Introduction to Philosophy: Aesthetic Theory and Practice

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: AESTHETIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

YURIKO SAITO; RUTH SONDEREGGER; INES KLEESATTEL; ELIZABETH BURNS COLEMAN; ELIZABETH SCARBROUGH; MATTEO RAVASIO; XIAO OUYANG; RICHARD HUDSON-MILES; ANDREW BROADEY; PIERRE FASULA; ALEXANDER WESTENBERG; MATTHEW SHARPE; VALERY VINO (BOOK EDITOR); AND CHRISTINA HENDRICKS (SERIES EDITOR)

The Rebus Community

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CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

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We hope the books (or chapters in the books) will be adopted for introductory-level courses in philosophy, as part of required readings. You may use the books as they are, or create adaptations or ancillaries. One of the important benefits of the Introduction to Philosophy series is that instructors can mix and match chapters from various books to make their own customised set of readings for their courses.

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- The .odt format can be opened by Open Office, Libre Office, or Microsoft Word. Note that there may be some issues with formatting on this format, and hyperlinks may not appear if opened with MS Word.
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- The EPUB file can be loaded onto digital reading platforms like Adobe Digital Editions, Apple Books, and Kindle. It can also be edited using Pressbooks or tools like Calibre.
- Edits can be made using the XHTML, the WordPress XML or the Pressbooks XML formats (for easier adaptation in Pressbooks).
- The book is also available for download as a Common Cartridge 1.1 file (with web links) for import into your learning management system (see instructions for importing Common Cartridge files, from the Pressbooks User Guide).

The multiple editable formats allow instructors to adapt the books as needed to fit their contexts. Another way to create adaptations is to involve students in contributing to open textbooks. Students may add new sections to an adapted book, link to other resources, create discussion questions or quiz questions, and more. Please see Rebus Community's A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students for more information and ideas.

If you plan to use or adapt one or more books (or chapters), we'd love to hear about it! Please let us know on the Rebus Community platform, and also on our adoption form.

And if you have feedback or suggestions about the book, we would really appreciate those as well. We have a separate form for keeping track of issues with digital accessibility, so please let us know if you find any.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

This book is part of the *Introduction to Philosophy* open textbook series, a set of nine (and counting?) open access textbooks that are designed to be used for introductory-level, survey courses in philosophy at the post-secondary level.

OVERVIEW OF THE SERIES

This set of books is meant to provide an introduction to some of the major topic areas often covered in introductory-level philosophy courses. I have found in teaching students new to philosophy that many struggle with the new ideas, questions, and approaches they find in introductory courses in philosophy, and that it can be helpful to provide them with texts that explain these in relatively straightforward terms.

When I began this project there were few textbooks that I was happy enough with to ask students to purchase, and even fewer openly licensed textbooks that I could pick and choose chapters from, or revise, to suit my courses. This series was created out of a desire to provide such resources that can be customised to fit different contexts and updated by instructors when needed (rather than waiting for an updated version from a publisher).

Each book is designed to be accessible to students who have little to no background in philosophy, by either eliminating jargon or providing a glossary for specialised philosophical terms. Many chapters in the books provide examples that apply philosophical questions or concepts to concrete objects or experiences that, we hope, many students are familiar with. Questions for reflection and discussion accompany chapters in most of the books, to support students in understanding what to focus on as they are reading.

The chapters in the books provide a broad overview of some of the main discussions and debates in the philosophical literature within a topic area, from the perspective of the chapter authors. Some of the chapters focus on historical approaches and debates, such as ancient theories of aesthetics, substance dualism in Descartes, or classical utilitarian versus Kantian

approaches in ethics. Others introduce students to questions and topics in the philosophical literature from just the last few decades.

The books currently in production for the series are:

- *Aesthetics* (Ed. Valery Vino): chapters include ancient aesthetics; beauty in art and nature; the nature of art, art and emotions, art and morality, recent aesthetics
- *Epistemology* (Ed. Brian Barnett): chapters include epistemic justification; rationalism, empiricism and beyond; skepticism; epistemic value, duty, and virtue; epistemology, gender, and society
- *Ethics* (Ed. George Matthews): chapters include ethical relativism, divine command theory and natural law; ethical egoism and social contract theory; virtue ethics; utilitarianism; Kantianism; feminist ethics
- *Logic* (Ed. Benjamin Martin): chapters include what is logic?; evaluating arguments; formal logic; informal fallacies; necessary and sufficient conditions
- *Metaphysics* (Ed. Adriano Palma): chapters include universals; finitism, infinitism, monism, dualism, pluralism; the possibility of free action; experimental metaphysics
- *Philosophy of Mind* (Ed. Heather Salazar): chapters include Descartes and substance dualism; behaviourism and materialism; functionalism; qualia; freedom of the will
- *Philosophy of Religion* (Ed. Beau Branson): chapters include arguments for belief in God; reasons not to believe; arguments against belief from the cognitive science of religion; critical perspectives on the philosophy of religion as a philosophy of theism
- *Philosophy of Science* (Ed. Eran Asoulin): chapters include empiricism, Popper's conjectures and refutations; Kuhn's normal and revolutionary science; the sociology of scientific knowledge; feminism and the philosophy of science; the problem of induction; explanation
- *Social and Political Philosophy* (Ed. Sam Rocha): chapters include the ideal society; the state of nature and the modern state; human rights, liberty, and social justice; radical social theories

We envision the books as helping to orient students within the topic areas covered by the chapters, as well as to introduce them to influential philosophical questions and approaches in an accessible way. The books may be used for course readings on their own, or in conjunction with primary source texts by the philosophers discussed in the chapters. We aim thereby to both save students money and to provide a relatively easy route for instructors to customise and update the resources as needed. And we hope that future adaptations will be shared back with the rest of the philosophical community!

HOW THE BOOKS WERE PRODUCED

Contributors to this series have been crowdsourced through email lists, social media, and other means. Each of the books has its own editor, and multiple authors from different parts of the world who have expertise in the topic of the book. This also means that there will inevitably be shifts in voice and tone between chapters, as well as in perspectives. This itself exemplifies the practice of philosophy, insofar as the philosophical questions worth discussing are those that do not yet have settled answers, and towards which there are multiple approaches worthy of consideration (which must, of course, provide arguments to support their claim to such worth).

I have been thrilled with the significant interest these books have generated, such that so many people have been willing to volunteer their time to contribute to them and ensure their quality—not only through careful writing and editing, but also through extensive feedback and review. Each book in the series has between five and ten authors, plus an editor and peer reviewers. It's exciting to see so many philosophers willing to contribute to a project devoted to helping students save money and instructors customise their textbooks!

The book editors, each with expertise in the field of the book they have edited, have done the bulk of the work for the books. They created outlines of chapters that were then peer reviewed and revised accordingly, and they selected authors for each of the chapters. The book editors worked with authors to develop a general approach to each chapter, and coordinated timelines for their completion. Chapters were reviewed by the editors both before and after the books went out for peer review, and the editors ensured revisions occurred where needed. They have also written introductions to their books, and in some cases other chapters as well. As the subject experts for the books, they have had the greatest influence on the content of each book.

My role as series editor started by envisioning the project as a whole and discussing what it might look like with a significant number of philosophers who contributed to shaping it early on. Overall, I have worked the Rebus Community on project management, such as developing author and reviewer guidelines and other workflows, coordinating with the book editors to ensure common approaches across the books, sending out calls for contributors to recruit new participants, and updating the community on the status of the project through the Rebus Community platform. I have reviewed the books, along with peer reviewers, from the perspective of both a philosopher who teaches introductory-level courses and a reader who is not an expert in many of the fields the books cover. As the books near publication, I have coordinated copy editing and importing into the Pressbooks publishing platform (troubleshooting where needed along the way).

Finally, after publication of the books I and the book editors work on spreading the word

about them and encouraging adoption. I plan to use chapters from a few of the books in my own Introduction to Philosophy courses, and hope to see many more adoptions to come.

This project has been multiple years in the making, and we hope the fruits of our many labours are taken up in philosophy courses!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS

CHRISTINA HENDRICKS, SERIES EDITOR

This book series started off as a single open textbook with sections on various topics, and the Aesthetics section was conceived and led in the early stages by Scott Clifton, who developed an outline of chapters for that section, recruited authors, and edited their chapters. Scott had to leave the project before we moved from a single textbook to a series of individual books, and I would like to thank him for his work on the book. He was one of the first to sign up for this project, and helped shape it along the way.

Special thanks to book editor Valery Vino, who reconceived the book from its original plan, incorporating most of the chapters that had already been written as well as recruiting authors for new chapters. He also worked with authors to do most of the edits to the chapters. Valery has been incredibly dedicated to this book, and has done an excellent job editing it. I want to thank him for his patience, and also for gently and kindly nudging me for updates to keep things moving along.

I would like to thank the authors in this book for their patience as well, as we worked through the process of recruiting authors, writing chapters, peer review, editing, copy editing, formatting in Pressbooks, and checking for accessibility. I was not as quick to do necessary tasks as I had hoped I could be, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when my work as the Academic Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of British Columbia Vancouver got busier than I could have imagined it ever would. Suddenly doing a project in my spare time outside of my regular job became next to impossible. I am excited that this book is now published, and am sorry it took so long to do so.

Also instrumental to the success of this book are the peer reviewers, Geoff Boucher and Gene

Flanady, who volunteered their time and expertise to read through a draft of the book and provide constructive comments and suggestions.

Jonathan Lashley has done an amazing job with the design of the book covers for this series, using original artwork by Heather Salazar (who is the editor for the Philosophy of Mind book in this series). The book covers are exceptionally well done, and really bring the series together as a whole.

I would also like to thank Chris Hubbard for providing much-needed help with copyediting, and Toby Steiner for importing and formatting the chapters in Pressbooks. Their work towards the end of the project was invaluable in getting this book published.

When I started this project there were many discussions amongst philosophers from various parts of the world on the Rebus Community platform, and their ideas and suggestions contributed significantly to the final products. There were also numerous people who gave comments on draft chapter outlines for each book. Thank you to the many unnamed philosophers who have contributed to the book in these and other ways!

This book series would not have gotten beyond the idea stage were it not for the support of the Rebus Community. I want to thank Hugh McGuire for believing in the project enough to support what we both realised at the time was probably much bigger than even our apprehensions about its enormity. Zoe Wake Hyde was instrumental in getting the project started, particularly in helping us develop workflows and documentation. And I'm not sure I can ever thank Apurva Ashok enough for being an unfailingly enthusiastic and patient supporter and guide for more months than I care to count. She spent a good deal of time working with me and the book editors to figure out how to make a project like this work on a day-to-day level, and taught me a great deal about the open publishing process. Apurva kept me on track when I would sometimes drop the ball or get behind on this off-the-side-of-my-desk project. She is one of the best collaborative partners I have never (yet!) met in person.

Finally, I want to thank my family for understanding how important this work is and why I have chosen to stay up late so many nights to do it. And for their patience on the many groggy, pre-coffee mornings that followed.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

VALERY VINO

Sunshine, Melbourne, August 2019. Soreti Kadir, David Pattinson, Tamara Leacock, Valery Vino.

PREFACE: ON THE AESTHETIC PROJECT

Canvassing both aesthetic theory and practice, our volume offers fresh perspectives on canonical and emerging topics, and also brings to your attention a number of culturally sensitive topics that are customarily silenced in introductions to philosophical aesthetics. Our papers are heterogeneous in terms of length and degrees of difficulty, inviting the reader into the creative study of contemporary aesthetics, which spans a lifetime.

Engagement with aesthetics entails an inquiry into three key categories: "philosophy," "philosopher," and "aesthetics."

Aesthetics is a progressive branch of philosophy. It is conceivable that, as a discipline and a way of life, aesthetics is as old as philosophy.

Looking back, Nietzsche ([1886] 2002) makes a playful and convincing claim that, after all, any philosophy is a "memoir," a critical recollection of an author situated in the vast world. Philosophy is an intimate project, and possibly each philosopher, then, should flesh out their own account of philosophical activity.

Philosophy is an ongoing, fascinating, and risky project.

We can follow the tradition and trace back the origins of Western philosophy to the 5th century BC, when Socrates posited life as a personal and collective problem: what kind of life is worth living? A beautiful, examined life in a thriving city! Less conventionally, this point in time can be pushed back to the ancient sophists, sceptics who explored self-consciousness while breaking free from dogmatic thinking; or even further to the ancient natural philosophers, like Democritus, making sense of our place from the vantage point of the infinitely moving cosmos.

We may also recall that philosophy can be one's way of life, a thoughtful embodied way to engage with the everyday, whatever it brings. In this more inclusive sense, philosophy stands for any pursuit for evaluative understanding of selfhood and humanity entangled with dynamic natural and cultural phenomena.

In this sense, the Socratic aspiration to live a good, beautiful life may prove to be far-fetched, since anyone in any age may happen to feel constrained and educated by dire circumstances. For example, in Montaigne's *Essays*, the author examines his elusive self in a world torn apart by grief, tyranny, endless wars and famine: in such circumstances, one has no other choice but to "live appropriately," carefully exploring humanity in worthwhile pursuits, "our great and glorious masterpiece" (Montaigne [1580] 1991a).

An old idea: the self is humanity itself, as each person bears a mark of all humankind. We are

all inevitably human! Appalling, cowardly and cruel examples of inhumanity must therefore be remembered. At the same time, the self is only a fraction of humanity, a collective project the person has no control of, except for her life's individual pursuits. The process of self-understanding thus lies at the heart of philosophy: striving to elucidate her humanity, to fashion selfhood, each person taps into the project of humanity, realised through culture in nature, or, simply, in our shared world.

Despite the peculiar distance and tension between one's individual humanity and the collective project, both are realised in the world *now*. "Where now? Who now? When now?" (Beckett [1953] 2010).

The origins of philosophical activity may be buried somewhere in a memory where wild nature is affected by my presence, eliciting a longing for questioning, a whisper. The glaring sun, and a group of white cockatoos is interacting across the branches of adjacent ghost ashes: are they interested in me? Clearly; am I included, then, along the lines of "check that out," or maybe I am an object of worry? Do I belong *here*?

Philosophy, and its history as it has survived, suggests that what matters more is not at what point in time philosophy began as a cultural enterprise, but that the philosophical project continues with you and in your own way. "Each new generation, every new human being, as he becomes conscious of being inserted between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave anew the path of thought" (Arendt [1977] 1981).

"But, then, what is philosophy today—philosophical activity, I mean—if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?" (Foucault [1984] 1990).

"We don't need any more writers as solitary heroes. We need a heroic writers movement: assertive, militant, pugnacious" (Morrison 2008).

Possibly, philosophical activity finds its origin in a longing for understanding, as Plato argues, a purposeful and blind longing for meaning that can be channeled into ἔρως (eros), a loving desire directed at an object of value. Philosophical ἔρως excites, it vitalises, and thinkers around the world, across cultures and epochs, have pursued and critically evaluated many such objects. Truth and nature, pleasure and doubt, certainty and inspiration, language and laughter, cruelty, revolution and repetition, health and power, career and nudity, honesty, generosity and hospitality, supreme social skills, the arts of friendship, parenthood and sex, gods, beauty, death and a kaleidoscope of other topics is freely available for passionate inquiry!

A transition from longing to ἔρως is an aesthetic moment. Firstly, the pursuit of the objects

of value is an exercise that relies on the imagination: it is a creative search, full of surprises, insofar as it is philosophical. Secondly, ἔρως becomes a full-blown aesthetic state inasmuch as one becomes aware that it is felt differently. Love feels differently, depending on its object, doesn't it? A scholarly paper, martial arts, or growing poppies—ἔρως fuels all kinds of activities, and it is only when we try to ascertain and evaluate the meaning of such differently felt and sensed experiences that we engage in proper aesthetic practice.

Traditionally, however, the birth of aesthetics as a discipline is marked by the publication of A.G. Baumgarten's masters thesis in 1735, where the term gets its first mention. Since the 21-year-old philosophy student adopted the ancient Greek word "*aisthēsis*" and invented "aesthetics," the study has grown into an expansive academic discipline that, of course, does not cover the full terrain of the aesthetic project.

Baumgarten's conceptual appropriation does not imply that preceding human efforts to philosophise about our world were aesthetically empty, be it earlier in the Renaissance, or much earlier in the dead cultures of ancient Greco-Romans and Persians, or the surviving ancient cultures, such as the native American, Aboriginal Australian, Roma, Hindu and Jewish, to name a few. In one way or another, philosophical narratives touch on the unavoidable aesthetic traits traversed in our volume: natural, spiritual, artistic, and the everyday phenomena that animate our sensible selves, and thereby prompt reflection and, possibly, action.

Like all branches of philosophy, aesthetics deals with the problem of the self inextricable from the world. However, historically, aesthetics is overshadowed by epistemology, logic, metaphysics, ethical and political discourses, since it centers around a—marvellous—human aptitude for occupying oneself with sense perception or, in other words, sensibility.

Sensibility both stimulates and eludes the discursive nature of philosophical inquiry, predominantly relying on the use of logic and language. In philosophical aesthetics, sensibility is brought to our critical attention as an essential way to appreciate our humanity, reacting to both the outer shared and inner private worlds, criss-crossed.

While sense perception is a key element of aesthetics, without thinking through it critically, it remains only a passive receptivity. Aesthetic life requires practical interest in our world, in raw perception, sensations, feelings, emotions, and all kinds of complex affective states and sentiments, such as awe, a mixed sense of caution and esteem (e.g. listening to a slum ballad by Estee Nack and Eto) or devotion (e.g. a tragic love of humanity, epitomised by Dostoevsky's *Idiot*).

Naturally, a gap between raw experience and thought cannot be bridged (see Kant [1781] 2002, A 320/B 376). Whenever I evaluate a sensation or a feeling, it becomes something else, but that is not to say that aesthetics is a futile project. On the contrary, while conventionally

exploring the mind, the arts and nature, aesthetics now also draws from all forms of life, various traditions, sub- and counter-cultures and, more broadly, it evaluates sensibility in relation to one's experiences and a style of life: one's environments, aspirations, responsibilities, activities, and selfhood—one's aesthetic world.

Let's map out the general parameters of aesthetic education in the 21st century, presented in our collection of papers, by first reconsidering the basic components of philosophical inquiry mentioned above: selfhood, humanity, and the world. Philosophy is a fascinating and risky venture because the three axes fail to synchronise.

No philosophical project seems possible if the individual self has little critical understanding of humanity beyond them. Contrarily, if an individual feeds off a culture without testing its norms and values through self-reflection, her prospects of a creative philosophical life are inhibited.

One may also discover that there are many cultures, many ways to inform our lives. Moreover, the prospect of a fulfilling life is undermined when human cultures ignore the world, the fact that our cultures are embodied in the world, as a part of the cosmos.

Increasingly, modern cultures thrive at the expense of the world. The cosmos is there—it is where our world is—whether we value it or neglect it, and, like our world, it can be pictured as a consuming source of wonder, creativity, vitality, and depth, while other times as an abyss of tantalising indifference, powerful enough to consume anything that can be recollected. Hard to duel Emerson: "We must see that the world is rough and surly, and will not mind drowning a man or a woman [or a child], but swallows your ship like a grain of dust" ([1860] 1944).

The philosophical project necessitates the acknowledgement of diversity, of various ways to realise humanity through culture in nature, of various cultures and styles of life, of limitless ways to inspire or stifle humanity. "And there never were, in the world, two opinions alike, no more than two hairs, or two grains: their most universal quality is diversity"; it's hard not to love Montaigne ([1580] 1991b).

In line with this rationale, our collection explores a multiplicity of topics in aesthetics, so as to estimate the contemporary aesthetic project in relation to the tradition, and geo-political and cultural circumstances in the 21st century.

The chapters are roughly divided in two groups, one addressing canonical topics, another the most recent and significant developments in aesthetics. In the first group, the authors overview and provide critical responses to the key topics in aesthetics, while the latter group diversifies our collaborative effort by considering topics that ostensibly challenge the foundations of Western aesthetics (and culture). That said, it is hard to draw a strict

line between the two compartments, as all chapters adopt an active critical and often multicultural optics, a methodological phenomenon signifying one of the most dramatic cultural shifts of our age.

Taken together, both parts of the volume enrich our understanding of the role of aesthetics in fulfilling the philosophical project. What unites these diverse accounts, concerning nature, civic life, and the arts, is the conviction that aesthetics has the might to reify our shared humanity. The fact that this objective–the aesthetic project–is far from reality is a matter of waging culture wars, and co-creating peace.

The opening chapter deals with the overarching problem of aesthetics: "What is Aesthetics?" To address this difficult question, Alexander Westenberg deploys various examples taken from the arts and nature, from Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Ancient Greek and Western philosophies. What is an appropriate aesthetic response, and how to develop it? The author finds a solution by situating the aesthetic between "subjective and objective, personal and universal."

Gravitating towards the politics of aesthetics, the second chapter aims to tackle another central question: "What is a Work of Art?" Both artists and philosophers, Richard Hudson-Miles and Andrew Broadey consider six central approaches to this question, "testing them against the irreducible complexity of contemporary artworks." Each approach, they conclude, is "mutable and historically contingent," which is not to say that this philosophical task is not worthy of our careful attention.

The third chapter investigates another key aporia in aesthetics, namely the question of a relation between "Artworks and Emotions." Do artworks express the artist's emotions? Or do artworks express emotions themselves? And how do such philosophical problems explain our responses to artworks? As Pierre Fasula observes, what the artwork expresses and what we experience are not necessarily the same.

Next, we continue our discussion of aesthetics in the realm of art by addressing the connections between "Artworks and Morality." Can a morally repugnant piece, such as Pasolini's *Saló*, still be considered a grandiose artistic accomplishment? Does the artistic value here remain unaffected by our moral concerns, or is it somehow decreased, or perhaps enhanced? A hard question to decisively respond to, but Matteo Ravasio argues convincingly that artworks can fortify our capacity for moral life.

The last two chapters of the first group of papers deal with the most prominent category in Western aesthetics: beauty. Chapter 5 fully embraces a multicultural lens in probing into the question "What Makes an Artwork Beautiful?" Developing a critical overview of canonical Western and Chinese accounts of beauty, Xiao Ouyang concludes that "whatever makes an artwork beautiful is unlikely to be something homogeneous and unitary." Still, what is

philosophically important is that beauty is "desirable," and a philosophical category "that sheds light on a deeper understanding of humanity."

Correspondingly, the following chapter is interested in the topic of "What makes Nature Beautiful?" Elizabeth Scarbrough discusses the two traditional Western accounts–the picturesque and the sublime–explicating our responses to natural phenomena, to then consider three contemporary perspectives, conceptual, non-conceptual and hybrid. This important chapter argues in favour of adopting "a pluralist model," one that can equip us with skills to engage with nature depending on the circumstances in one's life.

We move to the second part of the volume with a short and very important chapter on "The Significance of Environmental Aesthetics." A recent phenomenon in aesthetic inquiry, environmental aesthetics covers "nature, built structures, urban environment, domestic space, various objects within, and our interactions with others." Emphasising the pragmatic dimension, Yuriko Saito argues that this new approach not only opens up "diverse kinds of things and phenomena," but also is conducive to cultivation of "moral virtues of respect and humility regarding others."

The emphatic chapter on "Aesthetics and Politics" further advances our understanding of the scope and cultural significance of contemporary aesthetics. Ruth Sonderegger and Ines Kleesattel question the official origin of Western aesthetics and argue that, instead, it should be seen as the origin of "the aesthetic regime," an affirmation of "the supremacy of the bourgeois, liberal subject and, first of all, the male subject." The authors are thus deeply concerned with the question of "a better account of the world" and call for our attention to "relational aesthetics," "an integrated aesthetic, epistemic and ethical account that remains earth-bound," and is never set in stone.

The grounds for "Engaging with Indigenous Arts Aesthetically" is a central question investigated in the next chapter, authored by Elizabeth Coleman. Perhaps the most humbling piece in our collection, it draws inspiration from the recognition of Indigenous cultures' autonomy. Traditionally deemed "primitive" and hence inferior to Western culture along with its conceptions of the arts, Aboriginal cultures veil a rich artistic world. Possibly, it is one of the tasks of those unfamiliar with them to learn from such traditions, as "a sign of respect for the culture of other people."

The second last chapter is concerned with a problem that emerges in aesthetics, as a result of the discipline's expansion and a corresponding sense of a significant and yet nascent cultural niche. To ascertain the limits of contemporary aesthetic education, the chapter overviews two major phenomena in contemporary aesthetics: *everyday aesthetics* and *somaesthetics*. Both pragmatic theories advance philosophies of "care" for the neglected dimensions in aesthetics, namely the ordinary and the human body, and I consider whether an inclusion of the wild

nature into the discussion may facilitate a cultural change in acknowledging the power of aesthetics, as a means to radical self-understanding.

Our final chapter looks into another traditionally neglected field in aesthetics. Strangely, Western aesthetics, by and large, ignores the aesthetic considerations found in the very cradle of the Western philosophical tradition—Classical antiquity. Matthew Sharpe fills this lacuna and considers "Ancient Aesthetics" as a model to learn about the "larger sense of order and beauty," about the figure of the philosopher "who has fully conquered their fears, prejudices and desires," and who "could fully 'see' and savour the world." In other words, antiquity can teach us about the ways to tap into an interpretative dimension that "the modern world urgently needs to rediscover as great, destabilising ecological and political crises again beckon."

"True philosophy, loved [ἔρωτι], forces out every anxious and painful longing," the roots of needless suffering (Epicurus, frag. 457).

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PART I.

CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1.

WHAT IS AESTHETICS?

ALEXANDER WESTENBERG

It is a notorious characteristic of philosophy that any attempt to define it raises more questions than it answers: if this is true of philosophy more broadly, it is perhaps even more true of that branch known as aesthetics. Though in some respects the modern discipline as we know it today is traceable to eighteenth century European philosophy, the important work done in that century was not isolated from many centuries of work prior. In addition, this is to say nothing of the long tradition of aesthetical work in China and Japan, for example, which can trace its origins at least as far back as the European tradition (and, as we shall see, there are certain similarities of origin). Finally, though aesthetics is often taken today to be concerned with works of art, this is both an overstatement today and at odds with much of historical aesthetics.

The question, then, is not an easy one. In the face of such a dilemma, it is perhaps best to start etymologically: what does the word "aesthetic" mean on its own, and where does it come from? Though it was first brought into common use with the work of the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten ([1735] 1954), the word is Greek in origin, from the word αἰσθητικός (aisthetikos: Liddell & Short 1940), which refers to the perception and experience of the senses. On this understanding, then, the study of aesthetics is the study of something *sensed*, in a broad understanding of that word, rather than something imagined or reasoned. That is, the object of study in aesthetics must be, at least in part, sensorial. Of course, one might think that this is true of science, but the difference is crucial: science is the study of the material world in itself, whereas aesthetics—in its most fundamental sense—is about the *experience* of things in that world. In particular, aesthetics is about their level of pleasantness, as in asking whether a particular experience is pleasant or not.

At this point we begin to arrive not only at a working definition of aesthetics, but also a statement of its most important questions. Perhaps most importantly, we can arrive at

an explanation of why its questions are worth asking and why it is a useful discipline to undertake. Our definition, then, might be this: aesthetics is a sub-branch of philosophy that examines questions of the pleasantness of our experiences concerning things in the world (where pleasantness is taken in a broad sense to include, for example, the intellectual pleasure of being challenged or confronted). This is still quite general, but it gives us a framework from which to build a deeper understanding; though, as suggested at the beginning, any hopes of narrowing it down further may be futile. Certainly, the immediate benefit of this definition is that it highlights quite nicely a tension that resides at the heart of all aesthetic work: the tension between personal, subjective experiences and more universal, objective experiences. If we place all experiences on a spectrum, those at the subjective extreme, such as a personal enjoyment of swimming or celery are clearly experiences unique to a particular individual: though of course many people like swimming (and, apparently, celery), we do not expect anyone else to share in this enjoyment. At the other end of the spectrum we find objective experiences, which are so universal as to be applicable to humanity in general—experiences such as hunger, thirst, laughter, physical attraction, tiredness, physical pain, the experience of colour, the experience of feeling the water on one's skin while swimming, and so on. Objective experiences are not concerned with pleasantness; although we might find the experience of swimming (for example) to be either pleasant or not, nevertheless the experiences that make up the overall concept of swimming, such as the experience of feeling the water on one's skin, are not in themselves experiences *of* pleasantness, and so lie outside the discipline of aesthetics. But so, too, do subjective experiences; although a personal like or dislike of eating celery, for example, certainly has to do with pleasantness, it has to do with pleasantness *for you*, and nobody else. Certainly, one could ask if there is anything that ties together all people who like to enjoy celery, but if the answer is physical, then it's a question for physics, and if mental, psychology.

If we eliminate the experiences at either extreme, we find in between certain experiences that hold tension between being subjective and objective, personal and universal: experiences like listening to a song, a symphony, or the sound of the waves; looking at a beautiful sunset, a painting by Turner or Tensho Shubun, a sculpture, a piece of graffiti or a dance; or reading a novel or a poem. What's interesting about these experiences is that they are undoubtedly personal, and yet, unlike the case of liking celery, we expect these experiences to be universal, shared by others. Unlike eating celery, which is either pleasant or not, these other experiences involve a kind of judgment, like "this is beautiful," making it much closer to an objective experience like "this is yellow." And, just as we would expect others to agree that a yellow object really is yellow, and think their perceptions wrong or faulty if they disagreed, so too with experiences such as looking at a beautiful sculpture such as the Winged Victory of Samothrace, we expect others to agree that it is beautiful—in fact, at times we expect them to agree *even if they don't like it*, allowing a tension between saying "this is a good book, but I don't personally like it." And yet, at the same time, these experiences remain deeply

personal, subjective. And so we hear and use phrases like "this piece speaks *to me* about. . . ." It is *these* kinds of experiences which are the central focus of aesthetics, and so we call these experiences "aesthetic experiences." This tension between the personal and the universal, then, is the driving principle of the study of aesthetics.

