disorder (as presented in Chapter 2, pp. 40–42), there are strong reasons why one must accept that a rigid symmetrical set exhibits poor aesthetic order, in spite of a common inclination to praise symmetry.

Many have praised symmetry and regarded it as an expression of harmony and beauty. Santayana (1955:61) defines symmetry in terms of the traditional formula of beauty, "Symmetry is evidently a kind of unity in variety, when a whole is determined by rhythmic repetition of similar.".

Santayana, I argue, is wrong in his association of repetition with beauty. Repetitions are the mark of discursive orders, not aesthetic orders. Repetitions may add some stability to the aesthetic set, but unless they are integrated with other, non-repetitive elements they are more likely to cause boredom than create a sense of beauty. The beauty that may be seen through repetition is rather the beauty of variations. In *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe, the effectiveness of the repetitions ("nothing more" and "nevermore") is a result not of the repetitions themselves, but of the fact that in each case the same expression bears a different meaning.

Poincaré, like Santayana, associates truth in mathematics with beauty, order and symmetry. Mathematicians attach great importance to the elegance of their methods and of their results. What gives mathematicians the feeling of elegance in a solution or in a demonstration is:

> The harmony of the different parts, their symmetry, and their happy adjustment; it is, in a word, all that introduces order.
>
> (Poincaré, 1908:30–1).

If harmony is indeed a happy adjustment, then it cannot be synonymous with symmetry. Harmony can exist only among asymmetrical parts. Such parts complement or relate to each other in diverse ways, allowing thereby the creation of a harmonious whole. A happy, or for that matter an unhappy, adjustment occurs among distinguishable elements (or sections), not among symmetrical, identical ones. It is meaningless to describe the relation between identical (or nearly identical) parts as “adjustment”, as far as their common identity is considered and not their differences, just as the relation of an element to itself can hardly be described as “adjustment”. Only the relationship of elements that are different from each other can be harmonious or disharmonious.

The harmony (or disharmony) among the parts is informative and expressive; it expresses the nature of the element. It is a result of a tension between the asymmetrical parts; it conveys a new meaning of the unified whole. Asymmetry creates a conflict, and out of this conflict something new may be born. By contrast, repetitions of the same operation (same principle) within the same set do not reveal anything new; there is no conflict, and, as a result, the observer obtains the same information from the part as from the whole. The more symmetrical the set, the less information it reveals as a whole.

Aesthetic order consists of the network of interrelations among the elements; if these relations amount to identity relation (as the case is in strict symmetrical sets), there is either no “net” or it is a very poor one. Strictly symmetrical sets either bore us, or create a strange, frozen, lifeless, almost frightening effect; they appear to express a supernatural, inhumane power that enforces the same pattern again and again, like the machinery in Chaplin’s *Modern Times*. Natural laws may be described from this perspective as a mechanical force that is blind to the variety of human needs, anxieties, hopes and individuality. The unity attained by the natural “machinery” is, on the one hand, beneficial, since repetitions allow knowledge and foreseeability; on the other hand, they eliminate individual distinctions and disregard human will. Rigid symmetrical forms have been used for decorating sacred objects and religious art. This, I believe, is not a coincidence: it associates the objects in question with supernatural powers. It is also no mere coincidence that children’s stories, folk tales and legends tend toward symmetrical plots. This tendency gives them the quality of a fantasy, of a non-realistic and mysterious story, and, at the same time, the repetition of the pattern bestows stability and confidence.[12] The repetition of the “sacred” numbers—three and four, as well as their sum and multiplication, seven and twelve—creates a sense of mechanism activated by unknown authority: someone is taking care of this world. Beyond the realm of mythology and folk tales, however, we tend to be suspicious of theories that assume such strict symmetrical patterns.[13] This is one of the problems with Kant’s twelve categories: it makes one wonder whether Kant was enchanted by the magic numbers that have such a significant role in German folk tales, or whether folk tales intuitively reflect inherent mental patterns (the twelve categories).

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[12] Children seem to like repetition as much as they want stability. Both give them a sense of security. As children grow, this need is gradually replaced by the need to broaden their world and define their individuality.

[13] This seems the right moment to draw the reader’s attention to the asymmetry between order and disorder in this theory. Although there are two main types of order, there are (depending on how one counts them) between six and eight types of disorder.

Symmetry may be desirable as a background for asymmetrical elements, just as plain white walls may look attractive as a background for colorful furniture that breaks the symmetry. But mere white, symmetrical walls in an empty room induce a different effect altogether. A painting by Schröder-Sonnenstern entitled *The Swan-Doll's Dance of Death* presents a rigid bilateral symmetry and creates thereby a similar effect to that of empty, lifeless, white walls. Although it is entitled a "dance", it appears motionless, thus expressing death and determinism. The painter, as Arnheim (1974:148) tells us, spent most of his life in prisons and mental hospitals. There is no need to go into sophisticated psychological analysis in order to realize the connection between a rigid routine life in "motionless", institutes, and the devastating feelings of death and meaninglessness that gives rise to such a symmetrical painting.

The break of symmetry creates distinctions and thereby a sense of vitality. This is well exemplified in one of the most praised works by Giotto, the *Madonna in Maestà* (Uffizi Gallery, Florence). "What is the secret of the *Ognissanti Madonna*? How is it made flesh?" asks Hon. He answers:

> the key to this innovative painting is the inherent asymmetry of the Madonna's face: the eyes of the Madonna are not bilaterally symmetric, they irradiate different looks. The fish-shaped right eye is twisted to the right so that it appears to be looking in a different direction from the more realistic left eye.
>
> (Hon, 1993:173)

This function of asymmetry, described by Martin (1965) as "spiritual asymmetry", was adopted by Giotto's contemporaries and by the following generations of artists. Arnheim (1974:33) quotes Goethe expressing this very understanding, "the more perfect the creature, the more dissimilar its parts get to be". This does not mean that every asymmetry is beautiful or meaningful, but only that aesthetic order requires asymmetry. It is not in vain that Bergson associates the asymmetry of time and motion with vital order·

In Caravaggio's *Narcissus* we may find another case study. The bilateral symmetry between the "real" image of Narcissus and the reflected image is broken in the painting. The two images almost contrast each other. The "real" image is illuminated, detailed, and its contours are clearly defined, but the reflection is dark and is barely suggested. This can be interpreted in many ways, but the point is that the tension between the two images—the tension between their symmetry as images of the same person and their asymmetrical presentation—opens possibilities and allows for a meaningful interaction between the two parts of the painting, whereas a strict symmetry would "freeze" it. In many of Eugène Atget's photographs one can clearly see the slight, but intentional, and clear move of the camera from the symmetrical angle to the angle that breaks the symmetry. Thus, the picture is divided into asymmetrical sections that create a tension between the diversity of the images and the symmetrical field of vision. This tension creates the impression of motion, liveliness and individuality.

Since there are no pure cases of symmetry, or for that matter, of asymmetry, the sharp distinction is rather theoretical. Actual cases always consist of both symmetry and asymmetry but differ in the centrality and role of each of these factors. Order is created by the tension between symmetry and asymmetry, but the role of each element is different in each type of order. We may conclude that in aesthetic orders, asymmetry is central and symmetry is adjunct; in discursive orders it is the other way round. One may construe the tension between symmetry and asymmetry in two opposing directions. Science and discursive thinking in general attempt to defeat the asymmetry found in experience by exposing symmetrical principles. By contrast, the tension between symmetry and asymmetry in art expresses the human struggle to fight back mechanical powers, and to establish its own individual (asymmetrical) order.

Summary

1 Discursive and aesthetic orders coexist in every object, and they are mutually dependent.
2 Objects are categorized by their main order. Their category may change across the span of history. A complex of natural, pragmatic and cultural forces determines this change of categories (orders).
3 The orders supply the materials for each other. Discursive elements and principles are in themselves aesthetic sets, and the elements of aesthetic sets are discursive sets. This explains the link between aesthetics and science as well as the dependence of aesthetics on concepts in the broad sense.
4 The problem of limits is the problem of the fundamental layer. Pragmatic or natural forces determine the fundamental layer, and not logical considerations.
5 The relations between order and disorder are multifarious.
6 Aesthetic order originates in many forms of disorder: randomness, atomistic, conflict of order, chaos and symmetry. In some of the cases it is a historical or natural process from disorder to aesthetic order, in others it is a sudden turning point; in some cases it is unintended metamorphosis, in others it is a deliberate force upon the disordered set.

Part III

Aesthetic queries

Central issues pertaining to beauty and art, in the light of the theory of aesthetic order

The previous chapter concluded the presentation of aesthetic order. We are now at the stage of applications, that is, the examination of central aesthetic issues by means of the distinctions and observations made so far.

Two principal themes constitute the core of the aesthetic domain: beauty and art. In Plato's philosophy these are not only separated and independent but, in some sense, also opposing concepts. Whereas beauty is the sensual reflection of truth, art, at least as presented in *The Republic,* is a deceitful imitation of Nature. Plato had his reasons for this viewpoint, not all of them the result of coherent philosophical considerations. Reading between the lines and comparing different dialogues, one may come to the conclusion that art (good art, that is) and beauty are not alien to each other even in Plato's view. In *Ion,* for example, Plato mocks the poet but not his poetry. Although the poet is incapable of controlling or even understanding his own poetry, the poetry itself is inspired by the gods and as such it comes very close to divine truth.

A clear association between beauty and art is already to be found in Plotinus' *Enneades,* but the strong bond between them is boldly expressed in the aesthetics of the eighteenth century, mainly by Kant. Kant explicitly defines art via the concept of beauty and seeks to differentiate not between art and beauty but between natural beauty and artistic beauty. Contemporary analytic aesthetics, as much as it is non-Platonic by denying essences, expresses the Platonic tendency to detach beauty from art, although, for different, almost opposite reasons. It is art that is considered respectable and worthy of philosophical interest, whereas beauty is either meaningless or irrelevant to the philosophy of art.

Beauty has lost its role as a key concept in contemporary aesthetics. It is treated mostly as a vague, suspicious concept that bears little, if any, significance for understanding art. Mothersill (1984) describes and criticizes this tendency in her *Beauty Restored.* She argues that beauty is

> like knowledge or action, a "standing" concept, that [...] is taken for granted in critical discussion of the art, and [...] is indispensable.
>
> (Mothersill, 1984:247)

I agree with Mothersill. Beauty—vague, illusive, problematic and paradoxical as the concept may be—is nonetheless the essence of aesthetic experience. We may play with words and create synonyms in order to avoid the use of the term "beauty" for different reasons, yet avoiding the analysis of beauty is tantamount to avoiding the key concept without which no integral understanding of aesthetic experience is possible. Wittgenstein argues that the term "beauty" rarely appears in aesthetic appreciation:

> It is remarkable that in real life, when aesthetic judgments are made, aesthetic adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'fine', etc. play hardly any role at all.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1970:3)

Wittgenstein may or may not be right about this. His observation may reflect a temporary linguistic trend, not necessarily the genuine role of the concept of beauty. However, an aesthetic theory should not merely echo such trends (which may result in a misconception) but rather attempt to explain the experience that underlies them. Therefore, an aesthetic theory can and should focus on concepts that may not be explicit in everyday conversation but are substantial to its understanding. Understanding beauty does not merely involve analyzing our admiration of flowers and singing birds (although I do not depreciate such admiration). It is an attempt to go to the roots of aesthetic experience and understand what motivates a significant portion of human activity. The fact that we dedicate attention, time, effort and materials to the pursuit of beauty can be taken as evidence that beauty answers some need, and that it plays a significant role in human life. I therefore join Mothersill in her plea to restore the centrality of beauty and to revive the view that art is essentially the quest for beauty.

The theory of aesthetic order suggests that beauty is a high aesthetic order. As such it has quantitative and qualitative features. It is manifested in a range of degrees, it expresses complementary interpretation, and it has various relations with non-aesthetic qualities. Art, from this view, is the product of the intention to create beauty. It succeeds or fails as such; it is appreciated as an attempt to offer new interpretations of the multifarious materials of human experience. The following chapters examine central issues to the philosophy of beauty and art in the light of this general understanding.

10 Understanding beauty

The quantitative analysis of beauty

Aesthetic values

The notion of "aesthetic value" is ambiguous. Like the notion of order, "value" has at least two distinct meanings (see Chapter 1, p. 9). It is not always clear from the context which meaning is effective:

1. A value is an ordering principle, a concept that is *chosen* to serve as a *criterion* for determining the worth of particular cases in the relevant domain.
2. A value is the *measure* of a given set—its degree of coherence with a chosen ordering principle.

Values as ordering principles (V_1)

Value in the first sense expresses a choice, a preference. It is a discursive principle that is chosen to determine the worth of particular cases and act upon it. The more a particular case conforms to the principle in question the better it is. It is the agent who renders certain principles *values* and decides the hierarchy of the chosen values, i.e. which value prevails in a case of conflict. The selection of principles and their hierarchy constitute the worldview of a society or an individual. For instance, regarding knowledge as a value means that people are appreciated for their knowledge and their contribution to the growth of knowledge; it also means that learning and investigating in research are highly important. Knowledge may be placed at different rungs on the hierarchy of values. Some may hold that being "natural" and "innocent" is preferable to being knowledgeable; others may believe that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecclesiastes, 1:18).

Holding that health is a value entails that smoking is bad and eating carrots is good; by virtue of a different value—say, pleasure—smoking may be considered better than eating carrots. Which value should decide the issue? Clearly, this depends on the hierarchy of values that one holds: X may put pleasure above health, but Y may put health above pleasure.

Values in this sense (V_1), are neither moral nor aesthetic. They do not belong to any specific domain. Nevertheless, they initiate both moral and aesthetic judgments as well as many other aspects of life. Justice, for instance, is often considered a moral value, but this is not necessarily so. Michael Kohlhaas (Kleist's hero) believed that justice is the highest value of all and destroyed a whole country, as well as his own life, in the name of justice. Was Kohlhaas's fighting for justice a moral action? One may hold that life and peace are higher values and that consequently matters of justice should be compromised in certain situations.[1] From this perspective, Kohlhaas's choice (his hierarchy of values) is immoral.

In this particular sense, no value on its own is moral or immoral, but a certain hierarchy of values may be regarded as moral or immoral.[2] Likewise, no value on its own is aesthetic; no value guarantees aesthetic worth. Yet, all values may be relevant in many ways to aesthetic appreciation without thereby becoming *aesthetic values*. Health, for example, is not an aesthetic value any more than it is a moral value or a medical value, but it may certainly affect aesthetic appreciation, just as it may affect moral or medical considerations. Being healthy, on its own, does not guarantee beauty; its contribution to beauty depends on its place in the hierarchy of values. Although it is quite common (almost universally) that health is highly appreciated, one cannot assume that it is equally significant in all cultures at all times; it is sometimes overtaken by other values such as honor, social position, and so forth. The aristocracy once considered a pale skin (for Caucasians) beautiful, whereas a suntan was a feature of the working classes. In the *Song of Songs* (1:6) we find, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." And it goes on explaining the reason for becoming black (sun-tanned), "my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards." Paleness was also held to express romantic melancholy, which added to the charm and mystery of women *("La Dame aux Caméllias"),* as well as a poetic sensitivity, which men found becoming. With changing trends and social values, sun-tanned skin was considered to enhance beauty since it expressed an open, healthy life and social equality; paleness became unfashionable. Nowadays, the association of suntan with cancer has revived the fashion for pale skin, albeit for different reasons than before.

Although no value is aesthetic in the sense that it is exclusive to aesthetic evaluation, aesthetic evaluation itself may obtain the status of a value (a chosen principle) and acquire its place in the hierarchy of values just as any other value. Thus one may choose to evaluate people according to their appearance, or one may appreciate people for their wisdom or kindness regardless of their beauty. Objects may be appreciated for their aesthetic measure more than for their utility value or vice versa. Some people are willing to suffer in order to look beautiful (according to their standards); they express thereby the priority of beauty over health or gastronomic pleasure. Their preference, however, is not in itself an *aesthetic* preference. Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray put beauty above all other values and was indeed prepared to kill for it; is his preference aesthetic? Others may hold that "beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (*Proverbs,* 31:30). Such preferences are clearly not aesthetic preferences, although they touch upon matters of beauty. The place of beauty in the hierarchy of values is not determined by aesthetic criteria, just as preferring health to pleasure is not determined by medical considerations.[3] Beauty, in this sense, is a value like health, knowledge or justice, and its place in the hierarchy is a matter of a comprehensive worldview.

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[1] Values in this sense (the principles that are chosen by the agent) are termed by Kant "maxims". Kant's morality does not entail any specific value (or maxim), only coherence with one's own chosen values. Two people who hold different values may be equally moral. By contrast, teleological doctrines hold that morality entails the right choice. Some put pleasure (hedonism) at the top of the hierarchy, others prefer survival (egoism), or welfare (utilitarianism) or the fulfillment of natural potential (Aristotle's ethics).

[2] This is consistent with Hare's (1963) position that the choice between values (the hierarchy of values) constitutes the moral decision.

It may seem that some values do have aesthetic significance, and that it is therefore justified to regard them as "aesthetic values". For instance, simplicity is often praised in matters of beauty and art. But is simplicity really an aesthetic value? Can it be a value at all? My answer is no. Simplicity, in the strictest sense, cannot become an ordering principle at all; an ordering principle must have some degree of complexity. Simplicity in its ultimate, ideal state is beyond experience (see Chapter 1, p. 13, and Chapter 2, p. 32). But let us assume that when people refer to simplicity in the context of aesthetic appreciation they have in mind a flexible notion of relative simplicity. Can such a notion function as an aesthetic value? Does it guarantee beauty?

Ironically, the notion "simple" is not simple at all; it is loaded with contrasting meanings and implications; in fact, one can decide only by context whether "simple" is desirable or not. "Simple" in many cases is not a mere description but a praise; in others it is a renunciation. As such, it cannot be considered a criterion for evaluation since it is already the verdict itself. "Simple" can mean good, pleasing, ignorant, dull, natural, easy to achieve or operate, having less parts than others, refreshing, boring, and so on. In praising a work of art for its simplicity we may mean that the work is easy to perceive or that it has accomplished *much* by (relatively) *little* means. Theories are often praised in a similar manner. Is it the case that complexity, by definition, is a flaw? What exactly is it that we cherish by favoring simplicity? It is not that complexity is being denounced; rather it is *non-redundancy* that is being praised. Redundancy is indeed the mark of low aesthetic value, but it should not be confused with complexity. An object may exhibit high complexity and very low redundancy, or it may exhibit low complexity and yet high redundancy. If simplicity (low complexity) were an aesthetic value it would follow that the more simple an object was the more beautiful it would be and that the ultimate ideal would be an atom in the original sense. This is clearly not the case. Richness and complexity are praised in works of art, theories or natural objects no less than simplicity. Aristotle (1951:§13), for instance, says that "A perfect tragedy should […] be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan." We praise the grace of a single line that bears a complex of meanings, or a complex description that expresses the "simplicity" of an atmosphere, or a "simple" formula that captures a high complexity of problems and solutions. Having fewer parts or being easy to grasp does not guarantee that the object is more beautiful than an object of higher complexity.

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[3] Hare (1963) argues that such decisions are always moral decisions: they imply general prescriptions for the right conduct. It is not that beauty is a moral value, but that the decision to place beauty in at a certain point in the hierarchy of values is a moral decision.

Symmetry is another feature that is commonly mistaken for aesthetic value. As already stated in Chapter 9 (pp. 202–205), symmetry has to be balanced with asymmetry, and it cannot guarantee beauty on its own merit. Symmetry may be boring, dull and mechanical. Schopenhauer (1958: I, 216), for one, denied that symmetry is a necessary condition for beauty. Danto (1997:97) comments that the denial of symmetry as a necessary feature of beauty "marks the transition in the history of taste from neoclassicism to romanticism". The fact that one can see beauty in asymmetry (the beauty of ruins is Schopenhauer's example) demonstrates that symmetry is not a necessary requirement.

As we have seen, no quantitative feature, on its own, is sufficient for establishing the aesthetic worth of an object. Qualitative aspects have a significant role in determining the aesthetic value of an object. Since the quantitative and the qualitative features are interdependent and sensitive to their context, we may conclude that no feature or principle on its own is aesthetic in the sense that it guarantees beauty or artistic merit. Even "beauty" as a value that has its place in the hierarchy of values cannot be said to be an "aesthetic value". (It would be ridiculous to define "beauty" as a beauty-making feature.) Values of all kinds affect aesthetic order in many ways, just as beauty may affect non-aesthetic issues.

The idea that there are no aesthetic values in the above sense is reflected in Kant's rejection of the notion of perfection with regard to beauty (Kant, 1951a: § 15). "Perfection" implies discursive knowledge of what the object should be. A perfect object is thus an object that fully coheres to its concept or preconceived plan. Since there is no such a priori aesthetic knowledge of what the object should be, the concept of perfection is irrelevant to aesthetic evaluation.

However, "aesthetic perfection" may obtain a meaning other than a perfect coherence with discursive principles. Although there is no clear knowledge of what the (aesthetic) object should be in its completeness, there is a vague premonition that guides the observer to experiencing the beauty of the object. We have encountered a similar notion while examining the problem of appreciating interpretation (Chapter 8). There is a sense of direction that enables us to estimate the worth of the object while experiencing it. Danto (1997) refers to this kind of knowledge by quoting the American architect Luis Kahn:

> Kahn […] used to ask "what the building wanted" as if there were an internal drive or what later Greeks called an entelechy, an end state of fulfillment in which the building found the form through which it fulfilled its being.
>
> (Danto, 1997:106)

This kind of intuitive, obscure knowledge is conceived only a posteriori. It enables us to sense the incompleteness of an object, although we do not know yet exactly what the completeness of the object would be like. We may detect the shadow of such completeness. When we actually experience it, we recognize it as such, we know that it is right. Only in this limited and peculiar sense can one acknowledge the existence of aesthetic value (aesthetic perfection) according to which aesthetic evaluation is executed.

Values as degrees of order (V_2)

Value in the second sense is the degree of conformity found in an object with the relevant ordering principle. The value of carrots as healthy food is probably higher than the value of ice cream. Beauty, in this sense, is a measure: a high degree of aesthetic order. However, low degrees of aesthetic order are aesthetic values (measures) no less than is beauty. A boring or an ugly object also exhibits aesthetic measures (V_2).

We therefore have to differentiate between beauty as an aesthetic measure (in the sense of V_2), and beauty as a general concept that may function as a value (in the sense of V_1) and have its place in the hierarchy of values. An object may be beautiful (V_2), that is, it may exhibit a high degree of aesthetic order, but still be considered non-significant because of other values that defeat beauty. An agreement about the measure of a certain value (V_2) does not necessarily indicate an agreement about its place in the hierarchy of values (V_1). Socrates, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, was remarkably ugly in appearance, but this deficiency did not affect his worth as a person. By the same token, controversies about beauty contests are not aesthetic controversies; they do not touch upon problems of taste (measure) but rather upon social norms, moral principles and priorities (V1). Even if one is against beauty contests one may still agree that X is more beautiful than Y.

Preferences and their hierarchy may be capricious, traditional or dictated by natural tendencies; they express the agent's choices and worldview. By contrast, the value of an object in the second sense—its degree of order—is not a matter of choice; it expresses a relation found between two given elements: the set and its principle. Even a heavy smoker would have to acknowledge the statistical conclusions that have been reached regarding the damage caused by smoking; this does not necessarily mean that the person will give up smoking. Admitting that carrots contain more vitamins than ice cream does not determine the actual preference for carrots over ice cream. Admitting that a certain soap opera is bad art does not necessarily prevent a person from watching it (for different reasons). The "objective" measure does not determine the hierarchy of values.

Beauty: a high degree of aesthetic order

In accordance with the above distinction, "Beauty" has two different meanings:

1 In the sense of V_1 "beauty" is a general term for aesthetic qualities and matters of taste. As such it includes all aesthetic values, high and low, indeed even ugliness, as sub-types of beauty.
2 As V_2, "beauty" denotes a specific degree or a range of degrees of *high* aesthetic values; in this sense, beauty constitutes the positive pole of aesthetic order and is opposed by low aesthetic values—the negative pole.

"Beauty", in the first sense, is a synonym for "aesthetic value" or rather "aesthetic measure"; it sometimes designates the whole domain of aesthetics. As an inclusive term it denotes the whole range of degrees of aesthetic order and therefore is useless for indicating quantitative differences within the aesthetic domain. Any attempt to explain ugliness as the opposite of beauty is obscured by terminology that regards "beauty" as an inclusive term. Goodman is right to argue that "if the beautiful may be ugly, then "beauty" becomes only an alternative and a misleading word for aesthetic merit" Goodman (1984:255).

In what follows, I use "beauty" not in its first meaning as an inclusive term, but rather in its second meaning, that is, a high degree of aesthetic order. However, it should be stressed that "beauty" in this second sense should not be taken as the ultimate, single point of maximum or optimum aesthetic measure. As already argued (in Chapter 2), the point of maximum order is inconceivable. As for beauty, we may recall John Ruskin's words:

> Beauty deprived of its proper fails and adjuncts ceases to be enjoyed as beauty, just as light deprived of all shadow ceases to be enjoyed as light.
> (Ruskin, 1843:60)

Moreover, the common use of "beauty" allows that some objects are less beautiful than others (without becoming thereby ugly), which indicates the understanding that "beauty" denotes a *range* of high values, or a tendency toward high value and not the single optimal point.

It may happen that an object (natural or artificial) is praised for its beauty as if it has reached the highest perfection. Such enthusiastic expression should not be taken at face value but rather as an indication of the spectator's enthusiasm and momentary admiration. The feeling that a certain object has reached the point of maximum beauty may be a sincere feeling, but it cannot be taken literally. Even if at time t_1 one cannot imagine any higher degree of aesthetic order than that achieved by the object in question, it does not follow that at t_2 the same observer will not experience a higher degree of beauty or a different kind of equally impressive beauty. If we sincerely believed that certain objects have achieved ultimate beauty, we would be unable to explain the continuous search for beauty or changes in taste. After all, if the peak of beauty has been reached, say, by Leonardo (in paintings), by Bach or Mozart (in music), by roses (natural beauty of flowers) or by the Alps (landscape), what is the point of searching further? Why not sit back and enjoy the fruits of mankind's talent or of Nature's wonders? Moreover, such totality fails to explain how the same object receives different responses by different people or by the same person in different periods. Analyzing beauty in quantitative as well as qualitative terms allows a never-ending quest toward a high degree of beauty in different materials and different fashions without ever reaching the ultimate point that exhausts all possibilities. Beauty is not immune to changes in the *Zeitgeist*. Being sensitive to context, an aesthetic order is a dynamic notion: it may increase or decrease without ever reaching the ultimate degree.[4]

"Beauty" is quantitative, and its range is flexible. There are no rules that determine the point beyond which an object is excluded from the range of beauty and enters, say, the region of ugliness or mediocrity. Actual demarcations depend on the emphases that the observer wishes to make, on norms of language and culture, and on comparisons within a relevant group. We may think, for instance, that a painting is beautiful when compared with other paintings by the same artist, but less beautiful, or even mediocre, when compared with paintings by another artist. We praise the drawings of a child compared with drawings by other children of the same age group and not with sketches drawn by the great masters.

Most leading theories of beauty present binary distinctions: an object is either beautiful or rendered non-aesthetic. Such an approach regards "beauty" as a general and inclusive term, not as a quantitative concept. This is, for instance, a plausible conclusion of Kant's strategy. Kant's main concern is the demarcation of the aesthetic domain. He distinguishes between the judgment of *taste* and the judgment of the *good* and the *pleasing,* and he uses these distinctions as a central theoretical tool for the demarcation of the aesthetic domain. Mothersill justifies this strategy:

> What one asks of an aesthetic theory […] is that it provides a rationale for the distinction […] between beauty and other kinds of good. It is a step in the right direction to have a rule that marks off the beautiful from what pleases on other grounds.
>
> (Mothersill, 1984:405)

Indeed, the demarcation of the aesthetic domain is an important step, but not a sufficient one. Marking off the beautiful from other pleasing features does not explain the variety in degrees *within* the aesthetic domain.

Kant's non-quantitative aesthetics

Kant's theory of beauty, as noted above, is a typical case of a non-quantitative aesthetic theory that has inspired modern aesthetics in this respect. Kant's idea that beauty originates in the *free play* of the cognitive powers (reason and imagination) tells us something important about the aesthetic experience. However, Kant does not provide the tools for distinguishing between a free play that results in beauty (as a high degree of aesthetic order) and a free play that results in a less satisfying experience (assuming that such cases should be allowed).

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[4] We may refer again to Spinoza's words in *Ethics* IV (axiom), already cited in Chapter 2: "There is no particular thing in Nature than which there is none more powerful or stronger". We can safely add also "or more beautiful".

This shortcoming in Kant's theory has not passed entirely unnoticed by some of Kant's commentators.[5] At least one reading of Kant's theory may lead to the understanding that since every object may be viewed aesthetically, all objects are equally beautiful.[6] Kant's botanical example suggests that an object's aesthetic status is a matter of attitude: the botanist may examine the flower professionally in a non-aesthetic manner, but the same botanist may adopt a different attitude and thus view the flower aesthetically. All objects that are viewed "aesthetically" (disinterestedly, non-conceptually, and so on), are, by definition, equally beautiful. How can this be acceptable?

To be sure, Kant did not fail to acknowledge the variety of taste. The point is, however, that Kant's theory of beauty does not equip us with the means to explain such variety. Kant employs mostly binary concepts that differentiate the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic, but none of these concepts is helpful in explaining why some objects appear less beautiful then others or even ugly. Let us examine briefly these Kantian concepts.