If aesthetics is concerned with experiences such as these, then it becomes clear that to restrict it to any one type of experience or to one tradition is unjustifiable, even ridiculous. And so, though much of the work done by contemporary aestheticians has its roots in only the last few centuries, the ancient world was no stranger to aesthetics. Plato (428/427–348/347 BCE) famously thought the impact that the experience of art could have on people was so powerful as to be dangerous, and that art did not have anything to offer philosophy since it merely imitates reality, whereas philosophy seeks true reality ([380 BCE] 1974, bk. X, 595a–605c). Thus, art is a form of deception, so to speak.[1] In contrast to this, the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus (c. 110-30 BCE) wrote a work dedicated to examining the philosophical import of the Homeric corpus (see Asmis 1991),[2] and Augustine (354–430 CE) ([386–87] 2007) claimed that the study of poetry was an important introductory step into philosophy (2007). In China, Confucius (551–479 BCE) shared Plato's suspicion of art, yet he valued appreciation of beauty for the sensibilities of the self and for its moral qualities also (1938), while his contemporary in India, Bharata,[3] taught a theory of *rasa* as the end of the arts, a concept not too dissimilar from the Aristotelian notion of catharsis[4] (1950-1961; see Gerow 2002).

This brief overview of the kinds of experiences we call aesthetic, however, raises another issue that is often overlooked. Put simply, it suggests that the usual restriction of aesthetics to artworks and to natural phenomena is incomplete. After all, it is not uncommon for a mathematical equation to be termed "beautiful," or for aesthetic concepts and terms to be used in contexts such as social interactions, military maneuvers, and even politics.

AESTHETICS AS AN 18TH CENTURY DISCIPLINE

Nevertheless, it is a fact that, as I have said above, the discipline as we know it today has its origins largely in eighteenth century Europe, and so a brief overview of this lineage is not out of place. This section, therefore, provides an historical overview of the origins of aesthetics as a modern philosophical subject in the 18th century, and notes its journey

1. There have been a number of recent arguments, however, that Plato has been strongly misinterpreted on this point (Levin 2001; Planinc 2003; Pappas 2012; Sushytska 2012).
2. For further discussion of the Epicurean view that the arts could be philosophical, see Westenberg (2015).
3. Estimates of Bharata's life range from 500 BCE to 500 CE, but most put him between 500 and 200 BCE.
4. *Catharsis* is a notion famously introduced in Aristotle's discussion of tragedy. Simply put, it is the purgation or purification of one's emotions, achieved through a quasi-experience of those emotions during the performance of the tragedy. See Aristotle's *Poetics* ([335 BCE] 1996, 1449b21–29).

through engagement with fine arts to modern interest in pop culture. The discussion here is not meant to be an exhaustive historical outline, but a demonstration of the central questions of aesthetics through the last three hundred years. This will provide the impetus for a discussion of aesthetics as the study of beauty.

In Paul Guyer's (2005, 25) turn of phrase, aesthetics

> was not baptized until 1735, when the twenty-one-year-old Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, in his dissertation "Philosophical Meditations on some matters pertaining to Poetry," introduced the term to designate "the science for directing the inferior faculty of cognition or the science of how something is to be sensitively cognized."

Baumgarten, however, was himself working in a field begun some twenty years earlier, with the work of the Earl of Shaftesbury (*Characteristiks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times,* 1711), and his two followers Joseph Addison ("The Pleasures of the Imagination" in *The Spectator*, 1712) and Frances Hutcheson (*An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,* 1725) in Britain, and the work of Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (*Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music,* 1719) in France. Shaftesbury (1671–1713) made the important distinction, still upheld today, between enjoying something for the benefit it brings one—whether that be physical, mental, emotional, or any other kind of benefit—and enjoying something for its own sake, simply because it is worthy of being enjoyed ([1711] 1999, 318–319).

Shaftesbury's answer to the fundamental question of aesthetics—how is it that our experience is both subjective and yet in some sense objective and universal—claimed, in a rather Platonic fashion, that the beauty of the natural world and the created works of humanity lead one's mind "higher," to an appreciation of the beauty of the entirety of creation, and ultimately to its creator, the source of all beauty (Shaftesbury [1711] 1999, 322ff). This explains how it is we make aesthetic judgments, since we have an objective standard of beauty to which we can refer, though we can only come to know this standard through our experience of its instantiations, thus leading the way to a need for refinement. David Hume, though he discarded the notion of a creator of beauty and instead argued that we move with the imagination to a recognition of some form of utility—whether real or not ([1739–40] 2009, 463–470)—understood the need for some kind of standard to explain our use of aesthetic judgments, and so introduced the idea of an ideal critic whose senses were perfectly refined to the reception of aesthetic experiences (Hume [1757] 2000).[5]

Another important influential distinction of the eighteenth century was made by the British philosopher and statesman, Edmund Burke (1729–1797), who distinguished between the beautiful and the sublime. For Burke ([1757] 2005), beauty is a social quality, "where women

5. Hume here takes aesthetic experiences to be experiences of works of art.

and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them (and there are many that do so), they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons" (part 1, sec. 10). The sublime, on the other hand, is the deeper experience, the more profound, "the strongest emotion of which the mind is capable of feeling" (part 1, sec. 7). The sublime is oriented towards what is beyond our comprehension, whereas the beautiful, for Burke, has no apparent end. So, for example, if, in listening to "If Love's a Sweet Passion" by Henry Purcell, one is moved to a surge of emotion, even to tears, Burke would consider this a sublime experience, because of its power to call up strong and passionate emotions. What is notable about this distinction is that Burke's concept of the sublime allows for "negative" aesthetic experiences, such as the experience of Jordan Wolfson's virtual-reality artwork "Real Violence," to be considered sublime, and therefore positively appraised. Such an artwork is capable of inducing "the strongest emotions" which, for Burke, can ultimately lead us beyond the artwork to something greater, and thus the experience of it is sublime.

Probably the most important philosophical work on aesthetics in the eighteenth century, however, was written by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), namely the *Critique of Judgement* (1790). As is evident from the title of his work, Kant took the question of aesthetic judgment as paramount, making it the focus of the first half of his book. A complete discussion of Kant's work is outside the scope of this chapter, but a few points are worthy of mention here.

First, Kant's formulation of the faculty of judgment is influenced by Shaftesbury's and Hume's, with its most well-known characteristic being a disinterestedness in the object of judgment. What this means is that the observer, the person having the aesthetic experience, has no vested interests in the thing experienced, and so the judgment is outside of any benefit to them (Kant [1790] 2015, sec. 2).

Kant kept Burke's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, but modified it in a way that draws together threads from Shaftesbury as well. For Kant, beauty is present when we discern the intelligibility of what we experience without any apparent ultimate purpose. Thus beauty is present, for Kant, at a paradox of being purposive—that is, appearing to have been in some way designed—and being without an actual apparent purpose. As an example, when looking at a flower that we call beautiful, its beauty seems to be designed, to have a purpose. And yet no *particular* purpose is apparent, no clear concept of "what this beauty is for." Similarly with a sunset, we may wonder at its beauty, and feel it to be *purposive*, but there is no clear, definite purpose—after all, what purpose could the beauty of a sunset have? The sublime, on the other hand, comes into play when we stand in the face of something so truly awe-inspiring that it rejects all attempts to understand, and we simply stand in its presence, as it were (Kant [1790] 2015, sec. 23–29). The American Jewish poet and singer-

songwriter, Leonard Cohen, expressed this quite nicely when explaining the sentiment of his most famous song, *Hallelujah*:

> This world is full of conflicts and things that cannot be reconciled, but there are moments when we can transcend the [binaries] … and reconcile. … Regardless of how impossible the situation [seems], there is a moment when you open your mouth, throw open your arms and embrace the whole mess … and you just say "Hallelujah! Blessed is the name." (Cohen 1988)

For Cohen, the song was about acknowledging that there are some things in our world that are so big they are beyond us, and when we glimpse that bigger picture, even a little, our response is to cry out, in Cohen's words, "Hallelujah!" Cohen's formulation is particularly fitting because, for Kant (as for Shaftesbury), it is through aesthetic experiences such as these that we come to know the ultimate source of beauty or sublimity.

Kant answers the tension between the personal and universal in aesthetic experiences by linking the experience of the aesthetic with the fundamental nature of rational beings (Kant [1790] 2015, sec. 5). For Kant, it is intrinsic and unique to rationality to be able to see things as valuable in themselves—it is, indeed, the basis of his theory of morality in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This ability, however, can be used in two ways: pragmatically or what I shall call "aesthetically." In the former, we only use this ability with regards to purely practical (especially moral) reasoning, and thus the ability to see something as intrinsically valuable is itself a purely pragmatic ability. As an example, imagine someone comes to you wanting funding for a music preschool. You could reason to yourself that music is intrinsically valuable, and so worth the financial burden of funding the school, and this would be a fair thought process. But notice in this example that the ability to see something as intrinsically valuable is subject to the larger, practical question of "should I fund this music preschool?" This use of intrinsic value as a tool for reasoning is even more common in moral reasoning, where one might reason that it is wrong to hurt an animal because life itself is intrinsically valuable and therefore is worth protecting. Notice again that there is a "and therefore *x* action should be done." Clearly, the ability to see something as valuable in itself can become a purely pragmatic ability, that is, a useful skill, but not itself intrinsically valuable. This is because if we only use our ability to see things as valuable in themselves to help us with making decisions, then essentially we are only treating this skill as a tool to be used to improve our decision making about what to do or not to do. Just as our ability to see space (i.e., our ability for depth perception) is a tool which helps us move about the physical world, so, too our ability to see things as valuable in themselves is, if used exclusively for practical and moral reasoning, simply a tool to help us move about the moral world.

In these examples of "pragmatic intrinsic valuing," though the approach may be uniquely rational, it is still practical; but if we put all practical thoughts to the side, and stand observing something in its intrinsic worth—nature as a whole is the most perfect object of this for Kant (see Kant [1790] 2015, sec. 6)—then we engage in the most uniquely rational activity of all

(sec. 49). And, if this is the case, then it follows from the fact that it is uniquely rational that it is also, for Kant, a form of freedom for the rational being, in which rationality is not bound by the necessity to choose or deliberate, but can purely experience the value of something simply because it is valuable. Thus, for Kant, aesthetics becomes the most uniquely personal—even the most uniquely human—activity, since it is the function and expression of rationality to experience aesthetically.

These themes of 18th century aesthetics draw out that tension at the heart of aesthetics, the tension between the personal and the universal. In particular, Kant's notion of the aesthetic experience as uniquely, even supremely, rational draws out this same tension. It does this by highlighting the uniquely rational element—which is, of course, universally human—and the uniquely personal element of standing in the presence of the source of that experience, coupled with its role (for Kant) as instigator of a personal journey from the beautiful or sublime thing to beauty and sublimity as such. Though, for Kant, such experiences were largely (though not exclusively) found in the natural world, the cause—i.e., whether the object of aesthetic experience is natural or created by humanity—is not important for our discussion. What is important is the connection between the 18th century discipline and that fundamental tension which I have noted earlier. Thus it can truly be said that aesthetics is an 18th century discipline, for it is here that we find the most influential approach to that tension which is at its heart.

AESTHETICS AS THE STUDY OF BEAUTY

As the foregoing discussion has highlighted, the origins of modern philosophical aesthetics in the eighteenth century has tended to focus on the question of beauty (and its correlatives, such as sublimity, ugliness, and so on). This immediately raises the question, of course, of what is meant by beauty, for this is not a simple property like redness or squareness. Rather, beauty is a quality, intangibly constituted by different features in different edges, and what is beautiful in one thing might not be in another—for example, hard edges may look attractive on a building, but not on a cat.

So the first question is, what makes something beautiful? While this topic is discussed in great detail in due course, it may be pointed out here that if it is true that aesthetic experiences are those that hold tension between the personal and the universal, as I have argued in this chapter, then it stands to reason that some aspect of what it is that makes something beautiful, which we might call "objectively pleasant,"[6] must speak to this very tension. Of course, as we have seen, this is the fundamental question of aesthetics, so this is perhaps unsurprising. Nevertheless, it's worth taking a moment to explore the relationship between beauty and the tension between the personal and the universal. Raising this question does lead us, however,

6. Meaning we expect a certain level of universal appreciation for the object of our experience. People often use this concept naturally when they say, for example, "I don't *like* it, but I can *appreciate* it."

to expand the concept of beauty and deformity (as Hume would call it) or ugliness (as we might say today), to be something of a placeholder for any and all experiences which we might tend to insist upon universalising. This is because it is clear that if aesthetics is the study of beauty–as it is so often said to be–it can only be so if beauty is taken to encompass far more than simply what is agreeable.

Fig. 1: Utagawa Toyokuni, Courtesan in Her Boudoir. Accessed from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and used under fair dealing (Canada).

If we return to the working definition of aesthetics presented at the beginning of this chapter, we understand that pleasantness can not be synonymous with pleasure as opposed to pain, for this would fail to take into account the "pleasantness" of looking at Utagawa Toyokuni's (1769–1825) hanging scroll, "Courtesan in Her Boudoir," which portrays a courtesan putting herself together after having sex, seen fixing her hair with her clothes still partially open. The picture is not a happy one, and to derive enjoyment of it in a way that ignores the quiet sadness of the picture seems perverse, certainly out of place. Instead, we enjoy this picture precisely *because* of its portrayal of a situation tinged with sadness. Or again, the experience of a mathematical equation one has struggled for hours to achieve may have a certain intellectual pleasure at having overcome the difficulties presented by the equation, but has nothing to do with the pleasantness of the equation as such. Instead the pleasantness is to be found in the elegance and simplicity of the equation, the originality of thought, and so on, *in spite of* the pain, struggle, frustration, and tiredness experienced in grappling with it. The experience of reading Thomas Hardy's poem "The Walk," written after his wife's death, is another example of this distinction:

The Walk

You did not walk with me

Of late to the hill-top tree

By the gated ways,

As in earlier days;

You were weak and lame,

So you never came,

And I went alone, and I did not mind,

Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day

Just in the former way;

Surveyed around

The familiar ground

By myself again:

What difference, then?

Only that underlying sense

Of the look of a room on returning thence.

This poem is saturated with sorrow, and when we read it we feel that same sorrow, and it would be wrong to describe ourselves as finding pleasure in Hardy's sorrow. And yet the poem has *pleasantness*—that is, beauty—in its ability to capture, contain, and convey that emotion.

This "objective pleasantness" that we find in these aesthetic experiences, then, is a pleasantness that seems to be divorced from the question of our enjoyment and appraisal of the cause of that experience. This explains how it is that we can be expected to appreciate a book, painting, sculpture, piece of music, and so on even if we are not expected to like it, because the pleasantness of the aesthetic experience—which we might call our appreciation of it—seems to be assumed to be separate from the enjoyment and approval of the cause of that experience. If it is possible to appreciate an experience—that is, to have the appropriate response to it—and yet still not like it, then there seems to be two elements to an individual's experience: one purely personal, and thus not aesthetic as such, and the other personal-yet-universal. It is this latter element that constitutes the individual's aesthetic experience proper. This might then explain why, despite its significance in the eighteenth century, Burke and Kant's distinction between beauty and the sublime is not much used today, beauty instead becoming the overriding concept for all experiences that are universal yet personal, and which we believe have "pleasantness." Thus we find our answer to the question "what is beauty?" in this unique kind of pleasantness found in aesthetic experiences, devoid of their "goodness" or *personal* pleasantness.

As these examples show, beauty is not a "one-size-fits-all" concept—or if it is, it looks so radically different in different sizes that it is only in these different forms that we can talk

about it in any detail. And yet, expanding the notion of beauty in this way does not thereby render it useless. Though it seems to cover a wide range of experiences, and apply to a diverse—and at times contradictory—range of qualities, beauty has a role as the determining factor in aesthetic judgments. When we have an aesthetic experience, we feel words like "beautiful" are uniquely appropriate: we describe as beautiful not only the awesome, the inspiring, and the joy-filled, but also those experiences saturated with sorrow and desperation. Even when the experience seems too bleak, or what is portrayed in an artwork is too confronting or disturbing for us to be comfortable with calling it "beautiful" directly, it is still not uncommon to hear of such a work of art as being "beautifully put together." Beauty, then, still remains a powerful and useful concept in the study of aesthetics.

WHY AESTHETICS?

Drawing the different threads together, we are now in a position to reconsider and provide a more complete answer for the question of why aesthetics is worth pursuing. So far we have spoken of the experience of a tension between the personal and the universal as the main focus of aesthetics, but, of course, the experience cannot be had without someone to experience it. And so the individual is a crucial element in the equation of an aesthetic experience. The example above of Toyokumi's hanging scroll suggests two important aspects of this individual element.

The first aspect is to do with "proper response," or "correct pleasantness," as one might say. In looking at Toyokumi's "Courtesan in Her Boudoir" it would seem out of place to enjoy the painting because it includes a naked breast, for example: to look on the image in this way fails to do justice to the image as a work of art, certainly, but more than that it denigrates it as the object of an aesthetic experience. Likewise, to enjoy it because one enjoys the idea of a woman sold into the life of a courtesan, usually suffering not only venereal diseases but also lead poisoning from the make-up she wore, then this too would be a grossly inappropriate response, missing the point of the artwork and missing out on the aesthetic experience altogether. A similar point may be made about John Steinbeck's novella, *Of Mice and Men*, in which George must kill his best friend Lenny; we rightly feel for George, and find the book pleasant in its tragedy and its highlighting of a number of injustices, such as the injustice of a society that fails to care for its most vulnerable, the injustice of Lenny not being cared for by anyone except George, the injustice of George being put in a situation in which he thinks he has no option but to kill his best friend, and so on. We call the book beautiful, eye-opening, and we recommend it to others. Yet if we were to enjoy the book because we like the idea of shooting our friend or of killing someone with a disability, then again we have failed to have the correct aesthetic response. So the first aspect of the individual element in an aesthetic experience is the question of an appropriate response.

This is inextricably entwined with the second aspect, which is the question of the *development*

and *cultivation* of appreciation and appropriate response. If the appropriate response can be expected (irrespective of enjoyment), then one naturally turns to the question of aesthetic education, or how this appropriate response comes about, and how one develops the disposition from which such an appropriate response arises. It stands to reason that if judgments about aesthetic experiences are to be universal—that is, if we expect, as indeed we do, someone else to agree with our judgment—then we can only do this because we believe they are capable of making the same appropriate response (since, obviously, we assume our own judgment to be appropriate). This is because we cannot expect them to have a response that agrees with our own if that response is random, or purely based on personality—recalling our discussion at the beginning of the chapter, the experience must be "objectively personal," that is, personal yet universal. This leaves only two options: 1) everybody is born with the exact same disposition towards having an appropriate response *that does not change as they grow*; or 2) everybody's disposition towards having an appropriate response changes and is affected by the circumstances of each person's life and experience. The problem with the first option is trying to accommodate those who do *not* have an appropriate response: the only way to accommodate them is to say they have an innate abnormality. But in this case we would be unable to judge them for it. After all, we don't judge someone born blind for not agreeing with us that the object in front of us is yellow: it is simply not possible for them to agree or disagree, since they are physically incapable of experiencing the colour yellow. Likewise, if we say that all humanity is innately disposed to appropriate responses towards aesthetic experiences, then those who do not have the appropriate response are "let off the hook," as it were.

It seems, then, that the only option is to acknowledge that our disposition towards an appropriate response changes and develops over time, and thus acknowledge the possibility of aesthetic education, that is, education in developing appropriate responses. And, though the main focus of this chapter is the individual aesthetic experience, it's worth noting here that this shift in disposition towards an appropriate response that happens over time is true both at the individual and also at the cultural/societal level.[7] So, for example, for an Ancient Greek, revulsion at disproportionality was deemed an appropriate response, whereas in contemporary Western society, notwithstanding that this may well be the response of some people, disproportionality is culturally acceptable, and at times even the most praiseworthy feature of a work of art (one immediately thinks of Picasso, for example). To return to the subject of changing disposition towards appropriate responses, in taking up this option

7. One may wonder, if a society's position on aesthetics can change, how it can be considered universal. The answer lies in the fact that the society as a whole changes because someone (or a group of someones) challenges and "educates" (for lack of a better word) the society in a new way of thinking. We might think of the Impressionist movement, which challenged the prevailing realism in painting, was initially rejected, and later became widely recognised. In essence, there is no distinction here between the individual whose disposition changes, yet maintains a conviction that aesthetic experiences are universal, and the society or culture which does the same.

in conjunction with the assertion that a response to an aesthetic experience can be either appropriate or inappropriate (though there may be more than one appropriate or inappropriate response), then we immediately acknowledge the role of the individual's own disposition as a factor in aesthetic experiences, and thus in the study of aesthetics. Aesthetic experiences are, after all, the source of the personal in the tension between the personal and universal that drives aesthetics as a discipline.

This then suggests an amended answer to the question of why one ought to study aesthetics, if we take aesthetics to be the study of aesthetic experiences (as we have defined them here) involving both the object and subject of that experience. Under this definition, aesthetics is a discipline worthy of study because it examines and seeks to explain the myriad of experiences that make up a large part of the human experience, in which we respond to something on a personal, subjective level, and yet seek to universalise it on an objective level. Its subject matter lies on the threshold between the uniqueness of the individual and the shared experience of humanity, and looks to settle disputes about whether and why we can expect others to share a particular experience. Thus aesthetics can be taken to be a philosophical study of beauty (or lack thereof) *and our reaction to it*—in a word, taste.

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CHAPTER 2.

WHAT IS A WORK OF ART?

RICHARD HUDSON-MILES AND ANDREW BROADEY

INTRODUCTION

George Dickie's (1974) "What is Art? An Institutional Analysis" begins by surveying historical attempts to define art according to necessary and sufficient conditions. As such, it would seem to serve as a useful point of departure to the subject of this chapter. However, reading this essay today, with knowledge of the various challenges to classificatory logic of art history mounted by social and cultural theory, one tends to weary at this endless, perhaps hopeless task. In turn, critical neologisms such as "postmodern" (Jameson 1991; Owens [1980] 2002), "expanded field" (Krauss 1979), "post-medium" (Krauss 2000), "relational" (Bourriaud 2002), "alter-modern" (Bourriaud 2009), and "post-conceptual" (Osborne 2017) have all been introduced as theoretical attempts to supplement, redefine, or differentiate the art historical canon and its attendant taxonomies, periodisations, and categorisations. Dickie himself acknowledges that by the mid-1950s many philosophers had begrudgingly conceded that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for a work of art. Instead, like Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), one of the most important analytic philosophers, famously suggested about definitions of games ([1953] 2009, 65–66), perhaps we can aim for no more than a series of suggested "family resemblances" which unify some, but never all, of a maddeningly heterogeneous field of artistic practices? A quick survey of the diversity of contemporary art would certainly affirm such conclusions. Nevertheless, this task remains an ongoing concern of philosophical aesthetics, from which one could roughly delineate six approaches, each of which is problematic in its own way. This chapter will introduce each of these approaches, testing them against the irreducible complexity of contemporary artworks. Given this, the chapter might fall short of offering easy answers to the question "What is a Work of Art"?

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify the more expansive connotations "art" had in

Ancient Greece. Indeed, Herbert Read's (1893–1968) *Education through Art* (1961, 1-2) insists that most of the problems with modern art education stem from a misreading of the concept of "art" in Plato. In his time, "techne" [*τέχνη*], and its Latin equivalent *ars*, referred to all forms of human sensuous production, including crafts, social sciences, even skilled labour. Paul Oskar Kristeller (1951) has convincingly demonstrated that the modern sense of "art" was invented in the eighteenth century. Here, the *Beaux-Arts* tradition ossified five practices (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry) under the signifier "art." The rise of a European art market during this period instigated a new need to distinguish artworks from other commodities. Concepts such as "genius," the "masterpiece," and a romantic image of the artist, became increasingly important as mechanisms for justifying the uniqueness, desirability, and inflated price tags of "Fine Art" (Shiner 2001, 99–130), especially painting, which remains the most commercial of artforms. Consequences of this were the separation between artisan and artist, and the conceptual narrowing of "Fine Art" to simply painting and sculpture. Conceptual art practices of the twentieth century made significant efforts to broaden the signification of "art" once again, pushing it into what Rosalind Krauss has called "the expanded field" (Krauss 1979). Politically, such practices aimed to create forms of art which were deliberately unclassifiable, immaterial, and non-commodifiable, thus resistant to cooption by the market or gallery systems.

REPRESENTATIONAL THEORIES OF ART

The words "representation" or "imitation" generally signify philosophical theories of art which, if not directly, can be traced back to the work of Plato (424/423–348/347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE). Following Plato, such theories suggest art is essentially mimetic, meaning its primary objective is to represent an exterior and more authentic reality. Such theories remained influential during the Renaissance, only fading during the nineteenth century, and persisting in "commonsense" attempts to engage with art today. There is significantly more to the philosophy of artistic representation than Plato and Aristotle, though the classificatory logic of Kristeller's (1951) "modern system of art" could also be traced back to the work of these two philosophers. Aristotle's *Poetics* (335 BCE), in particular, outlines a taxonomic subdivision of the arts and their essential characteristics that remains influential today, especially in literary theory. However, given the limited scope of this introduction, this section will focus mainly on Plato.

As Maria S. Kardaun (2014) argues, the connotative distinction between art as "imitation" or "representation" depends on how one reads Plato. Like *techne*, *mimesis* carried expansive connotations in Ancient Greece, including "reflecting," "expressing," "mirroring," and "copying," alongside "representing" and "imitating." Therefore, the sophistication of Plato's art theory, which is sometimes too readily collapsed into his ultimate proscription and censorship of the arts, can be missed with careless reading (Kardaun 2014, 151–2). The persistent, but simplistic and inaccurate (150), reading is based on the famously dismissive

Book X of *The Republic* (380 BCE).[1] From here, the conclusion is usually that Plato rejects all art as "mere imitation" of ideal Forms—abstract but entirely pure concepts such as beauty, virtue, and truth, which precede, yet inform experience. The Forms are knowable only by gods, or perhaps the philosopher-kings Plato envisaged ruling in *The Republic*. Art can index but never equal them due to the imperfection of human beings. Given that art often represents existing worldly objects and actions which themselves are mere imitations of ideal Forms, it follows that mimetic art represents a thrice-removed simulacrum (a copy of a copy of the Forms), and consequently one of the lowest orders of knowledge.

Yet, despite their imperfections, both art and life strive towards the pure perfection of the Forms. For example, throughout Book V of *The Republic*, Plato argues that the harmony of the perfectly ordered republican state approximates the "cardinal virtues" of wisdom, courage, discipline, and justice so closely that it soothes the spirit in a manner that transcends even the best works of art. Similarly, despite its apparently low ontological status, Plato suggests the best art can be used as an educational tool, albeit in strictly censored form (bk. III, 376e2–402a4). However, the problematic characteristic of art for Plato is that it stirs our emotions; its affectivity causes us to act in ways that are not rational. Artists rely on divine inspiration, not logic. The audience of a play is seduced by the drama, or the crowd at a musical performance gets entranced by its rhythms. Art is powerful, corrupting, therefore dangerous. This is the primary reason for his infamous proscription of art from the ideal republic (bk. X, 605c–608b).

Whilst still figuring art as imitation, Aristotle's *Poetics* pushes back against Plato's disparaging critique of the mimetic arts. He even suggests that they can benefit society in the following ways. Firstly, he argues that art does not simply imitate reality but accentuates it. For Aristotle, the creative skills of the artist may teach us more about the nature of reality than reality itself. In Chapter 5, he argues that poetry can tell us more than the particulars of history through its expression of universals. Secondly, the emotion central to the experience of art can function as a form of cathartic release for the audience, possibly helping them purge negative feelings and overcome other problems (1449b).

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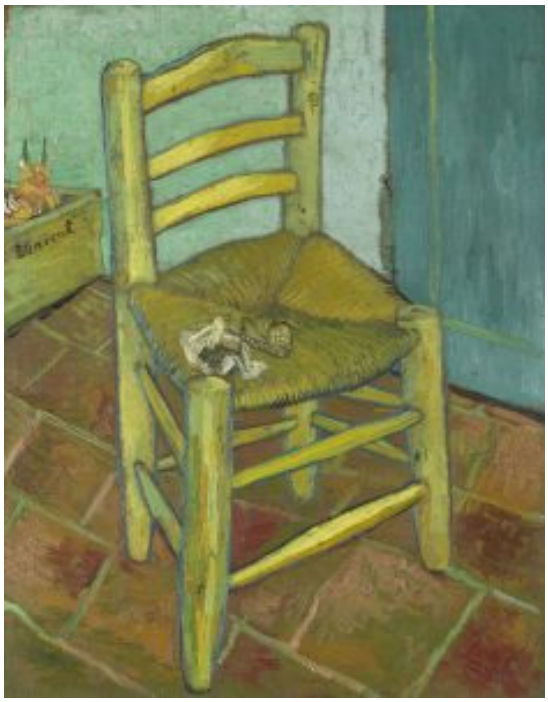
1. Here, Socrates rejects the claim that poets, or artists in general, are suitable teachers for the young citizens of the republic. Throughout Book X, he argues that artistic representations are unreliable. Painters of shoes know less about ideal Forms than shoemakers, who at least have applied knowledge. A painter of a bridle knows less about its truth than the bridle maker, and certainly less than the horseman who has practical knowledge of its use. Socrates establishes a hierarchy of knowledge gained through use, manufacture, and representation, arranged according to their distance from the truth of the Forms. Because artists create subjective copies of things which are already copies of universal Forms, "representative art is an inferior child of inferior parents" (603b). Stripped of their poetic colour, these arts contain little rational substance (601b). In contradistinction, only philosophers know the truth of the Forms in themselves. Because of their unreliability, and their potential corrupting capacity to engendered emotional rather than rational responses in their audiences, it is concluded that the representative arts should be strictly censored, if not banished, within the ideal republic.