1 *Disinterestedness.* One may be interested in an object in many ways with various intensities, but disinterestedness itself has no degrees. Regardless of the interpretation we may give to "disinterestedness", it is clear that Kant's concept is binary: one cannot be *more* or *less* disinterested in an object. Even the slightest interest "violates" the demand of disinterestedness. Kant (1951a: §13) makes this point explicit, "Every interest spoils the judgment of taste and takes from its impartiality." One either approaches an object in a disinterested manner or one involves other perspectives, external to the aesthetic domain. Within the aesthetic domain the category of disinterestedness is useless for explaining why some objects are "disinterestedly" boring, ugly or mediocre.

2 *Non-conceptuality.* The status of this category is similar to the previous category. A judgment is non-conceptual if the observer's evaluation is not determined by previous understandings or expectations. Non-conceptuality is typically binary: an object is either approached via concepts or it is not approached in this manner. There is no object that is "more conceptual" or "less conceptual" than another. If an object conforms to a concept, no matter how insignificant or primitive that concept may be, the object's evaluation is *fully* conceptual. (The question of whether an object that does not conform to any concept whatsoever is perceivable at all presents another difficulty.)

3 *Non-purposiveness.* This category is also directly associated with interest, "Every purpose, if it be regarded as a ground for satisfaction, always carries with it an interest" (Kant, 1951a: §11). An interest, any interest, mars the purity of judgment. Here, again, either an object has a known purpose or it

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[5] For instance Hudson (1991), Thomson (1992) and Gracyk (1986).

[6] This point has been raised by Guyer (1979:259), Meerbote (1982:81) and Gracyk (1986:50–2).

does not. The nature of the purpose or its significance is inconsequential; the presence of any purpose whatsoever invariably renders the evaluation "purposeful".

4 *Singularity.* The logical status of a judgment of taste is also non-quantitative. "All judgments of taste are singular judgments." (Kant, 1951a: §8). Singularity is clearly non-quantitative. An object cannot be more singular or more individual than another, at least not in any direct sense. The statements "X is beautiful", "Y is mediocre" and "Z is ugly" are equally singular.

The only quantitative concept in Kant's theory is the concept of (aesthetic) pleasure. Pleasure of any kind is indeed quantitative: it is manifested in various degrees of intensity, and it has its positive and negative poles. Thus, Kant could have argued that if an object were approached aesthetically (disinterestedly, non-conceptually, and so on), then the intensity of the pleasure obtained would be directly proportional to the degree of beauty of the object in question. An object that causes displeasure (under the above aesthetic conditions) is ugly.[7] This argument may be a promising start, but it is certainly not enough. Degrees of pleasure or displeasure are measures of the observer's reaction; but what does occasion this reaction? Why is it that an object fails to please aesthetically? If we approach all objects in the same requisite manner, and still achieve a variety of responses, the explanation must be found in the individual nature of the object itself (in its order), not merely in the observer's disposition.

Kant's neglect of the problem of degrees in judgments of taste is probably influenced and perhaps misled by the analogy he drew between his moral theory and the aesthetic characteristics. Kant's moral theory is inherently binary. Its essence is the intention to obey the imperative category. Such an intention cannot be quantitative by definition: one's maxim either conforms to the categorical imperative or it does not; one either has the genuine intention of obeying the categorical imperative or one does not. The consequences of our actions may be more or less satisfying—these are indeed quantitative elements; however, consequences do not determine the morality of the deed. The concept of "good" is in fact quantitative, but this quantitative aspect plays no principal role in Kant's moral theory. On the contrary, Kant uses a notion of "good" that is absolute:

> Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which can be called good without qualification, except a good *will.*
>
> (Kant, 1969:§1).

A moral deed needs to satisfy nothing except the pure intention of obeying moral duty, and the moral intention must be absolute, without qualifications.

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[7] In this vein, Garrett Thomson (1992:107) argues that although Kant barely mentioned ugliness, such a concept "can be constructed, based upon what Kant has written about beauty". In view of my objections, Thomson's claim is not persuasive.

The idea of non-quantitative morality is not just an integral element in Kant's ethics; it is the very essence of it. Intentions are binary; feelings and emotions (which are manifested in degrees of intensities) are morally irrelevant. By contrast, if pleasure is the mark of aesthetic experience, it cannot be binary; it requires, unlike the moral deed, a quantitative measure.

Mothersill: individuality without a measure

In her *Beauty Restored,* Mary Mothersill suggests that an aesthetic property is "common and peculiar to individuals that are indistinguishable from one another" (Mothersill, 1984:344). In other words, an aesthetic property is the expression of individuality in the object. This echoes Kant's view of the singularity of the judgment of taste and it coheres with the understanding that an aesthetic set constitutes a one-member class (see Chapter 6, pp. 113–114). Mothersill examines a few versions of this formula, all of them connect individuality with aesthetic pleasure without establishing the grounds for variation in degrees. For instance, definition 1 in her system suggests that

> Someone takes an individual to be beautiful if and only if the individual pleases him and he believes that it pleases him in virtue of its aesthetic properties.
>
> (Mothersill, 1984:342)

Definition 3 asserts that

> Any individual is beautiful if and only if it is such as to be the cause of pleasure in virtue of its aesthetic properties.
>
> (Mothersill, 1984:347)

The common core of the different definitions is the idea that the mark of beauty is a pleasure caused by the individual features of the object. This idea raises some difficulties.[8] For one, individuality may cause pleasure without thereby becoming an aesthetic property. For instance, the voice of my only daughter is, no doubt, her individual voice, which I can distinguish from any other voice. It gives me pleasure to hear her voice, but I would hesitate to describe the cause of my pleasure as aesthetic. Although it is associated with individuality, such pleasure may in some cases be in contrast to what is usually referred to as aesthetic pleasure. Shakespeare's *Sonnet CXXX* provides a convincing argument[9]:

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[8] Zemach (1987:67–9) argues that this definition of beauty is "too wide…too narrow". I agree with Zemach, but not for the same reasons. I agree that individuality is a component of beauty, but on its own it is not enough to explain beauty.

[9] I thank my daughter, Dorit, for drawing my attention to this sonnet.

> My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
> If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
> But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
> And in some perfumes is there more delight
> Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
> I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
> That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
> I grant I never saw a goddess go—
> My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
> And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
> As any she belied with false compare.

The point Shakespeare makes here is clearly against the identification of the pleasure caused by any individuality *per se* and the pleasure caused by beautiful individuals. Individuality is a necessary but insufficient condition for aesthetic merit.

Mothersill rightly associates the idea that beauty has no a priori principles with the argument concerning individuality. However, lack of a priori aesthetic principles is indicative of the whole range of aesthetic values and not just of high aesthetic values and intense pleasure. If there are no principles that govern beauty, by the same token there are no principles that govern low aesthetic measure. An individual may equally be beautiful or ugly in virtue of his or her individual properties.

Mothersill raises the issue of degrees in terms of comparative judgments. Although the object of aesthetic appreciation, being individual, is unique, comparisons are unavoidable. The quantitative aspect of beauty reveals itself through comparisons, although such comparisons are not equally important in every case, "A bunch of daisies: which is the most beautiful? Who cares?" (Mothersill, 1984:378). But what if we do care? What makes one object more beautiful than another? Mothersill suggests that "the more beautiful item is that which, in virtue of its aesthetic properties, has the capacity for causing greater pleasure" (Mothersill, 1984:379). Mothersill turns, as many have done before, to the only concept in Kant's theory that is quantitative–*pleasure*. Pleasure (aesthetic or non-aesthetic) is indeed quantitative, but does it answer the above question? Can we accept "pleasure" as an answer to the question of what makes one object more beautiful than another? After all, pleasure is the effect, not the cause. Mothersill addresses the difficulty of measuring pleasure, as if this were the main obstacle here. She suggests that since we have no "general theory of affect [...] we use what we have" (Mothersill, 1984:379–80). What we have is Bentham's scheme of grading pleasure.

Mothersill should be praised for acknowledging the widely neglected issue of degrees in aesthetic appreciation. Nonetheless, her suggestion indicates that, as many before her, she has fallen into the trap of "normative aesthetics", that is, the trap of attempting to set *norms* of measurements and view this task as the main concern for aestheticians. Her argument implies that if only we had an adequate method of measuring feelings of pleasure we would know (once and for all?) whether *Anna Karenina* is better than *Madame Bovary* or whether daisies (assuming that we do care) are lovelier than daffodils. Not only do I think that such "truths" are not available, but, even if they were, their disclosure would not be the task of a philosophical discipline such as aesthetics.[10]

The main reason for the difficulty of measuring beauty is not that we lack a sufficiently developed "affect theory", as Mothersill puts it, nor is it that beauty is subjective. I see no problem in accepting subjective measures (this is not to say that I regard beauty as being subjective). In fact, we all use such measures regarding our feelings and sensations: we can, for most purposes, adequately judge whether a certain emotion is more intense than another, or whether a certain sensation is stronger than another. We can also devise ways of reducing these "subjective measures" into general "objective" parameters and obtain pragmatic, "technical" solutions to the mind-body problem, if we need them. But this is not (or need not be) the issue here.

The main point is that focusing on pleasure (even if we call it "aesthetic pleasure") means attending to the outcome while ignoring the object that occasions it (the cause). The principal question: what is it in the object that pleases us?—a question that I regard as the core of the philosophical inquiry into the aesthetic experience—remains unanswered. After all, it is the object that we call "beautiful", not our emotions toward it.[11]

The philosophical problem of measuring beauty is not the problem of measuring feelings but rather the problem of measuring individuality (individuality and subjectivity are often confused). Individuality, being the mark of beauty, as Mothersill herself suggests, is a binary concept that does not allow gradation of measure. An object cannot be less individual than another; each individual is singular in the same sense. If we agree that degrees (but not necessarily the method of measuring them) are inherent to the aesthetic experience, then individuality *per se* cannot be the sole key to understanding beauty. A quantitative concept (such as order) must complement the idea of individuality.

The qualitative analysis of beauty

The qualitative aspect of aesthetic order was analyzed in Chapters 7 and 8 in terms of interpretation. Aesthetic order was presented as a form of complementary interpretation. Beauty in its qualitative aspect is, accordingly, a highly satisfying materialization of hidden potential; it is an excellent solution to the problem suggested by the materials of the object. Conceiving beauty as being a form of interpretation has crucial consequences for the role of concepts in the aesthetic experience and the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experience.

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[10] Wittgenstein (1970: II, 2:11) expressed this view forcefully: "You might think Aesthetics is a science telling us what is beautiful—almost too ridiculous for words. I suppose it also ought to include what sort of coffee tastes well."

[11] Walton (1993) presents the opposite view. His analysis of aesthetic evaluation suggests that the aesthetic value expresses a reflection of the emotions evoked by an object.

Beauty and concepts

The debate over the role of concepts in aesthetic experience has been mainly influenced by Kant's assumption that "free beauty" is non-conceptual. The idea that genuine beauty is divorced of concepts has generated some extreme views and made incredible demands on the aesthetic experience.

Bergson erected a solid divide between intuition and intellect and, consequently, between their products: vital order and geometrical order. Croce adopted a similar position and distinguished between intuitive and intellectual knowledge. Croce stated that intuition is "independent of the conceptual" and that it is "without any trace of reference to the intellectual" (Croce, 1992:2–3). Mark that, not a trace! Similarly, Bell believed that in order "to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life" (Bell, 1961:36). Note again—nothing from life! Beardsley (1988) characterized the aesthetic experience as complete in itself and independent of external, non-aesthetic information.

It should be noted that Kant ascribes non-conceptuality only to "free beauty", not to artifacts. Art, according to Kant, is conceptual by definition, or at least, he holds this to be true of most forms of art. Kant excludes music that has no theme ("phantasies"), and in general, music without words (1951a: §16). By contrast, Bergson, Croce, Bell, Beardsley, and others, ascribe non-conceptuality and purity of experience to art in general. All the same, my objection to non-conceptuality persists whether one relates it to natural objects or to artifacts. I hold that *no* experience is non-conceptual, and, equally, that *no* object that escapes categorization (and I doubt that such an object is describable or perceivable) can generate an aesthetic experience.

My objection to non-conceptuality is based on the analysis that aesthetic order and discursive order are mutually dependent and that neither is conceivable on its own. The fact that the two orders are theoretically distinct should not mislead us to believe that they can be separately experienced. There are no pure intellectual products that do not involve aesthetic order, just as there are no aesthetic experiences that are free from concepts, that is, of discursive order. Scientists and mathematicians often point to aesthetic features in their works; equally, artists do not work in a space devoid of knowledge and free of theoretical and factual constraints. There are differences in focus, priority, interest and the nature of the final product of each domain, but this does not mean that each domain is actually independent of the other. The burden on the aesthetic theory is to account for these differences as much as for the fertile interactions between the two orders.

The requirement for purity in aesthetic experience was criticized as "unworldly discipline" (Novitz, 1990:9–20). It was argued that it is impossible to nullify all previous knowledge and to experience a work of art or the beauty of Nature completely anew. That is, even if such a requirement were theoretically justifiable, practice would not permit it. I wish to go a step further and claim that it is not only practice that stands in the way of the demand for purity, but that there are also theoretical considerations that prevent this attainment. Kant's distinction between free and dependent beauty is examined here as a case study; it constitutes a paradigm for any theory that argues for non-conceptuality and "purity" in aesthetics.

Kant's free and dependent beauty[12]

Free beauty is non-conceptual, that is, "it presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be"; dependent beauty, by contrast, presupposes knowledge "of the purpose which determined what the thing is to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection" (Kant, 1951a:§16). The former is, with some exceptions, typical of natural objects (e.g. birds singing); the latter represents artifacts and natural objects that are directly associated with cultural life (e.g. horses). The difficulties that are raised in this distinction have motivated some of Kant's commentators to offer interpretations that would resolve them. The basic assumption of most commentators has been that the vagueness of Kant's presentation is responsible for these difficulties.[13] The following discussion will not attempt to resolve inconsistencies in Kant's analysis of the proposed distinction, but rather criticize the distinction as both mistaken and unnecessary. It is my view that the whole issue of "two types of beauty" is vague and incoherent, not because of a careless presentation but because the issue itself is problematic and its problems cannot be resolved. I seek to rehabilitate the notion of non-conceptuality in a way that allows for one type of beauty only, that is, one type of aesthetic order.

1. In the famous section 16 of *Critique of Judgement* Kant (1951a) clearly states that there are "two kinds of beauty". One would expect that the existence of two different kinds of beauty would require an account of the general concept of beauty (the concept of the species): if there are kinds, there must be an inclusive type to which both kinds belong as sub-types. Yet Kant does not follow the consequences of this logic: a general account of beauty, which is neither free nor dependent, is missing from Kant's theory. Is it possible that Kant meant to present free beauty as *the* general concept of beauty, and dependent beauty as its sub-type?
2. If free beauty functions as the general concept, and dependent beauty as its sub-type, another logical problem arises: by definition, a sub-type is distinguished from its governing type by possessing some qualities of its own, but it must also share some qualities common to its type. It follows that the

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[12] I have discussed this issue in an earlier publication (Lorand, 1989).

[13] For instance Scarre (1981), Crawford (1974:113–17) and Schaper (1970:78–98).

sub-type cannot differ from its type in every respect and it certainly cannot form a contradiction of it. However, dependent beauty is presented as a complete contrast to free beauty, and it is not clear what their common features are, if indeed there are any. If non-conceptuality is the mark of beauty in general, how can a specific sub-type of beauty be conceptual without creating a contradiction? Being *conceptual beauty* would require of "dependent beauty" to exhibit the impossible quality of *conceptual non-conceptuality*.

3 Kant's theory implies another possibility of conceiving the relation between the two kinds of beauty: the relation between the pure element (free beauty) and its composite (dependent beauty):

> Now, just as it is a clog on the purity of the judgment of taste to have the agreeable (of sensation) joined with beauty to which properly only the form is relevant, so to combine the good with beauty [...] mars its purity.
> (Kant, 1951a:§16)

Kant is fond of the chemistry metaphor, and applies it to other contexts as well. Like the chemist, the philosopher examines elements under laboratory conditions.[14] However, Kant does not adhere to the logic of his metaphor when it comes to beauty. If free beauty is the pure element and dependent beauty is a composite in which pure beauty is compounded with other elements, then the composite should not be regarded as *a kind of beauty;* in fact, it should not be regarded as "beauty" at all. Consider the analogy: water (H_2O) is not *a kind of oxygen* simply because oxygen is one of its elements. The nature of the composite as a whole may be very different from the nature of each of its constitutive elements. Thus, a conceptual "composite" may (perhaps) contain a non-conceptual "element", but the whole, being conceptual, does not directly reflect the nature of any isolated element over and above the nature of the other elements of the composite.

The adjectives "pure" and "impure", "free" and "dependent" become redundant in view of this analysis. All the elements of the composite are "pure" in the same sense: their qualities remain the same (at least theoretically) when they are in isolation or are combined with other elements to form the composite. If "pure" beauty is non-conceptual, it should remain so when it is combined with concepts (if indeed it can thus be combined). When combined, it is not beauty that becomes conceptual but the composite as a whole in which beauty partakes. At most, these adjectives—pure and impure, free and dependent—indicate different *conditions* or *states* of the beauty element, but not different *kinds*. By analogy, pure oxygen and impure oxygen are not different kinds of oxygen but rather different states or different manifestations of the same element. If there were two kinds of beauty, both of them would be “pure” or “impure”, in the same sense, depending on their particular manifestation. Purity and impurity cannot serve as criteria for differentiating among kinds, but rather among their conditions.

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[14] "The philosopher [...] like the chemist, can at any time make an experiment with every man's practical reason for the purpose of distinguishing the moral (pure) principle of determination from the empirical; namely, by adding the moral law (as a determining principle) to the empirically affected will (e.g. that of the man who would be ready to lie because he can gain something thereby). It is as if the analyst added alkali to a solution of lime in hydrochloric acid; the acid at once forsakes the lime, combines with the alkali, and the lime is precipitated." (Kant 1967:186). Kant applies the same metaphor to his analysis of beauty. However, Kant does not argue that there are two kinds of morality.

4 Kant’s examples of the two kinds of beauty are not clear-cut cases—they may support contrasting interpretations (as in fact they did). Among Kant’s examples for “free beauty” are flowers, song birds, seashells and musical fantasies or music without words. Men, horses, buildings and representational art are “dependent” beauties. The beauty of a man, a horse or a building is conceptual, according to Kant, since we cannot detach the idea of what is expected of a man or a horse or a building from their beauty-making features. These, so Kant implies, are culturally significant concepts whereas seashells and such like are excluded from the cultural context; they remain “natural”. Culturally dependent concepts are associated with their functions within cultural life. An office building should not look like a palace, a racing horse should not function as a field horse, and a man that has a (beautiful) tattoo is inappropriately decorated since this decoration contrasts the idea of man (according to Kant).[15] Nonetheless, it is not clear why some natural objects should be less conceptual than others. It seems that Kant takes his own cultural norms for granted and does not distinguish in this context between the normative level and the philosophical analysis.

A tattooed man is not beautiful, according to Kant, since the *idea* of a tattoo contradicts the *concept* of man, that is, the concept that Kant holds to be correct—it creates a conflict of orders. But how does Kant’s example fare in New Zealand? The Maori concept of man seems to cohere very well with the idea of having a tattoo—otherwise he would not have adorned himself in this way. We have, then, at least two concepts of man—one agrees with tattoos and the other does not. The question of which concept presents the “true” idea of man, and whether such a true idea is feasible, is not an aesthetic concern. The point here is not whether Kant’s concept of man is right or wrong. Even if we go along with Kant and agree that the New Zealander’s conception of man is mistaken, there is still a direct connection between the New Zealander’s (allegedly mistaken) concept and his (allegedly poor) taste. The logical connection is the same whether the concept is valid or not; it is this connection that should interest us here and not the validity of a specific concept of man.

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[15] It is interesting to note, that Kant rejects human decorations of another culture, while he says nothing about the decorations that are accepted in his own society. Elaborated wigs, heavy makeup and rich lace, no less than tattoo, may also evoke objection.

It remains now to establish whether the case of flowers or musical fantasies should be any different from the case of men, horses or buildings. Kant suggested that the layperson has no knowledge about what flowers really are, and need not have such knowledge in order to appreciate and enjoy the beauty of a flower. Is Kant right? I believe he is wrong on both points: (1) that the layperson has no concept of what flowers are, and (2) that an aesthetic appreciation does not need concepts. The first point is general and its claim exceeds the aesthetic domain. The second point is more specific to aesthetics.

Even if the layperson does not have the required botanical knowledge, it does not follow that s/he has no concept whatsoever of what flowers are. It may be a partial or a mistaken concept, but there must be some concept by which the flower is recognized and classified as a flower, differentiated from other objects and associated with previous experiences. The layperson's concept may consist of accumulated cultural connotations, individual associations and even partial, non-accurate botanical knowledge, but it constitutes a concept nonetheless. Even the mere ability to recognize various forms and colors indicates the possession of concepts. The fact that different people may hold different concepts not all of which cohere with the botanist's concept should not present an obstacle here.

If we consider only complete, true ideas as "concepts", then it is doubtful whether any botanist has such a concept of flowers, or that Kant has such a concept of man. But if we accept a more pragmatic approach, we must admit that even a two-year-old child is capable of having a concept of a flower: the child's concept is constructed from what s/he has been told and shown regarding flowers. As in the case of the New Zealander's tattoo, it is not the validity of the concept itself that should concern us here, but rather the fact that there is a concept involved in the experience and that it is effective. If a child knows that this *thing* is red and not blue or green, or that it is not edible but worth smelling, or that adults often enjoy looking at this *thing* placed in a vase the child has already acquired a concept. This concept is relatively simple and limited, partly mistaken and vague, but a concept nonetheless. Forms and colors, just like musical pitches and rhythms, are conceptual in the sense that they are recognized in different contexts and thus constitute primitive concepts (types) that have different instances (tokens). An impression that does not raise any associations and generalizations is so rudimentary that we cannot even picture ourselves experiencing it. It may belong to the very early days of our childhood of which we have no memories.

If Kant were correct about non-conceptuality, then people could easily enjoy objects from unfamiliar cultures, and infants would be more likely to have genuine aesthetic experiences than adults. I do not believe that this is the case. Infants are as close as possible to non-conceptuality, yet it is unlikely that they possess taste in Kant's sense. It is more likely that babies' preferences are determined by simple feelings of *pleasantness*—exactly the element that Kant placed in contrast to pure judgments of taste. It is also difficult to believe that infants are capable of recognizing a *form of purposiveness without a* *purpose* in order to construct a judgment of taste. Babies gradually develop the notion of purpose, and learn to recognize objects as the means by which purposes are achieved. Kant's *form of purposiveness* presupposes the understanding of what constitutes a purpose; it cannot precede it. Beauty, if indeed it is a form of order, is a complex concept. Children develop their ability to conceive of beauty along with the expansion of their conceptual facilities.

As to beauty in foreign cultures, experience shows that the strange and the unfamiliar do not appear beautiful as long as they remain strange and unfamiliar. As Somerset Maugham wrote:

> We find things beautiful because we recognize them and contrariwise we find things beautiful because their novelty surprises us.
>
> (Maugham, *The Summing Up,* 1938)

If Kant were right about music (without a theme), then a foreign piece of music should be the perfect candidate for pure aesthetic pleasure. It is obvious that even with music that seems to be as non-conceptual as possible, a certain familiarity with patterns, motifs, instruments, and so on, is required in order to initiate pleasure and appreciation.

A person who has no idea whatsoever of what a particular object is (assuming that such a case is possible), is incapable of appreciating the object, let alone of deriving any pleasure from it. Unfamiliarity is more likely to frighten us or raise our curiosity and motivate us to study the object before we can enjoy it in any way. The Bushman who has never heard of either bottles or airplanes, immediately categorizes the object that hits him (a Coca Cola bottle thrown from an airplane) as a gift sent by the gods.[16] His conception of this gift undergoes significant modifications throughout the film. First he believes that it is a good and useful object (since the gods have sent it to him), later he changes his mind and concludes that the gods must be crazy to send him such an evil thing. We are all like the Bushman in this sense: the moment something hits us we categorize it according to the concepts that we already possess. This categorization is revised in view of further experiences.[17]

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[16] One of the opening scenes in the South African film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (see Chapter 9, p. 182).

[17] This point expresses also a disagreement with the idea that a work of art cannot be aesthetically evaluated unless its genre is known to the observer. Walton (1979) argues that without having relevant historical facts we are unable to appreciate the coherence of the work with its generic features. Indeed, any appreciation of a work depends on what one holds to be the relevant facts (historical and others), but, as in the Bushman's case, this does not depend on conventional cultural facts. The question whether we should accept the judgment of the uninitiated as a proper judgment is a normative matter, not a conceptual issue. It depends on values and trends, and not on the understanding of the nature of aesthetic evaluation.

5 The admiration for natural objects (as *natural* objects) involves the concept of "Nature" among other concepts. Kant implies this much:

> The song of birds proclaims gladsomeness and contentment with existence. At least so we interpret Nature [...] But the interest which we here take in beauty has only to do with the beauty of Nature; it vanishes altogether as soon as we notice that we are deceived and that it is only art—vanishes so completely that taste can no longer find the thing beautiful.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§42)

Does this paragraph (and a few others in §42) not clearly articulate that we enjoy the beauty of Nature as *natural* beauty? Is the awareness of the naturality of the object not a crucial element of its appreciation? Is Kant's notion of "Nature" not dependent on concepts like "gladsomeness and contentment with existence"? Moreover, does not this concept presuppose certain characteristics of Kant's eighteenth-century German culture (presuppositions that are reflected in his other examples as well) and thus entail a concept of Nature that is very different from the one embedded, say, in Maori culture?

When we expect to find natural objects and find instead artifacts, we may be disappointed, and consequently regard the object as lacking in beauty, as Kant argues. This kind of a disappointment clearly indicates the possession of certain concepts of what is and what is not natural. However, there are cases in which it is precisely this "deception", the convincing imitation of Nature, which is the object of admiration. Actors, painters and writers are often praised for their ability to imitate Nature and "deceive" us, even if this ability does not solely determine the worth of their works. Each of the above cases involves different expectations and concepts, and as a result different reactions. Neither case can be said to be free from concepts.

6 I end this list of objections with Kant's words concerning the relevance of rationality to aesthetic experience:

> Pleasantness concerns irrational animals also, but beauty only concerns men, i.e. animal, but still rational, beings—not merely *qua* rational (e.g. spirits), but *qua* animal also—and the good concerns every rational being in general.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§5)

Kant states here that the sense of beauty, more than anything else, expresses the mode of being human: it creates a bond as well as a tension between rationality and sensuality. Neither of these elements is capable of generating the experience of beauty on its own.

An immediate consequence of Kant's position is that animals—assuming that they are irrational—cannot have a sense of beauty, only a sense of pleasantness (which is different from the pleasure occasioned by beauty).

> This position clearly contrasts another popular view that beauty plays an important role in Nature, mainly in sexual attraction among creatures.[18] The beauty of the peacock's tail is often presented as the prime example of the sense of beauty in animals. Whether the beauty of the peacock's tail proves that peacocks have a sense of beauty, I have no way of judging, and it is doubtful whether this issue can be decided at all. Nevertheless, the belief that animals are aware of beauty is based on a problematic analogy with human taste. The peacock's tail is indeed exceptionally beautiful (from a human perspective), but it does not follow that the female peacock appreciates such beauty in the way that humans do. For one, humans are not attracted to the male peacock in the same sense that the female peacock is. Suppose the analogy to humans is valid, and that whatever is (commonly) beautiful in our eyes is similarly beautiful from the perspective of animals and vice versa, we would then need to explain not only the attraction between peacocks (which is to our taste too), but also the attraction between slimy frogs, red-buttock baboons or stridulant grasshoppers.[19] Any argument concerning the sense of beauty of animals cannot be based merely on those cases that appeal to human taste. If we are completely unable to appreciate beauty from an animal's perspective, we can have no grounds for arguing either that they possess or that they lack a sense of beauty. According to Kant, it rather depends on the question of whether animals possess conceptual capacities. I concur with Kant that there is a necessary connection between the sense of beauty and conceptual capacity. I doubt whether it can be proven that animals lack or possess such a capacity.

The tension between the contrasting elements—rationality and sensuality—results in the paradoxical experience of beauty. Kant, accordingly, expresses the nature of this experience in paradoxical categories (disinterested interest, purposiveness without a purpose, and so forth). I suspect that with his distinction between free and dependent beauty, Kant wishes to dissolve the paradoxical tension by distinguishing between the pure sensual (free, non-conceptual beauty) and the rational (dependent, conceptual beauty) elements. This attempt is bound to fail since beauty, as Kant acknowledged, comprises a combination of sensuality and rationality; this complex cannot be reduced to its elements without the dissolution of beauty. Beauty is not merely conceptual or merely sensual. Being a paradoxical complex, beauty cannot be conceptual in the way that typical rational products are; it must express the "animal", sensual element; at the same time it cannot be deprived of concepts and be based on sensual pleasantness alone. Is there a way to resolve these opposing tendencies?

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[18] Scharfstein (1988) even accepts the idea that birds and other animals have their forms of art. See also Etcoff (1999).

[19] As Voltaire wrote: "Ask a toad what is beauty […]; he will answer that it is a female with two great round eyes coming out of her little head, a large flat mouth, a yellow belly and a brown back." (Voltaire, "Beauty", *Philosophical Dictionary,* 1764).

With all due respect and bearing in mind what Kant said about interpreting Plato, I take the liberty of suggesting that Kant "has not sufficiently determined his [own] concept" of non-conceptuality.[20] I suggest that we distinguish between (1) being *derived from* concepts and (2) being *dependent on* or *affected by* concepts. The first is typically discursive, the second is necessary for aesthetic experience.

1 *Being derived from* concepts entails deductive methods. On the basis of some given concepts (or principles), one may either derive another concept or apply the given concepts to particular instances. These applications are typical of discursive order. Given that he holds a certain concept of man, Kant concludes that a tattoo is an improper embellishment for man; if one holds a different concept of man, one may arrive at a different conclusion. Such conclusions do not require an immediate (aesthetic) experience of the particular object; they are general and applicable to all relevant cases (all men). Their validity depends on the validity of the initiating concepts and the deductive procedure.

   If, as Kant asserts, there are no general aesthetic principles, it follows that aesthetic values of particular objects are *not derived from* or *determined by* concepts (or principles). In other words, aesthetic evaluations are not mere applications of general principles. After all, it is Kant's position that judgment of taste is singular and cannot be generalized; this point has been made in fact by many, both before and after Kant.[21] In the light of this understanding, the assertion that tattoos are improper embellishment for a man should not be regarded as a judgment of taste at all. It does not constitute a singular judgment but a general judgement in the form for every X *if* X is human *then* tattoos are improper for X, or X should not wear tattoos. This kind of judgment reflects cultural or ethical norms, but not an aesthetic evaluation.

2 *Being dependent on* concepts means that concepts *affect* the particular experience in a direct manner, not via deductive procedures. Concepts in this case form a background that affects the object in question in the same way that a patch of color is affected by the color of its background. The influence of the background is not the result of deductive (discursive) procedures; it is individual and directly comprehended.

   Let us go back to one of Kant's examples, the seashell. What makes a seashell beautiful? I hold that it is beautiful not because we have no interest in it or no idea of its purpose (at least some of us do have such clear concepts),

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[20] As Kant (1956: B 370) wrote: "It is by no means unusual, […] to find that we understand him [the author] better than he has understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept."

[21] Sibley's (1970) famous 'Aesthetic concepts', which take Kant's position, have evoked an extensive discussion on the issue. Sibley argues that aesthetic concepts cannot be reduced to non-aesthetic concepts.

> but because its form is associated with geometrical concepts (circle, spiral, and so on) that carry cultural significance (completeness, infinity, and so forth). It astonishes and amuses us to find these meaningful, accurate forms reflected in such, often minute, alien creatures. We appreciate the forms that are carved as accurately as if they were the products of an expert designer. The qualities of the material also contribute to the overall impression—it is not easy to carve such osseous, fragile material into such a delicate form, and yet Nature has achieved this. If Kant were correct about form being the sole object of pure judgment of taste, then we could *equally* be expected to admire such a spiral form in plastic or dough. It is quite obvious that the appreciation of the material qualities of the shell (compared with other materials) is concept dependent. The conceptual understanding of both—form and material—constitutes an important element (though not the only one) in the overall aesthetic appreciation of a seashell.
>
> Furthermore, as Kant himself tells us, the recognition that an object that has been presented as natural is in fact an imitation of Nature involves the concept of deception. Our appreciation is dramatically reduced upon exposing the deception, unless we are willing to replace "delusion" and "deception" with "artistic representation" (Kant, 1951a:§42) or other positive concepts. The knowledge we obtain regarding the object—whether it is natural or artificial, whether it is rare or common, whether it is what it seems to be or not what it seems to be—has a crucial role for determining aesthetic appreciation. This point is essential for understanding why a forgery (even if it is a very accurate one) is less appreciated then the original. It involves unfavorable concepts such as deception, lack of originality, violation of the individuality of the work, and so on. At the same time, we may admire the forger for his or her ability to imitate and deceive the observer because it involves skills and knowledge that are not quite common (similarly we may admire a thief for his original technique but condemn his actions).[22]

The relations between the concepts associated with an object and the object's aesthetic value are not instances of *general-particular* relations but rather of *material-product* relations. A product is clearly not derived from its materials; it consists of them. If these materials are bound to include concepts, as I have argued, then the aesthetic value of every product is concept dependent. The difference between being "derived from" and being "affected by" or "dependent on" is the difference between discursive and aesthetic order.

Indeed, Kant correctly states that there are no general principles that determine the aesthetic value of an object. However, the fact that concepts directly affect the aesthetic value of an object is equally true for *all* aesthetic sets, natural or artificial. All aesthetic sets depend on concepts, even the most insignificant ones. The concepts themselves may be relatively simple, such as those of colors and sounds, or may be complex, such as the concepts of humanity, art and Nature. There are no different types of aesthetic order, only different manifestations of the same type. We may classify objects of aesthetic order according to different principles, but this is still a discursive classification, not an aesthetic one. Beauty is beauty. The division of objects into natural and artificial or sensual and abstract or any other mode of division does not have to result in conceptual distinctions of beauty. Indeed, the beauty of a man involves different expectations from that of a woman, and the beauty of a butterfly involves different qualities and concepts from that of a poem, but does it follow that the concept of beauty (in its philosophical sense) is different in all these cases? If we were to enumerate types of beauty according to types of objects, we would end up having a very long list of beauties—a useless typology for most purposes.

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[22] Alfred Hitchcock's film *To Catch a Thief* (1954) moves between an admiration for the thief's skills (almost as a form of art) and the moral aspect.

Beauty and interest

Much has been written about the role of interest in aesthetic experience, mainly in response to Kant, either as an interpretation and defense of his notion of "disinterestedness" or as an argument against it.[23] My concern here is not so much with interpreting Kant's notion, or any particular version of it, as with the various aspects of the relation between beauty, interest and their related concepts of order.[24]

Interest in the existence of the object

Kant defines interest as "the satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object" (Kant, 1951a:§2). From Kant's example (a palace in Paris) it is apparent that by "existence" Kant means material, concrete existence. A person may thus find an object beautiful without having any interest in its existence, that is, the person may be indifferent to whether the object is destroyed or continues to exist. The beauty of the palace and the interest in its existence do not condition each other. The observer may agree that the palace, although it is very beautiful, is too expensive to maintain, or that it is a monument of corruption, vanity and oppression and therefore should be demolished. Thus, an image of the palace, a pictorial representation, may afford us the same image of its beauty and occasion the same kind of aesthetic pleasure; the concrete existence of the palace is, from this perspective, redundant.

By contrast, we cannot detach the pleasantness of a warm fireplace on a stormy night from the actual existence of it: a representation of a fireplace can be beautiful, but it cannot keep us warm. Hans Christian Andersen's poor little match girl froze to death because all she had were images (representations) of a warm fireplace and a hot meal. By contrast, if the girl only needed beauty, her imagination would have sufficed: a fictional object is capable of causing aesthetic satisfaction. Awareness of the concrete existence of an object adds nothing (so Kant may argue) to the beauty of its image. Croce (1978) similarly holds that the actual materials of a work of art do not have artistic value. The "real" work is an idea, the image that the artist has, which is independent of its implementation in concrete, sensual materials.

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[23] "Psychological distance" is one of the modern expression of Kant's "disinterestedness". Among its defenders are Bullough (1913), Vivas (1937), Stolniz (1960) and Dawson (1961); among its critics are Margolis (1965) and Dickie (1969), who delivered a most vigorous blow against the issue.

[24] Zangwill (1992:149–51) argues that Kant has been largely misinterpreted on this point. However, being accurate about Kant's notion of disinterestedness does not imply that it is, to quote Zangwill, "beyond question".

This position coheres with Kant's notion of *form* as being the sole object of pure judgment of taste. "In painting, sculpture and in fact in all the formative arts […] the design is what is essential" (Kant, 1951a:§14). Qualities such as color, smell, texture, and so forth, contribute to the pleasantness of the object, not to its beauty. Kant regards form as a non-sensual quality that does not affect us emotionally as do sense qualities.[25] Given the same palace, its form would remain the same whether it is concrete or an image in a painting, a photograph or a memory.

It follows that the beauty of an object in gray is the same as the beauty of a similar object in vivid colors, or that the context in which the object occurs has no impact whatsoever on its beauty. The same score played on different instruments should constitute the same (pure) aesthetic object, regardless of variations in tonal qualities; the "same" sculpture in different sizes or materials is the same aesthetic object. Is this acceptable? Not according to the theory of aesthetic order.

Indeed, we may appreciate the shape of an object while ignoring other qualities (we may also compare it with other shapes), just as a score can be evaluated on its own merit (while ignoring its performances). But even in these cases some other concepts, besides the concept of form, shape or structure, must be involved. A score is never a "mere form", it is also a "content": it conveys motives, values, implied statements and beliefs. Its evaluation involves therefore not only the apprehension of its abstract structure. An abstract form is a discursive principle, not an aesthetic one. In aesthetic orders form cannot be detached from content, and even an "abstract" idea has its particular content.

If this is accepted, it becomes clear that the beauty of the concrete palace and the beauty of its pictorial representation cannot be the same. The sight of the real palace in Paris involves elements that a pictorial representation obviously lacks (and vice versa). We often have the impression that a photograph misrepresents the beauty of the real object: the object is either more beautiful in real life, or its representation is more beautiful than the object. Our memory too often betrays us. It is not uncommon to realize that an object is more (or less) beautiful than our recollection of it. Furthermore, we do not take for granted an adequate coherence between an object and its representation. We may have seen many good color photos of Capri, but nothing equals the direct experience of the island. The very presence of it here and now, the knowledge that it is *real,* the direct sensation of it, all these participate in the overall experience and affect the aesthetic order of the landscape. How can we be indifferent to its mode of existence?

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[25] Kandinsky (1955:151), by comparison, argues that forms, just like colors, have emotional impact.

If we accept that a concrete object and its representation may differ dramatically in their aesthetic order, then Kant's disinterestedness is not invalid but rather *vacuous*. Each mode of existence produces a different object for aesthetic appreciation. A beautiful palace in a painting is a beautiful *painted palace,* and a beautiful concrete palace in the middle of Paris is a beautiful *concrete Parisian palace*. No mode of existence determines the beauty of the object in a different mode, although it may contribute to it by raising expectations: seeing the real palace, I expect its photograph to reveal its "real" beauty. I may either be disappointed or discover a different perspective of the palace via the photograph. However, we cannot evaluate the beauty of a concrete object without its actual existence and our actual experience of it. Being indifferent to its existence is tantamount to being indifferent to its beauty.[26]

There is another angle to this issue. Kant seems not to have realized that there is a strong connection between the beauty we find in an object and our interest in the object's continuing existence in the same mode that revealed its beauty. If it is a beautiful dream, we are sorry that it fades away when we wake up (dreaming and remembering the dream affects us differently); if it is a beautiful painting, we hate to see it ruined and struggle to preserve it; if it is a concrete palace, we suffer when it is destroyed even if we agree with the reasons that necessitate its destruction. Beauty, when in conflict with other values (V_1)—health, justice, economy or convenience—does not always win. We may agree to cut down a beautiful tree not because we are indifferent to its existence or to its beauty, but because it blocks the road and is hazardous, and we value people's lives more than the beauty of the tree. Nonetheless, the destruction of a beautiful object, even if it is justified, is always painful. We sense the loss of a beauty that cannot be replaced or compensated by any form of its representation.

The beauty of the object and the interest in the object's existence are inseparable. The "purified" laboratory conditions of the philosopher may not reveal this connection, but the immediate experience of beauty clearly demonstrates that we have an interest in the very existence of the beautiful object because it is beautiful. The object is not beautiful because it exists, but it could not be thus beautiful if it did not to exist. Kant's implication that the beauty of an object in a photograph or a remembered image of that object arouses aesthetic appreciation and pleasure equal to those evoked by the "real thing" indicates that philosophical "distance" is not always rewarding.

Interest and attention

Oscar Wilde (1954:57–87) wrote, "the only beautiful things are things that do not concern us". Although Wilde cannot be accused of being remote from the aesthetic domain, and although much depends on how one construes "concern", I believe that Wilde is essentially mistaken. Indeed, when we focus directly on discursive order, aesthetic order fades into the background; when an object concerns us by virtue of its function as a means, we may not pay attention to its aesthetic order. But this does not mean that we notice beauty only in objects that do not interest us whatsoever.

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[26] Marcia Eaton (1989:133) makes a similar point when she writes, "But my delight is aesthetic only if I am actually in the presence of (and can actually perceive) the object of my delight."

If beauty is indeed a form of interpretation as I have argued, then the value of the interpretative solution, namely the beauty, depends among other things on the significance of the problem; we need to be interested in the problem (the hidden potential of the materials) in order to appreciate its solution. There is a direct connection between the interest we have in a certain category (a field, a genre or an aspect) and our inclination to notice the beauty of an object that falls within that category. A person who does not drink wine is unlikely to appreciate a good wine; a person who is not interested in poetry in general is unlikely to appreciate a fine poem or distinguish it from poor or mediocre poems. The judgment of the disinterested person is inclined to be blind to many significant qualities in the object.

Anyone may have an opinion, even about things that are remote from the one's interest. What is, however, the worth of such an opinion? People normally hesitate to evaluate an object in which they have no interest at all and, consequently, know very little about. People tend to apologize if they are asked to evaluate such objects: "Sorry, but I know nothing about wines." There is a feeling of uncertainty that accompanies such cases, because people feel that they are unable to see through the limited surface of the object and reveal its beauty without being deeply interested in it. Only a genuine interest prepares the grounds for the intimate acquaintance that allows for a sincere aesthetic appreciation.

What is usually called "taste" is a refined sensitivity in certain areas. Such sensitivity depends on interest and attention and cannot grow without these being exercised. When asked by his host in Ireland what he would like for breakfast, Wittgenstein, so the story goes, replied that it did not matter, as long as it was the same every morning.[27] This story may be interpreted as indicating Wittgenstein's understanding that taste requires attention and interest; lack of interest neutralizes taste. Being occupied with his investigations, he did not wish to be distracted by matters of taste.

It is important to clarify that regarding attention as necessary for aesthetic appreciation does not imply the existence of a special kind of "aesthetic attention" or "aesthetic attitude". In order to appreciate paintings one has to have an interest in painting; such an interest, however, is not essentially different from an interest taken in, say, growing bananas. The interest in painting is not an aesthetic interest, rather it is an interest in aesthetic objects (or, more accurately, objects that are typically considered for their aesthetic order). Although we may attend to different objects with various degrees of intensity, I do not hold that there are different types of attention. On this point, I am in agreement with Dickie (1969) and others who have commented on this issue.

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[27] I was unable to trace the origin of the story and its reliability, but whether it is true or not it remains a good illustration.

Beauty, purpose and pleasure

There are two opposite claims concerning the relation between the useful and the beautiful: (1) that beauty and usefulness are mere opposites, and (2) that the useful and the beautiful are identical. The first endorses the position that the aesthetic value of an object is independent of any purpose that the object may serve. Beauty is purposeless. The second stresses that non-redundancy, as a mark of beauty, is expressed in the perfect match between means and purpose. An object that is not suitable for its purpose cannot be beautiful. There is a grain of truth in both views, although neither view is flawless.

BEAUTY WITHOUT A PURPOSE

Kant maintains that an object is beautiful not because it fits a purpose, but because it exhibits a *form of purposiveness* without reference to a purpose. Therefore, the pleasure we derive from beautiful objects is not dependent on achieving a goal or fulfilling a need. Art has similarly been considered to be its own end. Indeed, the evaluation of an object as a means is a discursive evaluation: the end is determined prior to the means, and its principle is applicable in different cases. If we agree that beauty is not appreciated as means, does it follow that beauty, or aesthetic order in general, does not serve a purpose? To answer this question we have to differentiate between cases in which (1) X is a means of achieving Y and (2) X answers a need.

1. If X serves as a means, it follows that X is not the focus of our attention and that we derive pleasure from achieving Y, not from using X. As a mere means, X can be replaced by other, better means, if these are available. We gladly and easily trade old instruments with more advanced technology. It also follows, that once Y (the end) has been achieved, X (the means) ceases to interest us. However, since actuality is far more complicated than any theoretical distinctions, there are many cases in which means and ends are not clearly distinguishable or cases in which a means becomes an end and vice versa.
2. If X answers a need, we are directly interested in X, and its attainment gives us pleasure. Viewing X as satisfying a need should not be confused with the idea of X being *its own* purpose. If X were to be its own purpose, its attainment would not please *us;* it would rather please X itself (whatever that may mean).

Pleasure, any pleasure, is the consequence of satisfying a need. We derive pleasure from achieving our goal, from satisfying our hunger, and so on. No pleasure, regardless of its subject matter, is a “disinterested pleasure”. If beauty pleases us, it is an indication that beauty answers a need. If we find pleasure in experiencing art, I take it as an indication that art answers a need. Denying this basic assumption we cast unnecessary mysticism onto the aesthetic experience and prohibit any understanding of it. A pleasure is a pleasure, whether it is derived from a good meal, an efficient utility object, a good conversation or a beautiful story. Pleasures may differ in their causes, intensities and expressions, but not in their general structure. I do not see the benefit of differentiating among types of pleasure—aesthetic or non-aesthetic—according to their subject matter. If we were to classify pleasures by their subject matters, we would obtain an endless, useless list of types.[28]

The claim that beauty causes pleasure by satisfying a need does not imply that beauty is a means for something beyond it; nor does it suggest that beauty interests us for *its own* sake—that would be obscure. Beauty interests us for *our* sake. We cannot hope to understand the phenomenon of aesthetic experience without accepting this as a basic supposition.

Discursive order fulfills the need for generalizations, for viewing ourselves and our surroundings as controllable, predictable and comparable entities. Using discursive principles we draw analogies between different cases and arrive at conclusions regarding further cases. Aesthetic order complements this need; it is concerned with individual, unpredictable objects and regards their uniqueness as lawful. It satisfies the need for order and meaning on the individual level. Both types of order are essential and answer genuine needs. Discursive order is not enough since we cannot view our world and ourselves merely as instances of general categories. The self is lost when it is reduced to general categories. We have an immediate need to preserve the self as a unique individual that maintains its own order and sets its own laws. The individuality of the self is projected on its experiences and on other objects that we identify as individuals. Beauty reflects the need for materializing individuality at its best. This need integrates the sensual, immediate apprehension of the individual *per se* and the rational preference for achieving order, lawfulness and the best of all possibilities.

We should not confuse the idea that beauty answers a need with the claim that an object is beautiful because *it* (the object) serves a certain purpose sufficiently well. Kant has a point here. The utility value of an object cannot determine its aesthetic worth since it is only one of the elements that partakes in its aesthetic order. The aesthetic order of the object consists also of qualities that do not contribute to its particular utility value. A story may be very effective in its educational function, yet it may be a mediocre story; a piece of music may efficiently function for marching the brigades yet be poorly composed or performed.

Although the beauty of an object is not determined by the object's purpose, beauty is often used to achieve various purposes—sexual attraction being a typical case. Beauty is often created and used in order to attract attention and fulfill non-aesthetic needs (such as commercial purposes). The fact that beauty can be manipulated to affect people clearly indicates that beauty answers a need. If we were indifferent to beauty (we would not be needing it), we could not be tempted by it. Furthermore, the fact that beauty has such power over people explains the desire to encounter and even possess beautiful objects (thus ensuring further experiences of them). If Kant were right about our disinterestedness in the existence of beautiful objects, beauty would not then seduce us and motivate actions, it would leave us indifferent and unmotivated.

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[28] I am in full agreement on this with Zemach (1976).

THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE FUNCTIONAL

The identification of the beautiful with the useful is often exemplified in architecture, design in general and science. Architecture and science are both concerned with the seemingly competing notions of *means* and *end*. The implicit question underlying architectural considerations is whether a building should be regarded predominantly (or exclusively) as a means or as an end, and where and how the demarcation line between these views should be drawn. Is the most useful building also the most beautiful? Different answers to these questions result in different disciplines and styles. In science we encounter the question of whether scientific knowledge is a means for technology and ameliorating life (as Bacon had it), or whether scientific knowledge is an end in itself that satisfies the human natural need for knowledge (as Aristotle conceived of it). Is the most useful (applicable) theory also the most truthful or most beautiful?

How does functionalism combine with aesthetics? Let us consider the following example. When I first visited East Berlin, I was appalled by the many new apartment buildings that had been built since the end of Second World War; they are dreary, huge, homogeneous, gray, buildings that stand in clear contrast to the colorful variations and liveliness of the old buildings, both in East and West Berlin. Note that I refer here to the facade only, not to the interior planning (although I have no reasons to doubt that the interior is any different in this respect). Are these relatively new buildings ugly? I have no doubt that they are. Are these buildings functional? The answer depends on how one construes "functional" in this case. The buildings were planned to achieve certain goals, and probably did achieve them, more or less. I can think of a few such goals: to supply maximum housing in the minimum time and with minimum cost for as many people as possible, to fight bourgeois vanity, to create a certain psychological environment conducive to controlling tenants, and so on. If these buildings fulfill these functions (and I assume that they do), why am I unable to regard them beautiful?

A simple answer would be that fulfilling a function and being beautiful are not identical. A more complex answer would point to the significant gap between the designers' values and my own values. Different values define different functions. For one, I cherish individuality and heterogeneity and these are not reflected in the huge, homogeneous buildings. Gaps in conceptions of quality of life and goals may take different forms, but they are significant for defining and evaluating functions. Bearing these gaps in mind, we may say that an object may be ugly although it (beautifully) fulfills some functions. If the observer considers these functions to be unjustified or insignificant or undesirable, the observer experiences not beauty but a conflict of orders: the conflict between the actual (wrong) functioning of the object and the desired, unfulfilled functions.

A building is expected to fulfill a complex of functions—internal and external—not all of them obvious or undisputed. The situation is not as clear cut as Poincaré would like it to be:

> The care for the beautiful leads us to the same selection as the care for the useful…. The buildings we admire are those in which the architect has succeeded in proportioning the means to the end, in which the columns seem to carry the burdens imposed on them lightly and without effort.
>
> (Poincaré, 1908:23)

Very often disputes are not about the question of whether a building fulfills its function(s), but rather what these functions should be: is the "burden imposed" on the columns a justified burden? Should a modern post office look like a Greek temple? The answer is not as obvious as it may seem. If we hold that new buildings should reflect contemporary trends only, the answer is negative. However, Greek columns also express desires and probably answer some needs even in the twentieth century. The question of whether such desire is "good", "reasonable" or "justified" is an invitation not so much to pure philosophical discussion but rather to a cultural battle. Although many arguments against Greek columns in modern buildings are easily available, we should remember that values that are unpopular nowadays might prevail with changing trends for reasons we cannot even imagine at the moment.

Similar questions arise regarding the idea that the beautiful theory is the most useful or applicable. We have examined this issue and some of its difficulties in Chapter 9 (pp. 188–191). We have seen that the beauty of a theory depends on facts and values no less than it determines facts and values. In order to determine the beauty of a theory, we have to agree about its essential function. But how is such a function determined? This takes us far from the aesthetic domain into moral, ideological and religious issues. Mythology, in its time, was applicable. It remained functional for a long period and satisfied many people. When and why did it become an "ugly" theory (although beautiful as a collection of stories)? Applicability depends not only on the theory in question but also on what are considered to be the relevant facts for testing such applicability, and that again depends on values, interests and changing circumstances.

The argument that the useful and the beautiful are identical is either vacuous or false. It is vacuous if we regard it as an analytical understanding of beauty and ignore the complexity of experience. It is false if we allow actual cases such as the above examples to interfere. In practice we are often tempted by seemingly "useless" beauty, but we seldom pay attention to the aesthetic value of some of our most useful tools. Actuality seems to present a variety of relations between the useful and the beautiful; the identity relation is not the most prevalent. What can we conclude from this? One thing is sure: there is no straightforward correlation between beauty and utility (or function). We may further conclude that a theory that suggests either a complete identification or a total contrariety between these concepts is itself neither very beautiful nor very useful.

Opposites of beauty

Moore (1984:189–225) raises the issue of beauty and ugliness as a complementary discussion to his analysis of the "good". He defines beauty via the concept of good, and ugliness via the concept of evil:

> I shall use the word 'beautiful' to denote that of which the admiring contemplation is good in itself; and 'ugly' to denote that of which the admiring contemplation is evil in itself.
>
> (Moore, 1984:208)

This is not the place to examine Moore's notion of good, or to inquire into the reasons for including a brief analysis of beauty in *Principia Ethica* and thus associating the understanding of beauty with the understanding of the good. Notwithstanding, two of Moore's observations should concern us here: (1) that beauty is opposed only by ugliness, and (2) that this opposition can be defined in terms of the concept of evil.

Moore replaces the more popular concept of "aesthetic pleasure" with the inherently good "admiring contemplation". Very little has been said about the motive of such contemplation: why is it good and what is it that we admire in a beautiful object? This is not to say that the concept of "good" does not play a role in the analysis of beauty; it certainly does. But this role is far from conveying the complexity of beauty. The good and the beautiful are related in many ways, but it is not a simple relation of identity or inclusion. It is not the case that whatever one finds to be good in some sense one also appreciates as beautiful, at least not in an obvious sense. The idea that aesthetic order expresses complementary interpretation, and that beauty is a *good* interpretation, is a far cry from Moore's position.

Beauty, being a complex concept, may be negated in more than one form. Each opposite expresses a contrast to a different element of the complex "high aesthetic order": *low* aesthetic order stands in contrast to the *high* order; *discursive* order stands in contrast to the *aesthetic* element; various types of *disorder* stand in contrast to *order*. Moreover, since aesthetic order has qualitative features, beauty is also opposed on for this reason. Such considerations have no place in Moore's theory. His analysis either simplifies the matter or presents an analytical truth that has very little explanatory power for the complexity of beauty.

A Latin proverb has it that "we never really know what a thing is unless we are able to give a sufficient account of its opposite" (Mill, 1843:332). In concluding the present analysis of beauty, we may follow the wisdom of this proverb and examine beauty from the perspective of its many opposites. This perspective demonstrates the relevance of discursive order as well as disorder to the understanding of beauty.

Low aesthetic order

The tendency toward low sensitivity, high redundancy, predictability and openness (flexible borderlines) expresses low aesthetic order. These qualities are, in fact, also the characteristics of high discursive order. The question arises whether these are indeed the same features, and, if not, how can we distinguish between typical cases of low aesthetic order (that disappoint us) and typical cases of high discursive order (that please us)? The main difference may be defined in terms of the observer's focus and expectations. Does the observer focus on the aesthetic order of the object? Is the observer disappointed to find low aesthetic order? Is s/he pleased to find high discursive order? The category "art" typically raises expectations of aesthetic order; therefore, qualities of high discursive order in art are often viewed as low aesthetic order. For instance, a strong emphasis on generic features at the cost of low originality (low informative value) in a play is, in most cases, disappointing. Nonetheless, there are circumstances in which works of art interest the observer for their discursive order. A researcher expects to find similarities in patterns in different artworks and it pleases her to find such discursive orders that support the main claim or objective of her thesis. Thus, the same qualities that disappoint the art lover (i.e. the qualities that make the work predictable) may delight the researcher.

There is, however, an important difference between low aesthetic order and high discursive order: the qualitative aspect. Owing to the lack of qualitative features in discursive order, it is not true that each occurrence of low aesthetic order is, by definition, an occurrence of a high discursive order. In some cases "low aesthetic order" indicates that the qualitative aspect has failed to please us without thereby implying that the object is highly predictable. The interpretation of the materials may be informative (original) but the materials themselves may be insignificant or poorly handled (yet in a surprising manner). As Kant (1951a: §46) remarked, there is also such a thing as "original nonsense".

The boring

Aesthetic order is expected to be illuminating, stimulating and convincing in its interpretation. Boredom is therefore the quiet, but persistent enemy of beauty; it indicates a failure to maintain a sufficient degree of novelty (quantitative aspect), or a failure to deal with materials and problems that interest the observer (qualitative aspect).

1 A detective story is boring if the reader feels that its pattern is predictable. Even a beautiful object becomes boring when the observer views it as a "type" and sees through it many other, similar instances. For instance, "typical"

Hollywood beauties who are third-rate actresses in TV soap operas may appear boring (and thus not beautiful anymore) since they all look and sound the same. One tends to notice the "type" rather then the individual.

An object may bore us on its first appearance, or it may take a number of exposures before its discursive (boring) order prevails. Variations are context dependent. Some patterns are clearly manifested in certain contexts, but fade in others. There are objects that maintain their novelty throughout many exposures, not because they do not exhibit high discursive order but because these high discursive patterns do not prevail the overall aesthetic order of the object. Any analysis of works of art is, in fact, an attempt to reveal its discursive order—genre qualities, cultural norms, psychological patterns philosophical observations, and so on. However, if the observer has the impression that such an analysis exhausts all that there is in the work, that work is bound to receive a low appreciation. There is always something that escapes analysis in highly beautiful objects (or for that matter excellent works of art).

As already noted, there is nothing wrong with predictable patterns. In fact, we could not do without them. We expect to be able to anticipate Nature since we wish to control it. We demand that our utility instruments be predictable (and thus "boring"): we want them to work exactly as expected. But when it comes to the aesthetic domain, we wish to be surprised and enlightened. This is one of the reasons why fashions keep changing and why we are never satisfied with the beautiful things already created and experienced.

2 Boredom may also originate in an indifference towards the subject matter *per se*. This does not concern the degree of novelty found in the object in question but rather the category that the object belongs to. In terms of interpretation, if we are not interested in the initial problem, we neither take interest in nor do we appreciate the interpretative solution.

A boredom of the first kind does not indicate an indifference to the general field (genre or category). One may be very much interested in detective stories, yet find a specific detective story boring because it lacks novelty. However, a person who is not interested in the whole genre of detective stories is predisposed to be bored with any particular detective story, regardless of differences in quality (although occasionally one's predisposition may be surprised). Lack of interest in the type makes particular differences either unnoticeable (since they all seem to look alike) or redundant (since who cares?).