Where imitation theories debate whether art is an accentuation of the world or its mere simulacrum, representational and neo-representational theories focus more on the communicative act. Art does not simply represent the world; it is a representation produced with a specific public in mind whom it speaks to, and in turn, who recognise its content and status as art. Reflecting on the development of such theories, Peter Kivy (1997, 55–83) argues that shift of emphasis means that their real philosophical heritage lies in the work of analytic philosopher John Locke's (1632–1704) account of language. Book III of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ([1689] 1979, 223–54) insists words primarily signify ideas, however imperfect, formed in the imagination of an individual (225); communication is then the successful transference of "ideas" from one imagination to another. As Kivy (1997, 58) points out, this Lockean position has been used to support a plethora of "cinematic" accounts of literary and visual art, which figure art as the successfully shared mental representation between artist and audience. Mental representation, in this sense, refers to those images engendered in the mind by poetic literary phrases and dramatic actions, as well as the colours, shapes, and forms of the plastic arts. Kivy raises two main objections to this cinematic model. Firstly, that it is more valid for representational painting than other art forms. Secondly, the term "representation" unhelpfully confuses semantics, consciousness, phenomenology, and presentation (64). Though literature is clearly not non-representational, literary artforms, such as novels, contain large tracts which communicate in ways that don't involve images. Furthermore, a representational theory of art (literary or visual) *tout court* (71) denies the differences between the "spectator" of art (theater/public/passive) and its "reader" (modern novel/private/active), which a variety of late-twentieth century art theory (Rancière [2006] 2011, 2009b; Barthes [1971] 1977, 142–9; Mulvey 1975) would expose repeatedly.[2]

2. The famous "death of the author" thesis is generally accepted to begin from the essay by Roland Barthes ([1971] 1977, 142–9) of the same name, though countless cultural theorists and philosophers have contributed to the debate. In his essay, Barthes argues that the meaning of a literary work is produced at the point of its reception, by an active reader situated within a dynamic social context, rather than at the point of its production, where its meaning is fixed by a unique authorial intention. A precursor to this theory can be found in Walter Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" ([1935] 2007). Here, Benjamin claims that new media technologies exponentially increase the audiences and contexts for reception of art, invalidating the authority of any singular claim over the meaning of specific artworks. Feminist film theory, such as the work of Laura Mulvey (1975), theorised the specificity and difference of the female spectator in and against the patriarchal ideology produced and reproduced by Hollywood cinema. Building upon this, Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009b) argues that the presumptions of hegemonic models of theatrical performance and artistic display render their audiences physically, and by extension intellectually and politically, passive. In contradistinction, the promiscuity of the modern novel, which is recontextualised endlessly by mass culture, perpetually meeting new readers who invent new readings in turn, contains what he regards as *The Politics of Literature* ([2006] 2011). Plato recognises the same anarchic potential of writing, albeit as a negative rather than emancipatory quality, in his dialogue *The Phaedrus*.

The narrowness of both representational and imitation theories of art is revealed when they are tested against actual artworks. To use a canonical example, it might be useful to ask what is the exact nature of the (Aristotelian) augmentation, (Lockean) "ideas," or (Platonic) representations offered by *Van Gogh's Chair* (1888)? Much art historical ink continues to be spilt arguing about precisely such questions. The Platonic reading would be that it simply imitates the haptic knowledge of an unknown carpenter of Arles, who themselves merely copied the ideal Form of the chair. Another common reading is that it communicates the simplicity and authenticity of the proletarian identity Van Gogh identified with. Using evidence from Van Gogh's letters, Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton (1978, 58–60) claim these Arles interiors operate as "oblique self-portraits" projecting an ideal of simplicity which he equated with modern masculinity. Later, in *J'accuse Van Gog*h (Johnstone 1990), Pollock argued that the signature perspectival distortions of his pictorial space were not an attempt to represent anything, but simply accidental results of the technical incompetence of a self-taught amateur. Another reading, attempted by both Albert Lubin (1996, 167-8) and Harold Blum (1956), claims the stylistic differences between Van Gogh's and Gauguin's chairs reveal latent repressed homoerotic feelings between the two "friends." The obvious argument raised by these diverse symbolic readings is that if paintings can sustain such a variety of interpretation, then can it be justifiably argued that they represent any singular artistic vision of the producer?



Vincent Van Gogh (1888), Van Gogh's Chair via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

These questions have been complicated by the emergence of non-representational and immaterial art practices in the late twentieth century. Joseph Kosuth's (1965) *One and Three Chairs*, explicitly attempts to foreground questions of meaning and representation in art, and contribute to the further definition and categorisation of art. It is regarded as one of the first pieces of "Conceptual Art." In Kosuth's words, the "purest" definition of conceptual art would be that it is an enquiry into the concept of "art," as it has come to mean (Kosuth [1969] 1991).

Joseph Kosuth (1965) One and Three Chairs, photo by Gautier Poupeau, via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY 2.0. This image has been adapted by changing the exposure, saturation, and other colour elements.

Here, Kosuth directly questioned Clement Greenberg's (1909–94) then dominant account of the development of modernist art (discussed below) as a linear process gradually revealing "medium-specificity"—the essential characteristics common to artistic disciplines such as painting (flatness) or sculpture (three-dimensionality). Instead, Kosuth considered that the readymades attributed to Marcel Duchamp produced a new construction of art beyond enquiry within any given medium. Art now "questioned." A shift from "modern art" to "conceptual art" had occurred, "one from appearance to conception." Kosuth talked of "artistic propositions," whose value derived from their capacity to analyse or question: "the artist, as an analyst is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is only concerned with the way (1) in which art is capable of conceptual growth and (2) how his propositions are capable of logically following that growth" (Kosuth [1969] 1991). Kosuth's own works attempted to follow this function of analytic proposal. *One and Three Chairs* (1965) presents an industrially produced chair alongside a photograph of the chair, and a dictionary definition for the word "chair." Reception of the work takes the form of an enquiry into whether art imitates, communicates, represents, or augments, and also to whether meaning itself originates in the artist, audience, or the structures of language itself.

FORMALISM

Throughout modernism, critics have consistently correlated form with aesthetic value mediated by judgments of taste. Clement Greenberg considered the aesthetic to be a test of

whether a given practice qualified as art. His early text "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) was a defence of taste (high culture) against kitsch, or culture generated out of mass commodity production, such as Hollywood or magazines. Later texts, such as "Modernist Painting" (1960), theorised a developmental logic in the history of painting: a purification of the medium around the values of formalism. Greenberg's position built upon modernist criticism leading back to the turn of the 20th Century. Clive Bell (1881-1964) and Roger Fry (1866-1934) identified the realisation of formal relationships in the work of early modernists, such as Paul Gauguin and Henri Matisse, with artistic insight and the reception of these works with aesthetic experience. Bell claimed what he termed "significant form" was the distinguishing factor in an artefact's existence as art (Bell [1914] 2002). Significant form concerns particular compositions of line, colour, and shape that produce aesthetic emotion in the spectator. Roger Fry offers a further distinction, claiming art is a unity of formal elements held in a specific balanced relation that arouses aesthetic emotion (Fry [1909] 2002). A unity of elements is key for Fry. He considered that a work can be superficially ugly, displeasing, or lacking sensuous charm, but can arouse aesthetic emotion because of the unity of elements it conveys.

Each of these positions is rooted in Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) analysis of judgments of taste (Kant [1790] 2000). Kant claims aesthetic judgments concern moments when our rational faculties are set into a state of "free play," resulting in the claim, "this is beautiful." On this basis, when we feel aesthetic emotion, or appreciate the significance of the form of a work of art, our cognitive faculties engage the unorganised flux of sound, light, materials, etc. he calls the "manifold" in a state of free play rather than determining this flux as an array of entities in context. When we are able to say of such an object or situation "this is beautiful" we aren't interested in what it is in itself or what it can do for us, we are rather encountering the manner in which our cognitive faculties can interact with environmental stimuli in a state of free play. For Kant this relation is the marker of the beautiful and the reason why judgments of taste are non-determinate but objective, as no concept is deployed ("this is a …") but our cognitive faculties are activated in a manner that allows us to reasonably expect the assent of others ("it's beautiful, isn't it"). It follows that as objects of taste are an interface for our rational powers and we expect others to assent to our judgments of taste,[3] when we experience beauty, we recognise our participation in a community of sense. Finally, for Kant, art is distinguishable from other objects of beauty, such as natural forms, by virtue of its

3. For example, when we gaze up into the blueness of the sky and contemplate its beauty it seems beside the point for us to identify it as "the sky." Even a tacit awareness of what we are looking into is superseded in the moment of contemplation by the experience of beauty. This is structurally consistent with Kant's argument. The faculties (imagination and understanding) that would otherwise identify the blue field apprehended as the sky are in a state of free play. No concept is deployed because there is no synthesis of the apprehension into a determinate judgment. A different order of aesthetic judgment is operative.

mediation by a genius capable of configuring forms in order to compel aesthetic judgment. Fry echoes this point in his emphasis on unity.

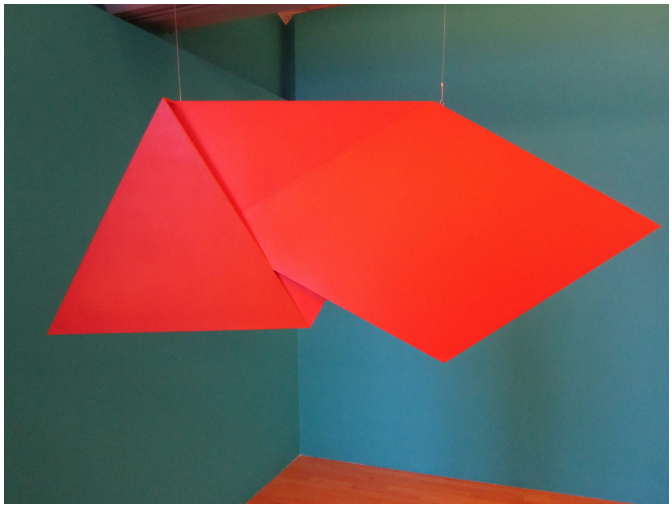
For Greenberg, art had to be a product of aesthetic judgment: "when no aesthetic value judgment, no verdict of taste, is there, then art isn't there either" (1971). Greenberg considered modernism to be a self-critical tendency that brought judgments of taste to the fore. Practitioners pursued aesthetic value in their art; in doing so they recognised the constraints of specific media and adapted their work to those constraints. In "Modernist Painting" (1961), Greenberg emphasised a progressive reduction in tactile associations in the work of 20th Century painters, which paved the way for abstract expressionist reduction of the pictorial field down to a colour space entered by eyesight alone. In the 1960s, Greenberg championed the flat spray-painted colour fields of Jules Olitski as exemplars of "high modernism," because such works held out to the viewer the possibility of examining the grounds of visual experience: the projective, weightless and synchronous nature of sight.

Diarmuid Costello (2007) notes that Greenbergian criticism and Kantian aesthetics appeared to be closely aligned in the moment of high modernism. He also claimed emergent postmodern critics, such as Rosalind E. Krauss and Hal Foster, believed that challenging its premises meant setting forth an anti-aesthetic rejection of Greenberg. Krauss's structural analysis of modernism (1979) dismantled high modernist assumptions of art's aesthetic nature, arguing that modernist artworks, such as the sculptures of Constantin Brancusi, existed in an oppositional relation to architecture and the landscape. This basis in opposition meant that modernist art was in fact a contextual construct. The function of Greenbergian modernism was to suppress the opposition, and naturalise Modernist art as context free, making it in Krauss's words, "abstraction," "placeless," and "self-referential" (1979). With the advent of postmodernism in the late 1960s Krauss argued that minimalism, conceptualism and land art synthesised the terms of the opposition (for example sculpture and architecture) in practice, emphasising art's contextual existence.

Brian O'Doherty makes the further claim that modernism had always depended on contextual factors to provide conditions conducive to its correct (aesthetic) reception in his analysis of the convention of the "white cube" gallery ([1977] 1986). White cube galleries are uniform, clean, white environments, designed to provide a purified environment of artistic display. O'Doherty's point is that this design convention historically developed alongside modernism to provide a neutral context for the reception of modernist art. For O'Doherty, the social form of the gallery conditioned modes of contemplative reception that modernist painting necessitated. The gallery was the unremarked context that gave the work "space to breathe" ([1977] 1986). For Costello, the binary nature of this debate (aesthetic/anti-aesthetic) is a function of the critical narrowing of Kantian aesthetics in modernist theory down to an austere formalism. Instead, Costello claims Kant's theorisation of the aesthetic is broad enough to encompass much of the practice Krauss included in the expanded field, because "it

is above all the way in which artworks indirectly embody ideas in sensuous form, by bringing their "aesthetic attributes" together in a unified form that is the focus of judgments of artistic beauty" (Costello 2007). The sensuous embodiment of ideas is the qualification missed by Greenberg, Fry, and Bell. This enables us to conceive the aesthetic as a response that can range across forms of art and non-art in a way that is consistent with the emergence of the expanded field as an aesthetic mobilisation of non-art forms as art.

If we test this discussion against an example of art practice then we start to see that a particular attitude to the bounding of form appears to mediate the premises of Bell's, Fry's, and Greenberg's positions. Significant form as criterion or modernist colour space as focus appears to rest on the certitude of its separation from social form. Further to this, we can see that the theorisation of the expanded field as somehow anti-aesthetic also misses the centrality of aesthetic experience to the reception of works operating beyond the bounds of medium specificity. Works by Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica explore form in ways that extend beyond the limits of conventional media and compel attention in a manner that is consistent with the expanded conception of formalism we have outlined. Oiticica was a member of the Rio de Janeiro based Neo-Concrete movement, and around 1960 developed a series of hanging "Spatial Reliefs" that expanded colour forms into architectural space.



Hélio Oiticica (1959), Spatial Relief (red) REL 036, photo by Rept0n1x via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Núcleos (Nuclei) (1960–6) consists of hanging geometric panels that occupy a cuboid field. The shapes comprising the work align dynamically at right angles; the central panels are coloured in a rich yellow and graduate to a deep orange at the periphery. The audience moves in and out of the panels as they navigate the gallery, so there is not any strict spatial division between the work and the social space it occupies. This work raises difficult questions for Bell's position as the encounter with colour forms relates to the architectural structure of the gallery. The work appears to necessitate the collapse of the opposition between work and architecture, or aesthetic and non-aesthetic form. Oiticica's panels assert the objecthood of colour and break open the static nature of contemplation, turning artistic reception into a dynamic participatory navigation of the work.

The backdrop to Krauss's and O'Doherty's interventions is the integration of artistic form into wider social practices of meaning making. Roland Barthes (1971) describes this shift as a movement from work to text (Barthes [1971] 1977). For Barthes, it is the limit or

frame of the work that defines the pictorial field and an area of focus for aesthetic emotion. Consequently, he reconceives the work as part of a field of co-related elements whose interactions determine their significance. Rather than a play of pure forms in the artwork, contexts develop through an ongoing play of social forms, whose meaning and status is an object of negotiation. Following Costello, we can argue that when appreciated from the viewpoint of its sensuous manifestation according to a play of our cognitive faculties such semiosis of social form is in fact aesthetic.

EXPRESSION

If we define art according to its expressivity, we immediately have to contend with the diversity of practices people have considered expressive. For example, the colour harmonies of Wassily Kandinsky's abstract compositions and Stuart Brisley's visceral performances are obviously very different types of art practice, but both artists describe their work using the term "expression." Reflecting this diversity, definitions of art as expression theorise art in terms of enlivenment, purgation, communication, spontaneity, and even transformation. We will navigate this diversity by considering positions developed by Leo Tolstoy and R.G. Collingwood, who focus narrowly on how an artwork might articulate conscious emotion, before considering broader positions advanced by Harold Rosenberg and Gilles Deleuze, for whom expression concerns acts of both individual and social transformation.

Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) claims art is the transmission of feeling ([1896] 1995). Many different expressions provoke feelings of different kinds in us, but the facility that for Tolstoy distinguishes art is a capacity to produce a unity of feeling between artist and audience. Upon making the work, the artist feels the emotions it expresses and upon receiving the work, each audience member feels this same emotion. We can recognise two assumptions that go unexplained in Tolstoy's argument: art communicates, and art expresses. Further, he assumes what is subjective for the artist is objective for the audience. Tolstoy's focus on communication leaves questions concerning the relation of expression to form and representation unanswered. We might also raise a further query around the necessity of premeditation that Tolstoy's linkage of expression and universal communication seems to require, and the spontaneity that seems to accompany acts of artistic creation.

R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) resolves some of these issues through his claim that art gives form to expressions that arise in the act of creation (Collingwood [1938] 2013). Art cannot be preconceived (planned and executed): to express is to become conscious of emotion in the act of creation. Similarly, to create is to give plastic reality to feelings that arise in the process of the laying down of forms. By relating artistic expression to creation in this way, Collingwood addresses the assumptions Tolstoy leaves unanswered, but by linking creation to formal arrangement he also limits the range of emotions art provokes to the kinds of aesthetic emotion we previously considered when we discussed Fry.

In contrast to Tolstoy and Collingwood's narrow theorisations of expression, broader models accommodate unconscious expression and emotions that belong to states of subjective transformation. An early instance of such a model is Aristotle's analysis of feelings of "fear and pity" ([335 BCE] 1996) experienced by audiences of Greek tragedies, which he identifies with catharsis, or the purging of stored feelings. Aristotle's analysis makes a change in state or a moment of transformation in the artist or audience member a possible dimension of expression. Aristotle thinks appropriate levels of cathartic response indicate a capacity to engage positively in social life as they demonstrate an ability to interpret others and are hence a marker of virtue.

Lee Krasner (1966), Gaea, photo by rocor via Flickr. License: CC BY-NC 2.0.

Poet and critic Harold Rosenberg (1906–1978) theorised abstract expressionist painting in a similar manner, terming it "action painting" (Rosenberg [1952] 2002). Rosenberg argued that painters, such as Lee Krasner, whose works combined improvisational gesture and "all-over" composition, gave symbolic form to emotions that arose in artistic acts of self-questioning, or self-transformation. This transformative potential lay, Rosenberg argued, at the intersection of psychic and plastic forces made to speak for each other in the artist's address to the blank canvas. For Rosenberg the act of painting was a ritual of self-discovery; symbolic languages were invented through painterly improvisation engaging an array of conscious and unconscious emotion, resulting in moments of self-reinvention. In the words of Clyfford Still (1952), painting was an "unqualified act."

A subsequent generation of artists viewed expression as action beyond the studio, in the social field. They considered Abstract Expressionism's pictorial mediation of gesture as indirect when artists could work with the raw material of their practice: their own bodies. To witness Stuart Brisley repeatedly vomiting in a gallery, Gina Pane cutting herself with a razor or spectate on one of Herman Nitsch's ritualistic actions is to encounter expressions according to an expanded model.

Hermann Nitsch (2013), Weltverwandlung, photo by Nitsch Foundation via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Here, the practitioner explores the potential of their own body to realise the kinds of psychological transformation discussed by Rosenberg through more direct means, refashioning the form of art in accordance to the openness of an event. The intention is to produce change, not just achieve moments of cathartic release.

Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Felix Guattari (1930–1992) conceptualise expression in this manner as a force of articulation that demarcates an assemblage (1996). By "assemblage" they mean a dynamic apparatus that articulates a field of social reproduction or transformation. We could talk about the Brisley/gallery assemblage as actions projecting architecturally constrained affect, or the Pane/razor assemblage of laceration and sensation/psychological intensity. Expression here is not merely the feelings of the artistic given plastic form; it is a power to bring forth potential within a structure in order for it to be differently articulated. This transformative aspect defines an event as a moment of rupture that brings forth unformed potentials within the assemblage. Art practices realised in this mode embrace the unknown as a true force of creation by producing a zone of affect that unfolds possibilities of social/psychological change, in contrast to familiar forms and feelings.

THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE

Theories of "aesthetic attitude" are less concerned with isolating essential characteristics of artworks, than with describing a certain state of receptivity or the conditions of spectatorship which make the experience of art possible. According to these theories, to attend to art properly we must enact a special kind of distancing, or "disinterestedness." Here, art is judged

outside of the influence of subjective desire or ulterior motivation. The most significant contemporary defender of the theory of the aesthetic attitude is Jerome Stolnitz (1960). For him, "disinterested attention" means focusing on art objects for longer than one would real world objects, sympathetic to their aims, and encountering them for their own sake alone. Before him, Edward Bullough (1880–1934) had characterised the aesthetic attitude as "psychical distance" (1912), where the everyday self is negated in order to generate a space to encounter the world from an aesthetic viewpoint. Stolnitz traces the aesthetic attitude back to the British philosophy of taste articulated in the work of Edmund Burke (1729–97), David Hume (1711–76), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), and the Earl of Shaftesbury [Anthony Ashley-Cooper] (1671–1713). However, the most influential (and infamous to hostile commentators) account of this special state of aesthetic receptivity is found in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* ([1790, 5: 204–10] 2000, 89–96). In Kant's own words, "one must not be in the least bit biased in favor of the existence of the thing but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste" (Kant [1790, 5: 205] 2000, 90–1). For Kant, disinterested judgments are non-cognitive—they are outside conceptual knowledge of the object judged, moral interest in it, or any pleasures derived from it. The aesthetic attitude therefore involves willing suspension of the above in order to experience beautiful objects as if one had no prior knowledge of them. His example is a palace, which can be appreciated aesthetically neither by its owner, due to their possessive vanity, nor those who built it, due to their knowledge of the blood and sweat expended on its construction. Similarly, true art is to be distinguished from "remunerative art" ([1790, 5: 304] 2000, 183), whose appeal partly, if not wholly, results from an associated financial reward. A quick, but insufficient, reference also needs to be made to Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), whose *The World as Will and Representation* ([1819] 2011) contains an important contribution to aesthetic attitude theory. Schopenhauer regards aesthetic contemplation as a form of sanctuary from the violence and enslavement of the world of Will (urges, instincts, cravings). For him, careful aesthetic contemplation brings us closer to the Platonic world of Forms, whilst also giving us a better understanding of the sensory world around us.

The most influential philosophical critique of such theories is Dickie's "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude" (1964). His objection is that "disinterested" contemplation is simply one way of giving attention to art. In terms of philosophical rigour, it is thus indistinct from careful "interested" contemplation. To push Dickie's argument further, denying the social history of an artwork to emphasise its aesthetic affect will produce a particular idea of art, just as explaining art as a mere reflex of its conditions of production will produce another. Neither approach could claim to have utmost validity in this scenario. A sensitive dialectical approach, incorporating both aesthetic affect and the sociology of art could come closer to attending to the complexity of the question "What is a work of art?"

Aesthetic attitude theories fell out of favour in the late twentieth century, perhaps because of

Dickie's critique, but also because of the increased influence of sociological and materialist theories of art. The claim for disinterestedness as a necessary condition for experiencing art has scandalised many commentators on the left. The classic sociological rebuttal comes from Bourdieu's (1930-2002) *Distinction* ([1979] 1996)—a lengthy text, citing an overwhelming array of statistical data to demonstrate that aesthetic "disinterestedness" is a bourgeois illusion, available only to those whose privileged financial situation allows them the luxury of time, or the illusory distance, for such contemplation. According to Kant's reading, "remunerative artists" are not true artists, despite the fact that no artist can live on fresh air alone. Bourdieu (486-88) concludes that the aesthetic attitude is simply the attitude of the ruling class, and that the purity of the aesthetic attitude is simply veiled contempt for the impurity, and by implication inferiority, of popular, working class culture. As we have seen, contemporary art criticism, such as O'Doherty (1986) and Bishop (2005), has highlighted that the aesthetic attitude finds its physical and spatial equivalent in the hegemonic "white cube" model of display. From the 1960s onwards, radical art practices attempted to problematise the benign image of art galleries as neutralised and universal arenas for disinterested contemplation.

The front page of the exhibition catalogue for Womanhouse (January 30-February 28, 1972), by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 4.0.

An example would be the exhibition *Womanhouse* (1972), organised by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro. Over three months, female artists from Cal Arts' Feminist Art Program renovated a disused Hollywood mansion, turning it into a space for the discussion, production, performance, and display of original artworks. Rather than affecting the faux neutrality of the aesthetic attitude, all exhibited work was explicitly and aggressively "interested." Men were prohibited from entering the space, and works were given titles such as *Menstruation Bathroom* (Judy Chicago), *Crocheted Environment, or Womb Room* (Faith Wilding), and *Eggs to Breasts* (Robin Weltch and Vicky Hodgetts). The foregrounding of factors specific to the contemporary experience of femininity highlighted the general omission of women from mainstream art galleries and curatorial programmes. The discursive, dialogic, and productive nature of *Womanhouse* also functioned as a critique of the sterility, neutrality, and passivity of the aesthetic attitude and its attendant white cube model of display. *Womanhouse*, as political other to such institutions,

exposed the exclusion and oppression which the aesthetic attitude has been shown to disguise.

THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF ART

This chapter opened by discussing Dickie's (1974) "What is Art? An Institutional Theory of Art." Alongside Arthur Danto's "The Artworld" (1964), these two texts outline an "institutional theory of art." For Danto, "The Artworld" describes an enclosed and self-reproducing system of institutions, discourses, critics, publishers, and artists, all of whom are invested in an agreed-upon definition of art. The primary function of the Artworld then is not the production of specific artworks, but the reproduction and dissemination of a dominant idea of art through cultural and educational institutions like schools, universities, museums, or galleries. Dickie's argument is even more straightforward. For him, art is simply whatever artefact or activity a representative of the Artworld has designated as art. This is not to suggest that artistic practices cannot occur outside the Artworld, such as the activities of hobbyist painters, or countless aspirational student artists, it is simply that these activities will not be recognised as art without its official institutional acknowledgement.

Given that the previous section of this chapter has already suggested that the Artworld is exclusive and non-representative, its absolute power to act as arbitrator of what is art and not-art is highly problematic. Consequently, all manner of radical art practices repeatedly sought to undermine its authority. A recurrent strategy of the "avant-garde," dating back to Courbet's Pavilion of Realism (1855), is the establishment of independent exhibitions on the periphery of the Artworld where alternative and oppositional practices can emerge. Such counter-exhibitions have been mounted by the Impressionists (1874–1886), the Dada movement (1916), the Surrealists (1936, 1938), and more recently the YBAs (Young British Artists) (1988). All of these seem to have been recuperated by the Artworld in one form or another, with many gaining canonical status. This capacity of the Artworld to assimilate its symbolic opposition seems to strengthen Dickie's and Danto's theses.

From the 1960s onwards, many artists attempted what is now called "Institutional Critique" of the exclusionary and elitist practices of the Artworld. An infamous exhibition by Hans Haacke at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1971) linked photographs of NYC buildings to financial records, diagrams, and maps of Manhattan to expose links between a Guggenheim trustee and one of New York's most notorious slum-lords; subsequently his exhibition was cancelled. The feminist artists' collective The Guerrilla Girls have spent the last three decades covering the billboards outside major art galleries with statistical evidence of the lack of female artists in their permanent collections. Andrea Fraser's (1989) *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* involved the artist dressing like an employee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and offering a guided tour of the collection, filled with exaggerations, misinformation, and institutional parody. Not only does this performance satirise the stulted

manners and orchestrated behaviours of gallery functionaries, it also highlights the extent to which the audiences of art rely on institutional interpretations to translate their own experiences for them.

Preceding both Institutional Critique and the Institutional Theory of Art, perhaps exceeding them both, is an enduringly influential essay by the German-Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), called "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" ([1935] 2007). Written during the Nazi ascent to power, the text invites "a far-reaching liquidation" of art's traditional institutions, whose structures he saw as complicit with the social passivity that allowed authoritarian fascism to rise. Benjamin was excited by the capacity ("exhibition-value") of new technologies of visual production (photography, lithography, cinema) to create new audiences for art outside the Artworld, thus changing the way art is received and understood. With the advent of these new artforms, the individualised reception of art, like viewing a painting alone in a gallery, is replaced by the collective experience of viewing film in a cinema, or a billboard poster in the city space. Because of this, the authority of art institutions to control the meaning of art recedes, not least because art now comes to meet us, in our situations and contexts, rather than vice versa. The consequence of this is that the meaning of art is constantly recontextualised and co-authored at the point of reception, rather than fixed at the point of production by an artist or the moment of exhibition by a gallery or curator.

Benjamin coins the term "aura" to describe the mystifying concepts (creativity, genius, eternal value, uniqueness, mystery) with which galleries, art criticism, and aesthetics surround art production. For Benjamin, these "auratic" discourses not only make art appear more special than it is, but by exaggerating the uniqueness of art and artists, tend to imply that the rest of us are hopelessly ordinary or limited in comparison. For Benjamin, this resembled the general tendency of the public to passively accept social inequality and the status quo, not to mention the hero worship of the "Führer-cult" he witnessed in 1930s Germany. However, the mass dissemination and reproduction of art gradually causes its aura to wither away. This technological "withering" of art's aura is inseparable from, and impossible without, the creation of a newly energised, critically active, and democratic public sphere, and therefore irreducibly political. The possibilities of new digital media, especially the internet, have multiplied this political effect exponentially. Activist artist groups like Mongrel (2000) can now hack into the Tate Gallery website and reauthor its content. Simple phone technologies can allow users to steal facsimiles of famous artworks, such as the Mona Lisa in the Louvre, and rework them into an infinite array of internet-based memes, GIFs, or fashion accessories. Writing recently, Andrea Fraser (2005) pessimistically recognised that many of the practices of Institutional Critique have become institutionalised. Yet, current digital reproductive technologies have the seemingly infinite capacity to perpetually redefine art and its institutions from the bottom up, and "reactivate the [art] object reproduced," leading "to

a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind" (Benjamin [1935] 2007, 221).