Ignorance is one of the reasons for not being interested. A person who is ignorant of classical music is likely to be bored with a Beethoven symphony as much as with a Brahms or a Schubert symphony. Knowledge, therefore, is one remedy for this kind of indifference and boredom. However, knowledge of "all the works that are done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes, 1:14) equally results in a pessimistic boredom, "the things that hath been, it is that which shall be […] and there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes, 1:9). Neither of these cases—sheer ignorance and extensive knowledge—is a promising prescription for experiencing beauty. The first blocks the perception of differences among instances of the same type and prevents appreciation of originality and completeness; the second leads to a total denial of novelty.[29]

Including "disinterestedness" among *opposites* of beauty obviously contradicts Kant's position that disinterestedness is the mark of pure judgment of taste. (However, this contradiction depends on how Kant's notion of disinterestedness is interpreted). It takes an interested eye to notice that a certain flower is more beautiful than another, or that a certain detective story is better than another. This may explain why a person tends to be offended when his or her new haircut or new dress is unnoticed: it is taken to indicate a general lack of interest in the person, or a dismissing attitude (no matter what you do, you are always the same). This also touches upon the association between love and beauty. Plato construed this association in one direction: beauty inspires love. But the reverse is no less effective: love (as a form of interest in the object) inspires the pursuit of beauty.

The insignificant

An insignificant object cannot be extremely beautiful, even if its quantitative features indicate high novelty and completeness. We appreciate beauty not only as a good materialization of hidden potentials but also as a materialization of *significant* potentials. We appreciate the solution of a problem not only in so far as it is a good solution to the problem, but also in so far as the problem is important. A vase of flowers may be well painted, but if the painted vase does not express significant meanings either in a metaphorical sense or in any other way beyond its obvious function, it remains "just a lovely vase of flowers", a decorative object. An insignificant object, even if it is well completed, may be cute, pretty, lovely or decorative, but not startlingly beautiful. A good-looking person, if his or her face does not express wisdom or kindness, or any other significant human quality, cannot be outstandingly beautiful.

The *boring* is not equivalent to the *insignificant*. We may be bored by something we hold significant and be attracted by trivial, insignificant objects. Our beliefs, norms and images of our ideals do not always agree with our momentary interests and emotions. Many admit that they are attracted to ridiculous TV soap operas and commercials while denying their significance. One may offer different explanations for this phenomenon (I leave these explanations to psychology), but the fact is that we often distinguish quite well between what we appreciate as significant and what attracts our attention despite its insignificance. Similarly, many are tempted by junk food against their better judgment. The fact that something attracts us is not enough to establish that we find the object beautiful. This argument may also play a role in theories that regard beauty as the main (or sole) motive for sexual attraction. Indeed, beauty attracts us (it inspires love), but we are also attracted by many other qualities for different reasons; even ugliness may be attractive (see further discussion).

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[29] This is, I believe, the main reason why Spinoza had no aesthetic theory. His philosophy idealizes and strives at an *absolute* knowledge of Nature.

People are often judged by what they appreciate as extremely beautiful; we intuitively understand that aesthetic appreciation implies non-aesthetic preferences. "How can you watch/read/listen to this nonsense?" is not an infrequent question. It is not so much an aesthetic criticism as much as it expresses disappointment in a person's hierarchy of values (non-aesthetic values, that is). What is often referred to as "taste" involves more than the mere ability to notice and appreciate the aesthetic order of certain objects. It involves the ability to distinguish between significant and insignificant aspects of life; it touches upon one's whole worldview and hierarchy of values.

Disorder

In principle, all forms of disorder stand in opposition to beauty, since beauty expresses high order and necessity. Randomness is contrasted with necessity and unity; symmetry creates mechanical repetitions that stand in opposition to the liveliness of new, intriguing interpretations; chaotic diffusions are typical of raw materials that await the hand that will process them and reveal their beauty. However, the most typical cases of aesthetic disorder are manifested in *a clash of orders* (ugliness) and *atomistic disorder* (meaninglessness).

Ugliness

Ugliness is the clearest and the most immediate opposite of beauty that comes to mind. It cannot be sufficiently characterized as *low* aesthetic order because low aesthetic order exhibits high redundancy and predictability, but an ugly object may be very unexpected, surprising and irregular. An ugly object raises strong emotions: it can be disgusting, intriguing, fascinating or frightening—at all events, it is not boring. An ugly object is also not necessarily insignificant: a clash of orders may occur in significant as well as insignificant objects.

The hunchback of Notre Dame is ugly. Cyrano de Bergerac, Edmond Rostand's hero, is ugly. Their ugliness originates in a disproportion of their features, irregular size or shape. Hume (1928: Vol. 2, 24–5) uses the term "deformity". I prefer to describe ugliness in terms of *a conflict of uncoordinated orders*. Disproportion is a conflict of sizes: each part may be appropriate in the context of its size group, but it clashes with a different size group. The same nose on the face of a giant may be in proportion and even beautiful, but on the face of Cyrano de Bergerac, a person of normal size, it is ugly.[30]

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[30] Aristotle associated ugliness with comedy and defect (*Poetics,* V), and Bergson (1956) analyzed the comic in terms of conflicting order—we encounter mechanism (geometrical order) where vital order should prevail.

Ugliness has its quantitative aspect: conflicts between orders may have various intensities. A disproportion of the limbs may be monstrous, or may merely consist of a slight, almost imperceptible disproportion. Some cases seem to be clear-cut instances of ugliness, like the case of Cyrano de Bergerac, which expresses a deviation from natural, "normal" proportions. Some cases depend on concepts, trends and all kinds of cultural and individual (non-aesthetic) values. For example, Anne (of Green Gables) could not imagine anything uglier than green hair when she accidentally dyed her hair this color.[31] In *Gone with the Wind,* shocking dyed red hair is associated with prostitution and is thus considered ugly; it creates a conflict with decency. This does not imply that green (or red) is an ugly color—only that it was not considered an appropriate color for decent people's hair (a conflict of orders). Nowadays, we tend to view hair as a fashion accessory that can be changed according to mood, weather or occasion. Shocking, irregular colors of hair are more acceptable today. Contemporary notions of decency are different and as result these hair colors are not as shocking and irregular as they used to be—old conflicts have been reconciled by new trends. Kant would probably resent colored hair for the same reasons he disliked tattoos. From the point of view of the Maori, such ornamentation of the body obviously does not create a clash of orders. Concepts and values determine ugliness just as they determine beauty.

A poem that consists of mixed metaphors is considered a bad poem: it expresses a conflict of orders, a threat to the unity of the poem. Each metaphor on its own may be a good metaphor, but the conflict of categories fractures the poem.[32] A mixture of techniques, styles or ideas that do not integrate constitutes a conflict of order. A house designed according to mixed conceptions is ugly as long as one does not grasp any common congenial conception of the whole that reconciles the conflicting elements and allows for their coexistence. A change in values and conceptions may reconcile old conflicts and thus what seemed ugly in the past is not ugly anymore.

In many cases, ugliness is interesting and even inspiring because it expresses a struggle of conflicting forces. New ideas are born out of conflicts between old ideas; new styles are generated out of conflicts with "old" styles. However, ugliness is not necessarily a step toward beauty. Not all conflicts result in a better arrangement among the parties ("La guerre com la guerre").

One of the reasons given for rejecting the idea that art should be defined as an attempt to create beauty, is that many good works of art are not beautiful; some of them appear ugly and unpleasant. However, we need to distinguish between the aesthetic value of the elements and the value of the work as a whole. It is Plotinus' (1969: *First Enneades,* VI) position that the elements of beautiful objects should be beautiful in themselves. But this demand, according to the theory of aesthetic order, is not only unjustified, it also expresses a misunderstanding of the interpretative nature of art as an aesthetic order. Being an interpretative solution to a problem, it is the beauty of the solution, not that of the problem, that decides the issue. A high aesthetic order may consist of elements that are not beautiful in themselves and be beautiful, whereas beautiful elements do not guarantee the beauty of the object as a whole. A good painting of an ugly object is beautiful because of the interpretation it offers to the ugliness of the object, not because of the beauty of its subject matter. A room may be decorated by many beautiful objects but appear ugly because of the conflicting categories of the objects, or because their quantity (the number of objects) is in conflict with the size of the room, and so on. A conflict between beautiful objects creates ugliness, and reconciliation between conflicting objects (or values) creates beauty.

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[31] In L.M.Montgomery's popular children's novel, *Anne of Green Gables*.

[32] The adjective "ugly" is rarely used for verbal objects, but the meaning of "bad" in this context is just the same.

The meaningless

A *meaningless* object constitutes a form of atomistic disorder. The components in this case do not clash; they are simply disconnected from one another and indifferent to one another; they fail to construct an integrated whole. Thus, their location within the set is arbitrary. A meaningless object cannot, be beautiful. This is another instance of my disagreement with Kant's notion of non-conceptuality. A meaningful object is bound to be associated with concepts familiar to the observer; an object detached from such concepts is meaningless and disordered, and it certainly cannot be perceived as a solution to an interpretive problem.

However, no object of experience is totally deprived of meaning or totally taken out of any context. Therefore, "meaninglessness" should be taken as a quantitative-relative concept. A person standing in front of a painting in a museum assumes (by the given context) that this object is a work of art. But the spectator may not be able to go beyond this assumption—may not understand *why* and *how* this object belongs to this category. One may know that the object is a piece of modern art (since it is exhibited in a modern art museum); one may even recognize the style and the general conception of the work, but be unable to make sense of particular details. Imagine now that we approach a person who understands only that the object is supposed to be a work of art (since it is hanging on the wall of a museum) and ask for his or her opinion about the work. What can s/he answer? The expected (honest) reply would be, "But what the hell is this?" A person who is unable to recognize the category within which the particular object falls and make sense of the object is unable to appreciate its aesthetic value.[33] This can be said of the aesthetic evaluation of any object, art or non-art.

A meaningless object is *not beautiful,* and *not ugly*. Ugliness is meaningful; it can therefore be interesting, even inspiring, but a meaningless object cannot. Meaninglessness stands in contrast to the sense of necessity evoked by a beautiful object: if the object were meaningless, none of its elements would appear to play a necessary role within the whole. By comparison, the components of an ugly object conflict as a result of their contrasting natures. This very conflict of natures does not allow the components to harmonize. The conflict thus expresses necessity, albeit in a negative fashion. The difference between the ugly and the meaningless may be compared to two different situations in which two people do not speak to each other: they may not be on speaking terms because they have had an argument (conflict of orders), or they may simply not know each other (indifference, atomistic disorder). The situation in both cases may be mended: a conflict of orders may be reconciled with changing values and perspectives (the quarreling pair may make it up), and the meaningless may become meaningful through learning (the two strangers may get acquainted).

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[33] A similar point is made by Walton (1979).

The kitsch

Kitsch is by no means boring, ugly or meaningless. It may be amusing or attractive, and it is definitely meaningful. Nonetheless, although it consists of beautiful elements, it is not beautiful in a strict sense; at least not in the sense proposed by the theory of aesthetic order. Kitsch is a *misuse* of beauty; it is a *parasite* of good art and natural beauty; it *manipulates* beauty for non-aesthetic purposes. Whereas genuine beauty (in art or Nature) is expressed in the *new* materialization of hidden potentials, kitsch utilizes well-known and established objects of beauty, natural or artificial, and exploits their "achievements". It is a prerequisite of a kitsch object that it should use familiar and known beauties to evoke expected positive responses (Kulka, 1988:18–27). The sweet smile of a baby, a bouquet of red roses, a red-roofed hut on the edge of a breathtaking lake—these images appeal to most of us. Kitsch uses this appeal for commercial or political purposes by manipulating innocent sentiments and desires. By using a well-known recipe for beauty, the promoter ensures a known reaction. A chocolate box is decorated with a pink sunset in order to seduce us to buy it against our better judgment, and Beethoven's *Mondschein* is played softly in the supermarket in order to create a calm atmosphere that encourages us to buy more than we need. Many of us fall victim to this stratagem.

Kitsch is a discursive order disguising itself as an aesthetic order: its apparent order is aesthetic, its hidden order is discursive. The main objective of kitsch is not to solve an interpretative problem, but rather make use of already appreciated aesthetic solutions. Kitsch is like flattery: it makes use of positive elements for insincere purposes—money and power being the major factors.

A kitsch object is always an artifact, even if it uses natural elements; its essence as kitsch is determined by the intention that initiates its creation and use, an intention of which the observer may or may not be aware. We normally label as kitsch only those objects whose creation we believe was motivated by manipulative intentions. We do not label kitsch that which has been made by innocent or naive people or children, although it may express kitsch qualities focusing on beautiful objects or attempting to imitate typically beautiful objects. Likewise, Nature is not kitsch. A natural object has no intentions behind it (metaphysical arguments aside), and therefore a natural sunset is never kitsch in the strict sense. We sometimes call natural scenes "kitsch" only because we are used to seeing their depiction exploited for kitsch purposes. In this sense, kitsch is also guilty of spoiling the innocent admiration of Nature: it is hard to admire a sunset without associating it with its common kitsch functions.

Categorizing an object as kitsch depends on one's awareness and perspective. A person who does not recognize the well-used pattern and does not suspect its purpose has no reason to regard the object as kitsch. Children are easily tempted by kitsch because they do not have the required sophistication to see beyond the represented beauty and resist its temptation.

Flattery works best when it is not recognized as flattery, and so does kitsch. Still, given the fact that human nature is as it is, flattery may have its effect even if we suspect that it is flattery. The desire to believe in flattering words is sometimes too strong to resist, and so is the desire to experience and posses the beauty that the kitsch object offers. We are attracted to kitsch, just as we are attracted to sweet words or chocolate cookies, even though we know that these are bad for us.

To judge kitsch as bad art or as an artistic failure indicates a misunderstanding of what underlines kitsch. Kitsch may fail to achieve its cause, not because it is bad art, but because it is "bad" kitsch: it fails to affect the observer as intended. Kitsch requires "know-how".[34] Not every use of beauty creates the "right" effect. Indeed, sometimes it is the purpose of kitsch to be sold as (good) art, and it exploits various elements to create this impression. An oil painting that is sold to a naive tourist on the streets of Paris is sold as if it were an original, valuable work of art, and it is successful as long as the buyer believes that s/he has bought an original work of art (for a relatively low price). The kitsch artist exploits the reputation of Paris as an art capital, utilizes the legends about unacknowledged artists starving on the cobbled streets of a merciless city and manipulates the tourist's fantasy of having an "original" hanging on his or her living-room wall. For the painter it is a way of earning money, for the tourist it is a flattering souvenir from the capital of art. Kitsch thus creates the illusion that good art does not exceed our grasp.

Kulka underlines the fact that kitsch attracts the masses. Indeed, it seems as if kitsch is more popular than good art, but this is not because people like kitsch *per se*. It would be misleading to put it this way. It is rather the other way around. Kitsch, being motivated by commercial and political purposes, is intentionally made to attract the masses and therefore it exploits what most people already like.

Kitsch is a form of deception. Seeing it in opposition to beauty suggests that the genuine experience of beauty is sincere, not directed to pre-calculated results beyond the interpretative problem it wishes to solve, and that it is not constituted by well-tested, effective formulae. Yet kitsch is interesting and indeed instructing. Its understanding can reveal some aspects of human weakness and desires, supplying thereby techniques of manipulating the public. This is probably why kitsch may also play a role in art. Art may use kitsch (just as kitsch makes use of art), reflect on it and interpret it, exactly as it does with other elements of human experience. As Milan Kundera observed:

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[34] On this point, as well as on some others, I agree with Kulka's (1996) extensive analysis of the issue.

> As soon as kitsch is recognized for the lie it is, it moves into the context of non-kitsch […] becoming as touching as any other human weakness.
>
> (quoted by Kulka, 1996:107)

The irrelevant

This category suggests that aesthetic evaluations are not always relevant and that in some cases they should not be exercised at all. There are different reasons for denying the relevance of the aesthetic perspective. In some cases it is a practical matter: if we focus on the aesthetic aspect of an object then its utility value may suffer. If, for instance, we refuse to take a medicine because its taste is not appealing, we focus on the "wrong" aspect of the object. In other cases it may be a moral issue: focusing on the beauty of the accused may cause injustice. This also touches upon the issue of hierarchy of values: in what cases should beauty function as a value? Is beauty relevant for choosing a partner? Should it be in employment decisions? In some cases, the aesthetic aspect is either redundant, it adds nothing to the matter in question, or it is deviating, that is, it blocks the view of the relevant aspect of the matter.

Another typical case of irrelevance is the case of aesthetically evaluating raw materials. Materials in their raw condition are not yet qualified for aesthetic evaluation. Such is the status of works of art in progress. We are not supposed to evaluate a work before it is finished (or rather, before it is considered finished by its creator). To be sure, we may exercise our judgment whether an unfinished work is beautiful or not, but what then is the point? We do not judge a dish before it is cooked and seasoned. Indeed, we may taste the dough before it is put in the oven and be disgusted by the taste, but why would we want to do this, knowing that the further process may result in a more pleasing product? The differences between the incomplete object and its final form are in some cases dramatic.

There are known cases in which incomplete works of art remain incomplete, and are presented as such to the public. This is done primarily with works of great artists in order to achieve an overall appreciation and understanding of their work. A work of a great artist naturally attracts attention even if the work has not been completed. These cases are exceptions; they do not substantiate a rule that an unfinished work is as a proper candidate for aesthetic appreciation.

The argument for irrelevance can be confronted by the claim that in principle everything may become an object for an aesthetic judgment, even a shopping list or an unfinished symphony. If aesthetic order is relevant to all objects, as I have argued, then any object, at any stage may be considered aesthetically. As much as this may be valid, experience and common sense teach us that not every possibility is equally worthy of attention, and not every object that can be considered for its aesthetic value should thus be considered.

Conclusions

As the proverb suggests, the opposites of beauty do offer us a grasp of the nature of beauty. The ugly, the meaningless, the kitsch, the boring, the insignificant and the irrelevant, all illuminate and define the borderlines of "beauty" from different perspectives. These opposites are not synonyms, and should not be amalgamated into one negative concept, although in some actual cases it may be difficult to tell them apart. The boring is not necessarily ugly; the ugly is not meaningless and it may or may not be insignificant; the kitsch is neither ugly nor meaningless. The variety of negations is unified only in the positive antonym—the concept of beauty. This unification makes beauty a complex concept. It expresses a high degree of aesthetic order not determined by external principles or purposes; it expresses a sense of truth, significance and sincerity, and brings about unexpected pleasure, awe and admiration.

Summary

1. Beauty is a measure of aesthetic order. As a high degree of aesthetic order it has both quantitative and qualitative features.
2. Kant's concept of judgment of taste is non-quantitative. It explains neither difference in degrees of aesthetic values nor ugliness nor other antonyms of beauty. Mothersill's notion of individuality is similarly found lacking in explanatory power.
3. Kant's distinction between free and dependent beauty is based on an incorrect assumption. No type of beauty can be free of concepts, although no concept determines a formula for beauty. Beauty is affected by concepts but not determined by them a priori.
4. There are various connections between interest and beauty. Aesthetic appreciation requires interest in the category within which the object falls as well as attention to the object's details. Beauty answers a need for individual completeness. The beauty of an object is not directly determined by the object's function as a means. Aesthetic pleasure is the pleasure we find in fulfilling the need for beauty. In this sense there is no difference between aesthetic or non-aesthetic pleasure: all pleasures originate in fulfilled needs.
5. Beauty may serve a purpose and have various functions because it answers a need.
6. Beauty has many opposites; each of these opposites contrasts a different feature of beauty. Low aesthetic orders are predictable, dull and boring or reflect the insignificance of their subject matter. Ugliness is a conflict of orders and is not necessarily predictable or insignificant. A meaningless object cannot be beautiful; it is in a state of atomistic disorder. Kitsch is a misuse of beauty; it turns an aesthetic order into a discursive order for achieving certain purposes. There are situations in which aesthetic appreciation is irrelevant.

11 Defining art

Problems of definitions

The question "What is art?" is a proper philosophical question. It is an invitation to reflect upon various aspects of art, its related experiences and its role in social and individual life. However, the very concept of art has raised serious doubts in contemporary analytic aesthetics, not only with regard to specific definitions but, more importantly, whether or not the concept is definable at all. Each proposed definition has been demolished, renounced and its effectiveness denied. Traditional views were rejected and any attempt to revive the inquiry into the essence of art was frowned upon. It appears that although the battles have been concluded without achieving a wide consensus, *non-essentialism* has carried the day. What we see today in the aftermath of these inconclusive discussions are attempts to re-evaluate achievements, assess damages and offer limited realignments.[1]

The objective of this final chapter is not to narrate the history of these developments, but to challenge non-essentialism and propose an understanding of art in terms of aesthetic order. My principal argument substantiates art as an intentional creation of beauty, as an attempt to interpret various materials of human experience by disclosing their hidden potentials through their realization. This is, in a sense, a kind of functionalism, but it does not regard pleasure as the essential objective of art.[2] Pleasure is rather the by-product that accompanies any satisfying experience and is not, therefore, a particular feature of aesthetic experience. This position not only assumes that art has a definable nature, but also that the definition should serve as the key for understanding the role of art, its relation to other aspects of human experience and its problems of evaluation. I therefore commence with an argument against non-essentialism.

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[1] See for instance Davies (1991). In *Definition of Art,* Davies examines the history of the issue in the last forty years. Davies has an inclination towards a version of the institutional definition, but he holds that "The primary function of art is to provide enjoyment" (1991:220). See also Stecker (1996).

[2] Unlike Davies's above conclusion (Footnote 1) and unlike Beardsley's functionalism, I argue that pleasure cannot be the essential objective of art. If it were, it would have been quite easily achieved. The secret of pleasing people is not as difficult to unfold as the secret of composing a good work of art. See Chapter 10, pp. 217–220, and further discussion in this chapter, pp. 260–262.

Non-essentialism and the institutional definition

The institutional definition of art, unlike other theories of art, is not rooted in the history of aesthetics. The novelty of the institutional definition compared with other definitions lies mainly in the fact that it is a non-essentialist definition. All other theories attempt to characterize essential features of art: imitation of Nature, creation of beauty, representation or expression of emotions, a source of pleasure, and so forth.[3]

It is not a coincidence that a non-essentialist definition has become the center of attention in contemporary aesthetics, mainly in Anglo-American philosophy. There is a direct connection between the status of aesthetics in analytic philosophy and the wide acceptance of a non-essentialist definition. I will briefly comment on the main junctures of this development; these comments are intended to substantiate my claim that art could and indeed should be viewed from a different perspective.

1 Art has acquired many definitions since Plato first presented it as an imitation of Nature. It has been defined as a representation of reality (a mild version of "imitation"), as an expression or symbol of feelings (the artist's feelings or, in general, human feelings), as a creation of beauty, as an expression of intuitive truth, as an organic whole, as stimuli of aesthetic experience and pleasure and as language. Each definition has many versions and combinations; most of them have been thoroughly examined and harshly criticized. The most common argument against any definition of art is that it does not differentiate sufficiently well art from non-art or provide one single characteristic that is exclusively typical to all works of art. The desire to have a consensus that puts an end to seemingly useless discussions was probably inspired by the heritage of logical positivism. Many aestheticians were convinced that encountering unsolved problems and non-satisfactory definitions clearly indicates that something is basically wrong with the whole project (as if philosophy has ever been a discipline based on consensus or been known to develop from one solved problem to another).

2 Severe criticism of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy (see Elton, 1954) has created an inferiority complex and apologetic approach among aestheticians. As a result, many aestheticians have attempted to reconcile their field of interest with the demands of analytic philosophy, thus ignoring, at least in part, the peculiar nature of the aesthetic experience.

Weitz (1956) borrowed Wittgenstein's notions of "open concept" and "family resemblance" as a respectable way out of the difficulties of defining art. According to this strategy, there are concepts that have no definable *essences*. The association among particular instances of an open concept is not determined by an inclusive definition but rather by a chain of resemblance—the family resemblance. Thus, it is not the case that all works of art are expressive or beautiful or representational; there are all kinds of connections and resemblances among works of art in different periods; works of art constitute a large family that consists of a variety of relations. The practical conclusion, then, is to abandon such useless attempts to define a non-existing essence and pay attention to sub-types and particular cases of art.[4]

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[3] It is interesting to note, that Arthur Danto, who coined the phrase "artworld" and thus inspired the institutional theory, is not a non-essentialist. On the contrary. In his *After the Death of Art* he writes: "I do not see how one can do the philosophy of art—or philosophy *period*—without to this extent being an essentialist." (Danto, 1997:95). I fully agree with Danto, as I will further elaborate.

The immediate benefit of this strategy is that aestheticians now have one philosophical burden less. However, one of the logical problems with the notion of "family resemblance"—to recall Goodman's (1968) argument from a different context—is that in some sense anything may resemble anything (It is not, of course, that Goodman argued directly against Weitz, but that his argument may be thus used). If we go by chains of resemblance, the "family of art" should include everything that has ever been created in the universe and it would be identical to any other family of any other open concept. Only a mere convention may draw the borderlines and decide that X does not belong to a particular family but rather to another. However, if this were the case, we would not need the family resemblance argument in the first place: conventions, by definition, should not be restricted to resemblance or any other feature, and here Goodman scores another point.[5]

Weitz's advice that we concentrate on distinct genres of art actually replaces the problem of defining art with the problem of defining a genre. Ziff (1953) similarly argues that a poem, a novel or a musical composition cannot be said to be a work of art in the same sense of the phrase in which a painting or a statue or a vase can be said to be a work of art. If we were to accept this, then the use of "art"—the same word in each case—would be misleading and useless, or at least would require a clear understanding of the different uses of the word "art". If art has different meanings, we should either refer to each of them separately by different terms and entirely abandon the umbrella term "art", or we should be able to distinguish between the different meanings of art as art_1, art_2, art_3, and so on.

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[4] This position is still effective nowadays, even if in milder versions. In his recent book Peter Kivy writes:

> "In no way I am urging [...] that the traditional task of defining the work of art is either impossible or exhausted [...] What I am recommending [...] is that at least some of us give it a rest and try to study the arts, *as philosophers,* in their differences rather than in their sameness."
>
> (Kivy, 1997:x)

[5] I accept Goodman's point that conventions are conventions, and as such they may be based on resemblances and they may ignore them. I also agree that the general concept of "representation" does not require resemblance (only specific sub-types of representation require resemblance), although I do not agree with the idea that art is some kind of representation, as I will further argue.

If we were to understand the word “art” as a homonym, we should have been able to differentiate between its various meanings by the context of its use. We understand that “bank” in one context means a financial establishment, and in another context it is the edge of a river. In most cases (if not all of them) the difference is very clear from the context. Is “art” such a homonym? I doubt it. I do not know of extensive literature that discusses and compares financial establishments and riverbanks. I know, however, of many books, journals and conferences that discuss literature, music, painting and dancing as forms of art under the same roof. I take this as an indication that “art” in all these cases has a similar if not the same meaning. If we are justified in describing a painting, a poem and a musical composition by the same term “art” and regard them as related objects, we must assume that they have something significant in common, in spite of their many important differences.

3 The institutional theory[6] is an attempt to prevent the concept of art from being an “open” non-definable concept without falling into the “trap” of essentialism. Developed by Dickie (1974, 1984) the institutional definition strives to bypass questions concerning the essence of art: it is a mere classificatory definition. It expresses an agreement with the idea that art has no definable essence; it has, however, a definable status. The institutional theory has a few versions, but its gist is that “art” is not a quality found in objects but is rather the *status* of an artifact. This status is determined by the relevant authorities, namely the institutions of the “artworld”. The nature and extension of these institutes may vary and artifacts may acquire their status as art for different reasons—depending on the historical and social context, but unless they are acknowledged (“christened”) by the relevant institutions, they are not properly considered works of art.

The institutional definition has addressed the problem of grouping art definitions (in the classificatory, binary sense) together with art appreciation (the quantitative, evaluative sense). Dickie rightly argues that most definitions of art do not allow for bad instances. If an artifact imitates Nature, or expresses feelings, or is an organic whole, it is art and it is, by the same token, good art. If it fails to imitate, express or be an organic whole, it is not art at all. Dickie is clearly right in his criticism: the scope of a concept should not be limited to, or identical with, only good instances. A work of art may be bad or mediocre and still be considered a work of art. The question remains, though, whether Dickie’s strategy offers an adequate solution to this problem.

Dickie is indeed correct in asserting that a concept cannot be limited to its successful instances. Yet, a total separation between the classificatory and the evaluative sense, as Dickie has suggested, is not the remedy in the case of art. In general, every concept has to provide the reason for evaluating its realizations *if* such evaluation is relevant as it is in the case of art or in the case of any artifact.

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[6] First suggested by Danto (1964). Danto attacked the theory developed by Dickie as being mechanical and ignoring crucial questions.

Indeed, classifications in general are basically binary: X is or is not a work of art, just as Y is or is not a car, and Z is or is not a chess game.[7] A chess game is defined by its board, pieces, rules and purpose. Any game that coheres with the definition of chess is a chess game regardless of its value. So far Dickie is right. However, the evaluation of a particular game is not detached from what is understood to be the concept of the game. A person who knows only the rules of the game (how to move the pieces on the board) and not the purpose or the general idea of the game would be able to *identify* a chess game as such, but s/he would miss the main point of the game. I would say that such a person, although able to identify the game as being a "chess game", *does not understand* the game. Mere identification of the game is a mechanical act that does not entail understanding; a three-year-old child or, for that matter, an alien, could learn to identify a chess game without having any idea of its function, purpose or meaning.

Differences between categories determine differences in expectations and evaluation of their instances. The value of a car is directly associated with the understanding of its category as a means of transportation; expectations and, consequently, evaluations, are in accordance with this understanding. A car is good *qua* car and a bicycle is good *qua* bicycle. Indeed, there are many important differences between cars and works of art, and yet the general idea regarding the evaluative nature of their concepts is the same. Art is not a mere binary concept and its meaning cannot be disconnected from whatever is required of an object to be a good instance of it. When someone is wondering how can X possibly be a work of art, s/he expects an explanation or a "demonstration" of how and to what extent X fulfils whatever it is that art is supposed to fulfil. The institutional definition offered by Dickie completely bypasses this requirement.

Dickie's definition of art informs us only of how pieces must be moved on the board, but not for what purpose. Artifacts are products of human activity, and as such their understanding cannot be disconnected from reason, intention and purpose. We may recall Socrates' words in *Phaedo,* mocking the person who would give a "mechanical" explanation to Socrates' imprisonment, "I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones […] are hard and have joints which divide them" (*Phaedo,* c 99). Leibniz expresses a similar view by introducing the notion of *sufficient reason* that goes beyond mechanical explanations. Leibniz made the notion of *purposes* or *final cause* essential to the understanding of events as well as the universe as a whole.

Dickie may argue that all he demands from a definition is that it serves as a means of *identifying* the instances of a certain category and differentiating it from others. Indeed, one may identify a chess game by watching it for merely a moment (without yet being able to estimate the worth of the game). But then again, without understanding one can be easily deceived: s/he will not be able to tell the difference between people *pretending* to play chess and people that are *really* playing chess. Such a person would make a lousy detective. Likewise one may *identify* a car or a bicycle without being able to evaluate them or use them (*qua* car and *qua* bicycle) or tell the difference between a real car and a toy car.

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[7] Chess was discussed in Chapter 1, pp. 16–17, as a paradigm for binary order, in the sense that no chess game is more or less "chess" than another. Art can similarly be viewed as a binary concept in the sense that if X and Y are works of art, then, regardless of differences in value, X is no more and no less art than is Y.

Dickie may be justified in arguing that "mechanical" identifications are sufficient for classifying an object under a certain category (although one can think of cases in which something creates the impression of being X, but in fact it is not and therefore a deeper understanding is required). Normally, upon seeing a framed painting hanging on the museum wall with a small placard near it, we immediately understand that this is (or is supposed to be) a work of art. The main point is that such identification, even if it works well from a pragmatic point of view, does not trigger interesting philosophical reflections on art.

Most of the debates over Dickie's position are conducted within the same framework: they are all about the nature of the *necessary and sufficient conditions* for an item to be considered a work of art. Noël Carroll (1994) offers an *identification procedure* that involves an understanding of how a certain object has become to be considered a work of art. Carroll's definition does not take us far beyond the institutional definition: it requires an adequate identifying narrative that "establishes that a work in question emerged in a recognizable way from an acknowledged artworld context" (Carroll, 1994:27). Robert Stecker (1996: Chapters 3–5) criticizes Dickie's definition for its circularity but joins, nonetheless, the institutional-normative trend. He suggests that the confused observer check whether X conforms to the forms and functions that are considered at time *t* to be central to art. The central function of a work depends on the central art form to which it belongs, while the central art form is determined within the art world. But with whom should the observer consult in order to define the central forms and functions of art in a given time *t* if not the art historians, art critics and art institutions? Moreover, what about pioneer works that do not conform to the central forms and functions of time *t* but create new ones? Jerrold Levinson (1989:21) states, "An artwork is a thing [...] that has been seriously intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art, that is, regard in any way pre-existing artworks are or were correctly regarded." Note the phrase *regard-as-a-work-of-art*. This is exactly my point: aestheticians were too busy defining necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be *regarded-as-a-work-of-art*. Moreover, most of them insist on defining these (more or less) "necessary conditions" in terms of flexible, *changing* norms.[8]

[8] I have not gone through the whole list and examined in detail the various arguments since my point is general and does not concern specific debates over this or that condition.

Compare the question, "is this *(really)* a work of art?" with, say, the question, "is this *(really)* food?" Who would ask such a question, and what sort of an answer would s/he expect? What does "really" stand for in the context of food? In most cases, I believe, people ask this question in order to express their angry disappointment with what they receive in a restaurant (the case of art is similar in this respect). This question, from a different perspective, may invite anthropological research into what human beings (assuming that we limit the question to humans) in different periods and climates have considered to be "food" and thus placing X in a geo-historical context. This question may also call for a lecture on the main functions of food—physiological, social, religious or psychological functions. One kind of answer does not necessarily overlap the other; one can always find examples for "institutional" food that is very poor in its nourishing values (or even has negative values) or nourishing ingredients that are not eaten by anyone anywhere, and so forth. At any rate, the *philosopher's* ability to enlighten us with regard to this issue is not tested by his or her answer to the disturbing (classificatory) question, "Are frog legs *really* food?" There is nothing wrong with the classificatory enterprise on its own. The attempt to define the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be classified as art in a given context is a legitimate project. Whether it is an interesting or a fruitful project, this depends on personal philosophical taste. Whether it is a possible mission, this depends on the philosophical understanding of the nature of art. The main problem with this project, however, is that it replaces and outweighs the philosophical reflections on the nature of art. It creates the impression that there is no philosophical issue beyond the establishment of the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be *regarded-as-a-work-of-art*. It keeps aestheticians occupied with problems that are decided in fact by art critics and art historians and social forces, and pushes aside the question that is more suitable and fruitful for philosophical reflections.

The philosophical question

In an article entitled *What is a Work of Art*? Osborne (1981:3) distinguishes between two questions: (1) "what things in the world around us are correctly designated works of art?" and (2) "what is meant by calling anything at all a work of art?". The first question involves methods of classifications, norms and historical considerations; the second is an invitation for a philosophical analysis. Most aestheticians, so Osborne argues, have failed to distinguish between the two questions and the sort of answers they require. Osborne further argues that the two questions, although existing on different logical planes, are nevertheless linked. The answer to the philosophical question determines the answer to the classificatory question: "we cannot sensibly decide whether or not anything is a work of art unless we know what the term 'work of art' means." (Osborne, 1981). Although this last point regarding the link between the two questions may raise serious objections, I believe that Osborne's distinction itself is beneficial.

Classifications, in general, are subject to changing norms, theories and beliefs. The identification of a specific object as art involves therefore an acquaintance with norms that are effective in a given context (even if one disagrees with these norms). By contrast, the philosophical inquiry is basically Platonic: it seeks to understand the essence, the idea or the concept that underlies a given classification. Kennick (1958) is disingenuous when he argues that "we are able to separate those objects that are works of art from those that are not because we know English." Knowing how to use a word in a given context is one thing, but understanding what it means (if indeed it means anything beyond its specific uses) is another thing. If the proper use of words could indicate a philosophical understanding, Kennick would be absolutely right: knowing English would suffice. Moreover, if Kennick were right, the whole philosophical inquiry into the meanings of concepts—all concepts, not only those of the aesthetic domain—would be redundant or empty; it would teach us nothing beyond what we already know about linguistic norms. Furthermore, if by referring to a concept we would only be adhering to norms of application, we would not be able to account for changes in norms (linguistic or others). Such changes, or any new occurrence, by definition cannot be exhausted by "old" norms.

Osborne's distinction between the two questions—the normative and the philosophical—is essential for the analysis of art. However, by associating the above two questions, Osborne falls into the same trap that is implied in Kennick's remark. Linking actual classifications to philosophical understanding Osborne commits himself not only to the idea that philosophical understanding guarantees "proper" applications, but also that a "proper" use of the word (knowing English) indicates philosophical understanding. This takes us back to the argument that a mere identification does not necessarily depend on understanding—the case of a child identifying a chess game without understanding the game. Even if we were to agree that mere identification expresses some kind of understanding, we would still have to admit that it is a very limited, insufficient understanding.

My point is that there is a constant (Platonic) gap between knowing how to apply a term in a conventional, communicative way, and knowing the complex meaning of the concept that underlies it. A philosophical analysis of a concept requires not only going beyond the mere identification of an object as falling into a certain category and adhering to a set of norms but also going beyond a vague and primitive or intuitive account of the concept. By this reasoning artists are not necessarily the most qualified people to enlighten us about the nature of art, as much as scientists are not necessarily the most qualified people to determine the validity, the limits or distinctiveness of scientific knowledge.[9]

People normally identify art objects without much difficulty, just as they identify other cultural objects. They do so by applying certain norms, and identifying certain indicators. As long as the familiar norms are effective, no major problems arise *vis-à-vis* identification. People normally identify a poem as such and distinguish it from a political article or weather report; people usually discriminate between a real love scene (in the park) and a love scene on stage (no tickets are required for the first). Problems and confusions arise only when familiar norms are no longer effective: poems have no rhymes, actors perform in the open without familiar signifiers to indicate that this is a performance, and everyday utility objects are presented in the museum as works of art.

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[9] Einstein remarked in a similar vein: "If you want to find out anything from the theoretical physicists about the methods they use, I advise you to stick closely to one principle: don't listen to their words, fix your attention on their deeds." (quoted by Clark, 1972:588).

The ability to apply norms (follow rules) and identify objects has very little to do with understanding or being able to explain the related concepts. It is not the case that we first *understand* the notion and only then learn to *use* it. A child learns to walk before s/he is able to explain the nature of the action or the purpose of moving from one place to another. Similarly, we learn to use words before we are able to reflect upon their meanings. Danto (1981:63) remarks that a child may know to identify his uncle without the "slightest mastery of the concept of uncle". However, to deny that there is something beyond the norms of application is to deny that philosophy in general is a worthwhile discipline.

The kind of question one wishes to answer is a matter of choice. If we set ourselves to answer the first question (is this "really" a work of art?) then Dickie's institutional theory may serve as an adequate answer. It reflects, however, a truism: there are all kinds of institutes, guidelines, procedures and authorities that determine the status of objects or persons within a given society. Unless one prefers to live on a desert island, one wants to know these facts; they are important for mutual understanding, cooperation and social life in general. On this understanding, the classificatory question "Is this (really) a work of art?" is a question about social norms. It serves as a method of acquainting ourselves with current trends or traditions and historical facts. Yet I suspect that in most cases in which a classificatory question is asked, one actually expects more than such an acquaintance. People assume that art has inherent qualities that determine its status as art, and no "external" factors have the power to instill such qualities. I also suspect that most people would not accept an institutional account as sufficient answer to their bewilderment over a painting that looks like the work of a four-year-old child but is praised as being a great work of art. They already know that it is hung there *as* a work of art, and this is precisely the cause of their perplexity.

In the early 1990s, the Tel-Aviv Museum mounted an exhibition of chairs designed by Ron Arad. Every visitor was aware of the fact that s/he was visiting a chair exhibition: this was announced at the entrance of the museum as well as in the newspapers. There could be no doubt that the objects situated in the gallery—some of them quite strange—were meant to be chairs. The question repeatedly asked by many of the visitors was not, "But is this *really* a chair?"—a silly question which would require a silly answer, "Yes, can't you read?"—but rather, "How can you sit on these things?" The lay person intuitively knows that there must be something beyond this or that conventional classification—a purpose, a function, an idea, "The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a point" (Wittgenstein, 1976:564).

The institutional definition of art simply does not address the philosophical issue. If it is a mere pragmatic classification that we want, we may use Dickie's definition, as indeed we may any other: a classification is after all a matter of convention and convenience.[10] The question that could and should be answered in a philosophical context is not, "Is this *really* a work of art?" but rather, "What do you mean by stating that *X is a work of art*?" A procedural account is not the relevant answer for the latter, just as the directions to a place do not justify the journey. One should not mistake art criticism or art history for the philosophy of art. Philosophy is not expected to classify objects or provide an applicable formula or give us directions towards such a formula, but rather to interpret actual classifications and concepts, and reflect on their meanings or offer a theory that would make sense of the variety of experience. That is, philosophy is expected to expose implied concepts and assumptions that underlie concrete cases, and to unify the variety of experience by providing a coherent account of its meaning. I therefore do not propose to provide a scheme for a convenient classification. Defining art in terms of aesthetic order and complementary interpretation suggests that there are artistic features in many human products and not only in those that are conventionally regarded as art. However, there are artifacts that express artistic qualities only as "by-products", and not as their main function, as I shall further elaborate.

Art, beauty and interpretation

I define art as the product of an intention to create beauty, that is, to create objects of high aesthetic order. This brings into play both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of aesthetic order. The qualitative analysis of aesthetic order defines beauty in terms of complementary interpretation. Art, accordingly, is the attempt to materialize (interpret) the potential of raw materials taken from the variety of human experience. This definition is based on the previous analysis, including the general understanding of interpretation as an aspect of aesthetic order and its interrelationships with forms of disorder. Some of the implications of this analysis are presented here through the examination of central arguments concerning the nature of art.

Art and beauty

The idea that art should be analyzed in terms of beauty has been rejected mainly on the basis of two claims: (1) beauty is a vague and therefore ineffective concept; (2) not all (good) works of art are beautiful—some are even disturbingly ugly. One cannot simultaneously hold both claims because the latter makes use of the concept of beauty, whereas the former disallows such use.[11] In view of my defense in the previous chapters of the complex meaning of beauty as a distinct and useful concept, I now proceed to dismiss the second claim. This claim assumes—in *contrast* to my position—that artistic and aesthetic values are different kinds of values; hence, a high artistic value may cohabit with a low aesthetic value and vice versa. Of course, if one is committed to the view that art is an imitation of Nature, or an expression of feelings, or a language of some sort, then beauty becomes, by definition, a redundant concept. In Aristotle's view, for example, works of art represent general ideas regarding human situations (and in this sense art is philosophical). Thus, the attributes of a good tragedy are derived from the understanding of what constitutes a tragedy. The concept of beauty, so it seems, has no role here.[12]

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[10] Unless one takes Aristotle's position and argues for natural classes (that have essences). Nevertheless, from an Aristotelian point of view, Dickie's institutional definition is also basically wrong.

Can good art be ugly?

Goodman argues that many of the best paintings are in the "most obvious sense ugly" (Goodman, 1968:255). This remark appears to reflect a common experience: we have all seen paintings, or for that matter read stories and watched films that we appreciate as being good art but which represent ugly objects, appalling situations or repulsive characters, in short, far from pleasant. Recall, for example Manzoni's *Cans of the Artist's Shit,* the paintings of Bacon, Zola's naturalist novels or Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*. Indeed, one may think of a long list of artworks that evoke horror, disgust and uneasiness. Should we conclude that these works are ugly? A positive reply would commit us to two suppositions: (1) that the values of the constituting elements directly determine the value of the whole; (2) that feelings which are occasioned by a work directly reflect its aesthetic value but not its artistic worth. I hold both assumptions incorrect.

1 The aesthetic value of an object as a whole is not the sum of the values of its elements. I have already criticized (Chapter 10, pp. 244–245) the position that the elements of a beautiful object must be beautiful themselves. The beauty or ugliness of the separate elements does not determine the aesthetic value of the combined whole. To grasp this point, it is enough to go through the bitter experience of trying on a beautiful dress only to discover that wearing it makes one look ridiculous; this, however, does not mean that one is bound to look ridiculous in any other dress.

A picture that depicts an ugly war scene can be beautiful; a horror film can be beautiful; and *Crime and Punishment,* although dealing with unhappy events, is still a beautiful work of art. A work is beautiful not because its subject matter is beautiful or pleasant, but because it realizes well the potential

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11 Goodman (1984:255–6), for example, argues for both: that "beauty" is a misleading word, and that some good works of art are not beautiful.

12 In fact, Aristotle is not decisive in separating art from beauty. Although his analysis of tragedy is not explicitly carried out in terms of beauty, there are some assertions in the *Poetics* that could be interpreted as implying a significant bond between art and beauty. For instance, discussing the structure of the plot, Aristotle says that "to be beautiful, a living creature, and every whole made up of parts, must not only present a certain order in its arrangement of parts, but also be of a certain definite magnitude." (*Poetics,* section 7).

of the materials; it interprets them and combines them into a meaningful whole. A work can be beautiful even when it deals with ugly elements: the beauty of the work is the beauty of the interpretation it offers. It is the value of the new insight, the revelations that the aesthetic order of the work offers concerning its materials. A work that fails in this respect is ugly, boring or kitsch, regardless of the beauty of its elements.

2 Feelings form another misleading factor in creating the impression that good works of art may be ugly. Indeed, the experience of a good work of art may be accompanied by unpleasant feelings, but this does not indicate that the work is ugly. We need to differentiate between objects that entertain us and elicit a sense of agreeableness, and works of art that do not cause such an effect and are not intended to do so. The conception that "The primary function of art is to provide enjoyment" (Davies, 1991:220) is misleading in this respect. If it were true that the *primary* function of art is to provide pleasure, artists would need to consult psychologists or conduct surveys on what pleases the majority of people.

Works of art please us because they constitute good, enlightening interpretations of significant materials, but the object of interpretation may be far from raising pleasant feelings. The pleasure that we take in good works of art is the by-product of the satisfying interpretative solution we find in the work; a solution that generates a high aesthetic order. Not every pleasure that is caused by a piece of music or a painting is a result of such a satisfaction, but every *good* interpretation is indeed pleasing by definition.

Many pleasant objects are *just pleasant;* they feel good, they appeal to our senses, and they create a soothing atmosphere that makes us forget our problems for a while and keep us happy, but they do not interfere with our views as a good interpretation does. We have a variety of terms to designate such pleasing objects: pretty, nice, agreeable, lovely, cute, decorative, and so on. Even kitsch may have such a pleasing effect (indeed, it strives to produce such an effect). These effects may be explained on biological or psychological grounds: green is believed to be pleasant to the eyes; certain rhythms have a relaxing influence because they resemble heartbeats; laughter is healthy (even if the cause for laughter is stupid or insignificant), and so on. Beauty is not a mere stimulus for pleasant feelings; it may cause pain and despair besides the joy over its revelation. Beauty combines, as Kant said, the sensual and the rational: it provides order and meaning that cannot be explained merely on the basis of the feelings it occasions. Beauty may or may not comprise attributes that evoke pleasant emotions, but it certainly cannot be reduced to them. This may also explain why beauty cannot be sufficiently accounted for by biology or psychology. Any attempt to reduce beauty to these disciplines is bound to fail.[13]

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[13] Wittgenstein expressed a similar view when he wrote:

> People often say that aesthetics is a branch of psychology. The idea is that once we are more advanced everything—all the mysteries of Art—will be understood by psychological experiments. Exceedingly stupid as the idea is, this is roughly it.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1970:§36).

Order expresses complexity, and so does beauty: it may occasion a variety of feelings and emotions due to the variety of its materials. The overall pleasing effect of beauty is something different from the variety of emotions it occasions: it is the appreciation of the overall meaning. A good (and indeed beautiful) performance of *Hamlet* is definitely not a light, pleasant amusement. It may raise fear, pain, sorrow, and renunciation since it consists of "ugly", disturbing scenes and poignant reflections on life, death and human nature. A good performance of *Hamlet* may please us because the play itself is a good interpretation of its materials—it offers an intriguing perspective of the original play.

Moreover, the genuine *need* for interpretation is bound to involve displeasing elements that cause uncertainty, embarrassment or disgust. It is the *solution* that may soothe these negative feelings. Merely pleasant events do not pose problems and, therefore, do not call for interpretation; they are pleasing and thus satisfying as they are. This is one of the main differences between art and entertainment. Great works of art deal with the dark, difficult, ugly and frightening aspects of life, since these are the problematic materials that want interpretation; hence the centrality of so-called ugliness in art. The achieved beauty is not greeted by cheerful smiles and light amusement, but by a complex array of feelings. We appreciate the artist's "solution", but at the same time, we realize the intensity of the problem that touches upon each of us in some way. Think of any great work of art, and this truth will immediately reveal itself. The happy inhabitants of paradise do not need art, and in the last analysis, they are incapable of appreciating beauty.

Beautiful representation

Kant defined art in terms of beauty:

> A natural beauty is a beautiful thing; artificial beauty is a beautiful representation of a thing.
>
> (1951a:§48)

Kant clearly accepts that a work of art may be beautiful even if its subject matter is ugly, since in art it is the representation that should be beautiful regardless of the subject matter. Kant could have had in mind some of Dürer's admirable drawings of unattractive objects.

The question I wish to raise here is concerned with the concept of (beautiful) representation in general and in Kant's theory in particular. It is apparent that by "representation" Kant does not mean *imitation* but rather something like *mode* of depiction or description:

> Where fine art evidences its superiority is in the beautiful descriptions it gives of things that in Nature would be ugly or displeasing.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§48)

This can be understood in two ways. (1) An object that is ugly in Nature appears beautiful when represented in (good) art. (2) The artistic *description* itself is (or should be) beautiful regardless of the nature of the subject matter.

1 Kant partly supports the first understanding by the following:

> The art of sculpture, again, since in its products art is almost confused with Nature, has excluded from its creations the direct representation of ugly objects, and, instead, only sanctions, for example, the representation of death (in a beautiful genius), or of the warlike spirit (in Mars), by means of an allegory, or attributes which wear a pleasant guise.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§48)

Kant might have changed his mind about sculpture being "almost confused with Nature" if he could have seen modern sculpture. But this is not the main point here. The general question to which the art of sculpture serves as a paradigm is: does art *beautify* its objects? The above passage suggests a positive reply. Being loyal to Nature, so the argument goes, the sculptor would be compelled to depict ugly objects as ugly, thus producing ugly artifacts. However, since art must express beauty, the art of sculpture can deal with ugliness only by allegorical means, allowing thereby the production of beautiful artifacts. In a word, beauty must win at all levels.

I believe that Kant was misled by the kind of sculptures with which he was familiar. For one, beautification is by no means unique to sculpture; we can point to famous portraits that beautify their models or novels that idealize their protagonists. These do not attempt to imitate Nature, but rather to "improve" it. Beautification is a matter of fashion and values, more than it is an aspect or a function of a certain genre. A work is justified in "beautifying" its objects if it serves a purpose within the interpretative boundaries; the purpose, in return, is not a pure artistic consideration (if such a thing exists), but a reflection of values, and fashions. For instance, could the Virgin Mary be portrayed as an ugly woman? The answer does not depend on aesthetic considerations but rather on religious emotions and cultural norms. The tendency to beautify the Virgin Mary does not originate in a philosophy of art but rather in a religious standpoint. This would be equally true for a painting that deliberately portrays the Virgin Mary as an ugly woman. It would indicate a different view regarding her function or significance in religious culture, or it may even express protest against traditional conceptions, but it would not indicate an aesthetic position. "Beautification" may have its reasons and can thus be an integral element within a specific work; it is not, however, a general rule in art. An object may be represented as more beautiful than it appears in its original context or as uglier than it appears—the artistic (or aesthetic) justification of each case lies in its function within the work as a whole as well as its generic characteristics.[14] Beautification *per se* in not the objective of art.

2 The second meaning of "beautiful representation" distinguishes between artifact and natural beauty; this meaning is coherent with Kant's general account of art: a "beautiful representation" is a *beautiful description*, or a *beautiful depiction,* or a *beautiful performance* of objects of all kinds. It means that the mode of representation itself is beautiful, not necessarily the represented object. This, however, raises another question: What does it mean for a description (or depiction, or performance) to be beautiful? Does it mean that the representation is successful? That would be too banal. Words often successfully represent objects and ideas but this does not necessarily make them beautiful in any particular sense. Examining what Kant says about "beautiful representation", it is apparent to me that the notion of "representation" in this context is redundant. Let me elaborate:

Good art, so Kant holds, must have "the appearance of being Nature" (Kant, 1951a:§45). Simultaneously, we should be in no doubt that it is an artifact. Thus, appearing *natural* by no means entails a delusion:

> The way in which a product of art seems like Nature is by the presence of perfect exactness in the agreement with rules prescribing how alone the product can be what it is intended to be.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§45)

Note that Kant does not say exactness in agreement with Nature but in agreement with some rules that are unique to the intention that generated the work. This also coheres with Kant's position that beauty is not based on general, discursive rules. For an artifact to be "natural" means that it expresses lawfulness. Nature is lawful in the sense that no single event can escape the laws of Nature (according to Kant's conception of Nature and natural laws). A "natural" artifact should similarly exhibit an inner necessity, that is, each element should fit in its place perfectly, as if natural forces determined its position. Although it is an artifact, art should not appear to be the product of labor. Rather, it should seem to lack

> labored effect (without academic form betraying itself), i.e. without a trace appearing of the artist having always had the rule present to him and of its having fettered his mental powers.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§45)

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[14] This brings to mind Aristotle's distinction between tragedy and comedy: the first portrays "higher" (noble) characters than the average and the latter, "lower" characters.

> In other words, the work should not reveal its discursive principles or its "preconceived plan" (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984:41) nor should it reveal the artist's effort to execute such principles. It should not appear as the product of a fashion or school (which are, unlike natural laws, temporal and subject to changes). This does not mean, of course, that works cannot belong to a school, but rather that the manifesto of the school should not appear as the central ordering principle of the individual work and overpower its inner necessity.

If this is what Kant had in mind by "beautiful representation", then the use of "representation" in this context is vague, or at best, redundant. If it is an inner "natural" order that determines the beauty of the work, then representation of any kind has no essential part to play in understanding this beauty. A work of art is not necessarily representational in any obvious sense; it does not necessarily depict objects or represent them via symbols. The issue of representation in art is entirely independent of the view that good works of art are beautiful.

We need to distinguish between the claim that art in general (or a certain type of art) is a kind of representation, and the claim that works of art may consist of representational elements. Even if a work of art consists of representations (as many do) it does not follow that the work (the final product) is a representation. A poem consists of words that are conventional representations, but this does not mean that the poem, as a whole, is a conventional symbol or a representation of any kind. A painting may consist of a representation of London (among other elements), without necessarily functioning as a representation of London in any usual sense—a dish made of potatoes is not a potato. Moreover, the fact that the painting exhibits a representation of London does not determine its meaning or value; different paintings that portray London representations may have different meanings and different values. Likewise, the fact that a dish contains potatoes does not tell us what its taste is and whether it is tasty or not. A bad painting may "represent" London successfully, that is, one immediately recognizes that it is a painting of, say, Trafalgar Square. Obviously, this fact alone does not determine the aesthetic significance of the painting.

Kant seems to use the notion of representation somewhat carelessly. He does not say much about what he means by it, and what he does say, can be well understood without the notion of representation. In fact, representation may mean different things and it is not always clear which meaning is in order. In some cases representation is confused with imitation, in others it is understood as a kind of a symbol or a substitute. I suspect that the popularity of this concept is at least partly due to its vagueness.

Basically, to represent something means to replace it with another object for a defined purpose. "X represents Y" means that X replaces Y in a limited, defined sense. If X replaces Y without any limitation, this is not a representation anymore but rather the creation of an *identical* object or a delusion of such an identity. Duplicating a key is not an act of creating a representation of the original but rather an attempt to create an identical key (albeit not identical in the logical sense). In the film *The Return of Martin Guerre,* the protagonist is accused of pretending to be Martin Guerre and thus attempting to replace him in *every* respect without limitations. The protagonist is accused of creating a delusion, not a representation of Martin Guerre. Plato similarly ascribed to art the negative attempt to fully substitute Nature by creating an illusion of it. Fake money and fake art are intended to create the impression (delusion) that these are genuine. Representation differs from delusion, deception and pretence; it is an "honest" and limited substitution. The limitations are defined by the purpose of presentation, therefore it is mandatory that the purpose of representation is made known to the observer. X cannot represent Y without a declared purpose. Words represent objects for communication purposes, a lawyer represents a client in court for the purpose of legal defense and photographs in passports represent people for identification purposes. The efficiency of such representations is evaluated according to the intended function.

The qualities that qualify X to represent Y depend on the purpose of representation. Similarity in appearance between X and Y is necessary only in those cases when X needs to *appear* as Y. For instance, the photograph in my passport needs to resemble me in order to certify that this passport is mine; should the photograph not resemble me, the passport might be considered dubious. However, not every representation requires such similarity (as Goodman rightly argues). A word represents an object by the power of mere convention and tradition; a lawyer represents his or her client in court by the power of the legal agreement between them. Goodman is therefore correct in arguing that in principle, anything may represent anything. The practical limitations and requirements are context dependent. How does this understanding relate to art? Is art a form of representation? And if it is, in what sense does art replace reality and for what purpose?

Walton's (1990) notion of representation, for instance, is defined in terms of "make-believe": a representation is a prop in a game of make-believe. There are various different qualities that qualify an object for becoming such a prop. Yet nowhere in his book does Walton claim that art is essentially a game of make-believe. Such a claim would force him to define the difference between children's games and works of art, among other things. Walton implicitly applies a distinction between "using representations" as components (or materials) of a work and "being a representation". Art may consists of representations (exploiting them as materials) without becoming a representation in itself.

Aristotle defines art in terms of representation: art represents Nature the way a *particular* object represents its *general* category. The purpose of this kind of representation is philosophical; the artistic object teaches us about the genre it represents. A good tragedy is a good instance of its category: it represents the essence of tragedy by means of a particular case. This conception justifies Aristotle's detailed analysis of tragedy and his conclusion that a careless materialization of the features of tragedy (or any genre) results in a poor work of art. The idea that art represents reality for a defined purpose creates a priori demands of art (as demonstrated by Aristotle). Kant agrees that some generic restriction is needed:

> In all free arts something of a compulsory character is still required, or, as it is called, a mechanism, without which the soul, which in art must be free, and which alone gives life to the work, would be bodiless and evanescent.
>
> (Kant, 1951a:§43)

However, since Kant viewed art as the product of genius that does not consist of *a priori* rules or knowledge, the nature and purpose of the mechanical restriction he requires is different from that of Aristotle. It is clear from the above that the "mechanistic" restrictions do not serve representational purposes, but rather give a "body" to the work, that is, create a framework without which disorder reigns. Without any limitations or restrictions the meaning of the details is lost (as in the case of the limitless, as discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 32–33). In what sense, then, could Kant claim that art is a "beautiful *representation*"?

Let us agree that a representation may be beautiful in the sense that its function may be beautifully fulfilled. If X "beautifully" fulfills its function of representing Y then X is a beautiful representation. In this sense, a lawyer may succeed (beautifully) or fail in representing his or her client in court. The criterion in this case will be the best interest of the client: did or did not the lawyer act in the best interest of the client? The function of the lawyer, although it can be beautifully fulfilled, is not the creation of beauty. Using this analogy, what is the function of representation in the case of art? By what criteria can we substantiate a claim that a work beautifully represents its subject matter? If the function itself is the creation of beauty, then the result is a very strange formula: art is beautiful (and thus is good art) when it beautifully fulfills the function of being beautiful.