ANTI-ESSENTIALISM

Representation, formalism, expression, aesthetic attitude, and institutionality each constitute dimensions of art practice, but they do violence to the heterogeneity of art practice when we make them function as art's necessary and sufficient conditions. To traverse the impasse, we might address the question differently, by asking what variable conditions can determine the unfolding of art. This approach attains the flexibility to consider immanent features—expression, form, etc.—in relation to contextual forces.

One example is Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) positioning of art's condition between mental processing and the raw data of our senses (Nietzsche 1896). Nietzsche radicalises Kantian aesthetic judgment, pointing out that our viewpoint is articulated through the medium of perception, which is separate from the raw materiality of natural events. Nietzsche's position is an example of anti-essentialism: what we call truth is something provisional and bound up with the mode of its production. For Nietzsche, perception's mode is a series of metaphoric abstractions from natural events—from nerve stimulus, to optical information, to mental judgment. The value Nietzsche attributes to art is based on the capacity he thinks art has to help us approach the intensity of those events in nature, and our primal integration within these events. Hence, art conveys our primal perceptual connection with our surroundings by manifesting a play of materiality and conceptual determination. An example of such a practice is Joan Mitchell's "Rock Bottom" (1960).

The painting comprises a colour field of gestural mark-making, conveying emotions felt by the artist within a landscape. In his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935–37) Heidegger extends Nietzsche's analysis to explore how we draw out possibilities of experience through interpretation. He argues that our viewpoint and the particular ways in which it is embedded in the world influences the way the world is disclosed to us. The way we approach disclosure is by circling within the dynamics of experience, between the objects of experience and the ways in which we approach them. The artwork is an aspect of this interpretative circling. It captures and draws out its dynamics. Like Nietzsche's critique of truth and Heidegger's analysis of disclosure, Mitchell's painting articulates judgments as the product of dynamically combined viewpoints, references, memories and sensations.

Fig. 7: Joan Mitchell (1960) Rock Bottom, photo by smallcurio, via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY 2.0.

The attention Nietzsche and Heidegger bring to the embedding of knowledge within specific modes of perception sets the groundwork for deconstruction, which extends these insights into a general analysis of textuality. Textuality assumes material relations that comprise social reality have an inescapable written quality that shapes acts of interpretation. In deconstruction textuality is taken as a condition of knowledge production. Deconstruction addresses art's ontology by asking what is at stake when we pose the question "What is art?" An example of this deconstructive strategy would be Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) essay *This is Not a Pipe* (1983), on Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1928–29), which features the image of a pipe and the caption "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." Foucault claims the pipe cannot be present without the painting. In a similar manner, Paul de Man (1919–1983) argues the practice of philosophy cannot commence without writing (1982). De Man foregrounds how philosophical discourse tends to rest upon metaphor, or figural language, and emphasises how such tropes have to coexist in writing with literal or grammatical meaning, yet even though they appear to mutually exclude each other in the act of reading, texts are always open to literal or figural interpretation. For example, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"—a story where a community is detained underground and forced to watch shadows, which they mistake for truth, before breaking out of the cave into the blinding light of actual truth—merely describes a series of events if read literally (Plato 380

BCE). Insight comes when we read it figuratively as an allegory of the difference between truth and opinion. Yet, the literal interpretation is also important, because it reveals these tropes as figures of language, compromising the effectiveness of the argument. In order to proceed Plato's arguments must suppress, or be blind to, literal interpretation, yet blindness runs contrary to the metaphor of illumination central to Plato's narrative. Such deconstructive analysis reads literal and figural interpretations through each other, a procedure de Man terms "allegories of reading." Magritte's painting allegorises in this way by presenting a discontinuity between image and caption, revealing how the interpretation of painting depends on a play of visual aspects and the power of naming. This strategy was later appropriated by Marcel Broodthaers to critique the authority of the public museum in *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles* (1968–71).

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) developed similar insights to frame truth as subject to a process of differing and deferral from itself (Derrida 1967). As de Man notes, words and signs never fully summon forth what they mean but can only be defined through appeal to additional words, from which they differ. Meaning is forever "deferred" or postponed through an endless chain of signifiers. Thus, for Derrida, we reside in a web of language/interpretation that has been laid down by tradition and which shifts each time we hear or read an utterance. Philosophy becomes an act of forensically reading these displacements and instabilities, analyzing the relations of power they manifest. We never arrive at the fixed essences expected by the philosophical tradition, but bear witness to the textual architectures out of which all truth claims arise. Derrida's (1987) *The Truth in Painting* seizes upon a passing reference to the "parergon" or frame in Kant's third critique to demonstrate the codependency of artwork, "Artworld," and art.[4] For Derrida, the physical frame of a painting can be viewed simultaneously as internal and external to the artwork; the frame is subordinate to the artwork, yet also emphasises and completes it. Also, it can legitimately be regarded as part of the wall of the gallery and part of the painting, collapsing the boundaries between artwork and context. For Derrida, the concept of the parergon can be extended metaphorically to deconstruct the relationship of the artwork to the wider Artworld which acts as its determining frame. Focusing on what "frames" an artwork indicates an instability in any theory of the aesthetic that regards it as separate to social form.

Some of the most significant and sustained challenges to philosophical aesthetics in recent years have come from the work of Jacques Rancière (2009a; 2004). In *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004), Rancière introduced the concept of three regimes of artistic production, each of which codifies and delimits what is and what is not recognizable as art in a given epoch. The

4. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Danto remained committed to the professional distinction between "analytic" and "continental" philosophy that this chapter has tried to sidestep. See Danto and Liska (1997), where he dismisses the pretentiousness of continental thought, especially Derrida's. Presumably, despite the possible compatibility of the concepts of "Artworld" and "parergon," Danto would probably never have countenanced such a comparison.

"representative regime," stemming from Aristotelian thought, lays down the "rules" of artistic production, including the delimitation of different genres / modes of practice. It also fixes the "principles of convenance"—the styles, methods, images, tropes, and significations proper to each artistic category within this rigid taxonomy. In contradistinction, an earlier "ethical regime" of art, emerging from Platonic thought, judges art according to its truthfulness to an ideal. A third regime, the "aesthetic regime" of modern art production, anarchically undoes these systems of regulation and definition, revealing them as repressive limits on the socio-political capacity of art. Though the concept of these regimes insists that our understanding of art is historically determined, the regimes themselves are meta-historic, unlike the conceptual categories of art history, and can overlap and co-exist in a particular era. For Rancière, the disciplines of philosophical aesthetics and art history are political as they restrict what is knowable as art through the task of categorisation and definition. At the same time, both artistic practice and aesthetics can act as counter-politics to this system by opening aporia within the prevailing regimes of production, exposing the exclusivity and hierarchical ordering of the Artworld, and the *a priori* ordering of the world, which Rancière refers to as the "distribution of the sensible" (2004, 12), that determines the forms and rights of participation in all of the above.

CONCLUSION

From narrow definitions of art based on representation, form, expression, or residing in a specific aesthetic attitude or institutional framework, we have developed a position that insists upon such criteria as mutable and historically contingent. This contingency is revealed by both careful philosophical reading and the agency of contemporary artworks. The one universal claim we can make for art is that it is a form of practice. For example, to discuss expression in art effectively, we were forced to broaden this categorisation out from notions of purgation (Aristotle) and self-transformation (Rosenberg) to consider expression on a social basis by addressing how events bring forth change (Deleuze) and how art can take the form of an event. Thus, we might conclude that what we call expression in art is inconstant and bound closely to the diverse specificities of practice.

The weakness of restricted representational, expressive, and formalist theories is the centrality they give to the artist and critic in turn as locus of meaning. Against such theories, we have identified that the origin of art resides as much within modes of social form and social structure. Individual acts of artistic production are part of a series of ongoing chains of signification that spread across general structures of meaning as they manifest at that time. In short, such acts are additive or disruptive. In contrast, institutional theory runs the risk of explaining artistic production, display and reception in a manner that leaves the disruptive charge of the individual work unexplained. Finally, the "aesthetic attitude" has been criticised for suggesting a universalised experience of modern art, outside of national, political, historical, or cultural reference points, disguising the predominantly white,

bourgeois, western-centric, patriarchal, and heteronormative character of the artworld's discourses and power bases. At the same time, the aesthetic act can work against normativity, exposing difference, and heterogeneity, and dissensus within presumed communities of sense (Rancière 2010; Derrida 1987).

From de Man we conclude, to answer the question "What is Art?" we must be attentive to its literal meanings, born out in the specificities of material and context. Moreover, this kind of answer interrogates the disciplinary assumptions that inform the question, a process that ultimately deconstructs the truth claims of philosophy. What is left is a paradoxical interplay of materiality and signification, which allows us to make the limited conclusion that intrinsic functions (representation, form and expression) co-exist with extrinsic determiners (aesthetic attitude and institutionality), challenging assumptions that inform many of the positions (Plato, Fry, Collingwood, Dickie, etc.) we have examined. A philosophy that seeks to reveal art's essence is blind to the sensuous particularity and heterogeneity of works of art. Insight comes when philosophy analyses these specificities withholding its own assumptions. It might also learn something about itself in the process.

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CHAPTER 3.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ARTWORKS AND EMOTIONS?

PIERRE FASULA

There are many connections between artworks and emotions, and this chapter aims at describing the ones that are philosophically significant. For this reason, it will focus on the Expression Theory of Art and its main alternatives.

We can describe artworks as sad or cheerful for instance, and more generally as expressing emotions such as enthusiasm, admiration, and desperation. To take famous examples, Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* expresses anxiety; Ravel's *Pavane for a Dead Infanta* the sadness of mourning; George Miller's movie *Mad Max* the rage in front of the loss of kinship. But how are we supposed to understand and explain this connection between artworks and emotions in terms of expression? And is expression the only relation between artworks and emotions? In this chapter, we will explore three main alternatives: the first section develops the idea that artworks express the artist's emotions; the second that art elicits and represents emotions independently of the artist's emotions; and the third that art can be said to express emotions by themselves.

Let's present these alternatives more closely. The first one is generally termed the Expression Theory of Art: if artworks can be described with the vocabulary of emotions, as expressing emotions, it is because they express the artist's emotions. An additional feature is that this expression of the artist enables the audience to experience these emotions. But it seems necessary to assess such a theory: is it legitimate to explain the sadness of a poem by saying that it actually expresses the sadness of its creator? The second theory involves no reference to the artist's emotions. A more central relation lies between the artwork and the audience, as the former is made to elicit emotions in the latter or represent emotions for the latter. However, what is the difference between elicitation and representation? And what is the connection between representing and expressing emotions? The third alternative defends

precisely the idea that artworks can be said to express emotions themselves, without being necessarily connected to the artist's emotions or those of the audience.

A historical remark must first be made in order to bring out the specificity of this issue. That artworks express the artist's emotions is an idea that appears with romanticism, at the beginning of the 19th century.[1] Before this period, another conception of artworks is predominant: they were considered as representations of reality.[2] This concept of representation can be understood in many ways and raises issues, but the most important for this chapter is that this concept of representation was more or less supplanted by the concept of expression, as can be seen for instance in the famous claim of the English romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850) in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth and Coleridge [1800] 1991, 237). Even if, according to Wordsworth, "our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts" (237) and his aim was to describe and colour ordinary life, the expression of emotions became central, a criterion not only for judging but also defining poetry, and later any kind of art.

THE EXPRESSION THEORY OF ART

In this section, we will begin with a description of the Expression Theory of Art, following the path of two famous defenders of it: Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) in *What is Art?* and R.G. Collingwood (1889–1943) in *The Principles of Art.* Then we'll consider several criticisms that can be addressed to this theory.

Suppose you find and describe such or such poem as expressing anger; it is rather natural to try to explain it by saying that the poem expresses the artist's anger. More precisely, the mention of the artist's anger functions here both as a justification of our description, and as an explanation of the poem itself, in the sense that the poet is supposed to have experienced such a feeling and produced the poem according to his feeling. However, it is possible to refine this ordinary explanation using literary and philosophical resources.

Tolstoy presents the Expression Theory of Art in the 5th chapter of *What Is Art?* Its first four chapters are devoted to beauty, insofar as beauty is very often considered as a criterion to distinguish between art and non-art. Tolstoy criticises such a use of the idea of beauty in order to propose another measure: the expression of emotions. The idea of beauty is

1. Particularly in Great Britain with William Wordsworth's poetry, for instance his *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), or in Germany with Caspar David Friedrich's paintings, for instance "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog" (1818).
2. The main representative works of this tradition are Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics*, even if the overlapping of their concept of imitation and the concept of representation is problematic. The question is indeed: Do artworks have to imitate reality? If so, what does "imitate" mean here? And what is the reality that would have to be imitated?

particularly contentious, and as such it can't provide a definition of art. This is why Tolstoy considers another option, shifting art into a more general framework: "the conditions of human life" (Tolstoy 1904, 47). Art is supposed to be one of these conditions of human life, or more precisely, "one of the means of intercourse between man and man" (47). Tolstoy then defines art in this way:

> To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art.
>
> Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them. (Tolstoy 1904, 50)

This definition implies, firstly, the presence of an artist, an audience, and an emotion; secondly, that the transfer of emotion from the artist to the audience is intentional ("consciously"); thirdly, that this requires an inward evocation and a clarification of what is experienced; fourthly, that the expression is based on specific artistic media (movements, lines, colours, sounds, words).

Thus Tolstoy puts together the elements of a dynamic model of art, emphasizing agents, action, and the means entailed in the experience and practice of art. Such a model is for Tolstoy more appropriate than the criterion of beauty insofar as it grasps the nature of art via its practice.

Collingwood similarly highlights these aspects of art, using the concept of expression to define art in his own version of the Expression Theory. However, his relevance and added value in comparison with Tolstoy lies in the distinction he draws between bringing out emotions and artistic expression:

> When a man is said to express emotion, what is being said about him comes to this. At first, he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement which he feels going on within him, but of whose nature he is ignorant. While in this state, all he can say about his emotion is: "I feel … I don't know what I feel." From this helpless and oppressed condition he extricates himself by doing something which we call expressing himself. This is an activity which has something to do with the thing we call language: he expresses himself by speaking. It has also something to do with consciousness: the emotion expressed is an emotion of whose nature the person who feels it is no longer unconscious. It also has something to do with the way in which he feels the emotion. As unexpressed, he feels it in what we called a helpless and oppressed way; as expressed, he feels in a way from which this sense of oppression has vanished. His mind is somehow lightened and eased. (Collingwood 1960, 109–10)

At the beginning of the process of creation, there isn't an identified "ready-made" emotion waiting for its expression, but what Collingwood calls a perturbation, an excitement; that is to

say, an internal feeling, the nature and the cause of which are still undetermined. An activity, the expression of oneself (the paradigm of which is language) clarifies, makes the perturbation conscious, and transforms it into an emotion, while alleviating the individual's perturbation. Thus, Collingwood considers the expression of the emotions in a deeper and a more subtle way, describing more precisely its actions and effects in individuals, but leaving aside other dimensions taken into account by Tolstoy, such as the necessity of an audience and the means of artistic expression. This provides the starting point of the next section.

The audience, the identity, and the existence of emotions in artistic creation

The expression theory of art by both Tolstoy and Collingwood are questionable, and we'll raise objections corresponding to their main elements.

The first objection deals with the necessity of an audience to which to communicate the emotions. An interesting feature of Collingwood's (1960) version of this theory is that "the expression of an emotion by speech *may* be addressed to someone; but if so it is not done with the intention of arousing a like emotion in him" (110, italics mine). This introduces a difference with Tolstoy's version. According to the latter, art consists, as an activity, in passing on emotions to other people; whereas, according to the former, the relation of art to an audience is only a possibility, not a necessity. The consequence is that there are actually two versions of Expression Theory of art, named by Noël Carroll in *Philosophy of Art* respectively the "transmission theory" and the "solo theory" (Carroll 1999, 65).

What is the issue? The objection to the transmission theory is that "one can make a work of art for oneself" without trying to publish it (e.g., literature) or to exhibit it (e.g., painting, sculpture) (Carroll 1999, 67). Someone else who would read or see it would deem it as an artwork, but if the artist hides it, the work is still an artwork. The rejoinder is that the mere fact of writing a poem, or producing a painting, or creating a piece of music, is a use of public media that makes the emotions public, which "indicate[s] an intention to communicate to others" (67).

A solution can be developed from two similar remarks. Firstly, there is a distinction between an actual and a potential audience. An artist may not want to address *such or such* audience, but create an artwork designed to communicate to a potential audience. Secondly, one can question the intention to communicate to others, without questioning the communication itself. Even if it is not the intention of an artist to communicate emotions to others, an artwork can nevertheless communicate emotions. These two remarks converge in the idea that communication is a potentiality, not necessarily an intention nor even a fact. This potentiality is actualised if the artwork is presented to a public. This idea preserves both the idea that one can make a work of art for oneself, and that the medium used is publicly accessible.

There is a second objection one can make against the transmission version. It deals with the identity of the emotion supposed to be communicated from the artist to the audience. "Identity" means firstly that the audience experiences the same emotion as the artist, which implies that the artist experienced this emotion and transmits it. But is this necessarily the case? A poet can express a feeling of sorrow, but the audience feels admiration for this expression. Let's take for instance Victor Hugo's poem "Tomorrow, At Dawn" (1856), related to the death of his daughter:

> At dawn tomorrow, when the plains grow bright,
>
> I'll go. You wait for me: I know you do.
>
> I'll cross the woods, I'll cross the mountain-height.
>
> No longer can I keep away from you.
>
> I'll walk along with eyes fixed on my mind—
>
> The world around I'll neither hear nor see—
>
> Alone, unknown, hands crossed, and back inclined;
>
> And day and night will be alike to me.
>
> I'll see neither the gold of evening gloom
>
> Nor the sails off to Harfleur far away;
>
> And when I come, I'll place upon your tomb
>
> Some flowering heather and a holly spray. (Hugo 2004, 199)

The emotion expressed and the emotion experienced may not be the same: Hugo expresses sadness, annihilation, and isolation, whereas the audience may well feel sadness, but also compassion, and perhaps more generally admiration, in response to such an expression of love.

"Identity" also refers to the identification of the emotions. Is the audience supposed to experience "these" emotions, as if it were possible to clearly identify our emotions? One can highlight the generality and vagueness of certain emotions. They are not necessarily individualised, but general, shared, and they are not necessarily clearly defined, but vague. In the example above, emotions overlap, and some of them are explicitly mentioned, others only suggested. It is true that this could be precisely the function of artworks to individualise and define our emotions. But such an idea fits only with a part of artistic practice: e.g., poetry is only sometimes an evocation of entangled emotions.

Ultimately, the Expression Theory of Art assumes the artist's experience of emotions.

However it is not at all certain that she must experience this emotion herself. Does a writer of a thriller experience fear, so that the thriller expresses and produces fear in the audience? It is likely they experience excitement in trying to produce fear. This objection does not deal anymore with the identity of the emotion, but with its very existence, at the roots of the potential relation between the artist and the audience. Why should an artist even experience any emotion? Of course, it would be difficult to defend the idea of artists experiencing no emotion at all. But it does not mean that emotions are the cause, the reason, or the object of creation. In this sense, emotions are not always necessary to creation.

ELICITING AND REPRESENTING EMOTIONS

These criticisms do not imply the rejection of expression of/and emotions in art, but only of the idea that art must be defined as an expression of the artist's emotions to an audience by certain means. Moreover, such a criticism allows other possible descriptions of the relation between artworks and emotions, such as elicitation and representation, which we consider in this section.

It is a classical idea of the rhetorical approach to literary works that they elicit emotions. Rhetoric describes the techniques by which one is able to produce reactions in an audience according to context. In the judicial field, the lawyer has to convince judges regarding past facts in order to win the case. In the political field, politicians and ordinary citizens have to convince each other to make a decision about the future, according to what is useful or detrimental to the country. In the field of public eulogies, the speaker has to praise or comfort. In all these cases, the rhetoric provides non-linguistic means such as advice about posture, gestures, etc., and linguistic means such as patterns of arguments (for instance, enthymemes) and figures of speech, that both play on and elicit emotional reactions, in order to convince and persuade.

Beyond these specific fields, literary criticism and more generally aesthetics use (among other things) the figures of speech studied and systematised by rhetoric. They do so in order not only to describe literary artworks and the style of artworks, but also to show the way artists and literary writers use these figures of speech as means to elicit emotions. Let's consider the first stanza of Rimbaud's "Orphans' New Year Gifts" (1870):

> The room is full of shadow and the sad
>
> Faint whispering of two little ones,
>
> Heads still heavy with dreams
>
> Beneath the long white curtain, stirring slightly …
>
> Outside, birds cluster for warmth,

> Wings drooping against the grey sky.
>
> And the New Year, dragging mist,
>
> Trailing its snow-dress on the ground,
>
> Smiles through tears, and shivers a song … (Rimbaud 2001, 3)

A significant feature is its general structure, organised around the contrast of two locations, a room and the outside, but also the continuity established between them by the echo of the shadow of the room in the sad whispering of the orphans, on one hand, and the mist of the New year and its "smile through tears," on the other. But more important is the personification of the New Year, which drags mist, trails a snow-dress, smiles through tears, and shivers a song, as a presence outside that echoes the orphans' sadness within. This figure of speech contributes to the eliciting of visual and emotional impressions, as a picture materialises gradually and a feeling of sadness arises, one that then envelops the whole stanza.

An alternative way to describe this elicitation of emotions can be found in T.S. Eliot's essay on "Hamlet and His Problems," under the label of "objective correlative." There he tries to explain what is, according to him, *Hamlet*'s failure. A starting point is his agreement with the idea that "the essential emotion of the play is the feeling of a son [Hamlet] towards a guilty mother" (Eliot 1939, 144). If there is a failure, though, it lies in that "Hamlet is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, . . . that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem" (145). By contrast, here is the rule T.S. Eliot defends:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (Eliot 1939, 145)

The emotion of the play and, more generally, of a literary work is to be found in an objective correlative, which is an "exact equivalent" characterised by a "complete adequacy of the external to the emotion." That's to say, more concretely, the emotion is found in a description of situations, events, characters, reactions, that shows this emotion, and therefore in a full representation of the emotion that elicits it in the audience. According to T.S. Eliot one finds a good example of objective correlative in *Macbeth*:

> You will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last events in the series. (Eliot 1939, 145)

Nevertheless, it would be superficial to present the elicitation of emotions as a causal

production of emotion by means of figures of speech. As Danto puts it in his discussion of Aristotle and rhetoric in the last part of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*,

> if it be anger they [rhetoricians] intend to arouse, they will know how to characterize the intended object of the anger in such a way that anger toward that object is the only justifiable response. . . . After all, like beliefs and actions–in contrast with bare perceptions and mere bodily movements–emotions–in contrast perhaps with bare feelings–are embedded in structures of justification. There are things we know we ought to feel given a certain characterization of the conditions we are under. (Danto 1981, 169)

To elicit emotions for a (literary) artwork is not merely a matter of causal relation: the artwork, its figures of speech, or its style, if successful, are such that one should have a determinate emotional response. In other words, not any emotion is admissible but only some of them are justifiable in front of a particular artwork.

To conclude this section, it is possible to argue that, even though artworks do not necessarily express the artist's emotions, they elicit emotions in the audience by artistic means such as figures of speech in literary artworks, or representation of emotions in the choice of a certain "correlated" objectivity, such as a series of actions in a play or a set of forms and colours in a painting.

AN AUTONOMOUS EXPRESSION

The idea defended in the last section, according to which artworks can represent emotions, allows us to come back to the notion of expression, but in a different way to the Expression Theory of Art elaborated in the first section. T.S. Eliot uses "representation" and "expression" almost indistinguishably, but these terms should be refined. What does it mean for artworks not only to represent but also to express emotions by themselves? A closer analysis of the notion of expression is needed here.

In our ordinary judgments, we talk about the sadness of a poem, the fact that a certain piece of music is described as joyful and another one as desperate, or that a particular style for a building is cold. Hence, the question: Can artworks be said to express emotions themselves? And why would it be a problem? As Oets K. Bouwsma explains in "The Expression Theory of Art,"

> The use of emotional terms—sad, gay, joyous, calm, restless, hopeful, playful, etc.—in describing music, poems, pictures, etc., is indeed common. So long as such descriptions are accepted and understood in innocence, there will be, of course, no puzzle. But nearly everyone can understand the motives of [the] question "How can music be sad?" and of his impulsive "It can't, of course." (Bouswma 1959, 74)

How can we explain such a paradoxical use of emotional terms, which seems to be at the same time accepted and impossible? What is assumed in "Music can't be sad" is "… as someone can

be sad." It is the reason why, according to Bouswma, it is interesting to consider and compare several uses of "sad," such as: "Cassie is sad," "Cassie's dog is sad," "Cassie's book is sad," and "Cassie's face is sad." In the first case, one can imagine Cassie learning the death of a next of kin and crying, or reading a wonderful but sad poem, and becoming sad herself, crying or not. In the second case, it makes sense to say that the dog can be sad, but could it cry? One does not expect the dog to express sadness in all the ways human beings do (a dog does not restrain its howls). One can paraphrase the third case saying that this book makes Cassie sad. And in the last case, one can easily describe obvious signs of sadness, however there is no guarantee that she is really sad.

What conclusion can we draw now as regards to the assertion "the music is sad"? This assertion is similar neither to Cassie being sad and crying because of a death in her family, nor to Cassie being sad but not crying, nor to her dog being sad but not crying: a song is neither crying nor holding back tears! It is much more similar to "the book is sad," understood as producing sadness, but particularly as being sad in itself, as a face can be sad, be it a real face or a drawing: the book, the music, and the face express sadness themselves but in a specific way.

How can one account for this expression? Are these examples really on the same level? One can find an answer in Nelson Goodman's theory of expression in *Languages of Art*, which is based on the concepts of exemplification and metaphor.

An expression can be considered as a kind of exemplification. Exemplification refers to a certain relation of something to some properties. For instance, a sample of fabric exemplifies cashmere, in that (1) it is made of cashmere and therefore possesses this property to be made of cashmere, (2) *qua* sample, it refers to this property. Indeed, something can refer to cashmere without possessing this property of being made of cashmere, as it is the case in a description of this fabric.

However, such a definition of exemplification is not enough to account for the description of an artwork as expressing such or such emotion. It is true that a sad poem possesses this property of being sad, and refers to sadness in general, but how could a sad poem be "made of sadness" or be described literally as sad? The poem is not described literally as sad but metaphorically; the possession of the property is not literal but metaphorical.[3] Therefore, a poem exemplifies sadness in that (1) it refers to sadness and (2) possesses sadness (3) metaphorically.

3. Goodman (1968) draws a distinction between literal and metaphorical descriptions as follows. A description is literal when the words are used in their ordinary, routine way (e.g., to use "green" to describe the grass). But it becomes metaphorical when the words are applied to new things that first of all resist such a description and then accept it (e.g., to use a word of colour in order to describe a mood).

One could object that this idea of metaphorical possession is obscure, as if only literal possession were without difficulty (for instance, in "this stone is hard"). However, among the different ways of describing things, events, people, etc., it is possible to attribute properties in a metaphorical way (and then to see in this possession an exemplification of the property in question). One could reply that, because it is a metaphor, the sadness is not "really" in the poem. However, the fact is that such a metaphorical description is sometimes far more objectively true than a literal one. To describe someone as a "Don Quixote" or a "Don Giovanni" (which means that this person possesses metaphorically and exemplifies the properties of Don Quixote or Don Giovanni) does not necessarily raise a question, whereas to describe literally such or such entity as a virus or an organism raises sometimes real difficulties and disagreements between scientists. In this sense, that a song or a poem expresses such or such emotion can be perfectly objective.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, there is certainly something right in the ordinary claim that artworks express emotions. This means that the issue lies somewhere else, in the philosophical accounts of such a claim. While a number of accounts can be found in contemporary philosophy, not all of them are likely to make sense of the ordinary claim about artwork's expression of emotions.

More precisely, all the elements mentioned by Tolstoy are interesting for those who are passionate about arts: the relation of an artist and audience, the sharing of emotions, and the means used to do this. They all belong to our experience and practice of art, and one virtue of Tolstoy's analysis is precisely to consider artworks in this broader context: our practices and experiences. At the same time, it raises a philosophical issue about what is essential in this general description if one wants to understand artworks' specific feature regarding emotions: expressivity.

This chapter aims at showing the intrinsic expressivity of artworks, in addition to their capacity to elicit and represent emotions, ultimately leaving aside the artist's and audience's experience of emotions. The idea is neither to deny the reality of such an experience, nor its importance for the artist and the audience, but to highlight how artworks' expressivity can be found in themselves, because they are themselves describable as expressing such or such emotion. To go further in this direction, one could say that the key to expressivity can be found in the functioning of works of art, for instance, the way a painting describes a landscape, possesses such or such characteristics (colours or lines), and refers to sadness or joy. What it is (characteristics) and what it does (description and reference) are central to understand how an artwork finally expresses emotions. The next step would be to come back to our experience and practice: How do they shape our ability to grasp the emotions expressed in artworks? What is the role of experience and practice in the understanding of the artwork's expressivity?

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CHAPTER 4.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND MORALITY?

MATTEO RAVASIO

This chapter explores some problems that arise when one considers the relation between art and morality.[1]

The first section questions whether it is possible for the artistic value and the moral value of an artwork to interact.[2] Some have denied that this is the case: while an artwork may well be correctly judged as being moral or immoral, this judgment has no bearing on the evaluation of the artistic merit of the artwork. Other philosophers disagree: they think they can show ways in which the moral flaws of an artwork negatively affect its artistic value, and some even believe they can show how moral flaws may at times enhance the artistic value of a work.

The second section of this chapter examines whether and how artworks may further our moral knowledge and understanding. Some philosophers have been sceptical about this possibility, as it is unclear what sort of knowledge could be communicated by a novel or a painting. Others have challenged this view, questioning the assumption that we acquire moral knowledge in the same way in which we learn truths in other areas.

INTERACTION BETWEEN ARTISTIC AND MORAL VALUE

Anti-Interactionist Views: Radical and Moderate Autonomism

We start by examining two anti-interactionist positions. They are anti-interactionist in that they deny that an artwork's moral value, if it exists, could have a bearing on its artistic value.

1. This chapter discusses the value interaction debate as it is found in contemporary analytic aesthetics. For an overview of a similar debate in Chinese aesthetics, see Peng (2016).
2. In the literature one finds both the expressions "artistic value" and "aesthetic value." For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to use "artistic value" throughout this chapter.

The first is radical autonomism, that is, the idea that artworks cannot be judged in moral terms. "Autonomism" refers to the separation of artistic and moral value, as these are considered as independent domains. The adjective "radical" further specifies that the artistic and moral sphere are *completely* independent—not only do they never affect each other, but it doesn't even make sense to evaluate an artistic object in moral terms.

A way to flesh out the radical autonomist view relies on the idea of a category mistake. A category mistake occurs when a property is attributed to an object belonging to a category that does not support such properties. For instance, it would be a category mistake to say that the number three is smelly, as smelliness is not a property numbers (as abstract objects) could possibly have. The radical autonomist claims that attributing ethical properties to artworks is a category mistake, as artworks do not support the attribution of such properties.

Richard Posner concedes that art may represent all sorts of morally good or bad acts but argues that this is insufficient to show that art may be moral or immoral. These represented acts and attitudes are simply part of an artwork's raw material (Posner 1997, 7). He holds that art may be evaluated from an ethical point of view only if it can educate morally, as this would show that art in fact may impact people's sense of what is right and wrong, and thus be worthy of ethical assessment. However, Posner firmly denies that art may contribute to moral education. He is therefore committed to a form of radical autonomism.[3]

Radical autonomism seems implausible, as there are many cases in which critics and lay people alike express moral judgments regarding artworks. Radical autonomism would need a theory that could explain why we erroneously and systematically describe artworks in ethical terms if they should not be so described.

Moderate autonomism avoids this problem by adopting a more defensible view. It accepts that artworks may be assessed for their ethical value, but also holds that this evaluation never bears on artistic value. In other words, moderate autonomism concedes that we may describe artworks as wicked or virtuous, while still judging them to be artistic accomplishments of the highest order, because the two evaluations do not interact.

This view is more compatible with the way people usually talk about art, as it makes sense of the cases in which we praise an artwork for its artistic merits despite our reservation for the moral attitude it displays. For instance, people may still consider Wagner's Ring Cycle a great work of art, while at the same time condemning its implicit anti-Semitism. These examples are taken by the moderate autonomist as a reason to keep artistic and ethical evaluation separate.

Anti-interactionism, in the form of moderate autonomism, remains a popular position,

3. See the section on Art and Moral Knowledge, below, for Posner's view on why art cannot educate morally.

although it has to face some objections. For one thing, moderate autonomism still seems incompatible with much art criticism, in which ethical considerations often figure in the evaluation of an artwork's artistic merits. Moreover, moderate autonomism would contradict intuitions artists sometimes have on the relation between the morality of their work and its artistic value. A cartoonist may think that part of her artistic success depends on moral features of her work: if her cartoons are based on easy irony targeting disadvantaged groups, the resulting product will not just be morally problematic, but also artistically defective.

In addition to these objections, moderate autonomism is threatened by any successful argument that shows how an artwork's moral value may impact its artistic value. The next section explores arguments of this sort.[4]

Interactionist Views: Moderate Moralism, Ethicism, and Immoralism

Over the past three decades, philosophers have produced powerful rejections of the anti-interactionist positions we have just examined. These philosophers think they can show how the moral character of an artwork may have an impact on its artistic value.

Interactionist views try to make sense of ethical criticism, that is, the practice of bringing ethical judgments concerning artworks to bear on their artistic evaluation. What follows is a presentation of some notable interactionist proposals.

Moderate Moralism

Noël Carroll holds an interactionist view he terms "moderate moralism" (Carroll 1996). This position is committed to the idea that sometimes ethical flaws are artistic flaws and sometimes ethical virtues are artistic virtues.

Carroll's main argument for moderate moralism is the "uptake argument". Artworks often require emotional uptake, in that they aim at arousing emotional responses in their audience. The moral character of the figures and events represented in the artwork are important to secure the audience's uptake. Carroll draws this observation from Aristotle, who, in the *Poetics*, had observed how a tragic hero could not be a completely flawless character, otherwise we would react to her fate with outrage, rather than with pity. In these cases, an author's ability in designing an appropriate character or event may affect emotional uptake by a morally sensitive audience.[5] Now, a failure to produce the relevant uptake occurs sometimes because the author fails to understand the appropriate ethical response to a certain character. This is an ethical failure: the author cannot understand the response that is appropriate to the character she presents. But it is at the same time a failure in designing an

4. For a general assessment of autonomist positions, see Clavel-Vazquez (2018).

5. A morally sensitive audience is something like an audience composed of people with a standard sense of morality. We shall see, however, that this concept may cause some issues for Carroll's argument.

appropriate character, that is, a character that would provoke the intended response, and so it is also an artistic failure.

Carroll exemplifies his view with an interpretation of Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* (1991). This work was intended as a satire of capitalistic society and attempted to pursue this goal by presenting a serial killer engaging in brutal murders and other morally repulsive acts—the point being perhaps that capitalism promotes a view of human beings as disposable commodities. Carroll observes how many readers are unable to get past the shocking brutality of the facts related by the novel. As a result, they fail to appreciate the underlying satirical intent. According to Carroll, Ellis's strategy rests on an ethical mistake, namely that of underestimating the effect of gratuitous violent murders on the audience's emotional response. In turn, this mistake undermines the novel's satirical intent, and thereby its artistic value.

We shall now consider two objections against the uptake argument, both due to Berys Gaut (2007, 228–30). A first problem is Carroll's appeal to a morally sensitive audience. Carroll needs this concept because it is perfectly conceivable to imagine a morally perverted audience that would have no uptake issues with an immoral work.

Consider Leni Riefenstahl's movie *Triumph of the Will* (1935), a propaganda documentary for the Nazi regime. We may guess that many of the original viewers of Riefenstahl's film did not have any problem with a work celebrating Hitler. In cases like this, the work's perspective, however immoral, would not result in a failure of uptake, and so would not diminish the artistic value of the work. The uptake argument only works if one is committed to the idea that an artwork's artistic value must be assessed from the standpoint of a morally sensitive audience, but Carroll does not offer any argument in support of this claim.

The second objection goes as follows. According to Carroll, failure of uptake results in an artistic flaw because it prevents the artwork from absorbing the viewer's attention and engaging her emotions. Now, even granting that absorption is a general goal of artworks, nothing prevents us from imagining a case in which a work's morally flawed perspective would sustain such an absorption and emotional engagement. So it does not seem that a moral flaw is always going to hinder uptake and sustained engagement. As Gaut observes, one may be absorbed by *The Triumph of the Will* precisely on the grounds of the warped moral outlook it displays (2007, 228).

Ethicism

Gaut believes he has a better interactionist strategy than Carroll's uptake argument, the so-called "merited response argument". This argument is similar to Carroll's uptake argument, although it results in a considerably stronger position, ethicism. This is a bolder position than moderate moralism, which is simply committed to the idea that moral flaws/virtues

sometimes decrease/increase artistic value. Ethicism holds that if an artwork possesses an artistically relevant moral flaw/virtue, this will always count also as an artistic flaw/virtue.

The merited response argument can be summarised as follows. Artworks typically attempt to provoke certain responses to those who appreciate them. One can say that artworks prescribe certain responses; in other words, they invite us to have such responses. For example, horror movies prescribe a fear response when they employ suspenseful music before a jump scare. Artworks may be more or less successful in prescribing these responses. Some horror movies may set up jump scares in such a way that they systematically fail in arousing fear in the audience. In this case, the prescribed response is unmerited; it is undeserved, as the artwork doesn't quite do what it takes for the intended response to occur. Sometimes a prescribed response is unmerited because of aesthetic reasons—the music may have been bad or the acting unconvincing. On other occasions, however, the prescribed response is unmerited on ethical grounds. For instance, some of Gainsborough's portraits of wealthy landowners may prescribe admiration and respect for individuals who have attained their status in morally unacceptable manners. This response is unmerited, not because of artistic or technical shortcomings of the painting, but rather because the object of admiration is in fact morally repulsive. In these cases, the artwork is artistically lacking because of its flawed moral perspective. Note that this strategy does not require an appeal to the ideal sensitive moral audience needed by Carroll's uptake argument. The claim here is simply that the artistic value of the work is compromised because it relies on a response that should not be adopted, as it is not merited on ethical grounds.

Ethicism is also committed to the idea that a work's morally commendable perspective is going to enhance the work's artistic value. Gaut thinks that the merited response argument can prove this too, as a work's ethically commendable attitude provides reasons to adopt the response prescribed by the work.

A criticism of ethicism is that it appears to construe moral value as a constituent of artistic value (McGregor 2014, 454). A morally appropriate attitude or prescribed response is thus part of what may render a work artistically valuable. The problem with this is that ethicism would turn into the uninteresting claim according to which moral value, as a subset of artistic value, has an impact on artistic value.

Another objection against ethicism questions the idea that attitudes manifested by artworks may be ethically assessable.[6] If these attitudes are directed towards imaginary objects, as opposed to real ones, it would seem inappropriate to regard them as morally commendable or reproachable. Gaut rejects this point, as he holds that even attitudes towards imaginary objects may be ethically assessable. For instance, we would certainly consider someone's

6. For discussion of this objection, see Conolly (2000, 309–312).

sexual fantasies as blameworthy if they were entirely constituted by rape fantasies involving imaginary women. Of course, this example only shows that some attitudes to imaginary objects are ethically assessable; it remains to show that that all are, and this is a contentious point.

It is important to stress that ethicism is not committed to the idea that a morally flawed/praiseworthy work is always going to be artistically defective/accomplished *overall*. Ethicism is simply committed to the idea that the attitudes expressed in the work *count towards* the work's artistic evaluation. A work manifesting an immoral attitude may then still be artistically praiseworthy because of some redeeming features. For instance, according to ethicism, Titian's *Rape of Europa* may still be a great work of art despite the sexist attitude it promotes (see Box 1).

Box 1: Ethical flaws and artistic achievement: Titian's *Rape of Europa*

Rape of Europa by Titian via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

Titian's *Rape of Europa* (1560–62) is often praised as an artistic achievement of the highest order, as it showcases many of the features that make Titian a towering figure in the history of Western art.

Anne W. Eaton (2003) argues that these artistic merits are partly marred by an ethical flaw in the painting. She argues that Titian's work does not simply represent rape, but eroticises it, depicting Europa as if she is taking pleasure in the act, while still clearly presenting her abduction by Jupiter as unwanted and forced. By doing so, Titian's painting displays the ethically flawed view according to which women may in fact enjoy sexual abuse, despite their apparent resistance.

Eaton holds that the artistic value of the painting is diminished by the fact that so many of its artistically valuable features depend on our acceptance of an ethically flawed perspective. She observes how several of the painting's notable features contribute to the attitude it manifests concerning Europa's rape. The colours

are joyous, and the painting's atmosphere serene; Europa's expression is often interpreted as betraying ecstasy more than pain or fear, and the painting's composition directs our gaze to her pubic region.

Immoralism

We have seen how some authors have proposed explanations of how an artwork's moral flaws may diminish its artistic value. But is it possible to conceive of cases in which a work's flawed moral perspective actually enhances its artistic value? The view held by those who answer these questions positively is generally named "immoralism." It holds that sometimes a moral flaw may enhance the artistic value of an artwork.

Daniel Jacobson supports a form of immoralism in observing that morally reprehensible art may be considered artistically successful precisely because it gets us to respond to its content in the way we think we should not respond (1997, 187). For instance, a caricature or political cartoon may show an individual or a group as deserving a response that we think is morally undeserved, and it may do this so well that our moral considerations are overridden. This is a moral flaw of the caricature, yet it is also an artistic merit. Commentators agree that Jacobson fails in providing compelling examples in support of his immoralist view, and that he is generally vague regarding its details.[7]

Matthew Kieran has advanced a position he terms "cognitive immoralism." His view is that some works of art present us with obviously immoral attitudes but do so in order to teach something with regard to those attitudes (2006, 138). An example is the Belgian pseudo-documentary movie *Man Bites Dog*, in which the everyday routine of a serial killer is related in an atmosphere of surreal and dark humour, abruptly dispelled by a scene in which the camera crew becomes involved in a brutal rape. After this, it becomes impossible for most viewers to maintain the same kind of amused response that they deemed appropriate to the rest of the movie. According to Kieran, this twist in the narrative highlights how far we can get in the representation of extreme violence whilst still being able to laugh at it. Thus, the film makes a moral point through its immoral character, as it gets us to think critically about our responses to violence in fiction. How does this support the interactionist thesis? According to Kieran, *Man Bites Dog* works because it gets us to respond to brutal murders with a response that is ethically problematic, but it redeems itself artistically because it is in virtue of its capacity to provoke and sustain unmerited responses that it allows us to learn an important moral lesson.

An objection to cognitive immoralism is that the immorality of the artwork in these cases is merely apparent, as the ultimate attitude the work takes on its subject matter is a morally

7. See Eaton (2012, 290) and Carroll (2013, 7). Eaton's defence of immoralism, presented below, may be considered a refinement of Jacobson's.

commendable one. If this is true, then cognitive immoralism would have failed to show that immoral art can be artistically valuable in virtue of its immorality (Eaton 2012, 289).

Anne W. Eaton has developed an ingenious case for immoralism based on the figure of the "rough hero" (Eaton 2012). A rough hero is a deeply and intrinsically flawed character who is also presented as sympathetic, likeable, and even admirable. Eaton's example of choice is that of Tony from the television series *The Sopranos*. Tony is a mobster and has a number of serious moral flaws, yet he typically gets the audience's sympathy. This is puzzling, as normally a morally flawed character generates some degree of imaginative resistance, that is, a reluctance and difficulty in the audience to follow along and adopt an attitude that is deemed unethical.

However, a successful rough hero figure is endowed with features that would normally motivate imaginative resistance, while at the same time being presented in such a way that this resistance is ultimately partly abandoned. In this way, fictions containing a rough hero manifest an artistic achievement, as they tread the fine line between imaginative resistance and positive responses. In appreciating fictions containing a rough hero, we feel tempted by both reactions, and the success of these fictions is partly in their capacity to keep this tension going.

If this is an artistic achievement, then it is one that depends essentially on the morally flawed attitude of the work towards the rough hero, where the flaw in the work's attitude resides in its presentation of a morally repulsive figure as likeable and admirable.[8]

It is important to stress that immoralism does not rule out the possibility, explored by moderate moralism and ethicism, of moral flaws that impact negatively the artistic value of a work. Immoralism is simply committed to the additional claim that sometimes a moral flaw may enhance the artistic value of a work of art.

ART AND MORAL KNOWLEDGE

In the preceding sections we assumed that artworks mandate certain responses, some of which are related to our moral attitudes. We also saw how an artwork can manifest an attitude towards objects or events it represents, and thus may have a moral perspective on such things.

Given these rather strong connections between art and morality, some philosophers have wondered whether it is also possible for artworks to teach us something about morality. It is rather uncontroversial that life events may develop our sense for what is right and wrong. Whether the fictional world of a work of art could do the same is open to question, but we

8. Eaton's immoralism has been recently criticised by Song (2018, 290–92).

have already seen that some of the interactionist arguments presented above relied on the alleged capacity of art to teach us moral lessons.

As noted earlier, Posner denies that art may educate morally. He observes that it just seems false that art has a great impact on the morality of those who appreciate it. We find good and bad characters among the uneducated crowds just as often as we do among the finest art critics (Posner 1997, 5). Moreover, even if we concede that we learn psychological truths from art, it would not follow from this that we also learn the disposition to act justly upon those truths, which is required for genuine moral advancement (10).

Jerome Stolnitz also defends a sceptical position on the matter. He argues that the truths that art is supposed to teach us do not possess the distinctive features possessed by truths of the more indubitable sort, such as scientific or common-sense truths. For one thing, the truths gleaned from art seem curiously immune to contradiction (Stolnitz 1992, 196). William Ernest Henley's poem *Invictus* (1888) holds that "I am the master of my fate;/ I am the captain of my soul." Henley seems to be saying that people, or at least some people, are in complete control of their lives. Greek tragedies, on the other hand, seem to hold that people can never control their fate. According to Stolnitz, we are undisturbed by these formal contradictions because we are not dealing with propositions aimed at truth.

Secondly, truths need some kind of confirmation, some evidence in their support. But confirmation eludes the truths we find expressed in great works of art, as many of their alleged moral lessons behave like bad generalizations when applied to a broader set of cases taken from the real world (Stolnitz 1992, 196–97). For instance, *Pride and Prejudice* may be interpreted as a story of how "stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice keep attractive people apart" (193). But is this anything that one may generalise and apply with some confidence to any other context? Stolnitz thinks that the answer to this is negative.

Martha C. Nussbaum firmly rejects many of the presuppositions on which views such as Stolnitz's are grounded. Stolnitz assumes that moral knowledge is something like a list of true propositions, or a set of general rules. Nussbaum, following Aristotle, believes that moral knowledge is much broader than that, as it includes emotional and volitional activity, that is, emotional responses, feeling, desires, and the like (1992, 40). Relatedly, she denies that general rules may exhaust our ethical knowledge, as this rests crucially on our capacity to react appropriately in the context of very specific situations (153). Because of this, some novels may in fact be just as important for our understanding of morality as standard works in ethics. These typically discuss far-fetched and simplified cases in order to draw general conclusions, whereas novels avoid idealised and regularised features, and present instead highly particularised scenarios.

I conclude by noting some ways in which the possibility of gaining moral knowledge from

art may impact the debate examined in the first section of this chapter. As a first example, think of Nussbaum's claim that we may gain moral knowledge from some novels. As we have just seen, the capacity novels have to develop our moral sensibility is strictly tied to the style and content of the novel in question, as it is dependent on a perceptive presentation of highly particularised scenarios. This may suggest that the moral value of a work may enhance its artistic value. The work's artistically valuable features acquire part of their value from their unique capacity of providing moral insight. If all of this is true, then it may lend support to interactionist views such as moderate moralism.

Secondly, some of the views considered above explicitly rely on art's capacity to provide moral knowledge (or lack thereof). Posner's defense of radical autonomism is partly supported by his denial that works educate morally. Kieran's defense of cognitive immoralism rests on the claim that artworks adopting immoral perspectives may enhance our moral understanding, and Gaut's cognitive argument for ethicism relies on a similar assumption.

Box 2: Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* and moral knowledge

The Potato Eaters by Vincent Van Gogh via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

Matthew Kieran considers Vincent Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* (1885) an illustration of how artworks have the capacity to further our moral education (1996, 344–46). The painting represents poor peasants gathered for their meagre meal. In a letter, Van Gogh expressed the view that pictures of peasants painted in a rough style, without the charming quality that is often found in depictions of the rural world, might give people a better sense of the harshness of that lifestyle—compare Van Gogh's work with peasant paintings by Jean-Batiste-Camille Corot to understand the sort of charming quality that Van Gogh considered inappropriate. According to Kieran, this painting's capacity to enhance our moral understanding depends on the fact that Van Gogh is prescribing us to imagine what it is like to be poor peasants who, in spite of their harsh material conditions, lead their lives with dignity and mutual respect. These prescribed imaginings would be hindered, Kieran observes, by a highly polished pictorial style, which would romanticise the picture and perhaps make us oblivious to the struggles of the people represented in it.

Lastly, but perhaps most interestingly, Cynthia Freeland notes that, if we grant that art may change our moral outlook, then we should be open to the possibility that our judgment as to the moral character of the artwork is itself going to be impacted by the artwork's effect on our moral sensibility (1997, 18). This point might be dismissed in the case of single artworks—after all, how much could a work possibly change our moral compass? However,

Freeland's suggestion gains relevance if we think of cases in which our evaluation bears on various works, all sharing the same outlook. Imagine a series of highly aestheticised propaganda documentaries. On our first encounter, the documentaries' problematic agenda results in a failure of uptake, in Carroll's sense: because of the work's moral perspective, we fail to respond to it in the way intended by its author. However, this initial failure may be overcome by the capacity these documentaries have to get us to buy into their moral universe once we are sufficiently exposed to them. And once the uptake is successful, the work's moral perspective is no more an obstacle to its artistic appreciation. This would not of course be enough to show that the uptake argument fails; rather, it would show that uptake is influenced by a work's effect on our moral sensibility.[9]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented some philosophical views on the connection between art and morality. Most importantly, we have considered the possibility of evaluating artworks along moral lines, as well the possible connection of this evaluation to their artistic value. This is not the only sense in which moral matters may be brought to bear on artistic evaluation. A question that has attracted a good deal of public attention in recent years is whether an artist's personal moral failings are relevant to the evaluation of their art.[10] The investigation of the connection between art and morality remains therefore an open and productive field of philosophical research.

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9. Note how Gaut's first objection to Carroll's argument questioned exactly Carroll's reliance on an idealised and fixed response by a morally sensitive audience.

10. Principled answers to this question have been offered by Wills and Holt (2017), Bartel (2019), and Harold (2020, Chapter 3).

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CHAPTER 5.

WHAT MAKES AN ARTWORK BEAUTIFUL?

XIAO OUYANG

INTRODUCTION

At least two concepts are immediately involved in any attempt at answering the question "What Makes an Artwork Beautiful?" Namely, the notion of beauty—a keyword in Western aesthetics—and the notion of art—one of the most debated topics in contemporary philosophical aesthetics. Given the still ongoing discussion of these two notions, and the synthetic nature of our inquiry regarding both topics, it is reasonable to think that, in principle, there can be various possible answers to these questions. What follows below is more a tentative reflection than anything conclusive. Since Chapter 2 is devoted to the definition of artwork and Chapter 6 to natural beauty, for the sake of avoiding overlap, this chapter suspends the discussion of the notion of "artwork" in general and does not majorly concern itself with the discussion of "beauty in nature/natural beauty." Finally, for the sake of clarity, it may be plausible to shift the focus of the question "what makes an artwork beautiful?" to an investigation of "artistic beauty."

Before embarking upon this investigation of "artistic beauty," an immediate axiological challenge comes to our attention—how much does "the beautiful" still matter to art and artworks after the modern and contemporary art movements (especially the avant-garde) have transformed not only our conception of art, but also its reality? If being beautiful or not is no longer an essential concern for artistic creation, why do we still care about "what makes an artwork beautiful?" Moreover, in philosophical aesthetics, there has also been the so-called "anti-aesthetics movement" since the 1980s, which heavily criticises the traditional Western discourse of aesthetics and its upholding of beauty as a fundamental issue. None of the recent influential trends in the studies of philosophical aesthetics focus on "artistic beauty"[1]—even though revived interest in beauty has indeed been witnessed lately.[2] I find that there is no satisfying answer to this challenge. However, historically speaking, many

influential philosophers and artists have regarded aesthetics as the same as philosophy of art and viewed art as the highest embodiment of beauty. I think that, despite the fact that artistic beauty is no longer the most important topic in aesthetics and philosophy of art, it nonetheless plays a significant role in our everyday experiences.

Looking at the Taj Mahal in the distance at sunset; walking through the Stourhead Gardens on a clear autumn day; gazing at Johanne Vermeer's portrait *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665); slowly unfolding the scroll *A Thousand Lis of Rivers and Mountains* painted by Wang Ximeng;[3] listening to the *Flowing Water* played on Guqin; watching a performance of the ballet Swan Lake; reading through the calligraphy *Lantingji xu* by Wang Xizhi;[4] reciting the poetry of Yeats; or gazing upon the relic of The Venus de Milo at Louvre—we frequently hear people describe these as "beautiful." Why do we find these human-created objects—buildings, gardens, paintings, music, dances, poetry, sculptures, etc. (things we regard as artworks)—beautiful? What contributes to artistic beauty? In what follows, I will review several influential thoughts regarding artistic beauty from both the Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions.

INFLUENTIAL PHILOSOPHERS AND THEORIES

Similar to the Greek term *mousikê* (the art of the Muses), the ancient Chinese notion *yue* 乐 also refers to a consortium of musico-poetic arts. The so-called "song culture"—"a culture in which poetry, music, and dance were a major means of expressing religious, political, ethical, and erotic values" (Halliwell 2009)—occurred in both ancient civilizations. It is perhaps of little surprise that some of the earliest reflections on artistic beauty come from music.

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1. For instance, "Environmental Aesthetics" directs our attention away from a narrowly defined artworld; to some extent, from the artistic to the natural. "Everyday Aesthetics" extends our aesthetic appreciation to the mundane, the ordinary, the so-called "minor league aesthetic qualities" that are pervasive in daily life and "can be experienced without the same kind and degree of aesthetic sensibility [for appreciating 'beauty and sublimity'] or sophistication required for art appreciation," such as the "pretty, nice, interesting, cute, sweet, adorable, boring, plain, drab, dowdy, shabby, gaudy, ostentatious, and the like" (Saito 2015).
2. In the past two decades, the issue of beauty has been revisited from various perspectives by the works of Mary Mothersill, Li Zehou, James Kirwan, Umberto Eco, Marcia Eaton, Jennifer McMahon, Alexander Nehamas, Roger Scruton, Denis Dutton, John Dadosky, so on and so forth. Conferences, symposiums, and seminars are frequently devoted to the study of beauty—just to name a few, "The Place of Beauty in The Contemporary World" (2019, Finland), "Philosophy and Beauty" (2019, Japan), "Beauty and Tradition" (2018, Australia), "Beauty and Why It Matters" (2018, Canada).
3. This legendary painting, preserved in The Palace Museum in Beijing, is called Qian li Jiangshan juan 千里江山卷 in Chinese, alleged to be painted by then 18-year old painter Wang Ximeng 王希孟 (1096–1119) in 1113. (See the online collection: https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/228354.html)
4. A legendary work by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361). A copy of it attributed to the Tang dynasty calligrapher Feng Chengsu 冯承素 (617–672) is preserved at The Palace Museum in Beijing. (See the online collection: https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/handwriting/228279.html)

In the West, the discovery of the correspondence between the central musical chords and certain whole number ratios is attributed to Pythagoras of Samos (c. 570–495 BCE). The Pythagorean school believed that beauty comes from the numeric harmony exemplified by music, which also manifests pervasively in the universe. Particular mathematical proportions, ratios (e.g., the Golden Ratio)[5] and shapes (e.g., the circle) bring about aesthetic excellence and make things—natural objects or artefacts alike—beautiful. It is said that the ancient Greek sculptor Polykleitos (c. 480/475–415 BCE), an alleged follower of the Pythagorean school, created the famous *Doryphoros* on the basis of a secret mathematical formula. Art historians often interpret this sculpture in terms of the so-called chiastic principle—a method of counterbalancing the parts in contrast, to form a proportioned symmetrical whole—and regard it as perfectly illustrating a paradigm of male beauty. In architecture, the famous Roman architect Vitruvius (80–15 BCE) in his *De Architectura* (The Ten Books on Architecture) a few centuries later claimed, in a similar Pythagorean spirit, that the beauty (*venustas*) of a building is produced "by the dimensions of all the parts being duly proportioned to each other," forming a whole with a pleasing appearance (Vitruvius 1984, 13).

In China, similar to the Pythagorean investigation, the ancient thought of music emphasised cosmic harmony and the unification of diversity—"music is the harmony of heaven and earth," "music promotes the same feeling of love via diverse patterns."[6] However, the Chinese tradition defined music clearly in terms of human feelings. *The Book of Music* argues that sound, the element of music, arises from the movement of the human susceptible heart-mind (*xin*) when it is affected by external things,[7] and music is thus essentially determined by a relational reaction of the heart-mind towards external things.[8] Therefore, one may consequently infer that the aesthetic excellency of music from the ancient Chinese perspective does not merely lie in its formalistic quality.

In his *Hippias Major*, despite "[appealing] to artworks as examples of beautiful things … generally Plato (c. 428–328 BCE) conducts his inquiry into beauty at a distance from his discussion of art" (Pappas 2020). But in light of Plato's Theory of Forms—beauty is regarded as a canonical example of the eternal and unchanging Forms that cause corresponding characteristics in the concrete things in the phenomenal world—what makes something beautiful (be it artwork or not) is then the Form of Beauty or the Beautiful Itself.[9] Moreover,

5. It has been debated that the attachment of importance to the Golden Ratio in visual arts has something to do with the Pythagorean tradition.

6. "**乐**者, 天地之和也," (Liji Zhengyi, 1270). "**乐**者异文合**爱**者" (1267).

7. "凡音之起, 由人心生也. 人心之动, 物使之然也. 感于物而动, 故形于声. 声相**应**, 故生变, 变成方, **谓**之音; 比音而**乐**之, 及干戚羽旄, **谓**之**乐**" (Liji Zhengyi, 1251).

8. "**乐**者, 音之所由生也. 其本在人心之感于物也" (Liji Zhengyi, 1253).