Not many clear answers were given to the questions: What does art represent and for what purpose? Does art replace philosophy by creating useful examples of different ideas and categories? Does art replace science as a cognitive means by offering an alternative method for achieving knowledge? Is art essentially a game of make-believe? Does art substitute for real experience? Does art speak in the name of reality (whatever that may mean) as a lawyer does in the name of his or her client? I am not saying that it is impossible to account for a representational relationship between art and reality, but in most theories of representation this relation is taken for granted without sufficiently defining the nature and purpose of artistic presentation. In Aristotle's theory the representational function is complemented by the therapeutic function of art and it is not quite clear how these two functions relate to each other. Plato introduces a rather clear and extreme notion of representation, but then, as many have argued, he is mistaken: art is not a pointless substitute for reality. Many works of art deal with the loss of boundaries between art and reality. The myth of Pygmalion expresses the desire that a work of art would become real, but this is different from the idea that art represents reality. Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* has at its core a similar desire. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* art and reality exchange roles, but this again is not a case of one representing the other, but rather the case of fading beauty versus preserved beauty. Indeed, in some pathological cases art may create a delusion of reality and thus function as a sanctuary for the tormented soul. However, if such a delusion were the essential purpose of art, then Plato would be justified in his demand to banish all artists.

It is my view that not only the notion of representation is redundant in Kant's theory of art, but also that art, although it may use representations, is not a representation of any kind. If we attach to art any function of representation, we deny that art has its own function. If we agree that art has its unique function and that it is not a mere substitute for philosophy, science, or "real" experience, then the notion of representation is of dubious benefit in understanding the nature of art, and the phrase "beautiful representation" is indeed futile.

Art and interpretation

As already stated, I defend the position that art is a type of interpretation. This position calls for further clarifications since interpretation is related to art in many different ways. The notions of "art" and "interpretation" are almost like Siamese twins: you can hardly mention one without considering the other. There are good reasons for this association, but inherent in it are also several confused and vague assumptions. There are two major arguments that need to be well differentiated and examined: (1) that art is a form of interpretation, and (2) that art constitutes a typical object for interpretation. The difference between these two is crucial. I take the former to be correct, but not the latter. I argue that art is indeed a form of interpretation but it is *not necessarily* an object that calls for interpretation.

Art as a form of interpretation

Paul Valéry defined art as "*an effort of one man* to create an artificial and ideal order by means of a material of vulgar origin" (Valéry, 1961:192). In line with the spirit of Valéry's definition, I define the act of creating (aesthetic) order from "materials of vulgar origin" (the chaotic raw materials), as an act of complementary interpretation. The main features and problems of this form of interpretation were presented in Chapters 7 and 8. The central points of that analysis are briefly recalled here:

1 Interpretation differs from description, explanation, clarification, decoding, evaluation and criticism, although it is often intertwined with these elements.
2 Interpretation is not merely an act that bestows meaning on an object. It is the intentional attempt to solve a problem that threatens the object's unity (its unified meaning). The solution is based on the disclosure of hidden potential and its realization.

3 Interpretation seeks completeness in the *individual* object. It regards the object as unique and not merely as an instance of its kind.
4 No a priori principles determine an interpretation. This is directly connected to the individuality of the object, its problem and solution.
5 A satisfying object does not motivate interpretation. Only an object that in some sense troubles the observer triggers the act of interpretation. This means that not every object actually calls for interpretation (although every object, under certain conditions, may become the subject of interpretation).
6 The final product of interpretation is expected to be an object of high aesthetic order—lawful, sensitive to changes, exhibiting low redundancy and high information value. It is a closed set with defined borders.
7 An object may raise more than one problem and have more than a single hidden potential. Therefore, an object may receive many interpretations that differ either in the problem they aim to solve or in the nature of the solution they offer while focusing on different potentials in the object.
8 Interpretation, unlike criticism, is motivated by a trust in the inherent completeness of the object, its significance and worth. An object that is believed to be unworthy of attention or genuinely incomplete is not a proper candidate for interpretation.
9 Interpretations are neither true nor false; they express possibilities. They may succeed or fail in presenting a unified object; they may deal with significant or insignificant materials.
10 There are different types of interpretation. The logical relations between the object and its proposed interpretation define each type and differentiate it from others.
11 Complementary interpretation consists of *material-product* relations. The resulting product interprets its constituting materials by placing them in certain positions and thus reordering them. In this new order the elements reveal some of their so far hidden qualities. This type of interpretation is the only type in which the object and its interpretation are inseparable, since the product cannot be separated from its raw materials. Complementary interpretation defines the essence of art.

Each of these points is implicit in the notion of art. This is true about institutional art as well as about other, non-conventional references of "art". For instance, when we praise a person for his or her *art of living,* we actually praise the ability to reach the full potential of that individual's life, and we imply that life, any life, is worthy of such interpretative effort. Each person has to achieve his or her own inherent potential: some appear to do it better than others. One cannot simply adopt other forms of life or other solutions to one's own problems. We intuitively understand that a person's life cannot be imitated; it involves whatever makes a person a unique individual. Living by the book ("how to improve your life") does not guarantee the "art of living". Furthermore, having achieved the art of living does not qualify one to tell others how to live their lives (many who do preach on this subject seem to lack the art themselves). However, since each person has only one life to live, art in this case is limited to one "product" (of each person); this "product" cannot be examined like conventional art for obvious reasons. Therefore, the expression "art of living" is more likely to be taken metaphorically than literally.

In some cases, to refer to something as "art" is unjustified, pretentious or confused. In spoken language we intuitively distinguish between justified and unjustified uses of "art". Metaphorical or literal, "the art of living" is a coherent, meaningful expression: we understand what it means, and we may agree or disagree about a particular use of the expression. By contrast, if I were to speak of "the art of washing up" it would be obvious that I am either joking or I have misused the word 'art'. What is the difference between these two expressions? Washing up normally interest us as a means, as something that does not raise its unique problem of completeness, but rather involves the practical problem of how to accomplish the job efficiently (or avoid doing it at all). It is clearly a matter of following rules and achieving predetermined results—a task suitable for a machine. Style, individuality, originality, hidden layers and other features that are associated with art as a form of interpretation are irrelevant when handling dirty dishes. And yet, since theoretically the possibility is there, we may assume, for the sake of argument, that in a different era, or on another planet, washing dishes may acquire artistic significance (something that it is hard for me to imagine right now).

It is quite obvious, that some applications of "art" are widely accepted and some are not, and it is also quite clear that the conventions that determine the fate of these applications are culturally dependent and subject to changes. When I make tea from tea-bags, I can hardly associate tea with art; the art of making tea in Japanese culture, however, this is a different matter altogether. Objects or activities that would not be considered "art", say, a hundred years ago, such as environmental sculpturing and graffiti, are now "proper" forms of art. Photography, in its early days, was not considered a proper means for creating works of art and there was (and still is) a long debate on this issue, not to mention computer and video art.

Let us examine a few implications of my proposed definition.

1 As a form of interpretation, art is a product of an *intentional* act; it is an artifact. We would not designate as art a natural or an unintended, accidental object. To be sure, some natural or accidental objects may look like art (as if an intention has motivated their creation), and some works of art may appear unintended—an accidental hodge-podge of elements. In order for an object to be considered art one needs to infuse it with an interpretative intention. It is not necessarily the actual intention that determines the fate of an object, but rather the observer's awareness or conviction of it. In this sense, even a natural object or a ready-made may become a work of art. A natural object (or a ready-made) that is presented as art invites the observer to contemplate its interpretative meaning.

The expectation that works of art should be intentional products partly explains the confusion and the anger that the observer might feel when seemingly accidental objects are presented as artworks. Reading a poem that seems to be an accidental assembly of words (but is presented as a poem), the reader may be confused by the conflict between the mode of presentation and the actual disorder s/he experiences. The observer may feel that an implied promise for order and meaningfulness has been violated. Yet, by presenting a seemingly “arbitrary” object as art, the artist may succeed in drawing attention to the object’s inherent significance.

2 As a complementary interpretation that expresses aesthetic order, a work of art is expected to be a *closed set*. Being a closed set does not mean being independent of any external categories or being isolated from everything else, but rather that the object has defined borderlines. Such borders do not preclude meaningful relationships with other objects, just as the existence of borders does not prevent relationships between sovereign states. On the contrary, without such borders meaningful relationships are replaced by chaotic diffusion. When it is not clear what belongs to the work and what does not belong to it, or where it begins and ends, it is not clear how the work relates to its materials and its context or even what these materials and context consist of. In some cases such confusions are intentional, and thus become, paradoxically, a clear element of the work. However, the observer needs to realize that the confusion is intentional (and as such it is an element of the work). Some theatrical performances begin when the actor(s) casually mix with the audience, and the audience cannot be sure whether the performance has begun or not; as an intentional act this method serves a point. Hayden’s *Farewell* symphony is another example: it presents a case in which the audience cannot be sure that the performance has concluded. In Hayden’s case it was especially confusing, for his audience were used to clear structures that made it apparent when the symphony was coming to an end. Hayden had a clear purpose in mind (to express payment grievances) for this uncommon ending, and indeed he succeeded in getting the King’s attention.

The problem with this requirement is that the definition of borders is not always obvious and may become in itself a matter of interpretation. If it is a matter of which words are included in the story, or what colors are applied to the painting, or which notes make up the composition—all theses can be easily established in most cases. But when we consider the meanings and implications of the elements in view of the complete work, we may come up with different accounts of what the object really is. The identification of some of the elements depends on knowledge as well as personal sensitivity and preferences. For instance, I may not realize that a musical composition consists of motifs taken from folk music, and may thus perceive the whole piece differently from someone who readily identifies these elements. I may claim that this knowledge is irrelevant, and that the musical object consists only of that which the ear receives. But such claims are obviously problematic. For one, it is not clear that the ear receives only pure auditory materials, and it is not at all clear that music is received by the ear only.[15]

To be sure, the identity of the elements may be a matter of dispute. Deciding what are the materials (or elements) of the work involves problems of interpretation, norms and knowledge. We may have to agree that there is more than one way to perceive an object, but this does not imply that the object is not a closed set. It simply means that different people may perceive different terrains in the same object.

3 There are no theoretical limitations to the kind of materials that art may interpret. A complementary interpretation may be given to a variety of materials: wood, glass, sounds, brush strokes, colors, forms, feelings, dreams, speculations, historical or personal events, scientific knowledge, beliefs, moral principles, and so on. Our everyday experience consists of so many disconnected, chaotic, partly confused, disturbing or trivial elements. Some of them intrigue us more than others, some are passed unnoticed until someone reveals to us their significance, and some of them are satisfyingly resolved by the discursive principles of science or tradition or everyday routine.

Art is expected to deal with significant materials. Which materials are significant, and which materials raise trivial problems—this is a matter of non-aesthetic values. However, there are instances when it is not clear if a work touches upon an issue that is in itself significant, or whether the issue becomes significant because of the aesthetic value it attains. Great works of art are often praised for dealing with basic aspects of human existence, but soap operas, for instance, use materials similar to those found in great novels: love, hate, jealousy, fear, relationships within and beyond the family, political situations, war, peace, and so on. The difference, then, is not just in the significance of the raw materials. Postmodern art deliberately obliterates the distinction between significant and non-significant materials: *everything* can be exploited as material for art; be it trash bins or sophisticated computer programs, nothing is excluded.

There are materials that are viewed as being improper for art, not because they are insignificant, but, on the contrary, because of their sacred significance. From the perspective of a believer, sacred articles need not become materials for free artistic interpretation. An artistic handling of such materials opens possibilities and exposes problems that one may want to avoid. Art may reveal many facets that threaten traditional religious doctrines. There have been artists who have managed to work beyond the boundaries of religious rules or create a work which operated on two levels: one that satisfied the authorities and one that went unnoticed by the authorities but revealed itself to eyes free of such constraints. The history of art provides many such instances that indicate the tension between the effort to preserve old orders and values and the desire to reorder and re-interpret materials of human experience.

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[15] I tend to agree with Arnheim who argues against the separation between perception and thinking: “only because perception gathers types of things, that is, concepts, can perceptual material be used for thought; and inversely, […] unless the stuff of the senses remains present the mind has nothing to think with” (Arnheim, 1969:1).

Another example of sensitive and problematic material for art is the holocaust. Many reject the idea that the terrible events of the holocaust should be viewed as raw materials for exploring artistic possibilities and thus, by definition, revealing beauty in these materials. This position is often expressed by survivors, who cannot see how their suffering can be interpreted in any way beyond its obvious horrible meaning. Any attempt to dwell on this issue from an aesthetic point of view seems to question its clear-cut horrifying meaning and create thereby a problem of morality in art. Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* has succeeded, in the eyes of many, to present an original, tragic-comic interpretation of life in concentration camps. Yet, there are voices that criticize this enterprise as inappropriate, mainly because it creates the illusion that there were some comic elements in these events. One critic wrote that in the eyes of the young generation this film might be viewed not as an allegory but as a realistic depiction of events and thus creates a false impression.[16]

4 The question concerning the mode of existence of a work of art has received extensive attention as a substantial issue (see for instance, Wollheim, 1980). On the one hand, it is quite obvious that all works of art have sensual qualities. Even literature is sensual; it not only has to be seen in order to be read, but the words have to be associated with the sensual impressions they designate. After all, a poem or a novel is not an abstract philosophical essay. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that a perception of a work, any work, involves more than the senses; it involves concepts, relations and order. Which of these aspects should decide the issue? Defining art as a form of interpretation I propose to view the whole issue from a different perspective. Interpretation is a cognitive (mental) activity, but it deals with concrete as well as abstract materials. It therefore cannot be reduced to either the physical (sensual) realm or the mental realm of abstract notions. Does a painting consist solely of a canvas, brush strokes and colors? Is it, therefore, a physical object? Alternatively, are such concrete materials only a means of communicating the *meaning* of the work, or, as Croce (1978) has it, the artistic intuition? From the standpoint of the theory of aesthetic order there is no direct answer to these questions since they use suppositions that cannot be decided within the aesthetic domain. I argue that the whole issue concerning the mode of existence of an artwork is inconsequential for understanding art.

Establishing the mode of existence of a work of art raises the same difficulties as attempting to establish the mode of existence of any other kind of object. All perceivable objects (like any work of art) exhibit both aesthetic and discursive order, and they all involve both the physical (or sensual) as well as the mental aspect. For example, is a table a physical object? In a sense it is but it is also a conceptual object that depends on cognitive faculties, human interests and cultural conventions. As a "table" it is not a mere object for physical investigations.

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[16] In an article entitled *"Life is beautiful" and False,* Nathan Birke argues against this film. [*Ha'aretz* (daily newspaper in Hebrew) 10 March 1999].

Why should the case of art be separately considered? Take for instance Croce's position. Croce argues that art cannot be physical because it is "supremely real" and "physical facts do not possess reality" (Croce, 1978:9). Croce in fact supports Berkeley's ontology. This ontology, however, is not specific to art. It is clear that if physical objects do not really exist, art is not physical, but neither are tables, trees, stars and other objects that inhabit the universe. If, by contrast, one holds a typical materialist position, then one would also deny that works of art are mental entities. If one holds that the physical and the mental are two aspects of the same substance (Spinoza's position), one would then have to agree that works of art can be viewed, just as anything else, via both aspects. If one votes for dualism, one has to solve first the general problem of interaction between the physical and the mental before one may apply it to the arts. At any rate, the benefit of such an application to art is questionable, since the problem and its proposed solutions are by no means unique to works of art or demand concepts that concern art more than non-art.

Those who wish to determine the mode of art as being physical or mental obviously focus on different aspects of art and assume that these can be separated: the raw materials (the constituting elements) and their order (their interrelationships that constitute the meaning of the whole). Let us assume for a moment that these can be separated and that the mode of existence of art is the same as the mode of its materials. But what is the mode of the materials? Are these always physical? All of them? What about ideas, intentions and emotions that partake in every work of art? Can we imagine a work of art without such non-physical elements? Should we then conclude, like Croce, that art is not physical? Are colors, sounds and other concrete materials only "means" for conveying meanings and not "real" elements of a work? A poem consists of words, but are words physical or mental objects? Can words exist without physical features? Is the taste of food physical or mental? Music is sensual since it depends on our ability to perceive sounds, but is music just a sequence of sounds? Or can we dismiss the physical aspect of music and argue that it is entirely mental?[17] Can we have meanings that are totally abstracted from any concrete manifestation? Many philosophical problems arise here; *none* of them is particular to art *qua* art. Whatever is said about art in connection with these issues is equally relevant to non-artistic objects.

It is my position that such philosophical problems, being relevant beyond the aesthetic domain, do not contribute to the differentiation between art and

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[17] Beethoven's case seems to provide a proof that music is independent of hearing, but then we cannot know whether Beethoven would be able to write music had he been born deaf. Moreover, even if music consists of mathematical relations, independent of their auditory materialization, one still needs to see the symbols.

> non-art or to the general demarcation of the aesthetic domain. By solving these problems in one way or another (assuming that such solutions are available), we do not gain any better understanding of art or matters of beauty. There is no reason, therefore, why aesthetics should shoulder the burden of solving problems that have not yet been solved in the more general context, and which have no particular affiliation to aesthetics. There are more than enough problems to answer within the aesthetic domain, without adding the heavy (perhaps impossible) burden of the body-mind problem, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (*St Mark,* 12:17).

Art as an object for interpretation

It has been already argued (in Chapter 7) that not every object that can be interpreted actually needs to be interpreted. A case in point is interpretation itself. An interpretation is expected to solve problems and change our views of its subject matter, but it is not made in order to create problems and be interpreted further. It is not a "natural" candidate for interpretation as long as it is considered for the solution it offers. However, like any other object, interpretations may require clarifications, explanations or justifications. An interpretation occasionally may also call for interpretation if it acquires a new status in cultural life. Rashi, the famous medieval interpreter of the Bible, became a central cultural figure and a religious authority. His interpretations became an influential source for the Jewish law (the Halacha). Rashi's interpretations therefore acquired the status of a text that raises problems and requires interpretation.

DANTO'S POSITION

In the light of the above, I reject the claim that art is a typical candidate for interpretation. If, as I argue, art in itself is a form of interpretation, then it is not the purpose of art to create interpretative problems but rather to solve them. One does not interpret X in order to create an object (Y) for interpretation, but rather to reveal new meanings in X. Works of art may raise different kinds of problems, but not necessarily interpretative problems. In getting ourselves acquainted with a work of art, we may need *clarification* of words, symbols or norms, and we may need *background information* concerning the materials of the work; these are not interpretations. In fact, much of the information that critics offer with regard to artworks should not be considered interpretation in the strict sense.

Interpreting the interpretation of X shifts focus from the problem of the apparent incompleteness of X to the apparent incompleteness of its interpretation. This, of course, is not impossible, even in the case of art. The performing arts, for instance, do interpret works of art; a film interprets the novel on which it is based. The novel may be complete in itself, but when it is viewed as a material for visual performance it is incomplete. This is not to say that all works of art need (by definition) to be interpreted, or that all novels should be made into films. A musical performance interprets the original score, but the performance itself does not necessarily require interpretation. It can be directly experienced and appreciated.

Arthur Danto (1979) holds otherwise. He claims that works of art must, by their very nature, be interpreted:

> The moment something is considered an artwork, it becomes subject to an *interpretation.* It owes its existence as an artwork to this.
>
> (Danto, 1979:108)

Why does art need to be interpreted? Danto maintains that "art is a language of some sort", and as there is space between all languages and what they denote, there is always a "space between art and reality" (Danto, 1979:108–109). This "space" calls for interpretation; it requires the mediation of those who "speak the languages of the artworld", and "know enough of the difference between artworks and real things" (Danto, 1979:109). In other words, we are back to the traditional hermeneutic conception of mediation. The main difference between art and non-art is, according to Danto, that art is self-referential; it is a transfigurative representation. Being self-referential, art is interpreted by means of theories of art and art history. A single work is to be understood in the historical context of art, and therefore can be sufficiently interpreted only within the artworld.

My objection to the above consists of three main points:

1 The "gap" between any language and reality does not require interpretation but rather decoding.
2 Art is not in itself a language and it cannot depend on its interpretation.
3 Art, in the last analysis, is not self-referential; it is about reality or human experience in general (art experience included).

1 If art were a language, it would require, like any language, the learning of its norms and rules. This learning will allow us to decode art the same way we read a familiar language and decode symbols of any linguistic system. Decoding, as I have argued, is different from interpretation. Even if it were agreed that art is a "sort of language" and that each work of art is a "text" in the context of art history, such a text would (still) need to be directly understood by those who speak the artistic language. As any "text" art need not necessarily be an object for interpretation. The assumption that linguistic objects are in constant need of interpretation is puzzling in itself. The category of an object, in this case linguistic, does not dictate interpretation any more than it dictates a need for explanation, clarification or decoding. Some texts require interpretation and some do not.

2 Art may consist of symbols and linguistic-like symbols; this does not make a work of art a description of reality (a description that is bound to create a gap). Languages—conventional and traditional or new and original—may serve as raw materials for a work; they do not determine the nature of art. If

art were a mere language, it should be possible to translate its meaning into another language. Even verbal works of art create difficulties for their translations, let alone non-verbal works: how do you "translate" a painting into words or sounds without a significant change in its meaning?

The hermeneutic mediation between the work and the layperson cannot, by itself, define the status of art *qua* art. Even if art were a language (a notion with which I disagree), and even if all works of art were always in need of interpretation (which I doubt), art would still not "owe its existence" to interpretation. For one, languages owe their existence to the fact that they are accepted, learned and used.

Moreover, no interpretation precedes its object. This is a logical point: an object always precedes its interpretation; a work that is interpreted as art must be recognized as such previous to its interpretation. The case of Picasso's tie, Danto's example, is as good as any other example: it is first recognized as an intentional work of an artist (hence, a work of art), and only afterwards, in the light of its categorization as art, it may receive different interpretations. A similar tie painted by a child is not considered art because it is taken to lack the serious (interpretative) intention of an artist. Children are not considered artists, because we assume that they lack the sophistication that is needed for solving interpretative problems (we may or may not be wrong about children). However, even if we decide not to consider a child's drawing a work of art, we can still interpret it in many ways, and detect in it hidden layers. Psychologists often do this. Interpretation can do wonders in both cases, art and non-art. A work that requires interpretation requires it because it raises problems (it appears incomplete for some reason) and not because it is a work of art. This is true for art, as it is true for non-art. An object that does not raise problems of incompleteness is not in need of interpretation no matter what its category is.

3 According to the theory of aesthetic order, art interprets various aspects of human experience and in this sense it is never self-referential. Even when a work of art deals with artistic issues as its subject matter or uses materials taken from previous works, it does so as a reflection on human experience. A work of art that refers to a previous work reflects on its attempt to interpret certain materials; it may expand on the previous interpretation or it may pursue different avenues. If art were indeed self-referential, as Danto holds, the interest taken in art would be enigmatic: why and how would an artifact bypass the human experience and be about itself without involving human problems and interests. It would, in fact, create a new version of the old *art for art's sake*. It appears that Danto conflates different points here. It is a fact that modern (and indeed postmodern) art often uses materials taken from previous works of art and refers to them in many ways. But does it mean that art has "become increasingly its own (and only) subject" (Danto: 1979)? I do not think so. Works of art may focus on the experience of art itself, but even then they are about human experience and have all kinds of bonds with other aspects of life. There is no essential difference between a film that quotes previous films and a film that utilizes historical affairs: both interpret materials of human

experience and both require and presuppose certain knowledge of the relevant materials. In principle all works of art should be considered as doing the same thing: reflecting upon materials that have potential for interpreting human experience. Danto, as a declared essentialist asserts that much: "I am committed to the view that art is eternally the same" (Danto, 1997:95).

Indeed, without the knowledge of the history of art, it is difficult to understand the subject matter of most modern works, let alone the interpretations they offer to previous works. If I do not understand the original problem, I cannot understand and appreciate the solution. Therefore, it is true that the understanding of most of contemporary art depends on knowledge of the history of art. But this may be true for many philosophical discussions as well: if I do not know the history of an issue, I may not understand the current discussions. Yet, Danto appears not to distinguish between possessing information relevant to the "subject" of a work and the act of interpreting. Filling gaps in information and explaining the problems with which modern and postmodern artists have struggled are the tasks of the experts. However, providing relevant information is not in itself an act of interpreting and I doubt whether it can be regarded as an act of removing the "space between art and reality" either. It is not that art and reality have a gap between them (I am not sure that I understand what it means, since art is part of reality), but rather that the observer may have some gaps in information that need to be filled. Such gaps are to be found in many areas (science being a typical case); they are not essential to art.

If art is any different from other domains in this respect, this difference goes against Danto's argument. It has been seriously argued by many that art, unlike other disciplines, does not require background knowledge for its experience; that it should be "innocently" viewed.[18] True, it can be said that one misses a lot by ignoring the history of art, but by the same token it may be argued that the background knowledge interferes with the direct experience of the work. This view may or may not appeal to us; it is, however, not a matter of determining what art is, but rather what is the best way to benefit from art. One may develop a non-historical attitude toward art without violating thereby the very idea of art.

THE WORK AND ITS "CONCRETIONS"—INGARDEN AND ISER

The idea that, by definition, a work of art is an object for interpretation has developed in various directions. Danto, as we have seen, suggests that interpreting art is the task of the expert who "speaks the language of the artworld". Ingarden and Iser dissent from this view and claim that it is the observer (or the reader) who interprets the work by the very act of experiencing it. Ingarden (1964, 1973a, b) and Iser (1971, 1974, 1978) agree about this main point, but disagree about others.

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[18] Theories of aesthetic experience, such as Bell's or Beardsley's at a certain stage, or theories of aesthetic attitude, such as Bullogh's and others, offer different understanding of the role of historical context in the experience of art.

For instance, Ingarden holds that there are proper and improper concretions of art, but Iser does not accept such distinctions. Although their claims concern mainly literary works, the implications, as Ingarden acknowledges, are also relevant to other forms of art.

Ingarden distinguishes between (1) works of art and (2) aesthetic objects. The work *itself* is "something that transcends the sphere of our experiences and their contents" (Ingarden, 1964:202). It is "the product of the intentional activities of an artist". This product has potential for realization, for creating many "concrete" aesthetic objects. As a mere potential the work contains "areas of indeterminateness"; "it is a schematic creation", it is a "skeleton" (Ingarden, 1964:199). Thus, an aesthetic object is the mutual product of the artist who creates the potential, and the observer (or reader) who concretizes the artistic scheme by interpreting it and determining "areas of indeterminateness". What does this mean?[19]

Ingarden clearly reverses the direction that I have suggested: instead of viewing the work as a "concretion" of the potential of materials taken from experience, the work itself, according to Ingarden, becomes a potential, a scheme or a "skeleton" that may be realized in various ways—some better than others. The fact that Ingarden refers mainly to literary works may partly explain the roots of what I consider to be the main problem here: the quality of the (linguistic) material is confused with the quality of the artistic object, and conclusions drawn from the former affect the latter.

"Areas of indeterminateness" reflect the nature of language in general: language is abstract and its particular subject matter is (in most cases) more individual and concrete. This feature is by no means unique to artistic use of language. Consider the simple utterance, "This is my doll". Can we determine the meaning of this sentence without placing it in a definite context? So much depends on who says it, to whom, when, where, in what tone; so much depends on details that are missing in the disconnected sentence. "Indeterminateness" of this sort is determined, in everyday communication, by general cultural norms and the specific context in which the speaker and the listener both partake. In the case of a work of art the context is much more flexible; there are no fixed norms or a defined context in which the artist and the observer share exactly the same understandings.

The nature of "indeterminateness" may vary and occur on different levels of the object. In some cases details are deliberately ignored since they are redundant. The missing information may be deduced on the basis of the context and norms that are common to speaker and listener. There are many linguistic short cuts and condensed expressions that need not be spelled out unless someone is unfamiliar with the norms or the relevant context. Furthermore, linguistic reports are always selective; they never provide or intend to provide a complete account of the object. There are necessary gaps that either cannot be filled (because of lack of knowledge) or need not be filled (because they are irrelevant or insignificant or deducible from the context). A description must be selective and present only those details that are significant for its specific purpose. No report—as accurate as it may be—accounts for the complete details of its object. It cannot do so and it need not attempt to do so. This is true for everyday conversation, as it is true for verbal art. A person who replies to the question, "What have you been doing recently?" by attempting to give a complete report of all his actions, thoughts, emotions, and so on, will never be asked again

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[19] There are many points in Ingarden's theory that I find problematic. One such area is his distinction between artistic and aesthetic value and his claim that a work is aesthetically neutral, but that its value is deduced on the basis of valuable aesthetic concretions. However, I limit the present discussion to those points that are directly relevant to the issue of interpretation.

How is this relevant to understanding art? What does it teach us beyond the understanding of the linguistic materials? Not much, I believe. Let us agree that each work of art asserts something or tells some story. It therefore "reports" in its own language (be it words, notes or brush strokes) on its subject matter. As such, it must contain, as Ingarden suggests, "areas of indeterminateness". While determining the relevant context, each reader applies his or her own norms and imagination and fills in the missing information on different levels. As readers, we are free to imagine that the protagonist has blue eyes (unless she belongs to a certain ethnic group), to infer that she is pregnant (if the text informs us that she suddenly develops a desire for pickles), and to conclude that she is happy or anxious from what she says, thinks or does (and for that matter, from what she does *not* think, say or do). All this is done with regard to everyday information exactly the way it is done with literary information: on the basis of the given information we deduce further information.

When my neighbor tells me about his beloved cousin Edna who is coming to visit from overseas, I am free to imagine (based on what I am told) what she looks like and whether I am going to like her or not. The main difference between imagining (filling in gaps?) fictional figures and imagining real people is that with the latter we are able to confirm the hypothetical images. When I meet cousin Edna I will be able to compare her real appearance and personality with the image I created in my mind. My neighbor's "story" is not fictional and it is not a work of art; it is an open set. I can ask him questions, he may expand on the previous information and he may also show me photos. A fictional story is not such an open set.