9. "The Beautiful itself–as Plato calls the eternal, unchanging and divine Form of Beauty, accessible not to the

because artworks are considered as the imitation of the concrete things in the word, artistic beauty is then two times removed from the ideal and original Form of Beauty or the Beautiful itself. The Neoplatonist Plotinus (c. 204–270) further states that all things are beautiful due to the presence of beautiful Forms in the intelligible world. These beautiful Forms are intelligible in the sense that they are understood only by intellectual means.[10]

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) inherited the notion of art as mimesis, but, unlike Plato, Aristotle not only regards beauty as a real property of things—as he thinks that the beautiful and the essence of beauty, be it Form or not, are "one and the same in no merely accidental way"[11]—but also that art, such as poetry, represents something more universal (thus to some extent more real in the Platonic sense) than the actual world we experience.[12] Moreover, in viewing beauty "as in some sense a cause," Aristotle laid out the groundwork for the later Kantian teleological conception of beauty in terms of the notion of purposiveness.[13] Still, Aristotle is not too different from the Pythagorean tradition in attributing artistic

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senses, but only to the intellect (*Symposium*, 211d). Instances of beauty in the sensible world exhibit variability or relativity: something is beautiful at one time, not at another; in one respect or relation, not in another; to one observer, not to another. The Beautiful itself lacks all such variability, it 'always is and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes …' (ibid., 211a)" (Janaway 2000).

10. "In the intelligible world it will see all the beautiful Forms and will declare that these Ideas are what Beauty is. For all things are beautiful due to these; they are the offsprings of Intellect and Substantiality … the 'place' of the Forms is intelligible Beauty, whereas the Good transcends that and is the 'source and principle' of Beauty. … In any case, Beauty is in the intelligible world" (Plotinus 2018, *The Enneads*, 1.6.9).

11. Here is Aristotle's argument for this point: "the good, then, must be one with the essence of good, and the beautiful with the essence of beauty, and so with all things which do not depend on something else but are self-subsistent and primary. For it is enough if they are this, even if there are no Forms; and perhaps all the more if there are Forms.—At the same time it is clear that if there are Ideas such as some people say there are, the substratum of them will not be substance; for these must be substances, and not predicable of a substratum; for if they were they would exist only by being participated in.—Each thing then and its essence are one and the same in no merely accidental way, as is evident both from the preceding arguments and because to know each thing, at least, is to know its essence, so that even by the exhibition of instances it becomes clear that both must be one" (Aristotle 1991, *Metaphysics*, 1031b11–1031b21).

12. "The distinction between historian and poet … consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry" (Aristotle 1991, *Poetics*, 1451a37–1451b26).

13. "And since these (e.g. order and definiteness) are obviously causes of many things, evidently these sciences must treat this sort of cause also (i.e., the beautiful) as in some sense a cause" (Aristotle 1991, *Metaphysics*, 1078b6–1705). "Those who thought thus stated that there is a principle of things which is at the same time the cause of beauty, and that sort of cause from which things acquire movement" (*Metaphysics*, 984b8–984b22). Kant defines beauty in terms of purposiveness without a purpose, or subjective formal purposiveness. For a detailed discussion of Kant's concept of purposiveness, its relation to aesthetic judgment and Kant's teleological thought in general, see Xiao Ouyang (2019, 100–109).

beauty to proper magnitude, order and proportion. He writes, "beauty is a matter of size and order" (*Poetics*, 1450b22); "beauty is realized in number and magnitude, and the state which combines magnitude with good order must necessarily be the most beautiful" (*Politics*, 1326b3–5); "The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree" (*Metaphysics*, 1078b6–1705).[14]

In addition, Aristotle thinks that in the "works of art … the scattered elements are combined" in an organic whole which allow the otherwise less fair parts to appear beautiful together.[15] This emphasis on the intrinsic tie between artistic beauty and integrity was promoted and cherished widely as a characteristic of classicism. It can be seen, for example, in the leading Roman poet Horace's (65–8 BCE) *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry). Cassius Longinus (c. 213–273) in his famous *On the Sublime* holds that there are passages that are not "noticeable in [themselves], yet all in combination produce a perfect structure," and that this well-organised unity then contributes to the grandeur of poetry.[16] Despite their differences, for the ancient Greeks and Romans, what makes an artwork beautiful are objective and real qualities of the artwork itself. In addition, the ancient root of the discussion of artistic beauty in the West shows a dimension of aesthetic formalism, which remains particularly active in the Western aesthetic tradition since Plato.

In the Western tradition, one can hardly ignore the significant input of Christian religion in shaping the understanding of artistic beauty. St. Augustine (354–430), in his *Confessions*, recalled his early writings "on the fair and fit"—what he now called the "lower beauties" that were demonstrated by "corporeal examples" ([397] 2002). Similar to Aristotle and his Roman predecessors, St. Augustine thinks this sort of beauty comes from a harmonised organic whole formed by corresponding parts.[17] In his *City of God* ([413–426] 1871, bk. XXII), Augustine writes, "for all bodily beauty consists in the proportion of the parts, together with a

14. I think *Sun and Immortal Bird Gold Foil* (c. 13th century BCE, unearthed in Jinsha site of the city Chengdu in 2001) can illustrate the Aristotelian notion of beauty. This gold ornament was chosen to be the symbol of Chinese Cultural Heritage.

15. "There is a similar combination of qualities in good men, who differ from any individual of the many, as the beautiful are said to differ from those who are not beautiful, and works of art from realities, because in them the scattered elements are combined, although, if taken separately, the eye of one person or some other feature in another person would be fairer than in the picture. Whether this principle can apply to every democracy, and to all bodies of men, is not clear" (Aristotle 1991, *Politics*, 1281a40–1282a23).

16. "Language is made grand in the highest degree by that which corresponds to the collocation of limbs in the body, of which no one, if cut off from another, has anything noticeable in itself, yet all in combination produce a perfect structure. So great passages … if they are formed by partnership into a body, and also enclosed by the bond of rhythm … contribute to a common fund of grandeur" (Longinus 1906, sect. XL).

17. "'What then is the beautiful? And what is beauty? ... 'And I marked and perceived that in bodies themselves, there was a beauty, from their forming a sort of whole, and again another from apt and mutual correspondence, as of a part of the body with its whole, or a shoe with a foot, and the like" (Augustine [397–400] 2002, bk. IV).

certain agreeableness of colour." In this view we see the confluence of the classical proportion theory of beauty (related notions: unity, integrity, harmony, order, wholeness, etc.) with the colour-light theory of beauty that became increasingly influential in Medieval aesthetics.

Arguably, the great synthesis of the age came with St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas writes, "for beauty includes three conditions, integrity or perfection (*integritas sive perfectio*), since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due proportion or harmony (*proportio sive consonantia*); and lastly, brightness, or clarity (*claritas*), whence things are called beautiful which have a bright color" (1920, I.39.8).[18] It can be argued that, in identifying the three formal constituents of beauty, namely, integrity, proportion, and clarity (*proportio*, *claritas*, and *integritas*), Aquinas not only further developed the aesthetic formalist dimension from Ancient Greek tradition, but also provided an objectivist account of artistic beauty. However, there is another essential aspect in both Augustine's and Aquinas' understanding of beauty. In the Christian worldview, God is the cause for light, order, and harmony, and God is the most virtuous artist, who created the world and human beings. Aquinas discusses each of the three constitutive elements of beauty in relation to a property of the Son, while the confessing Augustine reminds us, the ultimate cause of all things beautiful—natural objects and artefacts alike—is God: "beauty of all things beautiful" ([397-400] 2002, bk. III), whose "own fairness makest all things fair" (bk. I).

One of the earliest ancient Chinese notions of beauty can be reconstructed on the materials from the *Book of Changes*.[19] This ancient text records a puzzling proposition, "*you mei han zhi* (有美含之)," literally, "containing in this there is *mei*."[20] *Mei* 美 is the Chinese word regarded as a counterpart of beauty. However, *mei* can also be used as an adjective and a verb, thus meaning "beautiful" or "to beautify." This early proposition about beauty in the Chinese tradition is interpreted as referring to the formation of the decorative pattern(s) (*wen* 文), such as the shapes, colours and grains seen in plants and animals.[21] One may argue that, in light of

18. Cited from Sevier (2015, 104).

19. A.k.a., *Yijing* 易经, an ancient book originally used for divination. It contains a text formed around the mid-Western Zhou dynasty (around 10th or 9th Century BCE) and 10 appendices, the latest of which was formed before the mid-Warring States period (around 4th century BCE).

20. Chinese classical texts are not punctuated. The possibility of abstracting such a proposition lies in the leading Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) textual study and his division of the text. Some other ways of dividing the text do not allow such a proposition.

21. As the *Book of Changes* is known for being extremely succinct and obscure, this point is a summary of a long history of exegesis and debates. In Wu Cheng's 吴澄 (1249–1333) commentary on the *Book of Changes*, he argues that "'*han zhang*' refers to image … when the *yin* and *yang* intersect and mix, they form a decorative pattern called '*zhang*' ('含章,' 象也…阴阳相间**杂**而成文曰章" (Wu 1781, vol. 1). Liu Gangji 刘**纲纪** interprets the proposition "*you mei han zhi* 有美含之 (containing in it there is beauty)" as the same as the notion of "*han zhang*," and thereby relates *mei* to the notion of "*cheng wen* 成文 (forming patterns)" (Liu G. 2006, 18). It is worth noting that *zhang* and *wen* together form the name for the Chinese term for writing or literature, "*wen zhang*." Liu's

the ancient Chinese tradition, what makes an artwork beautiful is its exhibition of a certain decorative pattern—if one ignores the possible chicken-and-egg dilemma. In Ernst Grosse's *The Beginning of Art* (2014), it is argued that early decorative art comes from the patterns of natural things.

Mei in the *Book of Changes*, as well as in other ancient Chinese texts,[22] is related to the notion of fine/fineness (or good/goodness). Paleographic studies provide us with further evidence. The 2nd century Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi*, complied by Xu Shen 许慎 (58–148), states that "[*mei*] means delicious or sweet [*gan* 甘]. Its character is composed of the characters for Sheep/Goat (*yang* 羊) and Big (*da* 大). Among the six kinds of domestic animals, Sheep/Goat is a major source of food. Beauty and Fine/Good (*hao* 好) have the same meaning."[23] It is worth noting here that some argue that Plato's word *kalon*—often translated as "beautiful"—is also closer to the notion of "fine" in many contexts (Janaway 2000).[24] St. Thomas Aquinas draws another clear equivalence between beauty and goodness ("beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally"), but instead of giving a somewhat pragmatic explanation like the Chinese source, Aquinas believed that beauty and goodness "are based on the same thing, namely, the form" (1920, I.5.4 ad 1).[25]

Generally speaking, ancient Greek and Chinese thinkers seem to have no interest in (or perhaps no need for) distinguishing what makes an artwork beautiful and what makes it useful or good, as we do. Moreover, seeking moral values in beauty (a topic largely omitted in this chapter) consistently constitutes a dominant approach in both traditions. In the Chinese art tradition, propositions such as "literature for the sake of carrying on the Dao" (文以**载**道), "poetry for the sake of expressing aspiration" (**诗**以言志), "music for the sake of resonating with the Dao" (以音**应**道), "seeking [spiritual] tranquillity in sound-music" (声中求静) are mainstream throughout Chinese history. According to this tradition, the aesthetic excellence of art is intertwined with its practical and, especially, moral values. In a sense, what makes an artwork beautiful has to be something morally good as well. Art became a method of moral self-cultivation.[26] The modern conception that what makes an artwork beautiful should be

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further argument: "《周易》坤卦中所言"含章"之美, "文"之美，指的是山川, 动植物的形状, 花**纹**, 色彩等的美 …《周易》的美的**观**念同"好", "善"的**观**念是**紧**密联系在一起，还没有从"好", "善"中完全独立和分化出来" (36).

22. In the *Laozi*, *mei* is paired with *e* **恶** (evil) to form an antithesis, for instance, "all under heaven know beautiful [*mei*] as beautiful, then [there is] … *e* **恶** [ugly, evil, bad]. 天下皆知 美之**为**美, 斯**恶**矣" (Chen 2020, 56). Also, in the *Guanzi*, "*e* **恶** is the *chong* 充 [growth, filling, supply] of *mei* **恶**者美之充也" (Li 2004, vol.4, 250).

23. "甘也. 从羊, 大. 羊在六畜主**给**膳也. 美与善同意" (Xu 1981, 146).

24. "Plato's concept of beauty is arguably quite different from the modern aesthetic concept, whatever exactly that is. We translate Plato's word *kalon* as 'beautiful,' but a preferable translation in many contexts is 'fine.' Definitions and examples from the Platonic dialogue *Hippias Major* illuminate the broad application of *kalon*: a fine girl is fine, so is anything made of gold, so is living a rich and healthy life and giving your parents a decent burial" (Janaway 2000).

25. Cited from Sevier (2015, 13).

something *sui generis* and different from what makes it cognitively, morally, religiously or politically valuable came to prominence at a rather late stage of the history of aesthetics. Surely, one would say, when we look at a Song dynasty vessel made in Ruyao and feel it is elegant and beautiful, it is not because of it being suitable for flower-arranging or its value in auction, but simply that its colour and shape, as well as the light and shadow playing around it delight us. In this transition of the understanding of beauty to the so-called disinterested theory of beauty (with a famous slogan "l'art pour l'art"), a great contribution comes from Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

Despite the fact that Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) is widely regarded as the one who established aesthetics as a modern philosophical discipline and defined it as "the science of sensible cognition" (actually largely as "the theory of the liberal arts"),[27] it is Kant's seminal work *Critique of Judgment* (1790) that realised a genuine breakthrough.[28] In this work, Kant engages an important 18th century topic, namely taste, by means of a unique investigation on the power of reflective judgment. Art is only one of multiple concerns in the *Critique of Judgment*. In sections 42 and 43 of the book, Kant provides a clarification of the relevant notions of art, such as "art in general," "free art," "mercenary art" (or craft), "aesthetic art" (including "agreeable art," "fine art"), among which it is arguably only fine art (*schöne Kunst*, literally, "beautiful art") that can be considered the art proper which plays a significant role in the notion of beauty in Kantian aesthetics. According to Kant, both kinds of aesthetic art entail the feeling of pleasure, while for fine art, "the pleasure should accompany presentations that are ways of cognizing" instead of "presentations that are mere sensations" ([1790] 1987, 5:305). Fine art is the embodiment of beauty, and it entails "a pleasure of reflection rather than one of enjoyment arising from mere sensation" (5:306). For instance, Kant regards table-music played at banquets as merely agreeable art instead of fine art, for it is "only an agreeable noise serving to keep the minds in a cheerful mood … foster[ing] the free flow of conversation

26. I have analysed how this ideology had driven the evolution of the aesthetic standards of Chinese literati music; see Xiao Ouyang (2018). In Zhu Xi's poem devoted to his Chinese zither styled Ziyang (i.e., the *Ziyang Qinming* 紫阳琴**铭**), we find a paradigm of this ideology: "养君中和之正性, 禁尔忿欲之邪心. 乾坤无言物有**则**, 我独与子**钩**其深 ("cultivate one's upright propensity towards the balanced and the harmonious, exterminate one's evil mind regarding anger and desire. The universe says nothing while everything has its principle to follow, and I shall explore with you [my Ziyang zither] the profoundness in this") (Zhu 2002, vol. 24, 3994).

27. "Die Ästhetik (als Theorie der freien Künste, als untere Erkenntnislehre, als Kunst des schönen Denkens und als Kunst des der Vernunft analogen Denkens) ist die Wissenschaft der sinnlichen Erkenntnis" (Aesthetics, [as the theory of the liberal arts, the logic of the lower capacities of cognition, the art of thinking beautifully, and the art of reasoning analogous to thinking] is the science of sensible cognition")(Baumgarten [1750-58] 1983, §1).

28. "Kant's complex and delicate interpretation of the freedom of the imagination in the experience of beauty can be seen as the summation and synthesis of ideas set forth at the outset of the flowering of modern aesthetics in the first decades of the eighteenth century" (Guyer 2004).

between each person and his neighbour, without anyone's paying the slightest attention to the music's composition" (5:306).

Also, "fine art must have the look of nature even though we are conscious of it as art" (Kant [1790] 1987, 5:307). Because this naturalness comes from the purposiveness in its form that seems to be "free from all constraint of chosen rules" and is linked to a "feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive power," Kant argues that the "beautiful is what we like in merely judging [the purposive form of] it (rather than either in sensation proper or through a concept)" (5:306). In brief, Kant thinks when we judge an artwork as beautiful, that is because the purposive form it exhibits arouses a harmonious free play of our cognitive powers (such as imagination and understanding). For instance, in an aesthetic appreciation of a flower painting by van Gogh, we are very likely to be delighted by its various formal characteristics such as its vibrant colours and expressive brushstrokes, and therefore call it as beautiful. Kant would argue that in this experience, our aroused "imagination in its freedom harmonizes with the understanding in its lawfulness" (5:287). That is, for collaboratively realising the presentation involved in such an aesthetic experience, our power of understanding cannot be directed to any determinate concepts (such as the species and genus of the flowers, their proper anatomy and other botanical features), but to the so-called cognition in general.[29] Kant thinks that aesthetic judgment concerns merely the form of the object and does not involve any concept (either cognitive or moral), nor does it require the real existence of the object.

One may be forgiven for thinking that Kant is a radical formalist, who finds aesthetic value only in the form of an artwork, and not in its content or meaning. However, it would be wrong to boil his thinking down to this one notion. In his discussion of free beauty, Kant argues, "when we judge free beauty (according to mere form) … we presuppose no concept of any purpose for which the manifold is to serve the given object, and hence no concept [as to] what the object is [meant] to represent" ([1790] 1987, 5:229). For Kant, many natural things such as flowers and trees, or human-created things such as "the foliage on borders or on wallpaper," "fantasias in music … indeed all music not set to words" fall into the category of free beauty. By contrast, the beauty of a building, human beauty, etc., presupposing "the concept of the purpose that determines what the thing is [meant] to be, and hence a concept of its perfection," is only adherent beauty. In other words, artistic beauty (or the beauty of fine arts) can be either free beauty or adherent beauty (a.k.a., "conditioned beauty"), depending on whether the focus of the actual judging presupposes a concept or not. In addition, comparable to the Chinese tradition, Kant thinks that there is a relation between the beautiful and the morally good, although he thinks the relation is an analogical one, and "the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good." For instance, the beautiful can "arouse sensations in us

29. "Cognition in general" is not a specific cognition, but the *a priori* pattern or structure of the cognitive powers in a "proportioned attunement" (Kant [1790] 1987, 5: 217–219).

that are somehow analogous to the consciousness we have in a mental state produced by moral judgments" (5:353–354). In this sense, by maintaining a symbolic relation and a sound analogy between the moral and the beautiful, it is hard to say that Kant fully breaks with the ancient tradition.

G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) explicitly uses the term aesthetics as "philosophy of fine art."[30] Therefore, unlike Kant, whose account of the beautiful primarily considered natural beauty, Hegel places artistic beauty as the main subject in his aesthetics. For Hegel, inherent in the concept of beauty there are the ideas of freedom and infinity,[31] as beauty is the sensuous manifestation of the freedom of spirit, and "the Idea as the immediate unity of the Concept with its reality … [which] is present immediately in sensuous and real appearance" ([1835] 1988, 116). Hegel believes that "everything spiritual is better than any product of nature … no natural being is able, as art is, to present the divine Ideal" (29), and therefore, he claims that "the beauty of art is higher than nature. The beauty of art is beauty born of the spirit and born again … [while] the beauty of nature appears only as a reflection of the beauty that belongs to spirit, as an imperfect incomplete mode [of beauty], a mode which in its *substance* is contained in the spirit itself" (2). In brief, underneath all the formal qualities of beautiful artworks (unity, harmony, organic wholeness, etc.) is the free spirit that makes artwork beautiful, "everything beautiful is truly beautiful only as sharing in this higher sphere and generated by [spirit]" which is "alone the true, comprehending everything in itself" (2).

Generally speaking, Hegel's notion of "beauty itself" as "the Idea made real in the sensuous and actual world" ([1835] 1988, 284) bears strong traits of essentialism. In the Chinese tradition, the essentialist approach of understanding artistic beauty was never full-fledged by itself. This might have something to do with the aforementioned "interested" tendency in the Chinese art tradition which fuses practical concerns with aesthetic pursuits, but also might be a linguistic issue. It is argued that grammar and metaphysical thinking have an intrinsic relation. According to this view, the fact that there is no counterpart of the copula "be" in the classical Chinese language has contributed to its lack of the notion of "being" and therefore the possibility of an Aristotelian argument for "being qua being," which then leads Chinese metaphysical thinking to a different path from substance ontology. In aesthetics, the fusion of the functions of verb, noun, and adjective in the same word *mei* seems to reduce the possibility of an essentialist approach in the Chinese tradition. In the modern Chinese language, despite the fact that *mei* has been gradually read into the philosophical qualities of

30. "Because of the unsatisfactoriness, or more accurately, the superficiality of this word [Aesthetics], attempts were made after all to frame others, e.g. 'Callistics'. … As a name then it [Aesthetics] may be retained, but the proper expression for our science is Philosophy of Art and, more definitely, Philosophy of Fine Art" (Hegel [1835] 1988, 1).

31. "Owing to this freedom and infinity, which are inherent in the Concept of beauty, as well as in the beautiful object and its subjective contemplation, the sphere of the beautiful is withdrawn from the relativity of finite affairs and raised into the absolute realm of the Idea and its truth" (Hegel [1835] 1988, 115).

its Western counterpart, terms such "*mei benshen* (美本身, beauty itself)" had to be coined in order to properly translate the essentialist notion of beauty.

However, in the Chinese tradition, there seems to be a *prima facie* Hegelian thesis related to artistic beauty. As Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850) states in his *Wenzhang Lun* (文章论, *On Literature*), "Writing as such [comes from] the inspiring *qi* (vital energy) of *ziran* (the self-so). It comes in [a state of] uncertainty, it arrives without any articulation."[32] Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修 (1007–1072), arguably the most distinguished man of letters of the time, echoes Li's point and says, "he who would like to author something immortal, [or] whatever inside manifests externally, [must] achieve it via the self-so."[33] About a century later, another great poet Lu You 陆游 (1125–1210) expresses in his poem *Wenzhang* (文章 *Literature*) that "literature is originally a heavenly accomplishment, and the exquisite writers discovered it by accident."[34] This line of thought went on and enjoyed a prominence in the 17th and 18th centuries. Influential figures such as Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682) and Yao Nai 姚鼐 (1731–1815) were recorded to say respectively, "like a breeze travelling on the water, patterns/writings (*wen*) are formed naturally";[35] "the source of literature roots in the heaven and earth."[36] Throughout history, despite its many variations, this influential line of thought is witnessed in literary criticism and reflections on other forms of art. It can be summarised into a thesis: artistic excellency comes from *ziran* (the self-so).[37] *Ziran* or self-so is a central idea in Chinese philosophy. A comparative study between it and the Hegelian absolute spirit would be enlightening, but it is not the task of the current chapter. In a nutshell, the self-so is hardly a transcendental or non-material entity.

A relevant question to our concern might be, would this artistic excellence in the Chinese tradition be the same as beauty? Arguably, beauty is regarded as the keyword in Western art tradition since antiquity. If we browse Chinese classical writings on art criticism, a striking difference manifests—there the category of *mei* or beauty does not have a dominant presence. For instance, among the 24 aesthetic categories of poetry listed by Sikong Tu 司空图 (837–908) in his celebrated treatise (Sikong n.d.), only three or four categories can be regarded as related to the Western notion of beauty. Moreover, according to Xu Hong's (c. 1580–1660) *Xishan Qinkuang* 谿山琴况 (c. 1640), the most influential treatise on the aesthetics of guqin (Chinese zither) music, the category of *li* (pretty, beautiful) is merely the 10th of

32. 文之为物, 自然灵气. 恍惚而来, 不思而至 (Dong et al. n.d., vol. 709).

33. 君子之欲著于不朽者, 有诸其内而见于外者, 必得于自然 (Ouyang Xiu 2001, vol. 140, 2239).

34. 文章本天成, 妙手偶得之 (Lu 2011, vol. 8, 228).

35. 风行水上, 自然成文 (Lu 2011, vol. 19, 752).

36. 文章之原, 本乎天地 (Yao 1935, vol. 4, 35).

37. This thesis is dominant in literature but also celebrated in other arts. It may sound like Plato's theory of inspiration, but *ziran* or the self-so is not personified god or goddess such as the Muse. There is no such state of involuntary "possession" or madness in the process of artistic creation.

the 24 aesthetic categories, and the top six were harmony, tranquillity, clarity, profundity, antiquity, subtlety.[38] In Chinese paintings, prominence was given to the categories such as *shen* (spiritual) and *miao* (subtle) before *mei*. Overall, one also finds that the comparison between the beautiful and the sublime—which defined the influential aesthetics of Edmund Burke (1729–1797) and Immanuel Kant, and consequently became an iconic discourse in Western aesthetics—is also missing in the Chinese history of aesthetics. To conclude, in a cross-cultural comparative context, it is fair to say that an inquiry on what makes an artwork beautiful may turn out to be even less productive than in the contemporary artworld.

CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE: BRIEF REMARK

The Hegelian definition of aesthetics as the philosophy of art that considers the issue of artistic beauty as its core concern is no more enchanting in our time. Many would agree that the question "what makes an artwork beautiful" plays a minor role in contemporary aesthetics and philosophy of art, where the question has been updated to "what makes an artwork meaningful or valuable?"

Two factors might contribute to this situation. Firstly, it is not a coincidence that the loss of interest in the inquiry into artistic beauty coincides with a sea change in the artworld, transformed by new art movements as well as struggles in defining art. Being beautiful is no longer a defining feature of art. Also, when the representationalism, the expression theories, formalism, neoformalism, aesthetic theories in defining art all fail to offer an account that is capable of coping with the dynamic scenes of the artworld, and when the anti-essentialist movement in philosophical aesthetics then paves a way to functionalism, institutionalism and various versions of historicism, the question of artistic beauty as such not only loses its limelight, but also is, to some extent, abandoned for its strong Hegelian colour. Now if "art" itself becomes an open concept or a socially, historically, culturally sensitive notion, then whatever makes an artwork beautiful is unlikely to be something homogeneous and unitary.

Secondly, the inquiry into "beauty" experienced a shift of focus from the emphasis on aesthetic properties of the objects to the subjective experience involved in aesthetic appreciation. In other words, a shift from an inquiry about "the beauty of object" to the issue of "the pleasure of beauty." The contemporary inquiry into beauty in general is often classified in light of the framework of realism vs non-realism. Realism regards artistic beauty as a property of artworks which is independent of the subject, while non-realism holds that artistic beauty is not an independent property of artworks. This shift has a long historical preparation, contributed especially by the British empiricists such as Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) and David Hume (1711–1776). Hutcheson thinks that beauty lies in both the object and the subject, and artistic beauty comes from the quality of "uniformity amidst

38. 和, 静, 清, **远**, 古, 澹 (Research Institute of Music 2010, vol.14, 316–321).

variety" in the object and the involvement of an "internal sense" in the subject.[39] Hume argues that "beauty is no quality in things themselves," but a "sentiment" in "the mind that contemplates them" and "to seek the real beauty … is … fruitless."[40] In contemporary aesthetics, from the study of empathy to Freud's libido, to the evolutionary theory of beauty, to the focus on perception in aesthetic experience, more and more philosophers seek to answer the question of what makes an artwork beautiful in light of human physiology and psychology. For instance, the evolutionary theory regards artistic beauty as "fitness signal" that displays desirable personal qualities that strengthen reproductive advantage, and our pleasant feeling caused by something beautiful, like sexual pleasure, is engraved in our minds by the process of evolution, assisting us to make the "the most adaptive decisions for survival and reproduction."[41]

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that this investigation is nothing more than a tentative reflection on artistic beauty, because of the still ongoing discussions involving the notions of art and beauty in general. We then learned a great deal from many intelligent minds in human history, but still we seem to feel even less certain about an answer to our inquiry. I would also argue that a full inquiry into beauty is hardly separable from the issues such as the ugly and the odd (or the deformity) which we have not engaged. In Chinese aesthetics, the ugly or the odd has long been a remarkable subject in aesthetic appreciation. Furthermore, some may question our inquiry based on linguistic insight. What do we really mean by using the word "beautiful" to describe things? It seems that, in both Chinese and English languages, the word beautiful or *mei* is often generally used as a positive comment (like "nice!" "wonderful!") that refers to things that share nothing in common. Shall we accept that (even if reluctantly) artistic beauty or beauty in general is *Je ne sais quoi*, and sigh, "what is beautiful is difficult?"[42] It seems this is not our way out either. However elusive and undefinable the beautiful is, many of us still agree that it is something desirable, and something that sheds light on a deeper understanding of humanity, "what is beautiful is not beautiful by itself, it manifests through the human beings"[43]—those who create it and those who appreciate it. Now perhaps we may strategically shift our question again for some clarity.

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39. "The Figures which excite in us the Ideas of Beauty, seem to be those in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety" (§ II, p. 28). "The internal Sense is, a passive Power of receiving Ideas of Beauty from all Objects in which there is Uniformity amidst Variety" (§ VI, 67).

40. "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty … every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an inquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter" (Hume 1998, 136–137).

41. Denis Dutton (2010) provides such an account in his TED talk, "A Darwinian Theory of Beauty."

42. The quote is from Plato's *Hippias Major*, and "beautiful" is the translation of *kalon*, which would be closer to the word "fine." I use this quote in a more rhetorical sense.

Let's instead ask, who makes an artwork beautiful? I think the answer to this question would not be too difficult.

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43. "美不自美, 因人而彰" (Liu Z. 1936, vol.27, 84). This is a famous proposition in Chinese aesthetics proposed by Liu Zongyuan (773–819). It can be interpreted in several ways.

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CHAPTER 6.

WHAT MAKES NATURE BEAUTIFUL?

ELIZABETH SCARBROUGH

INTRODUCTION

As you have read in this volume, much of contemporary aesthetics focuses on the nature of art and artworks. The aesthetics of nature as a subdiscipline of analytic philosophical aesthetics gained prominence in the second half of the twentieth century.[1] Discussions about the aesthetics of nature are complicated by questions about the scope of the topic: Are we talking about natural objects? Natural environments? Whole ecosystems? What about human-created natural environments such as gardens, parks, and cityscapes? Exactly what counts as natural beauty?

In what follows I will present a brief overview of different theories of the beauty of nature. I will start by discussing two historical accounts that I believe have most impacted our current conception of the beauty in nature: the picturesque and the sublime. I will then turn to a discussion of contemporary accounts of the beauty of nature, dividing these accounts into conceptual accounts, non-conceptual accounts, and hybrid accounts of nature appreciation.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

Anthropocentric accounts: the picturesque and landscape aesthetics

The picturesque is an aesthetic category often applied to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It was popularised toward the end of the eighteenth century in Britain.[2] At the core of the

1. Ronald Hepburn's 1966 article, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," is a good place to start and a must-read for anyone interested in the topic. This essay, and many others I discuss in this chapter, can be found in Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant's edited volume, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Carlson and Berleant 2004).

2. The term seems to have first appeared in 1768, in an essay by Rev. William Gilpin (1724–1804) entitled, "An

notion of the picturesque is the prospect of converting natural scenes into pictures. This "landscape aesthetic" assumes that one ought to employ a mode of aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment that is informed by the practice, and aesthetic criteria of, landscape painting. Eighteenth-century landscape painters used devices such as the "Claude-glass" to help "frame" the scene they wished to paint. These Claude-glasses became so popular in the eighteenth century that travelers and other flâneurs would use them without any intention to paint the vistas they saw.[3] While there were many disparate understandings of the picturesque during this time period, I will mention two seminal figures: Sir Uvedale Price (1747–1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824).[4] Price argues that the picturesque was an objective aesthetic quality that resided in the object (Ross 1998, 133). Price believes that the picturesque could be defined through its "roughness, sudden variation, irregularity, intricacy and variety," and his list of picturesque objects included: water, trees, buildings, ruins, dogs, sheep, horses, birds of prey, women, music, and painting. In contrast, Knight thinks that the picturesque was a mode of association found within the viewer and thus any object could be picturesque. These associations, he believes, would only be available to those who had knowledge of landscape paintings:

> This very relation to painting expressed by the word picturesque, is that which affords the whole pleasure derived from association; which can, therefore, only be felt by persons who have correspondent ideas to associate; that is, by persons in a certain degree conversant in that art. Such persons being in the habit of viewing, and receiving pleasure from fine pictures, will naturally feel pleasure in viewing those objects in nature, which have called forth those powers of imitation and embellishment. (Ross 1998, 155–156)

Thus, within the history of the picturesque we see differing ideas about the source of beauty: Is beauty subjective (residing in the perceiver's mind) or is beauty an objective quality in objects?[5] Whether you believe beauty is subjective or objective, the picturesque is probably still the most popular (mis)conception of the beauty of nature. When we think of a beautiful scene of nature, our ideas are substantially informed by our past experiences with landscape paintings, and now landscape photography.

Essay Upon Prints," where Gilpin defined the picturesque simply as "a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture" ([1768] 2010, xii).

3. Allen Carlson, whose Natural Environmental Model we will discuss in the next section, has noted that if we are to adhere to the landscape cult's practice of viewing the environment as a landscape painting, we are essentially forced to see the natural environment as static and as a mere two-dimensional representation. This leads us to have an incomplete and shallow aesthetic engagement with the natural environment.
4. While I will discuss only Sir Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, two other men would be relevant to a longer discussion about the picturesque: William Gilpin and Humphry Repton (1752–1818).
5. As we will see in the next section on the sublime, Kant's theory of judgment places beauty in the minds of the spectator.

The sublime

The sublime is another theory of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. While the first reference to the sublime is in the first century CE (we see hints of its predecessor in Aristotle's *Poetics*),[6] the term really blossomed in eighteenth-century British philosophy. Anthony Ashley-Cooper (1671–1713), third Earl of Shaftesbury (now known simply as Shaftesbury) wrote about the sublime in *The Moralist: A Philosophical Rhapsody*. While viewing the Alps during his "Grand Tour" he wrote,

> Here thoughtless Men, seized with the Newness of such Objects, become thoughtful, and willingly contemplate the incessant Changes of their Earth's Surface. They see, as in one instant, the Revolutions of past Ages, the fleeting forms of Things, and the Decay even of their own Globe. … The wasted Mountains show them the World itself only as a humble Ruin, and make them think of its approaching Period. (Hussey [1927] 1983, 55–56).[7]

He praises the mountains as sublime, claiming that mountains are the highest order of scenery (Hussey [1927] 1983, 55). The sublime, for Shaftesbury, is not contrary to beauty, but superior to it.

The sublime is bigger, harder, and darker than the picturesque. Unlike the picturesque, whose beauty is aimed to charm, the sublime teaches us something. The two most influential theories of the sublime are those of Edmund Burke (1729–1797) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

In his Introduction to Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* Adam Phillips writes, "Beauty and Sublimity turn out to be the outlaws of rational enquiry. Both are coercive, irresistible, and a species of seduction. The sublime is a rape, Beauty is a lure" (Burke [1757] 2008, xxii). The sublime is dangerous, full of terror. Burke's sublime can be found in both art and nature.[8] For Burke the sublime exists in degrees, the strongest of which invokes astonishment from the viewer, mingled with a degree of horror (53). Burke claims that the strongest forms of the sublime are usually found in the ideas of eternity and infinity (57). In weaker forms, the sublime's effects include admiration, reverence and respect (53). Burke states,

> Whatever leads to raise in man his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph, that is extremely grateful to the human mind. And this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates

6. The first reference to the sublime is thought to be Longinus: Peri Hupsous/Hypsous. The sublime was said to inspire awe. Aristotle believed that horrific events (in tragic plays) call upon fear and pity, resulting in a catharsis in the spectator. Elements of this view can be found in many theories of the sublime.

7. See also Shaftesbury ([1709] 2010)

8. Burke believed that anything that contained one or more of the following attributes could be perceived as sublime: (1) Obscurity, (2) Power, (3), Privation (4), Vastness, (5) Infinity, (6) Succession, (7) Uniformity ([1757] 2008, 61–76).

> with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. (46)

When we experience the sublime, we feel as if the human mind has triumphed in the face of terror. This accomplishment is pleasurable, and thus we receive pleasure from what at first started as an unpleasurable experience.

Burke's influence on Kant's theory of the sublime cannot be overstated. Like Burke, Kant recognised that in experiencing the sublime, something pleasurable resulted from an experience that could not be called beautiful. Like Burke's, Kant's conception of the sublime is tied to notions of awe and respect, and, like Burke's, Kant's sublime is found in the infinite. Kant took Burke's nascent ideas and from them developed a full-fledged theory of the sublime. Unlike Burke, Kant believed that the experience of the sublime resides solely in the minds of people.

Kant distinguishes two different types of the sublime: the mathematical and the dynamical. The paradigmatic example of the mathematical sublime is that of infinity (again, similar to Burke). With the mathematical sublime,

> the feeling of the sublime is thus a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason, and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason, insofar as striving from them is never less a law for us. (Kant [1790] 2001, § 27, 5:247).

For Kant, the imagination is the faculty we use to bring perceptions into our mind before we subsume these "intuitions" under concepts. With the mathematical sublime, my mind is incapable of perceiving the magnitude of what I'm witnessing. When I look up at the starry night, my mind cannot comprehend the magnitude of space. While I can't comprehend the magnitude, I am none the less pleased at my ability to grapple with it. In sum, what Kant is saying here is that we feel displeasure in the fact that we cannot fully comprehend infinity but feel pleasure in the fact that we at least have the ability to try.

Kant's dynamical sublime involves the recognition of the possible destructive forces in nature, which could result in our death. This recognition, while initially unpleasurable, leads to pleasure since these forces in nature (e.g., storms, winds, earthquakes) "allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature" (Kant [1790] 2001, § 28, 5:261). The experience of the dynamical sublime, then, is an experience of the enormity of nature and our role within it. We feel puny against the forces of nature, but also realise our reason gives us standing.

Now that we have discussed two historical accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature, I turn to more contemporary accounts.

CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS: (A) COGNITIVE, (B) NON-COGNITIVE, (C) HYBRID

Cognitive

Contemporary accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature start to gain traction around the 1970s.[9] This is no accident as the environmental movement was in full swing. In what follows I will discuss the contemporary accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature in two major camps: the cognitive (or conceptual) camp and the non-cognitive (or non-conceptual) camp. Loosely speaking, cognitive theories are those that emphasise the centrality of knowledge in the appreciation of natural beauty. These theories come in many flavours, but many of them (e.g., the theories of Carlson, Rolston, and Eaton[10]) focus on the use of scientific categories in nature appreciation. Allen Carlson's Natural Environmental Model (NEM) is a paradigmatic example of a cognitivist theory of the aesthetics of natural environments. For Carlson, the key to appreciating nature aesthetically is to appreciate it through our scientific knowledge. Carlson's NEM borrows Paul Ziff's notion of aspection (Ziff 1966, 71). Aspection (seeing the object first this way, then that) provides guidelines or boundaries for our aesthetic experiences and judgments of certain art objects. Different artworks have different boundaries, which will yield different acts of aspection. For example, while many paintings can be viewed from one location, other works of art (e.g., sculpture, architecture) require you to walk through space. Thus, painting and sculpture require different acts of aspection.

Drawing upon the insights of Ziff (and others such as Kendall Walton,[11]) Carlson argues that

9. Please note that I have skipped over the nineteenth century aesthetics of nature here. In G.W.F. Hegel's (1770–1831) aesthetics, philosophy of art expressed "Absolute Spirit" and nature was relegated to a footnote. Only a handful of Romantic thinkers thought and wrote on the aesthetics of nature, and many of these were in the United States. For a good introduction read Henry David Thoreau's (1817–1862) "Autumnal Tints" (Thoreau [1862] 2012), George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882) ([1865] 2018), and the environmentalist John Muir's (1838–1914) "A View of the High Sierra" (Muir 1894).

10. An introduction to Carlson's cognitive model for the aesthetic appreciation of nature can be found in his "Appreciation and the Natural Environment" (Carlson 1979). For an introduction to Holmes Rolston III's cognitive model, please see his "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests" (Rolston III 2004). A good introduction to Marcia Muelder Eaton can be found in her "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" (Eaton 2004).

11. Carlson also draws upon Kendall Walton's "Categories of Art" (1970) in which Walton argues that we need art historical information to make well-informed aesthetic judgments. For example, if I were to judge Jeff Koons's "Balloon Swan" as a failure of minimalist sculpture, I wouldn't be attending to the properties of "Balloon Swan" which makes it a successful piece of (non-minimalist) contemporary pop sculpture. In order to appreciate "Balloon Swan" appropriately, I must categorise it appropriately.

the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature involves acts of aspection through the lens (or category) of scientific knowledge.[12] Just as knowledge of the art's kind (e.g., opera, painting, sculpture) informs our appreciation, scientific information about nature informs our aesthetic appreciation of it. Thus, to truly appreciate an ecosystem or an object in that system, one must have (some) scientific knowledge in order to employ the appropriate act of aspection. Importantly, one must not treat nature as one would treat art, turning a natural object into an art object,[13] or transforming an experience of an open field into an imagined landscape painting (as theories of the picturesque might).[14] Carlson acknowledges that nature is importantly unframed and as a consequence when we try to frame nature by turning a natural object (e.g., driftwood) into a free standing object, or when one tries to frame nature by experiencing it as if looking through a Claude-glass, one imposes a frame that should not be there. Carlson's approach is labeled "cognitivist" because it emphasises the importance of cognition in aesthetically appreciating nature *well*.

Non-Cognitive

Non-cognitive theories are those that emphasise the subjective aesthetic experience of natural beauty and often focus on the role of the imagination. These include theories put forth by various philosophers, including Hepburn (2010), Berleant (1992), Carroll (2004), Godlovitch (1997), and Brady (1998).[15]

Emily Brady presents one such non-cognitivist model in her article "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature." Using Carlson's NEM as a foil against her own account, she argues that basing the aesthetic appreciation of nature on scientific categories is flawed because it is "too constraining as a guide for appreciation of nature qua aesthetic object"

12. While Carlson gives priority to appreciation informed by scientific knowledge, he does acknowledge the role of common sense in our aesthetic appreciation of nature.

13. The "object model"—as Carlson calls it—asks the appreciator to take the object out of its natural environment and observe its formal properties such as symmetry, unity, etc. When we do this, we appreciate the natural object as an art object, thus only appreciating a limited set of aesthetic properties, namely those formal properties that we find in art. In rejecting this model, Carlson demands that our appreciation of a natural object requires us to place it in its natural context. For example, we should see the honeycomb as part of the bee life cycle and appreciate the purpose and role it plays in nature.

14. The "landscape model" asks us to aesthetically appreciate a natural landscape as we would appreciate the painting or picture of that natural landscape. We are asked to attend to the scenic qualities of the landscape, to appreciate its lines and form. Unlike a painting, which is already presented to us as a framed object, we should likewise frame the landscape. This model reinforces the subject/object distinction, by asking us to place ourselves outside or in opposition to the landscape that we are trying to appreciate.

15. Non-cognitive accounts may further be divided into imagination accounts (Brady) and immersion accounts (Berleant). While I focus here on imagination accounts, Berleant's immersion account is instructive. Berleant argues that the appropriate way to appreciate nature is through engagement; this non-conceptual model (of engagement) correctly emphasises humanity's continuity with the natural world and nature's boundlessness where other models do not.

(Brady 1998, 158). She provides four core criticisms of Carlson's scientific approach. First, she asserts that Carlson's account rests on a faulty analogy: just as aesthetic appreciation of art requires knowledge of art history and criticism to help place art in its correct category, we should use natural history (e.g., geology, biology, physics) to place nature in a correct category. In a (now) famous counterexample to the NEM, recounted by Brady, Noël Carroll raises the worrisome case of the waterfall (Carroll 2004, 95). Carroll asks: What scientific category must we fit a particular waterfall in order to appreciate it aesthetically? If the only category that we need is that of a waterfall, then the NEM need not rely on scientific knowledge at all, but just rely on "common sense."

Further, Brady argues that even if we grant that scientific knowledge *could* enrich an aesthetic appreciation of nature, it does not seem essential to aesthetic appreciation. Ecological value, she argues, is—and ought to be—a distinct (while still overlapping) category of value. Perhaps most convincing of Brady's objections is that the scientific approach is too constraining, since proper aesthetic appreciation of nature requires "freedom, flexibility, and creativity" (Brady 1998, 159). We should have the freedom to explore trains of thought not related to scientific categories. When looking at the weathered bark on a tree, I need not know how it was formed; rather I may make associations between the weathered tree bark and the beauty of a beloved older relative's face—the ravines in both adding a beautiful texture to the surface. She believes that the aesthetic appreciation of nature ought to use perceptual and imaginative capacities, such as those exemplified in my tree bark/relative example.[16] Brady claims that the most desirable model of aesthetic appreciation of nature will: (a) be able to distinguish aesthetic value from other types of value, (b) provide a structure to make aesthetic judgments which are not merely subjective, and (c) solve the problem of how to guide the aesthetic appreciation of nature without reference to art models.

Criticisms of this "imaginative approach" focus on the possibility of an unfettered imagination producing absurd trains of aesthetic inquiry. For example, one might look at the ripple pattern reflecting on the water of a lake and imagine that the ripples look like the ridges of the potato chips you recently cut out of your diet. From here you begin a train of thought which leads you to worry about processed food, factory farming, and fad diets. This seems like an unproductive, and unaesthetic, train of thought. To combat this "unfettered imagination" worry, Brady gives us some guidelines to prevent self-indulgence and irrelevant trains of thought. She believes the Kantian notion of disinterestedness can help prevent the sort of train of thought I just rehearsed.[17] Further Brady gives us guidelines for what she

16. Brady details four different types of imagination: (i) exploratory, which is the imaginative search for unity in perception, (ii) projective, where we intentionally see something as something else, (iii) ampliative, which moves beyond mere imagination to draw upon other cognitive resources, and (iv) revelatory, where the ampliative imagination has led to the discovery of an aesthetic truth (Brady 1998, 163).

17. The First Moment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* tells us that judgments of taste (which are judgments

calls "imagining well." She believes "imagining well" should be thought of like an Aristotelian virtue: it is acquired only through practice and only becomes a virtue once it is a matter of habit. This is a non-conceptual model of aesthetic appreciation in that it does not rely on previous concepts of art or nature for deep aesthetic appreciation.

If imagining well is like an Aristotelian virtue, then there should be a developing capacity on the part of the aesthetic participant to know when to employ scientific categories and when not to. Surely, sometimes focusing on scientific categories can cut aesthetic pleasure off at the knees.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*:

> The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book–a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. . . . In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading matter. . . . I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river. . . .The sun means that we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means that the river is rising; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights. . . . No, the romance and the beauty were all gone from the river. (Twain [1883] 1984, 94–96)

This much-discussed example shows that knowledge sometimes precludes aesthetic appreciation. Turning to another example, as a flute player I am aware of passages that are particularly hard to play. One reason for their difficulty is the lack of a natural stopping place to take a quick breath. Whenever I hear another flute player perform one of such pieces, I am on the edge of my seat, anticipating when he or she will take a breath. The in-depth knowledge about the piece precludes my appreciating the overall sound of the music. Instead, I find myself focusing on the technical ability of the artists. According to Brady, I am not appropriately disinterested in this instance. If that's the case, then almost any amount of expert knowledge (including scientific knowledge) could preclude aesthetic appreciation. Is there a happy middle ground?

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about beauty) are "disinterested." Kant details a few different ways in which these judgments are disinterested: we must not ask if the object is good (or good for something), we shouldn't invoke sensations of the agreeable, and we shouldn't care about the real existence of the object. Let's take these three forms of interest in turn. First, when looking at something beautiful (let's say a flower) I shouldn't care if the flower is good for something (such as being good for medicinal purposes). I shouldn't also care if the object is morally good. Second, when I make a judgment of beauty, I am not saying that the object is "agreeable" or pleasing to me. Going back to our flower example—Kant doesn't want us to say something like, "this flower is agreeable to me since it is the kind my mother used to give me when I was sick." Finally, we shouldn't care whether or not the object is real. A mirage of a flower and an actual flower should hold the same judgment of beauty. In this sense we are disinterested in whether the object is real or imaginary.

Hybrid Accounts: Can We Marry Cognitive and Non-Cognitive accounts to get the best of both worlds?

Perhaps instead of aiming for a uniform experience, we should be aiming for experiences that are aesthetically meaningful and reward our attention and efforts. In other words, we should allow for the co-recognition of a variety of experiences rather than defending one account of meaning over another when it is possible to countenance them all. In his book *Natural Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*, Ronald Moore (2007) details a pluralist model of aesthetic appreciation. Moore argues that the appropriate way to aesthetically appreciate nature is syncretic: rather than using any one particular model, we should draw from multiple models. This syncretic way of appreciating nature re-integrates our appreciation of natural objects and artworks. Moore insists that we "approach the qualities of things we think worthy of admiration in nature through lenses we have developed for thinking of aesthetic qualities at large—not art, not literature, not music, not politics, not urban planning, not landscape design, but all of these and more" (2007, 216). If the goal of our aesthetic appreciation is to use those parts of our intelligent awareness that suit the object, then this model can include all modes of aesthetic appreciation.

But while such a model enables us to explore many modes of appreciation, it does not tell us what modes of appreciation are relevant to which objects. Some might see this as a weakness of the syncretic account, but one might also argue that the charm of the syncretic model is that it challenges us to come up with specific accounts of appreciation for different types of objects.

One might worry that different modes of appreciation might preclude one another. When Moore declares that syncretism is "the Unitarianism of aesthetics" (2007, 39), a precocious deist might ask if one can be both Jewish and Buddhist, both Jesuit and Bahá'í? In my view, some models are not only compatible, but also ampliative. For example, non-cognitive models of the appreciation of natural beauty that focus on "trains of ideas" or "associations," may be informed by more cognitive models such as Carlson's NEM.[18] Scientific information about an object of delectation can spur more interesting, and perhaps, more productive trains of thought. If we know that a particular flower blooms but once a year, that scientific information can be utilised to ground a fruitful aesthetic experience.

But some models might be incommensurable; it might be impossible to employ two models at the same time, to have two experiences of appreciation at the same time. In this scenario we might decide to alternate between two different modes of appreciation. Take, for example, the film critic. Film critics often watch movies twice: once to allow themselves to enjoy the film—to immerse themselves, and the second time to focus on technical aspects of the

18. Those who argue for "associative" models of aesthetic experience might include Archibald Alison (1790), who argues that objects spur "trains of ideas of emotions"; John Dewey's discussion of "trains of ideas" ([1934] 2005); and Emily Brady on "Imagining Well" (1998).

production with an eye toward their criticism. The "technical" mode and the "immersion" mode might very well be incompatible, but one might be able to switch off and on between the two. If this is the case, there is nothing stopping me from having one experience after the other as the appreciation unfolds throughout time. These multiple avenues for aesthetic pleasure favor a syncretic model, or pluralist model, of aesthetic appreciation. We must draw upon whatever models we have at our disposal, including conceptual as well as non-conceptual models, artistic as well as natural models, historical and contemporary models alike.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we examined some of the historical underpinnings of our appreciation of nature, namely the British Picturesque and the sublime. We then discussed cognitive, non-cognitive, and hybrid accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. What I hope to have shown is that there is no one-principle-fits-all solution for all aesthetic experiences of nature. An immersive experience river rafting will be different from birdwatching. Knowledge in some cases will add depth to our aesthetic experiences, while in other cases will impede our ability to appreciate. We should thus embrace a pluralistic model of aesthetic engagement, one that allows us to employ different models to different objects—or different models at different times in our life. The appropriate response to nature, for the sublime, is awe and humility. This might be instructive for me at a particular time in my life. At another time, the NEM might allow me to gain access to experiences of unscenic nature otherwise inaccessible through other models (such as the picturesque).

I would like to leave you with one final thought: we need not go to a National Park to engage with nature. We live *in* nature and are part of it. It is accessible to us in the trees that line our streets, the urban animals who forage for scraps in our trash bins, and in the sunsets we watch through our car windshield on our commute home. The beauty of nature surrounds us and is available to all—free of charge.

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CHAPTER 7.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS

YURIKO SAITO

In the Western aesthetic tradition, concerns with the environment have always been present. But it was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that the specific discourse of environmental aesthetics was established, first with a focus on nature, soon followed by the consideration of the built environment. The most recent formulation includes the entirety of our lived world, including our interactions with various objects and other people. Environmental aesthetics thus explores the way in which we gain an aesthetic experience when we engage with our environment in this expansive sense through active perception informed by sensibility and imagination.

The occasion for gaining an aesthetic experience is everywhere in our environment, not limited to memorable or extraordinary "standout" moments. Such unforgettable experiences of a sublime landscape and a stunning architectural piece have been a favored subject for aesthetics in general. However, the mundane, nondescript, and often-overlooked aspects of our everyday environment are also capable of provoking an aesthetic experience, though different in character and intensity. Furthermore, we have constructed an evaluative framework of environmental aesthetic values that is culturally, socially, and historically situated. For example, wetlands have generally been regarded as lacking aesthetic merit not only because they are rather dull-looking but also they have long been considered to lack any utilitarian values for humans. Consequently, they have been vulnerable to destruction for the sake of "improvement" and "development." Weeds, such as dandelions, in a green lawn—a quintessential ideal for the American domestic landscape—are considered the public enemy number one because they ruin the perfectly smooth and green carpet; hence they need to be eradicated.

However, the seemingly monotonous and boring appearance of wetlands starts becoming more complicated and intriguing once we understand its complex ecological functions. We

start noticing the subtle change in vegetations that respond to the differing saline contents of the water, and we realise the wetlands' seemingly boring appearance conceals lively activities of various creatures that inhabit this environment. Imaginative engagement based upon such knowledge leads us to develop an aesthetic appreciation of an otherwise humble, quiet, and easily overlooked beauty of this environment. Despite the negativity associated with dandelions, unsightly weeds in our lawn, we can't help but marvel at their remarkable life story shown by their dramatic transformation from the vivid yellow flower to the floating cotton fuzz. Once we overcome various stereotypes and assumptions, we find aesthetic gems everywhere. The well-known twentieth century environmental thinker, Aldo Leopold, thus declares in his *Sand County Almanac* that "the weeds in a city lot convey the same lesson as the redwoods" ([1949] 1966, 266). It's just that what is all-too-common and all-too-familiar to us is aesthetically disadvantaged.

Overcoming their aesthetic disadvantage is beneficial to our lives. First, it widens and sharpens our aesthetic sensibility to be able to have an aesthetic experience of something on its own terms. We open ourselves to be affected by diverse kinds of things and phenomena. Second, this openness cultivates moral virtues of respect and humility regarding others insofar as we don't impose our preconceived criteria or values on them. Cultivating such an attitude is vital in our moral interaction with others. This intimate melding of the aesthetic and the ethical is one of the wisdoms offered by non-Western traditions such as Zen Buddhism. Spiritual enlightenment, according to Zen, is facilitated by transcending one's self burdened with all kinds of predilections so that we can respectfully experience and appreciate the other for what it is, not as what we think it ought to be or what we would like it to be.

At the same time, attending to the aesthetic potential of those that have been invisible does not mean that aestheticization should take place indiscriminately. Some parts of our environments are downright ugly and in need of repair, clean-up, or reconstruction. It is not contradictory to encourage cultivating our aesthetic sensibility toward many aspects of our environment while recognizing that some of them are aesthetically negative with no redeeming values. However, such discrimination needs to involve not only sensory perception but also a sympathetic imagination. For example, a dilapidated neighborhood in one case may be an environment with memories for its residents who still regard it with affection, while in another case the residents may be suffering from severe aesthetic deprivation and are desperate for some degree of aesthetic decency in their environment. Such finely nuanced and sympathetic understanding that informs aesthetic sensibility is valuable when we as a society decide what course of action, if any, should be taken regarding the said neighborhood.

Thus, environmental aesthetics is multi-faceted in terms of what it deals with: nature, built structures, urban environment, domestic space, various objects within, and our interactions with others. It encourages unearthing the hidden gems in our environment, but at the same

time it cultivates a sober but sympathetic eye regarding those environments that are aesthetically harmful. Ultimately, it explores our intimate connection with our environs because we are creatures whose lives are deeply embedded in the lived world and its quality cannot but affect the quality of our lives.

When reading Plato's (428/7–348/7 BCE) aesthetics today, one of the claims that most likely causes disagreement is his advocacy for the state's regulation of the arts in Book X of his *Republic*.[1] What we tend to miss, however, is that underlying his view on censorship of the arts is his acknowledgement that we humans are profoundly affected by the aesthetic dimensions of our lives. Although his targets are mostly arts because of their capacity for providing intensified and focused aesthetic experiences, we can expand his acknowledgement of the power of the aesthetic to include the entirety of our lived environment, namely, natural surroundings, built structures, various objects in our daily lives, and interactions with other people. Our sensory and emotive engagement with these various ingredients of our environment constitutes aesthetic experiences. If these experiences are mere dispensable icing on the cake, there is no need for Plato to call for regulating the arts in the *Republic*.

Whether or not we agree with his proposal of censorship of the arts or his vision of the ideal society, the most important insight Plato offers is that aesthetic experiences play an indispensable role in cultivating intellects and moral virtues. Plato was fully cognizant of the power of the aesthetic that is a double-edge sword. It can be harnessed to promote a good life, humane and civil society, and a sustainable world, or it can work against these goals. Thus, environmental aesthetics should be regarded not simply as a matter of aesthetic experience of the environment but as a discourse and practice with profound ethical and social significance.

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1. Plato's views on art and how and why it should be regulated in an ideal republic are discussed in several chapters of this book; see, e.g. Chapter 11, "Ancient Aesthetics."

CHAPTER 8.

AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

RUTH SONDEREGGER AND INES KLEESATTEL

ALLEGEDLY BEYOND POLITICS: THE INVENTION OF AESTHETICS

Against the common assumption that it is the content of artworks which, in some cases at least, contains political messages, philosophers such as Theodor W. Adorno and Jacques Rancière, have contended that the politics of aesthetics should rather be located in the formal dimension of art. This chapter, however, argues that the mere existence, or rather, coming into existence of aesthetics as a philosophical sub-discipline in the 18th century in Western Europe is in and of itself highly political. Moreover, we maintain that it is against the backdrop of the politics of aesthetics as a discipline that debates about the politics of specific aesthetic forms and/or contents should be understood. This is why this chapter starts out with a brief discussion of the beginning of philosophical aesthetics and its socio- as well as geopolitical context.

In contrast to the domains of theoretical and practical philosophy, the sub-discipline of aesthetics emerged rather late in Western philosophy.[1] The first book entitled *Aesthetica*, authored by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, was published in 1750 (Baumgarten [1750] 2007). Moreover, Baumgarten still used the term "aesthetic" in order to define a specific kind of knowledge, namely sensuous knowledge. Of course, myriads of art-related treatises and rule books had been written in earlier centuries, but usually by artists or artisans themselves and not by philosophers. And what is more, until the end of the 18th century, there was no such thing as art, art theory, or aesthetics in the (collective) singular, but a plurality of arts and rulebooks for each of them.

1. This is not meant to deny the fact that Greco-Roman culture engaged with questions of beauty, the arts, and aesthetic education so that one could, indeed, speak of Ancient Aesthetics even if this field had not yet been acknowledged as a sub-field of philosophy. Cf. Chapter 11 by Matthew Sharpe in this volume.