Notwithstanding, a fictional story allows the reader to go beyond the explicit and infer further information. The question is whether *everything,* but everything, that can be inferred from the explicit information (in both the real and the fictional story) also belongs to the story? We may recall Beardsley's example:

> Daisy Miller appears at the hotel; therefore, she must have been born. She goes out with men she has barely met; therefore she is careless of her reputation. Part of what is involved in coming to understand a literary work is this process of filling out our knowledge of what is going on, beyond what is overtly presented.
>
> (Beardsley, 1988:242)

Indeed, what Beardsley says sounds logical, and yet implausible. I have read this paragraph over and over again, especially its first sentence. Could it be true? When a person (fictional or non-fictional) appears at the hotel, do we think: "oh, this person must have been born"? When my neighbor told me about cousin Edna, have I entertained the thought, "Yeah, she must have been born"? Well, not as far as I can recall. Could I have done so? Would it be true that she was born? Indeed I could and indeed it would.

To go beyond what is "overtly presented" has many aspects and manifestations, not all of them relevant to the understanding of a literary work. Some of them create obstacles for such an understanding. I find it hard to believe that upon reading Kafka's *Metamorphosis,* Beardsley (or for that matter Iser or Ingarden) entertains the thought: "Oh, Gregor Samsa has parents, therefore he must have had grandparents (who also had parents and grandparents). What was their occupation? Were they Jewish?" and so on. Above all, I cannot see why anybody would believe that such thoughts (in case they do occur) are typical or necessary or of any benefit to the act of reading or experiencing any form of art. The idea that any given information carries with it the implications of other (perhaps endless amounts of) information is by no means unique to art, but the idea that all that can be inferred is actually relevant is false in everyday communication as it is in art. The implication that Daisy Miller was born is not only redundant but is an obstacle to the understanding of the story: if such implications really belong in the story, they destroy its structure and turn it into a boring, endless (and impossible) report of the universe.

Indeed, some aestheticians seem to favor the idea that in the last analysis all stories are, or should be, such purposeless, endless reports of events. Iser, for one, holds that the reader constantly fills in gaps of information. Some of these are temporary gaps that the story eventually fills in as it develops (e.g. the identity of the murderer); some gaps are permanent and entirely depend on the reader who determines their nature according to his or her own understanding and associations. No tale, so Iser claims,

> can be told in its entirety. [...] Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in gaps left by the text itself.
>
> (Iser, 1971:285)

Iser clearly suggests that the reader participates in the act of creation: the original text contains gaps (interruptions), the reader fills them in, and thus the work becomes (relatively) completed by the very act of reading. I say "relatively", since if no tale can be entirely told, why should we assume that the reader is able to do what the artist could not? The great chain of gaps could go on forever. Rimmon-Kenan supports Iser's position by stating that

> Holes or gaps are so central in narrative fiction because the materials the

> text provides for the reconstruction of a world (or a story) are insufficient for saturation.
>
> (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:127)

Indeed, if one assumes that art provides materials "for the reconstruction of a world", one would certainly never be completely satisfied, especially if by "world" one means a complete universe. No assembly of materials can solve the ancient continuum paradox: between any two given points (events, notes, colors, ideas) there is always room for another point (event, note, color, idea). The mission of completeness is thus a priori impossible and the chain of details is thus endless.

Clearly the theory of aesthetic order that I have presented reverses the directions. It is not the work that supplies materials for reconstructing a world; rather, it is the other way around: the "world" (human experience) supplies materials for artistic interpretation and completion. In this view, *every story is complete*—be it a good or a bad story. An incomplete story is not yet ready for publication. If it is presented as a story or as any work of art, it should be viewed as a complete work and evaluated as such. What does this completeness mean?—only that a story (or any work) is not a report or reconstruction of reality but an interpretation of some of its components; as such, it consists of defined elements and definite borderlines just as any problem and solution do. If a story does not tell us about the early childhood of the protagonist, if a story does not mention, hint or require the consideration of the protagonist's childhood, then this period is simply not a part of the story. Should we conclude that this period is missing or lost? Should we, as faithful readers, imagine it in order to "complete" the "reconstructed world"? I think not. That is, we are of course free to imagine as much as we like, but our imagination and contemplation are by no means part of the work itself, even if sometimes it is not an easy task to tell them apart. If the reader (or the interpreter) is convinced that, although the early childhood is not explicit in the story, it is nevertheless implicitly relevant, the burden is on the reader to substantiate this relevance. At any rate, such relevance should not be taken for granted merely on the basis of the truism that every adult must have had a childhood.

Iser argues that no tale can be told in its entirety. By contrast I argue that if it is not told (or cannot be told) in its entirety it is not a tale. A story begins and ends where it begins and ends; it contains certain words in a certain order; these describe certain situations that have certain relations with other situations, and so on. Attempting to include everything that can be included in a story would result in destroying the individuality of each work and render all stories (or all works of art) alike: they could all start with Adam and Eve and end on Doomsday. Consider, for example, Kleist's novella, *Die Marquise Von O*. A crucial detail is "missing" in the story: the name of the progenitor of the unborn child of the Marquise Von O. This name is unknown to her as it remains unknown to the reader until the end of the novella. This missing element not only motivates the plot, but also creates a certain tension and constructs the central theme. There are clues and hints in the story that suggest three possibilities but the mystery is not solved. Iser would classify it as a "permanent gap". The reader may indeed speculate and fantasize as much as s/he pleases, but what would become of Kleist's novella if this gap or this "area of indeterminateness" were to be filled or "determined"?

Let us turn, by analogy, to non-verbal forms of art and consider the case of the *Mona Lisa*. We do not see the Mona Lisa's legs, but surely she must have had legs. Are these missing? Is this a gap that the observer should fill by imagining the complete figure? Was Duchamp filling in gaps when he added the famous mustache to Leonardo's painting? Clearly, the result of Duchamp's act is not an improvement or a completion of the original work but an ironic interpretation of it. This interpretation produced a *new* work of art; it does not complete the former by adding to it "missing" details.

Consider a delicate lace. Would we accept the claim that the fine holes are in fact gaps that should be filled in by the observer's imagination? Or comparing a story to a musical composition, just imagine the listener trying to fill in the missing notes in the scale. A work of art is as a piece of lace, not as a crossword puzzle. It is true that no story can tell us the complete history of even a single person. If it did, it would not be a story (and it is doubtful whether such an attempt could succeed or whether it is desirable). All forms of art have borders and defined elements, even if not all observers are in agreement about the nature and meaning of these definitions. Boundaries do not indicate shortcomings; on the contrary, boundaries are necessary for order and meaning in general and therefore for aesthetic order and art in particular.

The ability to *read between the lines, deduce one thing from another* and *imagine possibilities* is crucial in everyday experience as it is in experiencing art. These are aspects of the blessed ability of *understanding*. However, this blessing may turn into a curse if these abilities are exercised without the power of judgment. We do not conclude everything that can be concluded from a given information. We tacitly differentiate between relevant and irrelevant conclusions depending on the context. Similarly, we do not imagine everything that can be imagined, or else we would be day-dreaming for the rest of our lives. We are rational creatures who have priorities and limitations, and (thanks to Kant) the power of judgment. Therefore, upon an initial encounter with someone, we may conclude many things from his or her appearance, accent, gestures, and so on; we may imagine this person in different situations. But normally we would not entertain the thought that s/he must have been born, for reasons too obvious to spell out.

The conception of a work of art as a natural candidate for interpretation primarily because it contains "areas of indeterminateness", or gaps, is basically a misconception. Such a conception confuses possibilities with actualities and the potential qualities of the materials with the nature of the final product: the final product materializes some potential. No product materializes all possible potential. The act of understanding, imagining, selecting and attending to details is, in principle, the same in science, philosophy, art and indeed in everyday experience. However, unlike discursive knowledge that is open to endless growth, a work of art (as any form of aesthetic order) is not such an open set. It is a selective *closed set*. Pauses, turns, hints, "absence" of details and such like are not gaps that need to be filled; they belong to the work as part of its materials and make it what it is.

Determining the boundaries of a work

Although I disagree with the “gap” theory, I do concede that it reflects a genuine difficulty: the difficulty of determining the boundaries of a work. We are on relatively safe ground as long as we are examining, say, the words or notes in a composition, lexical definitions or grammatical structures, or any other element that is determined by conventions or common knowledge. When it comes to issues that involve values, complicated meanings, cultural or personal associations and other implied materials, the problem of boundaries becomes evident. How do we distinguish between elements that belong to the work and those that are evoked by the work but belong to the observer’s mental realm?

Raw materials have the annoying tendency to carry with them more qualities than intended: they have the potential that is realized in the work but also potential of which the artist may not have been aware. Materials carry different associations with their origin, that is, the actual world. These associations are not identical for different observers; they reflect differences in knowledge, experience, memory, interests and values. There are common, cultural associations that are shared by people who belong to the same circles and are applied to their art experiences. Such associations, because they are shared, may create the illusion that they “objectively” determine once and for all the relevant qualities of the materials, and consequently the meaning of the work. No analysis, learned and sophisticated as it may be, can cover comprehensively everything that could be said about the “content” of a single work (which is also true for non-artistic objects). In order to do so, one would have to know and articulate everything that could be known about the real world.[20] For instance, it is unlikely that Dickens could have imagined that *Great Expectations* would one day receive a feminist interpretation, thereby reformulating its values. Should we include the contemporary feminist perspective as an element in the novel? Upon examining a painting, a physician may observe in the depicted person symptoms of a disease that had not been discovered at the time when the work was painted. Should we take this illness into account while considering the meaning of the painting? It is clear that the feminist and the physician cannot avoid seeing what they see, and no normative theory can alter their perception. Once something is noticed it is effectively there, whether it was meant to be included in the object or not; it plays a role in the overall aesthetic order that is perceived by the observer in question. Although this may seem to be a problem, it should not really be thus considered; it reflects the “normal” differences among cultures, periods and individuals.

Wolterstorff brings into play the analytical perspective:

> Now suppose that among the things some author indicates is the state of affairs of *a person named “John”s’ being exactly 6 foot tall.* We naturally conclude that the world also includes the state of affairs *of a 6 foot tall person named “John”s’ not being 7 foot tall.*
>
> (Wolterstorff, 1980:116)

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[20] This may remind us of Leibniz’s *Monadology* (§56): “Each simple substance has relations that express all the others, and is in consequence a perpetual mirror of the whole universe.”.

Indeed, this is a logical conclusion, but is it also a relevant conclusion? Does such a conclusion belong in the story about *6-foot-tall John*? A positive reply would force us to continue with this line of reasoning and produce further facts: *"John"s' not being 7.1 foot tall, "John"s' not being 7.2 foot tall…8, 8.1, 8.2…9, 9.1,* and so on forever. If such an infinite chain of conclusions is included in the story about John, then Iser is absolutely right: not only that no tale can be ever told in its entirety, but also that we could never proceed from the first sentence to the second. More than that, let us consider that instead of "John was 6 foot tall" we find in the story the sentence: "John was not 8 foot tall, nor was he 7 foot tall—he was 6 foot tall". Wouldn't such a sentence make a difference in the understanding of this fact and its function in the story? Wouldn't we wonder why the author bothered to specify these negations? Whereas the innocent, positive sentence "John was 6 foot tall" does not raise such a question, although, according to Wolterstorff it includes the above negative assertions as well.

According to Walton (1990:144–50), such deduced facts are "implied fictional truths". There are "primary fictional truths" that are directly presented by works of art (and even these are not simple to determine), and others that are implied. For instance,

> It will be fictional in 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' that Tenzing and Hillary achieved the first ascent of Mount Everest and Neil Armstrong the first landing of the moon.
>
> (Walton, 1990:148)

The idea that in the last analysis all facts pertaining to the real world must partake (in one way or another) in every story is based on the implied understanding that (1) a story (or any work of art) is about the world; and (2) all the facts of the (real) world are related. Therefore, if some facts are relevant to a story, by implication all facts become relevant. For instance, if the moon is mentioned in a story, the reader naturally assumes (make believes) that it is the "same" moon s/he knows from the real world. Otherwise, it is not clear what does "moon" stand for in the story. If indeed "moon" fictionally denotes the real moon, all the facts that concern the real moon should concern, by implication, the "fictional" moon and thus become "fictional truths".

Walton admits that it cannot be denied that such facts as the first landing of the moon belong (fictitiously) to the fictional world of "Goldilocks", just as there is no way of denying the fact that if Daisy Miller entered the hotel, she must have been born. Walton does not fail to realize, however, that these logical implications lead to a practical absurdity: all works of art (like Leibniz's monads) reflect the same facts. There is no coherent way of denying that the first landing of the moon (and the second and the third) as well as "my most recent visit to the grocery store" (Walton, 1990:148 n. 14), belong to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or to any other story, or for that matter to any work of art. Walton, in his attempt to reduce the obvious damages of this strategy, offers to distinguish between "emphasized and highlighted" (fictional) truths and others that are de-emphasized, which "remain in the shadows", placed in the "deep background of the story" (Walton, 1990:148–9).

My objection to this position consists of the following:

1 By adopting the above view one accepts (by implication) that art is a *mirror* of the real world. Thus, even facts that are not seen in the mirror "exist" behind the clear image (in the "shadow" as it were). This takes us back to the familiar debates about imitation theories. Why is it necessary to assume that art reflects the real world, and what is the benefit of such assumption? Is art a copy of the real world, or is Goodman's motto stating that "one of the damn things is enough" (Goodman, 1976:3) right? A real mirror reflects only a limited section of the world constrained by size and angle. Thus, even if one insists on viewing art as mirroring the world, it does not follow that every work reflects the whole world from every possible angle. My claim that art is a form of interpretation and thus consists of aesthetic order rejects all imitation theories. As result, I do not hold that a story or any work of art is an open set of endless facts. The fictional moon is not a mere reflection of the real moon; it is a "limited" image of the moon, an interpretation of some of its features. The relevant facts are only those that have a role in the work. Indeed, this role and the related, relevant facts may be a matter of debate. Nonetheless, debating over the borders and the relevance of certain facts is not the same as arguing that there are no borders at all and all facts are included. A certain "fictional" moon has a personality of its own, which is constructed of selected facts and associations. The moon in story X and the moon in story Y or painting Z are not necessarily identical (although they must have some common features in order to be identified as "moon"). This is an expression of the individuality of art. If it is always the same moon in every poem or painting, it is not an interesting moon; it is not a new interpretation of it and there is no reason for dwelling on it over and over again. The "realities" of work X and that of work Y may differ like two kinds of vegetable soup. They do not share all ingredients and are not prepared (composed) in the same way, although they both contain vegetables. Each recipe interprets "vegetables" in a different way. Thus, carrots are not de-emphasized in soup that does not contain carrots.

2 One may place something "in the shadow" only if it has (however briefly) been "in the light"; one may de-emphasize only what has been emphasized. If it is the creator that de-emphasizes some facts, we must assume that s/he considered them in some way before doing so. However, most of the facts of the world are not even known to the creator or the beholder. The process of creation consists of selections of facts, but this process can never go through all the facts of the world (Tenzing and Hillary—out, Goldilocks lost in the wood—in). The same is true, I believe, about the beholder: s/he does not select and place some facts in the background of the story; s/he does not even recall, consider, or think about most of them when following a tale or observing a picture.

3 The view that all the facts of the world partake (explicitly or implicitly) in

every story is bound to result in a confusing inconsistency. For instance, it is a fact (in the real world) that bears do not have their own houses in the middle of the forest and do not sit on chairs and eat porridge or speak English. These facts clearly contrast some "fictional" facts of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears;* how can these contrasting facts belong to the story, even as de-emphasized facts? Moreover, all works of art (being fictional) contrast in one way or another facts of the non-fictional world. After all, *Madam Bovary* is not Madam Bovary in the real world ("ce moi!"). What if a story tells us that Neil Armstrong has not succeeded in landing on the moon or that he was not the first one who did so? Is such story an impossible work of art by definition?

4 The argument that all facts are included in every story originates from the logical difficulty of justifying the exclusion of some facts. Since all facts are, in the last analysis, interrelated, there is no reliable method for discriminating among facts and excluding some of them. But why is it a simpler task to discriminate between emphasized and de-emphasized facts in a given work than between facts that belong and facts that do not belong to the work? The difficulties of the latter are bound to emerge in the former as well. If there is a method by which Walton can be certain that the landing on the moon is de-emphasized in a story (for instance, it is not mentioned), by the same method he can argue that this fact simply does not partake in the story. If, however, not being mentioned does not serve as sufficient evidence for the exclusion of this detail, then I do not see how it can serve as evidence for being de-emphasized. In short, it is not clear what distinguishes between de-emphasized facts and excluded facts.

5 If we accept the idea that a work of art expresses an aesthetic order, then we must agree that works of art do not tolerate high redundancy. High redundancy is the mark of low aesthetic order, and, therefore, of a low-value work of art. If a story (or any work of art) were to include *all* the facts of the real world (most of these as de-emphasized facts), it would mean that the story tolerates the highest redundancy one can imagine. In fact, its redundancy would exceed by far its informative value. Should this be the fate of all works of art? Are they all condemned to infinite redundancy?

6 A typical case in which Iser's "gap" theory and Walton's account of fictional truths might indeed be effective is in a specific genre of biblical interpretation. Many of the Talmudic Sages as well as Christian interpreters read the Bible as material for reconstruction of the world. It is the task of the interpreters to "fill in gaps" of information and demonstrate that the Bible includes *everything* from eternity to eternity. There are different methods of associating the biblical text with the facts (or whatever one wishes to present as a fact) of the world: filling in gaps in information by creating tales (*agada,* the collection of legends that originate from biblical interpretation), numerology, associating similar words, and so forth. One of the most famous examples of such interpretation is the claim that the birth of Jesus is anticipated in the book of Isaiah.

> Notice, however, that the orthodox interpreters do not consider the Bible a work of art, and therefore the problem of boundaries becomes irrelevant. The Bible, in the eyes of the believers, has no boundaries; it represents the world in the most concrete sense. Is the case of art similar to that of the Bible? I believe not. Art would cease to be *art* if it were to assimilate the above conception of the book of books.

Accepting that art is a complementary interpretation means that the work does something with certain materials—it interprets them; it does not attempt to reconstruct a world. Daisy Miller may walk in and out of the hotel, as many times as the author wishes and I still would not consider her appendix, or Tenzing and Hillary, or any of my recent visits to the grocery store as elements of the story. Why wouldn't I? Is it because these facts cannot become relevant to the story? Any quick mind can come up with a variety of ways of how to associate Daisy Miller with Tenzing and Hillary or the neighborhood grocery store. All it takes is a little imagination and a well-trained argumentative mind (like that of the interpreters of the Bible) and anything may become relevant to anything. However, art, is the domain of the miraculous, where a frog may become a prince without consideration for the kind of physics that allows such a phenomenon to occur, and Daisy Miller may walk into the hotel without being born.

I believe that it is the implied understanding of what a story is and what art in general is that enables a sensible distinction between relevant and irrelevant facts. This truism, once again, is by no means unique to art. We similarly sense the borderlines between different personalities, events, objects and ideas, which does not mean that we all perceive them the same way, or that we can give a detailed account of and justification for the borderlines we delineate. We may disagree, for example, whether certain ideas belong to Aristotle's philosophy and we may disagree about the essential differences between Aristotle's philosophy and that of Plato's. It would be preposterous, however, to suggest that eventually Plato and Aristotle (and all other philosophers) hold exactly the same views and refer exactly to the same problems, since they all belong to the same world.

The puzzle, its solution and its puzzles

The role of art

Works of art may function in many ways, but the *primary* function of art is to create beauty by exploring new potential and realizing it. The experience of the individual can be viewed as a chaotic cluster of impressions, feelings, concepts, dreams, relationships, and so forth. Religion, philosophy and science offer discursive orders and satisfy the need for controlled and predictable systems. Art answers a different need: the need for a meaningful individuality. It is not necessarily the case that art deals with extraordinary objects or events, but rather that even seemingly everyday, ordinary events, when interpreted as art, become unique, individual and "extraordinary". The artist carves out chunks of the chaotic cluster and reorganizes them into meaningful objects, disclosing their uniqueness and significance. To quote Oscar Wilde (1982:270), “Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known”. Wilde could have meant the individuality of the artist. The individuality 1 have in mind is that of the *materials*. A work of art interprets its materials by demonstrating what can be done with *these* particular materials (I emphasize the particularity of the materials to indicate that a work is not about the whole world). This particularity also reflects the individuality of the artist, whose unique perspective reveals the individuality of the materials. It is the artist that selects the materials and reorders them in a new way. Therefore, it is not surprising that one can recognize the fingerprints of the artist on his or her various works. In the last analysis, the aesthetic experience also reflects the individuality of the observer who finds the work meaningful, significant and thus, enjoyable in his or her own mode.

Although art interprets materials taken from human experience (“reality”) and reveals their potential, it does not provide *recipes* for creating beauty. People sometimes get caught in the illusion that poetry, music, cinema and other forms of art have divulged to them the authentic formula for a true, meaningful and indeed beautiful life. This illusion can lead to a belief that the imitation of artistic images will transfer the “magic” of art into real life: “life imitates art far more than art imitates life” as Wilde tells us in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Indeed, life may *attempt* to imitate art in order to become more beautiful, but life cannot really simulate art any more than the marble quarry can emulate the sculpture that is made of its marble. Whatever art may be, it is not a model for life; it may, however, generate fashions and influence ideologies. Fashions, even if they are generated via good art, do not express the meaningfulness of the original, they do not express the same aesthetic order. On the contrary, they transform the beauty of art into vain, mechanical patterns of behavior. On the one hand, it is not surprising that good art is influential and is expected to be relevant to life. After all, if something beautiful has been revealed, why not make the best of it and exploit it as much as possible. Why not attempt to relive a rich (although often painful) and meaningful life of a literary heroine, instead of living a mediocre, relatively routine life that most of us live? Why not decorate our living rooms (literary and metaphorically) with reproductions of the best painters, instead of original low-rate art?

This is the fate of aesthetic order: its wisdom cannot be further applied; its imitations are futile. This may be one of the reasons why art has been considered (unjustifiably) gratuitous and purposeless (Hampshire, 1979b:652). Art is not applicable in a simple direct sense of the word, although it is influential and effective; it influences the way we see the world and inspires further contemplation.

Art as a metaphor

Conceiving of art as a metaphor may explain some of the peculiar relations of art to non-art (allegedly the “real” world), as well as the function of art in cultural language. But what is a metaphor? In recent years, this question has received considerable attention—the concept of metaphor being examined from many different viewpoints. My brief examination will be functional.

It is widely accepted that there is no formula for creating good metaphors, just as there is no formula for creating good art or any other high aesthetic order. Indeed, (good) metaphors are irreducible to discursive orders; their "reduction" results in a "a loss in cognitive content" (Black, 1979:329). Metaphors are thus informative; the meanings they offer are unique to them and cannot be conveyed by other means. Like any object of aesthetic interest, metaphors are sensitive to repetitions: they gradually lose their aesthetic effectiveness with frequent usage and transform thereby into discursive, "conventional" symbols, like any literal expression ("dead" metaphors).

A metaphor differs from a simile as aesthetic order differs from discursive order. The expression, "Richard is *like* a lion" is a simile. It invites the question, "In what sense is Richard like a lion?" Is Richard strong like a lion? Brave like a lion? Big like a lion? Respected like a lion? Similes are confined to specific qualities or aspects, and are based on a clear formula: X is like Y in the sense of Z, where Z is a quality or an aspect related to X and Y. By comparison, metaphors seem to be based on identity relations: Richard *is* a lion (not just like a lion), namely, "Richard=a lion"; or, in the Aristotelian sense: "the essence of Richard=the essence of a lion". A metaphor appears to express identity relation; yet, it is not a standard identity relation. If metaphors were to express identity relations in the logical sense, it would not be difficult to explain and construct them. The problem is that the identity relation in a metaphor exists between components that belong to different genres or realms. As such, they cannot be identical. Richard (being a man) simply cannot be a lion.

From another perspective, "Richard is a lion" may be understood in terms of subject-predicate relation: "being a lion" (L) predicates Richard (r), that is, rL. We cannot reverse this relation as we can with identity relations. We cannot deduce that if "r is L" then "l is R" (lions are Richard). In this sense, a metaphor is more likely to convey predicate relations. However, "being a lion" in this metaphorical sense is not just any predicate of Richard—it is an "exhaustive" predicate, the "conclusive" predicate of Richard that conveys his essence, the core of his personality. An "exhaustive" predicate ultimately forms an identity: being a lion is the very identity of Richard; all other predicates of Richard (allegedly) stem from this identity. Yet, this metaphorical predicate is as impossible as the metaphorical identity: Richard (being a man) cannot literally posses a lion essence.

What is the structure of a metaphor, then? Is it an identity relation or a predicate relation? We cannot escape the disturbing conclusion that a metaphor is both and none: it expresses the logically impossible situation in which it thrives on both the identity and the predicate relations, but it cannot be reduced to either of them. A metaphor presents a similar "logic" to that which is found in mythologies and dreams (see, for instance, Cooper, 1986), where a prince can be a beast, or a person can be two different people at the same time.

How is this relevant to art, and what does it mean for art to be a metaphor of reality? To explicate my view I use Black's (1979:328) distinctions between the two crucial elements that comprise a metaphor: the "principal" subject, and the "subsidiary" one. The subsidiary element interprets the principal. "Richard is a lion" is about Richard (the principal subject); being a lion is a subsidiary element. Similarly, when I say that art is a metaphor of reality, I claim that art is about reality, albeit in a very special way. Reality (any element or aspect of it) is the principal subject, and the work is the subsidiary element. In this sense, art is about reality without imitating it and without being subject to conventional truth conditions; it is not a report or a denotation, or a verifiable predicate of reality. At a stroke, art creates and characterizes reality; it attributes to it an identity in the form of the work itself. As a metaphor, art always implies the claim: "and this is how things are (or can be)". This argument cannot be put to any of the conventional tests, just as no discursive method can verify the metaphorical claim that Richard is indeed a lion; a discursive method can only verify a simile (Richard is or is not strong as a lion).

Works of art supply metaphorical images of reality, and, like metaphors, their extensive use damages their revealing effect and creates discursive coins. Famous works of art that are extensively referred to in different contexts turn eventually into dead metaphors. The sacrifice of Isaac, Dante's journey in the middle of his life and Massaccio's *Expulsion from Eden* have long become, in Western culture, (dead) metaphors for different human situations. When we view a situation as a case of "crime and punishment", a person as "Dorian Gray", a facial expression as a "Mona Lisa's smile" or a foggy scene as one of Turner's paintings we apply the metaphorical disposition of art: we view components of reality via artistic images. Art, like a metaphor, provides new ways of viewing the world; it reorders and redefines our experience. Good metaphors, like any high aesthetic order, create a sense of necessity. When we discover a good metaphor and experience its effectiveness, we do not know how we could have done without it; we see through it something genuine and essential. We feel as if the good metaphor, as indeed a good work of art, not only expresses something that is necessarily true, but that its very existence is indispensable; it becomes identical with the truth it discovers and expresses.

There is an important difference between Goodman's (1968) view that art creates its own language, and my argument that art creates a cultural "language" consisting of metaphors. The former regards each work as a system of symbols that has its own code which needs to be learned like any language. The latter regards each work as a contribution to the "cultural language" of images (metaphors). Goodman's notion of the languages of art views artistic symbols as new conventions (discursive sets) that require "dictionaries", codes and rules of their own, whereas a cultural language, in my sense, is not merely conventional since it is composed of works of art that were not created according to conventions. Metaphors are not simply decided upon; in view of their effectiveness they are either adopted or ignored. A cultural language embraces those artistic images that seem to convey relevant and effective meanings within the cultural life and "abandons" works that have short-term power.

Evaluating art

Reasons

How do we know that X is a good work of art? Basically, the problems of evaluating art are not different from the problems of evaluating any interpretation in general (as analyzed in Chapter 8). These problems are rooted in the fact that interpretations do not follow rules but rather create them; they are not subject to fixed interests or perspectives; on the contrary, they offer them. Interpretations are not truth-claims in any regular sense; they cannot be verified or repudiated by facts since by exploring possibilities they go beyond the given and create or reveal new facts.

I have suggested that the value of a work of art expresses relations between two levels: (1) the level of the problem—the materials, and (2) the level of the solution—the product. There are many different relations between the two levels: one may appreciate the problem but not its solution; one may dismiss the problem as insignificant and thus not be interested in the solution; one may learn to view the problem differently via the proposed solution, and so on. As already explained in Chapter 8, in the case of complementary interpretation, the "problem" and its "solution" manifest themselves at the same time and they are therefore practically indistinguishable. They may be indirectly differentiated through comparisons: examining different works that have a mutual subject matter reveals differences in solutions. However, the effectiveness of such comparisons is limited. Being sensitive to changes, no two works of art have exactly the same subject matter (the same problem). Ultimately, it is the individuality of the work that carries its value, and this individuality cannot be reduced to comparative categories. In a sense, individuality depends on comparisons, as the individuality of X is revealed when compared with or viewed in the context of other objects of the same genre. This touches upon the mutual dependence between discursive and aesthetic order, but it does not suggest a reduction in either direction (see Chapter 9).

Many do not seem to differentiate between the two questions: (1) How do I know that this is good art? and (2) How do I convince others that this is a good work? The answer to the first question appears to be easier. I know that a work is good, because it deals with significant materials (significant, that is, in my view); the interpretation it offers reveals new perspectives to me, new understanding of its subject matters. This interpretation presents a new aesthetic order of high degree that evokes in me a sense of completeness. My emotional reaction to beauty may vary. In most cases it is not a simple feeling of pleasure but a complex of feelings. I may feel thrilled over the discovery of such completeness; I may feel happy, enriched and enlightened, but at the same time I may also be sad, angry or jealous. Whatever the complex of emotions may be and whatever the reasons may be, when something appears beautiful to *me* I know in an instant that something genuine and significant has been revealed. But how should I proceed to express my revelation and convince others? How can I substantiate my claim that the object in question is genuinely beautiful? Convincing others demands communicative means, such as reasons and justifications, and these, by their very nature, are based on discursive principles. Although the first question presents us with difficulties of its own, it is the second question that receives most of the attention.

Justifications may be required for appreciation at both levels: *material* and *order*. The material level is justified by non-aesthetic values, but these are insufficient for justifying the value of the order itself. Let us consider, for instance, the statement "it is a good novel because it meticulously expresses pre-WW II trends". This statement indicates the appreciation of subject matter (the pre-war trends); if the issue were of no importance, its meticulous presentation would not be valuable. It is obvious that "meticulously" in this context should be taken metaphorically rather than literally; if it were literal, no description in any novel would suffice. But what does this mean metaphorically? If it means that the salient points are included in the description or depiction of events, we would again be referring to the material level. What is or is not important about certain materials is a matter of (non-aesthetic) values and perspectives, but this cannot justify the order level. If by "meticulously" we understand that the critic is satisfied with the aesthetic order of the description, then "meticulously" is a term of praise rather then a justification or mere description, and we still need to justify this praise.

Good works of art exhibit high aesthetic order and are thus lawful, sensitive and informative. However, when I am asked to give reasons why I think that X is a good work, I cannot simply repeat the above formula. If I were to do so, I can imagine how impatient my interlocutor would become: "Yes, of course", s/he might say, "but can you show me what it is in **X** that makes it lawful and informative?" Frank Sibley (1970:826–49) has presented us with a similar question in his famous and widely discussed article *Aesthetic Concepts*. His analysis demonstrates that aesthetic order depends on discursive order and yet it is irreducible to the latter. Therefore, the value of an aesthetic order is insufficiently justified by the discursive value of its materials.

A philosophical analysis cannot provide a method for justifying the evaluation of *particular* cases. The fact that people agree on the philosophical level does not guarantee that they will agree on particular instances; this point is often blurred when discussing evaluative issues. Beardsley, for one, does not seem to be impressed by the gap between philosophical understanding and its applications; he claims that

> Unity, complexity, and intensity, can be meaningfully appealed to in the judgments of aesthetic objects.
>
> (Beardsley, 1969:253)

Even if I were to agree with Beardsley on the philosophical level, I would not know how to implement this in practice. As long as I do not have to convince anyone else that a work is unified, I would have no substantial difficulties: I see it, I feel it; I have an overall impression of the work. To justify, however, this conviction by reasons is a different "story" altogether. One may accept that art, as Beardsley has it, should be unified, and even agree that the work in question is unified, yet view the unity of the work in a completely different way to one's interlocutor. How can people convey to each other the unity they have in mind and convince each other that an object is actually unified? How is the concept of unity applied in practice? Is *unity* a neutral predicate or is it an expression of praise?

What critics usually do is not to convince us that the work is unified, complex and intense (although they may use these terms). Rather, they *describe* parts of the work, *associate* them with other works of a similar genre, *provide* background knowledge (psychological, political, historical or philosophical), *praise* the work and draw flattering comparisons with great works that have achieved wide consensus. Doing that, critics pretend or truly believe that they have proved the point. All these activities may influence observers, change their focus of attention and indeed their understanding and appreciation. However, these are not *reasons* that justify the verdict in a strict sense. Consider, for instance, the following passage by Beardsley, which attempts to reason aesthetic judgment.

> *Any* fact about an artwork that would help to explain its goodness (or poorness) can be used as a reason to help justify the judgment that it is good or poor). *Some* facts that may be used as reasons for judging an artwork to be good (or poor) are facts that would help to explain its goodness (or poorness); let us call such reasons "explanatory reasons".
>
> (Beardsley, 1982:333)

The issue is not whether a feature that explains the value is also a feature that justifies it and vice versa, but rather that we cannot single out such explanatory features. This analytical juggling is of little use. At most it screens off the fact that one refuses to acknowledge the inherent problem of aesthetic justification.

This is one of the frustrations inherent in the aesthetic experience: it cannot be transformed into justifiable arguments. We see the beauty of the object (its aesthetic merit) just as we see that the object is there, yet we are unable to validate the judgment beyond personal impressions, cultural or individual values and taste. It is precisely this misleading "objectivity" of our experience, as Kant has pointed out, that motivates us in our doomed-to-fail attempt to reason the aesthetic evaluation.

Some false justifications

The attempt to set norms for evaluating art has generated all kinds of false justifications. Here are a few typical examples:

1 Pleasure is elicited by a good work of art and is, therefore, the mark of artistic value.
2 A good work of art allows for many interpretations; this indicates the richness and complexity of the work.
3 A good work of art is a work that passes the "test of time".

Let us examine these arguments:

1 Determining the value of the work in accordance with the pleasure it evokes is problematic for reasons I have already mentioned: art may occasion all kinds of feelings and it is not easy to establish which one is or should be the most prominent. Bad art or kitsch may also cause pleasure, albeit for different reasons. One may learn something through bad art or kitsch and benefit from the experience. Pleasure is the reaction, not the cause. The attempt to understand art and its significance should direct us to the cognitive value of art as a form of interpretation and regard the emotive reaction as its by-product, not the mark of its value.

2 The belief that great works of art are rich in meaning and allow for many interpretations amounts to the claim that the better and the greater the work is the more interpretations it allows for. Richness of interpretation becomes then the hallmark for the greatness of the work. This, I dare say, is an illusion. It is based on reversing the process of evaluation: a great work of art attracts attention, intrigues more people and is worthy of the effort of interpretation *because* it is believed to be good and complete. Conversely, in the case of a mediocre work the observer may feel (and rightly so) that it does not warrant much time and effort. This does not prove that a mediocre work cannot be interpreted in many ways. Bad or mediocre artworks may reveal as many layers as one wishes and consequently generate no less interpretations than do good works of art. It all depends on the interpreter's skill, determination, imagination and free time. For instance, the "method" of deconstruction may be equally applied to any work or any object. Indeed, by this "method" evaluative differences as well as generic differences dissolve and all works become equally interesting, equally rich with meanings and consequently, equally good. In a word, the evaluative differentiation dissolves itself, and with it evaporates the problem of justification.

We should remember that the degree of complexity found in an object (its richness) also depends on the interest that the observer takes in the object: the more one attends to it, the more one may find in it (see Chapter 1, pp. 22–23). One may apply historical, political, psychoanalytical, philosophical, technical or generic methods of analysis to any work regardless of its value. The number of interpretations may indicate only that people are eager to apply their methods and perspective to the object in question. They do so either because they already believe that the work is worthy, or because they wish to impress others with their interpretative skills. The interpretative interest in a work may be influenced by the "bandwagon effect": a work may receive many interpretations only because it has already drawn the attention of influential critics and these in turn intrigue others into "joining the social game" and expressing their own views. Academic fashions often prosper and perish this way.

3 The "test of time" expresses the belief that the "true" value of a work survives changing trends. As Hume tells us in his essay *Of the Standard of Taste:*

> The same Homer, who pleased us at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory.
>
> (Hume, 1985:233)

Note that Hume uses a typical objective terminology. It is the "same Homer" whose merit is the *same* for centuries. The genuineness of the inherent value of Homer's poetry and its stability in the changing contexts is confirmed by empirical evidence, namely the popularity of the work throughout the centuries.

This view does not quite cohere with Hume's own idea that values in general and matters of taste in particular originate in personal emotions. At the beginning of his essay Hume states that the "variety of taste is obvious to the most careless inquirer" but it is "still greater in reality than in appearance." This variety is the immediate reflection of the fact that "the sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty" (Hume, 1985:226–7). Even when people seem to agree about matters of taste it does not prove that they actually mean the same thing. There is a discrepancy between what aesthetic terms convey and what people actually mean by them in relation to a particular case.

> Every voice is united in applauding elegance, propriety, simplicity […] and in blaming fustian, affection, coldness and a false brilliancy; but when the critics come to particulars, then seeming unanimity vanishes.
>
> (Hume, 1985:227)

If this is the original understanding, how is it possible for Hume to accept that *the same* recognition of a single work lasts for two thousand years? How do we know that it is the *same*? Why does the variety of taste not apply in Homer's case as it does in many others? What are the theoretical implication of the fact (assuming that it is a fact) that a single work of art maintains its glory for centuries?

Suppose we take Hume's statement not as a claim for objectivity in matters of taste in general, but as a mere empirical observation: it is a fact (let us assume that it is) that Homer is admired for centuries in spite of differences in language and changes in Western trends. Historical research may confirm that a poet was admired by, say, the majority of the educated audience in different periods. What are the theoretical implications of such a confirmation? For one, it implies that one has to ask the consumer to know the worth of the work and not examine the work itself. If we were to judge by the number of people who actually read Homer willingly these days we would probably be compelled to admit that the popularity of the Greek poet has dramatically deteriorated since the eighteenth century (assuming Hume's description is accurate).

But Hume wishes to say more than just state the "statistical" facts. The popularity of Homer (in Paris and London) as well as the inherent value of his poetry (the glory that cannot be obscured by changing trends) must justify each other: it is popular because it has some inherent values, and its popularity for two thousand years is a clear indication of such values. Hume distinguishes accordingly between an *unjustified popularity* (or, for that matter, an unjustified neglect) that grows out of a *coincidental taste* and a justified popularity that is based on the recognition of genuine values:

> Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his composition is examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours.
>
> (Hume, 1985:233)

Here again Hume uses an "objective" terminology. Like some qualities of gold that are revealed only under certain conditions and by those who have certain knowledge, the true value of a work of art is revealed under certain conditions by those who are not blinded by envy or any kind of prejudice and have the required sensitivity that allows them to detect the true qualities of the work.

Hume's position seems to be supported by the history of art: there are many famous cases in which an artist's work has not been appreciated by his contemporaries and only after his death has he received more deserving attention. Such empirical evidence, however, does not settle the theoretical question. One may still argue that the artist's contemporaries were right and that the later positive recognition was a mistake. Why is it necessary to accept that the judgment of the "foreigners" is impartial and non-prejudiced whatsoever? Although an outsider may notice qualities or aspects that the insider does not notice, it is an illusion to believe that the outsider sees things as they "really are". No viewer, regardless of his or her era, is free of a priori assumptions, beliefs or postulates of some kind that construct a certain perspective and context. If such purity is fictional, then in what sense is the "foreigner" more reliable than the artist's contemporaries? Whose prejudices are more justified? And how "foreign" need the "foreigner" be? A "complete" foreigner is unable to appreciate the work or relate to it in any beneficial way; a certain familiarity is mandatory for appreciating aesthetic order (as I have argued in the previous chapters). Moreover, there is no guarantee that the following generations will view the work as it "really" is. Similar (or different) obstacles to those that conceal the "real" value of the work from its contemporaries may also hide it from the following generations.

Hume suggests that time is an important factor: a mistaken judgment cannot last for long, sooner or later it is bound to be replaced by a lasting, correct judgment. This surprisingly optimistic observation cannot be validated by empirical evidence. For one, differences among traditions or cultures may last for centuries without reaching any agreement about which of them is better (of course, each party may be convinced in the greater worth of its own assets). Hume himself confesses that being a "foreigner" to the Islamic culture he sees the *Alcoran* as a "wild and absurd performance" (Hume, 1985:229). The Islamic followers, however, insist, as Hume puts it, "on the excellent moral" of this book for quite a substantial period of time. If time were to be the ultimate test, then it is not clear who is mistaken here—Hume and with him, perhaps, European culture or the followers of Islam. Time seems to be on the side of both parties. The so-called "test of time" or the perspective of an impartial foreigner clearly does not settle cultural differences. These differences may be "settled" only by a historical process in which different cultures gradually merge, or alternatively one culture dissolves itself and lets the other take over. But such historical developments do not prove the objective superiority of the values of either of the cultures. It would be naive to believe that the best always wins.

Western classical music, one may observe, has conquered the Far East: it is played and enjoyed by a culture in which it is entirely foreign. This may be taken as evidence for the inherent value of this music. However, by the same reasoning, American TV soap operas and junk food should also be highly praised; they too have managed to break through the boundaries of their original culture and conquer the world.

The idea that a work passes the "test of time" means that art has no history; it is not affected by changes and does not go through different stages in different periods. Croce, for one, portrays such an understanding of the nature of art. Art, being an intuition, is not subject to changes; it does not depend on its physical features or on the pleasure or displeasure it induces. Indeed, Croce enthusiastically describes the works of the great masters as "the eternal flower that springs from their passions" (Croce, 1978:31). Can a work of art be thus "eternal"?

Hume argues that changes in language have not affected the glory of Homer. This may be very true, but it does not follow that it is the *same Homer* in English or French as it is in ancient Greek. The question that often troubles translators is whether the original should submit to the spirit of the new language and may thus become alive and natural to the new readers, or whether the translation should be as loyal as possible to the original at the cost of remaining somewhat alien to the new readers. It is obvious that each way sacrifices something—the accuracy of the original meaning or the liveliness and intimacy of the translation. It is a fact that the poetry of Homer, Dante and other great poets is being retranslated once in a while. Changes in *Zeitgeist* are reflected in the language and therefore the old translations, like the original text, become remote from the contemporary readers and require modifications. Translations demonstrate the forces that act upon the original work in a new cultural context. Language in general, and poetic language in particular, is not a simple transparent means of communication. It is saturated with cultural connotation and temporal associations and demonstrates that passing the "test of time" without incurring the ravages of time is an impossible mission.

One may study mathematics without its history and still be an expert in that field, but how can one be an art expert without any awareness of the history of art? Indeed, the innocent immediate individual experience does not depend on historical knowledge. One does not have to be an art expert in order to enjoy a work of art, just as one does not have to be a gourmet in order to enjoy one's meal. From the *individual* point of view it does not matter whether the pleasure is a "justified" one or not. Even Hume states that the end of poetry is "to please by means of the passion and the imagination" (Hume, 1985:240).[21] This end is achieved whenever one enjoys a poem, regardless of its cultural context or historical status. But if there is more to art than just the pleasure of an immediate experience, then history and social context are significant. This argumentation takes us back to Danto's position as presented earlier in this chapter.

Now, if historical knowledge is indeed relevant to art appreciation, then it is not the impartial "foreigner" that decides the issue. The opinion of the experts may not reflect the popularity of the work; it is their sensitivity, so Hume holds, that constitutes the "laboratory" for testing the true value of a work. To illustrate his position Hume refers to the story told by Sancho in *Don Quixote* (see also Chapter 6, p. 98). The main problem with the moral of this story is that in the case of art it is not clear when and how the hogshead is emptied and the metal key with the leathern thong is found to support the judgment of the sensitive experts. Put it differently, it is not at all clear when the "test of time" is concluded. Savile (1982:35) argues that "the test [of time] does not even begin to operate until the attention the work receives is properly anchored". This again is not very helpful because it replaces the problem of the test with the problem of the "proper" anchoring.

The opinion of the expert and that of the layman may differ in many fields. But there is an important difference between the experts who "establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty" (Savile, 1982:241) and experts in any of the sciences. The chemist may obtain knowledge that is not popular but nonetheless subjected to proof by others under similar conditions (laboratory conditions). But if we accept that the sentiments of the art expert constitute the *laboratory conditions,* we accept then that only one person (or a few) is capable of conducting the test and evaluating the results. We accept thereby a vicious circle that bears very little explanatory power and forces upon us sentiments that we are, in most cases, incapable of feeling. The sensitivity of the wine expert in Sancho's story may detect qualities that others do not, but upon *drinking* the wine it is the taste that we sense that matters, not the qualities that we are not sensitive enough to discern. The wine taster has the talent of identifying the ingredients in the wine and stating whether a certain wine has the necessary ingredients (and only them) to make it a good specimen of its kind. This does not authorize the wine taster to decide which *kind* of wine we should like better, or whether a new type of wine is better than a traditional one or that a certain tradition will last forever. In fact, many conventions regarding wine drinking are frowned upon nowadays. What does it prove? Does it prove the long-term tradition wrong? Furthermore, works of art are not appreciated merely for having the necessary generic ingredients, although generic categories have their role in evaluating art. Like Hume, Anthony Savile argues that the test of time should be associated with the idea of experts. Hume's qualified critic is a sensitive person without any prejudice; Savile's requirement is somewhat different, but no less firm:

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[21] I disagree with Hume on this, but the question of the "end" of poetry or art in general is not the issue here.

> To pass time's test, […] a work of art has to hold our attention for reasons that bear on its critical estimation as the work it is. To do so it must in particular hold our attention under some interpretation […] that allows the work to be correctly perceived and understood.
>
> (Savile, 1982:7)

The two notions "the work it is" and "correctly perceived" are explosive in the objectivist's field. These notions touch upon the hermeneutic circle and the debate between monism and pluralism in interpretation. If there is one correct way to read Homer, then the chances are that most readers are ignorant of that way, and their admiration for Homer rests on the "wrong" reading. For one, most of Homer's readers are incapable of reading the original, and how can Homer in English be as correct as Homer in French? Yet, Hume assumes that this mission is not only possible but has also been accomplished: it is the "same Homer" in London and Paris.

Values, norms, beliefs and lifestyle have changed significantly since Homer's days, and it is hard to believe that they account for nothing. The idea that it is the "same Homer" for all (which must also be the "correct" Homer) is a patronizing idea that ignores actual pluralism and cultural diversities. Pluralism in interpretation allows each generation or trend its own understanding at the cost of the original identity of the work; monism protects the original identity but risks the alienation of the work. Which approach is more suitable for art?

Understanding art in terms of complementary interpretation does not cohere with Hume's or Savile's "test of time". Aesthetic orders, and thus works of art, are sensitive entities and their meanings reflect changes in time. Many forces determine the centrality of an artist and his or her work in the history of art, not all of them are equally appreciated by different observers. It may so happen that a hundred years from now Tolstoy's work will be considered an insignificant episode in the history of literature. Such historical developments cannot be foreseen. The attempt to determine the value of a work "once and for all" is an expression of the belief (and indeed the vanity) that whatever one holds to be good must similarly hold for others for exactly the same reasons.

Many of the great works of the past function like dead metaphors: they have become an essential element of cultural language; they have inspired further artistic and philosophical development and it is hard to imagine our culture without them. Yet, they have lost their vitality and effectiveness as living metaphors, and they are no longer appreciated as vital works of art; they do not seem to interpret *contemporary* materials. However, since no metaphorical death sentence is eternal, dead metaphors and forsaken works of art may be resurrected.

The function of evaluating art

If we cannot substantiate our evaluation of art, why not give up trying? Why is it important? What do we gain by convincing others that X is a good film or that Y is a bad poem? Why does this hopeless enterprise seem so important? After all, the fact that my neighbor has not enjoyed the film that I recommended to him should not ruin my positive experience. Nonetheless, it is a fact that we do attempt to so convince each other, and that we do care whether our recommendation was well appreciated or not. It is also a fact that we are quite interested in what professional critics or our friends have to say. We want to know the *reasons,* to compare them with ours and perhaps draw some conclusions about the work, about the critics or about ourselves.

Architecture is a typical case in which the taste of others directly affects our environment, our wellbeing and our pleasures. My aesthetic sensitivity is indeed hurt when I open my window and have to look at the ugly structures opposite. I wish to convince the architect or the mayor of the city to proscribe such buildings. Is the case of bad poetry or bad painting similar? How do they affect my environment? If my friend enjoys a bad poem, why should it spoil my delight in a good poem? Why should it matter if I am wrong or right in my appreciation of a certain novel or a certain film? After all, unlike moral decisions, and unlike the exceptional case of architecture, most aesthetic "decisions" do not seem to affect the structure of society and its functions.[22]

These questions deserve thorough analyses that involve, *inter alia,* psychological, sociological and ideological aspects. The following brief discussion, however, touches only on points that I believe contribute to the understanding of art as a form of interpretation and conclude this analysis.

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22 Oliver Johnson (1971) argues that if aesthetics were important enough to society, we would have developed normative aesthetics analogous to normative ethics. I disagree with both points: (1) that aesthetics can become normative like ethics, and (2) that aesthetic is of less importance to social life. Fashions, for instance, express the desire for aesthetic social norms. The fact that fashions change rapidly (unlike ethical norms) indicates the peculiarity of aesthetics and not its non-significance.

1. Aesthetic evaluations and preferences imply non-aesthetic values, feelings and knowledge—a whole personal world. This is an expression of the mutual dependence between aesthetic and discursive order. A “Bach person” is different from a “Mozart person”, and a “Gauguin person” is different from a “Picasso person”. These differences go beyond a specific preference. We may learn about the worldview and sensitivities of others from their aesthetic preferences and their justifications. The theoretical obstacles that defeat aesthetic justifications do not undermine the benefits of the practice: even “unjustified” justifications teach us something about the person who attempts to convince us and, in a way, also about the work in question. Agreement or disagreement with a proposed aesthetic reasoning defines one’s location in the “cultural map”. Being in agreement with another person on aesthetic matters creates kindred spirits and a sense of an intimate bond. This bond may be even stronger and deeper than an ideological bond, since the latter depends on general categories and does not necessarily involve intimacy. The bond between people who discover that they like the same music or appreciate the same painter is far more personal. It is a bond of a love, which is often expressed in glowing faces and joy not only over the rewarding experiences of the work itself but also over the discovery of a soul mate.
2. On a larger scale, consensus regarding a corpus of great works is important for cultural bonds and it strengthens the sense of cultural community. Art functions on this level as a cultural “language”. It provides images, metaphors and associations that shape the ways an entire community relates to reality. A cultural consensus determines which novels and poems should be taught at school, which paintings should be permanently presented in national museums, which plays should be performed on stage, and so forth. These decisions affect values and patterns of thinking, as Plato rightly observed. An agreement about a substantial corpus of works of art is therefore crucial as a cohesive force for a unified social-cultural life. If it is true that art creates its own laws, then sharing appreciation of the same works of art amounts to living “under” the same laws.

The unsolved paradox

Art presents us with many puzzles. Most of them stem from the paradoxical nature of the order of which art consists—a lawless order. Some of the perplexities are easier to settle than others; some maintain their perplexing nature despite endless theoretical attempts to resolve them. Paradoxes, as the history of philosophy has taught us, are stubborn entities that do not surrender to analysis. It is often the analysis that has to give up if it does not wish to explain away essential components of the phenomena.

The paradoxical nature of art has given rise to extreme views in the attempt to solve or bypass the paradox. On the one hand, we find the tendency to mystify art and disconnect it from worldly experiences, disregarding the obvious fact that art is, after all, created by people for people. As such it should be also appreciated and understood by people in their natural environments. On the other hand, we find the tendency to reduce the experience of art into inconsequential pleasure or into an acquaintance with cultural conventions, thus sacrificing its peculiar cognitive value.

I have tried to show that there are significant associations between art as an expression of beauty, the cognitive values of art as a complementary interpretation, the pleasure art bestows upon us, and the function of art in private and in social life. Viewing art as an interpretation associates art with other domains of experience and with the general need for meaning that is also provided by religion, philosophy and science. I have sought to explain the difficulties of justifying aesthetic evaluations by separating the justifications into two levels: the level of materials and the level of their overall new aesthetic order. Justifications concerning the material level are non-aesthetic. These concern preferences, values and interests of all kinds. This kind of justification is limited; it cannot supply sufficient grounds for preferring one work to another that deals with the same materials. As for the level of aesthetic order, this is a most recalcitrant question: Are there aesthetic justifications for the second level? If there are no such justifications, how do we know that an aesthetic order (being lawless) is good? The persistent difficulty of this question is amplified by the related question: How is the individual need for beauty satisfied by works of art created by other individuals, expressing their individuality? The two questions are interdependent.

This last question has been widely ignored by aestheticians, even by those who agree that art is indeed governed by individuality. But this is a crucial question. The "truths" that art reveals are created by the artists, bearing their own personal signatures, and yet they appear to touch the individuality of others as if they were general, applicable truths. Oscar Wilde has asserted that

> A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want.
>
> (Wilde, 1982:270)

If Wilde is right, how can it be that the result of the "temperament" of one person becomes a meaningful discovery for another person whose needs have not been considered? Giordano Bruno in *The Heroic Enthusiasts,* (an essay dedicated to Philip Sidney) expresses a similar point in a different way:

> Rules are not the source of poetry, but poetry is the source of rules, and there are as many rules as there are poets.
>
> (Giordano Bruno, *De gli Eroici Furoi*)

Giordano Bruno's words cohere with the notion of lawless order, since the case in which each poet creates his or her own rules, amounts to the situation in which there are no rules (or laws). The question is, therefore, how can a poet compel us to accept his or her "rules"? Moreover, how do poets "convince" us to accept different and perhaps contrasting rules without creating a problem of inconsistency?

It is a well-established fact that (good) art has this strange influence even on orthodox truth defenders. Good art manages not only to convince us of its private rules but also creates the impression that it is made for *us* and indeed is about *us*. It bears an authenticity that leads us to feel that we could, or should, have created it ourselves. How is this achieved? How is it possible to transmit individual meanings that acquire the status of truth without the mediation of general philosophical or scientific principles? Can the theory of aesthetic order account for this phenomenon?

While writing these final paragraphs of my book, I am listening to Mozart's *Requiem*. This could be symbolic, except that I frequently listen to different performances of the *Requiem*. I am familiar with the history of the work and a range of interpretations and criticism it has received. Mozart's personality, beliefs and preferences, his life and his milieu, are all very different from mine. From what I gather, I am not sure that I would want him as my next door neighbor. Nevertheless, what is it in *his* music that enchants *me*? What is it in *his* music that makes *me* feel at one with my own personality? Why do I find truth in this music?

A favorite poet of mine, Fernando Pessoa, is a Portuguese poet who spent his childhood in South Africa and then returned to his native Portugal. Unlike me, he neither married nor had children. He wrote in Portuguese and English—neither is my native language. The neighborhoods he described, I have never seen; the people he mentioned, I have never met. Yet when I read his poems, they reveal to me a necessary and significant truth. His "Esteves sem metafísica" (the non-metaphysical Esteves), who waves to the poet from the entrance of the tobacco shop (as described at the end of the poem, *Tabacaria*) is my Esteves too. I can see him waving to *me*. I know this hand-wave in a very intimate fashion, yet I am unable to explain why. Many hand-waves have been described in novels and poems; many hand-waves have been portrayed in paintings and films; none of them can I remember in such an intense intimacy. Can an aesthetic theory—any aesthetic theory—explain this sense of appropriation?

The theory of aesthetic order cannot account for this phenomenon. Given the nature of the problem, I doubt whether any theory can fully explicate it. It remains the unsolved paradox that inhabits the aesthetic experience. I must therefore admit that there are insufficient grounds for explaining what is it in a given aesthetic order that compels us to prefer it over another and crown it as our law, only to move on to crown another aesthetic order for entirely different reasons. Does it mean that the theory of aesthetic order has failed to achieve its goal? I would not go that far. I have covered some distance in my attempt to explain the nature of the aesthetic experience: starting with the general concepts of order and disorder, going through the distinction between two types of order, their quantitative and qualitative characteristics, and discussing other related distinctions and arguments. I hope that much has been gained along this arduous way. Yet, at the end of the journey there is this stubborn perplexity of lawless order that cannot be taken apart and settled by theoretical means. It does not sadden me to realize that my detailed theory has its limits.

At the end of this journey I find myself returning to the ancient wisdom of Plato's dialogues, to Meno's question:

> How will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? [...] Even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn't know?
>
> (Plato, 1976, Meno, 80d)

It is not surprising that Socrates' reply to Meno is based on what he had learned from priests and poets. The true ideas are inherent in our souls, so priests and poets say. We recognize true ideas when we encounter them; we know what they are because they touch our souls and remind us of forgotten truths. Plato, Socrates and Meno, however, were interested in discursive truths, the truth that is achieved by means of intellectual capacities. Their perplexity is resolved by the belief that we all share the same ideas that are inherent in our souls. Whether this answer settles the problems of the knowledge of the true ideas is a matter of further consideration. As for aesthetic knowledge, Socrates' answer may serve as a good metaphor. It captures the wonder and mystery of the aesthetic order: we do not know it before we experience it, yet we recognize it and appreciate its worth when we encounter it. It is not based on general common ideas, but it incorporates our inner recollections, our sense of eternity, and "it comes", as Socrates puts it, "by divine dispensation". Take this answer literally or metaphorically: in either case, it indicates the scope and limit of this aesthetic theory.

Summary

1. "What does it mean for something to be a work of art?" is a philosophical question; "Is this a work of art?" seeks a normative, classificatory definition, which goes beyond philosophical analyses. The institutional theory of art offers an answer for the latter but not for the former.
2. Art is a product of the intentional effort to create beauty; it is a complementary interpretation.
3. Art does not *represent* reality, but interprets it.
4. There is a difference between viewing art as an interpretation and viewing art as an object for interpretation. Art interprets reality, and it can also be interpreted, but art is not essentially an object for interpretation.
5. A work of art is a closed set; as such, it has no gaps that require completion by the observer. A work of art must have boundaries, although various observers may differently define these boundaries.
6. Art answers the need for individual meanings. This need is not satisfied by religion, philosophy or science. Art, like a good metaphor, enables us to view reality by means of a new image.
7. An evaluation of a work can be reasoned only on the material, non-aesthetic level. The value of the interpretation itself, that is, the value of the aesthetic

order it creates cannot be corroborated. There are no aesthetic justifications beyond the immediate impression of the observer.

8 Reasons (even if not validated) for aesthetic appreciation reveals the worldview and the personality of the observer, and they substantiate cultural bonds.

9 The question of how a work that is created by one individual becomes relevant and meaningful to another individual, and how this is established by the observer, constitutes the unsolved problem of the theory of aesthetic order.

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