After the invention of philosophical aesthetics, however, aesthetic production was ever less theorised in the course of the 18th century. Much rather, artistic production was left to "geniuses" and hence considered to be beyond analysis as well as beyond teaching and learning. The only individuals that needed to be analyzed and (endlessly) educated were, as now, the recipients of aesthetic experiences and the taste of such recipients. This major shift and its political entanglement are most apparent in Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) *Critique of Judgment* ([1790] 2008).

In the first part of Kant's *Critique* that is devoted to questions of beauty and art, Kant starts out by drawing absolutely strict dividing lines between questions of beauty, on the one hand, and theoretical as well as practical questions on the other. He then proceeds by differentiating between four "moments" or "conditions of possibility" of aesthetic judgments. Whereas "moments" one and three emphasise the disinterestedness of aesthetic pleasure and the judgments expressing such pleasure, moments two and four are about the universality of aesthetic judgments.

A lot could be said and indeed has been written about the provocations inherent in the principle of disinterestedness and the exclusions it advocates on seemingly (purely) transcendental grounds. Kant's account of aesthetic judgments not only dismisses all forms of sensualism but also any kind of ethical or moral improvement through aesthetic experiences, both of which had been so important in English debates about taste, of which Kant was well aware.[2] Moreover, the principle of disinterestedness presupposes aesthetic subjects whose basic needs are satisfied and who have ample leisure time. Those, on the other hand, who suffer from hunger like, it seems, the "Iroquois *sachem*" to whom Kant refers in § 2 ([1790] 2008, 36) might find it difficult to contemplate a bountiful table. Not for nothing, there is a huge amount of literature arguing that the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness is not a (Kantian) invention but rather a reaction to the growth of an affluent bourgeois middle class with plenty of spare time in Western Europe towards the end of the 18th century (cf. Woodmansee 1994; Mortensen 1977).

The Kantian principle of universality is no less contested. At first, it seems that the universality in question is guaranteed by the mere fact that nothing but a certain relation between the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding—their anti-hierarchical, a-teleological free play—is involved in aesthetic experiences. According to Kant such free play means that both faculties are equally important and, therefore, unable to bring their playful interaction to an end by defeating the respective other. And as nothing but our cognitive

2. However, we want to acknowledge that there are a number of passages in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* that hint towards possible connections between the beautiful and the good, connections i.e., that are addressed as "hints," "symbols," or "analogies" and remain rather vague. Kant's longing for such connections that, however, go against the grain of the book's first part entitled "Analytic of the Beautiful," figure prominently in the "Introduction" as well as in §§ 42 and 59.

faculties (which we share with all human beings) are involved, my judgment—or so Kant seems to argue—ought to be everybody else's, too. According to this account of aesthetic judgments, taste does not presuppose any special knowledge, education, or whatever else except the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding.[3] This seems to open up the realm of aesthetics in a truly emancipatory, indeed unheard-of emancipatory way to all human beings. This is because *all* thinking beings possess the two faculties necessary for aesthetic experience. However, Kant proceeds by discussing the challenge that we might deceive ourselves as far as hidden (or not so hidden) interests are concerned and mistakenly assume that nothing but our cognitive faculties were involved when we judged an object as beautiful. Therefore, an additional test is needed in order to find out as to whether really nothing but imagination and understanding are involved in aesthetic experiences and the judgment that ensue from them.

The test that Kant proposes—without ever calling it a test—goes by the name of *sensus communis* or "a *public* sense." It consists in judging a potentially beautiful object or representation thereof not only from my perspective but also from the perspective of

> everyone else, in order, *as it were*, to weigh [the] judgment with the collective reason of mankind. … This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the position of everyone else. … This, in turn, is effected by so far as possible leaving out the element of matter, i.e. sensation … , and confining attention to the formal peculiarities of our representation or general state of representational activity. (Kant [1790] 2008, 123)

When Kant first refers to the *sensus communis* in § 22 and contends that such sense is necessarily presupposed in all aesthetic judgments he leaves open whether the *sensus communis* is an intrinsic part of the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding, or whether it is something to be learned in the course of an individual life, or throughout the process he calls civilization. Later on in the text, however, Kant clearly advocates a *sensus communis* that is the result of a learning process that, in its turn, separates "merely … human being[s]" from "a human being refined in his own way (the beginning of civilization)" ([1790] 2008, 126). As in § 2, it is the Iroquois amongst others who are to exemplify what it means to be "merely a human being" according to Kant, and to not know the refinements of civilization and taste:

> And thus, no doubt, at first only chars, e.g. colours for painting oneself (rocou among the Caribs and cinnabar among the Iroquois), or flowers, sea-shells, beautifully coloured feathers, then, in the course of time, also beautiful forms (as in canoes, appárel etc.) … become of moment in society and attract a considerable interest. Eventually, when civilization has reached its height it makes this work of communication almost the main business of refined inclination, and the entire value of

3. However, Kant will challenge, if not completely reject, this claim in his discussion of *sensus communis* (see next paragraph).

> sensations is placed in the degree to which they permit of universal communication. ([1790] 2008, 127)

Although the interleaving of aesthetic education with a racialised idea of civilization is problematic enough, the next and last paragraph on taste as *sensus communis* advocates an even more appalling differentiation. Instead of only differentiating between different stages of civilisational progress this section excludes some human beings from the process of acquiring taste as interest in pure formal beauty altogether. Kant writes in § 42: "But … this immediate interest in the beauty of nature"—the epitome of formal beauty—"is not in fact common. It is peculiar to those whose habits of thought are already trained to the good or else are eminently susceptible to such training" ([1790] 2008, 130).

Kant's concluding remarks on the principle of *sensus communis* thus imply that some human beings are already refined whereas others are at least susceptible of training towards refinement. However, there is a third group of beings that seem to remain insusceptible. In arguing in favour of such division, Kant's seemingly emancipatory steps towards a conception of aesthetics that is no longer tied to privileges of class, gender, or race seems not to go beyond his early *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* ([1764] 2011) despite the importance of the transcendental or critical turn that lies between the two works. In Kant's *Observations* it is women who are said to be susceptible of acquiring taste as *sensus communis* (only in the future) whereas Black people, and here Kant relies upon highly problematic remarks by David Hume (cf. Gikandi 2011, 99–106), are excluded altogether (cf. Elizabeth Coleman's contribution to this volume, Chapter 9).

Apart from the fact that Hume and Kant knew of Black writers and philosophers but obviously deemed their achievements as trifling, one cannot but conclude that the idea of taste that Kant is advocating is specifically geared to white, well-educated men—that is, to human beings like himself. To put it more paradoxically: the test of the universalisability of aesthetic judgments, that is, the seemingly cosmopolitan attitude of thinking from the perspective of everybody else, turns out to be a privilege of the favoured few. Thus, Kant's account of taste or *sensus communis* appears to work towards closing the in-group of the subjects of taste as well as towards the valorisation of these subjects. Emphasizing biases of class rather than issues of race or gender, Richard Shusterman comes to a similar conclusion when he writes, "Uniformity of taste comes to mean the uniformity of taste of those who have taste and this is already largely determined by prevailing structures of social privilege" (1993, 110).

To sum up, despite the opening claim of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* according to which aesthetics has nothing to do with issues of ethics, morality, or politics, 18th century aesthetic theory functions as an apparatus that contributes to establishing the supremacy of the bourgeois, liberal subject and, first of all, the male subject, that is distinguished by its aesthetic

taste—"taste" being the master category that sutures French, British, and German debates (Lowe 2015, 4; Lloyd 2019). The underside of the construction of such superiority consists not only in the reinforcement of hierarchical class and gender division. Much rather, European 18th century aesthetic theories play a major role in the invention of racial thinking that made the conceptualization of enslaved humans as cargo, cattle, and tool, and hence the outsourcing of capitalist violence into the colonised parts of the world where possible (Bindman 2002; Gikandi 2011). There is, for instance, hardly any aesthetician in the 18th century who did not write on the colour and perception of Black people (Gilman 1975).

Moreover, the aesthetic regime that was invented by bourgeois aesthetic theory in the 18th century provided ideal opportunities to obscure classist, sexist, and colonial violence and to whitewash the profits resulting from such violence so that expropriation, extractivism, exploitation, and downright mass killings could appear as nothing but charity work. As such, aesthetic theory promised freedom, autonomy, and emancipation in the most brutal times; in times, that is, when bourgeois fear of insurrections in the colonies but also at home was pervasive and the acceptance of white supremacy seemed to somewhat falter. In this context, the possession of aesthetic taste became a kind of assurance that the bourgeois subject was indeed above both the corrupt feudal subject and the violent villains of the colonies.

For example, Simon Gikandi, who has published widely on the relation between slavery and the emergence of European aesthetic theory in the 18th century, writes in his *Slavery and the Culture of Taste,* "still, as major scholars of the order of art in the eighteenth century have noted, the category of taste and the idea of the aesthetic in general arose as part of a concerted attempt to stabilise the potentially excessive and disruptive aspects of commerce" (2011, 59).

On the other hand, the newly established sphere of autonomous art and its emerging institutions, most notably the art market, provided ample opportunities to invest capitalist profit into something seen as innocuous if not liberating and emancipatory. Carmen Mörsch's research on the history of art education in Britain, for instance, has convincingly shown that such seemingly emancipatory practice began in the foundling hospitals of 18th century London where pauperised street children were transformed—by way of artworks—into civilised beings ready for capitalist exploitation. However, the artworks on display in such hospitals—loan items provided by the charitable bourgeoisie—were also regularly shown to the public in order to sell them to emerging collectors. In other words: what looked like almsgiving to the foundling hospitals was an apparatus of whitewashing profit and making more profit by way of establishing the British art market (Mörsch 2017).[4]

4. In a similar vein, Bourdieu's study *The Rules of Art* (1992) analyzes the emergence of the French art field and its institutions. However, in contrast to Gikandi's and Mörsch's accounts of the beginnings of English art institutions, aspects of coloniality are blatantly absent in Bourdieu's book. On the other hand, we want to emphasise that contributions to institutional critique are not only to be found in the realm of theory. Much

To conclude, the seemingly autonomous sphere of aesthetics that was defended most fiercely by Kant in the 18th century was not so autonomous after all. Much rather, the institutionalization of such aesthetic autonomy had strong ethical and political implications that were whitewashed by emphasizing aesthetic emancipation and freedom.

However, it was not long before the swiftly institutionalised aesthetic autonomy together with its philosophical theory were criticised. For example, by Hegel's efforts to link art theory to society and history and, in the second half of the 19th century, by Nietzsche's endeavour to reconnect art and life (Hegel [1823] 2014; Nietzsche [1872] 1993). Both Hegelian and Nietzschean elements of critique of Kant's aesthetic of autonomy were then developed further by various strands of pragmatist aesthetics around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, ranging from Dewey's much-quoted book *Art as Experience* to W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* (Dewey [1934] 1980; Du Bois [1903] 2007). Whereas the former has quickly become a classic, Du Bois' pragmatist account of Black folk art has been almost entirely ignored by philosophical aesthetics.[5]

AESTHETICS AS POLITICS AND THE ROLE OF THE RECIPIENT

In the first section of this chapter, we have clearly distanced ourselves from aesthetic theories that celebrate the Kantian caesura in the history of Western aesthetics as one of (unique) democratisation. However, the fact that we grant Kant such a great significance in this text nevertheless is motivated, on the one hand, by the objective of demonstrating the underlying (colonial, racist, sexist, and classist) politicality of Kant's allegedly disinterested aesthetics. On the other hand, we do not want to disguise the fact that in the 20th and 21st century Kant's aesthetic of autonomy still has a strong influence on Western aesthetics—not only on disciplinarily conservative philosophers who accept the Kantian divide between aesthetics, epistemology, and politics or ethics, but also among leftist thinkers like Jacques Rancière who focuses on the intersection between aesthetics and politics.

Rancière praises the democratic potential of the Kantian caesura in European aesthetic theory for two reasons: first, for the fact that, in many formulations, Kant suggests that all human beings are capable of issuing aesthetic judgements. Second, Rancière applauds Kant's rejection of aesthetic rulebooks of the classical age, which prescribed normative rules for individual arts or genres.[6] Full of enthusiasm for such aesthetics of liberation (from prescriptions), Rancière claims that with Kant (and Schiller) a new and truly "aesthetic regime" emerges that replaces the rule-oriented aesthetics that have prevailed since Aristotle.

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rather, institutional critique has become a major field of artistic practices in the 20th century (cf. Alberro and Stimson 2009).

5. Theodor W. Adorno ([1970] 1997) holds a similar position.

6. Following Aristotles' *Poetics* that formulated rather strict rules of representation: what contents and forms were legitimate in what way to what ends (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1996).

In Rancière's view, the new aesthetic regime is to be understood as the "specific regime of the sensible, which is extricated from its ordinary connections," that is, from a system of representational means and ends. Moreover, the new (Kantian) aesthetic regime is said to liberate art in the singular "from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres" (Rancière 2004, 23). It is this very liberation of art from the former system of representational means and ends that Rancière considers politically emancipatory. He even claims that, due to its anti-representational and thus anti-hierarchical egalitarian move, autonomous art as such becomes politics in the aesthetic regime. With this generalization, Rancière neglects the highly exclusive implications of Kantian aesthetics and refuses to investigate more precisely as to when, where and for whom art possesses liberating potential or not. Furthermore, he decidedly polemicises against explicitly political contemporary art while, at the same time, claims that aesthetic autonomy and emancipatory politics are not mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, depend on each other.

In order to understand Rancière's close interweaving of politics and aesthetics as well as his rejection of explicitly engaged art, one must bear in mind Rancière's very peculiar notion of politics: in his view, politics does not denote party politics, parliamentarism, state business, or exercise of power, but "first and foremost an intervention upon the visible and the sayable" (Rancière 2001, §21); or, to put it differently, situations that disrupt the existing, hierarchically structured orders of perception and of what, so far, has been considered as "evident," "natural," and "real." According to Rancière politics is a "redistribution of the sensible" whereby "the sensible" refers to the indissoluble confluence of sensuality and meaning. Moreover, such politics is an inevitably aesthetic affair. Interestingly enough, "aesthetic" here does not designate "art" or anything related to art but, rather, refers to the Greek term *aisthesis* (sensual perception). To be more precise, such politics is not a matter of (a more just) redistribution but, much rather, a radically democratic disruption of a prevailing distribution and its hierarchies.

On the basis of this specific concept of politics Rancière decidedly rejects any engaged art that commits itself to activism or ideology critique. Instead, he advocates an art that distances itself from the existing reality and its accustomed standards of representation, communication, and information by bringing forth a fundamentally open aesthetic indeterminacy. While in his early political writings Rancière argued for a dissenting politics that takes a clear stand for specific expansions of equality, Rancière's more recent art theory ultimately tends to dissolve such a dissenting stand in favor of a general praise of the aesthetically open and indeterminate. As a result, he polemicises sharply against art that aims for emancipation and education in any direct way—like the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht, for example. Rancière condemns the epic theatre's aim "to show incorrect political attitudes and thus to teach correct ones" (Brecht [1930] 1998, 345) as a pedagogical and anti-emancipatory "stultification." He considers the intention of teaching right from wrong in

itself problematic because it is said to be based on the premise of a hierarchical difference between knowledge (expressed in the artwork) and ignorance (of recipients), capacity and incapacity, activity and passivity. Truly political art, in contrast, should rather start from the premise that "emancipation begins … when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts. … She observes, selects, compares, interprets" (Rancière 2009, 13).

The productive activity of those traditionally called recipients is at the heart of Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) political aesthetics as well. In his case, however, the political potential of active spectatorship is not tied to aesthetic indeterminacy and a generalised opening up of the sensible but to political urgency, on the one hand, and to new technological conditions on the other. It is not least significant that Benjamin repeatedly and affirmatively referred to Brecht. Friends of each other, both were radical critics of the bourgeois idea of art's autonomy and of the bourgeois understanding of reception as contemplation.

Thinking and writing under precarious conditions in exile from Nazi Germany, Benjamin is not so much interested in subjective aesthetic experience but, rather, in the material and technical conditions of modern cultural production, its economic factors, and the social functions that art fulfilled and fulfills in both the past and the present. In Benjamin's view, human perception—including modes of aesthetic experience and spectatorship—is not determined by the biology of human organs but conditioned by social history and media technologies and, therefore, variable. Cinema, for instance, is deemed by Benjamin not only as the mode of expression appropriate to the 20th century due to fragmentation and montage, but also as a training ground for modern life since it contributes to the acceleration of the processing of sensory impressions. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* Benjamin elaborates on how technical reproducibility changes the relationship between art and its audience which is, in the era of photography and cinema, no longer limited to singular individuals contemplating in front of a quasi-sacred original (Benjamin 1969). Due to their technical reproducibility, pictures are liberated from the "auratic" authenticity of the unique existence ("here and now") that loomed large in the so-called painterly original.[7] Photography and film, on the other hand, invite mass reception, whereby political operability takes the place of the former sacred logic of contemplation. Such political operability is based, firstly, on the fact that, as a mass, the audience is capable of

7. Benjamin gave a new twist to the term "the auratic" or "aura." He thinks of it as a quality that is attributed (in the quasi-religious experience of bourgeois contemplation) to a unique and unattainable artistic original. According to bourgeois aesthetic theory this original remains inaccessible while it is nevertheless present in space and time ("here and now"). As "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be" (Benjamin 1969, 222), the aura of the work of art withers in the age of mechanical reproduction. Through mechanical reproduction, the presence of the original and the inaccessibility of its auratic authenticity is replaced by a multiplicity of reproductions and their potential "to meet the beholder halfway" (220). In relation to both space and time the seemingly distant original draws nearer to a mass audience.

communicating collectively instead of withdrawing into the individual inwardness of one's private associations. Secondly, due to their technical character, film and photography require and enable a different awareness than paintings, namely a critical attitude instead of a receptive pleasure.

The reason for this is to be found in the technical apparatus of the camera: "Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored" (Benjamin 1969, 236). Benjamin emphasises that the camera does not simply depict in more detail what is already obvious. Much rather, the snapshot isolates a fraction of a second from the flow of a movement that has never been perceived before; likewise, the microscopic magnification shows the fine-particle structure of a material that appears coarse to the bare eye. Such technical possibility to shed light on new layers of reality that have hitherto been beyond human perception is of utmost importance for Benjamin as the emergence of photography proves that human vision and perception are not purely natural mechanisms but subject to the influences of cultural practices and technical developments. In contrast to "creative" (i.e., traditionally and consciously composed) paintings, photographs can open up previously unnoticed things (Benjamin 1972, 7, 21). Whenever such openings occur, photographic images become irritatingly alien to their viewers.

It is this very irritation and alienation—to be found, according to Benjamin, paradigmatically in Eugène Atget's photographs of deserted Paris streets—that enables Benjamin to identify the political function of photography: the power of establishing "evidence for historical occurrences" (1969, 226) without submitting technical pictures to representational norms and the "pedagogical stultification" Rancière speaks of. For if the spectator is disturbed by certain photographic pictures, the traditional way of consuming art passively in "free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them" any longer (1969, 226). Much rather, they challenge the spectator to actively read their meaning in relation to the present reality. As a consequence, the photographic picture itself is only half the business; it is the critical reading of the spectator that creates "a photography which literarises the relationships of life and without which photographic construction would remain stuck in the approximate" (1972, 25). Since historical truth, the evidence of which is provided by photography and cinema, is not simply depicted in the image but must be produced in a contextualizing reading of the picture, "the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character" (1969, 232). To highlight and contribute to the dissolution of this distinction is the core of Benjamin's political aesthetics.

Being a leftist political thinker, who was deeply concerned about the autocratic politics of German National Socialism, Benjamin was interested in art and cultural production insofar as it possesses what he calls an "organizational function." As the Nazi regime with its visually impressive theatrical mass performances pursued an aestheticisation of politics, it was

imperative for Benjamin to politicise aesthetics. Such politicisation—in which Brecht pioneered, according to Benjamin—develops by way of an emancipatory "functional transformation" of art (a term coined by Brecht) towards the liberation and socialization of the artistic means of production. Instead of simply serving the existing apparatus of cultural production, Benjamin advocates the transformation and improvement of this apparatus so that "it leads consumers to production, in short that it is capable of making co-workers out of readers or spectators" (1970, 93). Therefore, the organizational function of politicised art does not lie in mere agitation, but in a removal of the separation of reception from its production.

Although Brecht's concern is clearly political agitation and the unveiling of historical truth, his functional transformation of art is not limited to a hierarchical pedagogy. In his *Lehrstücke*—interestingly enough often translated as "teaching-plays" whereas Brecht's own translation was "learning-plays"—the audience is not so much taught by what is presented on stage but, much rather, actively involved in performing themselves and thus learning through practical use. It would go beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail as to what extent the audiences of Brecht's *Lehrstücke* actually become full-fledged producers. In any case, Benjamin's art-theoretical considerations are strongly inspired by Brecht and thus arrive at a political aesthetic that is at odds with the separation of aesthetic reception and production. He suggests a much more fundamental politicization than the artistic use of political topics which, according to Benjamin's diagnosis (still astonishingly timely today), has little effect: "In point of fact we are faced with a situation … in which the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication can assimilate an astonishing number of revolutionary themes, and can even propagate them without seriously placing its own existence or the existence of the class that possesses them into question" (1970, 90).

Fifty years later, Benjamin and Brecht's insistence on enabling recipients to become active producers has been taken up by various scholars of Birmingham's School of Cultural Studies. Not only did these scholars conceive of reception practices as modes of cultural production. They also put previously neglected forms of production, particularly production by marginalised producers, centre stage (Hall 2007).

RELATIONAL PRACTICES—POLITICAL AESTHETICS BEYOND ART

Referring to Félix Guattari, the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term "Relational Aesthetics" with regard to process-oriented and participatory art projects of the 1990s that shift their creative energy away from artworks as objects and artworld-oriented entities towards social situations of encounter and exchange. In view of projects by artists such as Rikrit Tiravanija, Félix Gonzales-Torres, Christine Hill, or Pierre Huyghe, all of which focus on the activity of their audience, Bourriaud states, "contemporary art *models* more than it represents, … art is at once the object and the subject of an ethic," and "art is a

state of encounter" (2002, 18). His understanding of such art in the framework of Relational Aesthetics is strongly inspired by Guattari's writings on what the latter termed a "New Aesthetic Paradigm." This new aesthetic paradigm also informs Guattari's interest in art, which is neither an interest in the exceptional productivity of an artist-individual nor a plea for the aestheticisation of the social (in the sense of a superficial beautification or glorification of communal life). Much rather, Guattari advocates creative processes that link artistic practice with modes of subjectivation, collective productivity, and environmental ecology:

> The refoundation of politics will have to pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions implied in the three ecologies—the environment, the socius [i.e. societal relations among human beings] and the psyche. We cannot conceive of solutions to the poisoning of the atmosphere and to global warming due to the greenhouse effect, or to the problem of population control, without a mutation of mentality, without promoting a new art of living in society. … We cannot conceive of a collective recomposition of the socius … without a new way of conceiving political and economic democracies that respect cultural differences. … The entire division of labour, its modes of valorisation and finalities need to be rethought. … [P]oetry today might have more to teach us than economic science, the human sciences, and psychoanalysis combined. (Guattari 1992, 20)

Against the theoretical backdrop of this "ecosophical" aesthetic paradigm, Bourriaud focuses on art projects, whose "substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which take … being-together as a central theme" (Bourriaud 2002, 15). In doing so, Bourriaud conceives of encounters exclusively as forms of human sociality whereas Guattari's subjectivation is "auto-enriching its relation to the world" and, thus, involves a more nuanced and materially differentiated approach that goes beyond human relations. Guattari envisions an ecosophy (ecological philosophy) according to which more-than-human environments, social relations, and psychological subjectivities are interrelated and enriching each other. In other words, Bourriaud, on the other hand, conceives of relationality as a genuinely human connectivity that is able to compensate for social defects and to promote, in a strangely harmonious way, recovery from the alienations of a capitalist and technified reality. Moreover, his focus on gatherings of people within the framing of art exhibitions (that in themselves are rather exclusive) overlooks power relations as well as the very specificities of the material entanglements involved.

In view of the long and varied history of participatory art in the 20th century (see, e.g., Bishop 2012 and Raunig 2007), it is also startling that Bourriaud declares 1990s Relational Aesthetics to revolve around something radically new. While earlier avant-gardes aspired to a radical break and conflict with their present through revolutionary demands and utopian manifestos, Relational Aesthetics deals with constructive proposals for a realizable community with new "life possibilities" here and now (Bourriaud 2002, 46). Even though Bourriaud is not entirely wrong in attributing utopian-revolutionary concerns and provocative confrontational strategies to the avant-gardes, some of them were not concerned

with conflict and social upheaval but with the realization of alternative forms of communality in temporally and locally limited settings. As a consequence, they are quite similar to the micro-politics of later Relational Art. The Brazilian artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, for example, already relied on participatory formats from the 1960s onwards—participatory formats, for instance, that were dedicated quite decidedly to pleasure. Challenging everyday routines, the space and time of their installations invited practices of "creleisure" (creation and leisure), which made relaxing, joyful, therapeutic, or liberating experiences possible. Clark also designed small, variably movable objects for finger games—so-called "Relational Objects"—as well as various structures made of fabrics, foils, and threads, some of which literally wrapped or connected the recipients with their bodies.

The diversity of art practices just mentioned not only anticipated some moments of Relational Aesthetics and questioned the horizon of the post-industrial globalised West. Moreover, they make it very clear that the relationship between art and life or art and politics can only be adequately analyzed in relation to individual case studies. Instead of referring to the obscure collective singulars of "art" and "life" or "politics," it is much more illuminating to look at the geo-socio-historical situation of each specific aesthetic project in order to fathom its concrete preconditions, strategies, and references as well as the persons and publics involved. It is especially from a feminist perspective that Bourriaud's historical and geo-political blindness as well as his generalizations prove to have seriously problematic consequences—not least with regard to an assessment of the artists he praises. Helena Reckitt, for instance, argues convincingly that his blanking out of the feminist avant-garde leads to a depoliticisation of those artistic approaches that Bourriaud ennobles as Relational Aesthetics (Reckitt 2013). Bourriaud completely neglects the fact that feminist and institution-critical artists have been pointing to violent preconditions of communities since the 1970s, namely their immanent hierarchies, concealed exclusions, and invisible supports. Bourriaud's neglect of these artistic practices is all the more astonishing since the projects honoured by him involve, to a large extent, activities that are intimately related to the fields of affective and immaterial (care-)work. Relational Art is said to be communicative and caring; it nourishes, bestows, creates homeliness, and cultivates hospitality. It thus deals with a field of activities that for a long time has been considered to be "feminine," at least until this field became the focus of feminist criticism. Thus, Bourriaud unsurprisingly overlooks or conceals artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who had already worked on challenges of communality decades ago and, what is more, in such a way that structural inequalities in the division of labour came to light and relationality did not remain a merely harmonious micro-gesture.

In closing, we would like to turn to another, less homogenizing version of Relational Aesthetics, namely the "Poetics of Relation" by Martiniqueian poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant. Far from Bourriaud's unifying ideal of "including the other," Glissant pursues a

co-constitutively heterogenising understanding of relationality. Focusing on colonial history and the post-colonial present, Glissant develops a concept of relationality according to which every subject is an object and every object a subject within a globalised world of "creolisations." Creolisation does not designate fusion or integration but, rather, refers to encounters with unforeseeable potentials. If sustained by mutual appreciation of the heterogeneous elements such encounters have the potential to unfold diversity by transforming everything involved without uniforming it. In the eyes of Glissant, encounters are not only of relevance for former colonies such as the Antilles, where Creole language is spoken as a result of the sudden and violent encounter between different languages as part of the transatlantic slave trade. Much rather, creolisation also shapes what Glissant calls the "*tout-monde*" (whole-world) or "*chaos-monde*" (chaos-world), that is, the diversifying mixture of cultures that globally enfolds in open processes of "shock, entanglement, repulsions and attractions, consents, oppositions and conflicts" (1996, 82).

> Relation is that which simultaneously realizes and expresses this motion. It is the *chaos-mode* relating (to itself). The poetics of Relation … senses, assumes, opens, gathers, scatters, continues, and transforms the thought of these elements, these forms, and this motion. (Glissant 1997a, 94f.)

Glissant connects the perception of such creolising relations to a heterogenising art practice because the potential of the imaginary allows us "to conceive the elusive globality of [the] *chaos-monde*" and to take note of particular details at the same time (1997b, 22). The poetics that ensues enables a diversified "aesthetics of the earth," that interrupts the imperative, "triumphant voice" of Western abstract thinking. Pertaining to a materialism of encounter, which is historically specific as well as embodied and embraces more-than-human encounters, Glissant's Poetics of Relation accounts for colonial-capitalist entanglements as well as for emancipatory and creative potentials of manifold creolisations. Through the detailed observation of a specific landscape—a beach at the south of Martinique that opens up a view on Diamond Rock for example—his own writing engages in a conversation with this land's latencies and realises the thick presence of the specific place. His poetics of relation thus takes bodily encounters *with* worldly materiality as its starting point instead of writing as an individual author-subject that contemplates *on* the world. According to Glissant, it is the earth's relationality that finds its expression through and within the poet's encounter with a specific landscape. In this vein, he describes the painfully resonating encounter, that emerges from a land permeated by (post-)colonialism: "It is that here I am confronted with this necessity to exhaust all at once the deserted (devastated) field of history where our voice has dissipated, and to precipitate that voice into the here and now, into the history to be made with everyone" (Glissant 2010, 43).

Here Glissant's endeavour meets Guattari's New Aesthetic Paradigm as well as Donna Haraway's call for a more-than-human *Storytelling for Earthly Survival* (see Terranova 2016). For all three of them, poetic practices are of vital importance because we (though this "we"

is never without questions) urgently need "a better account of the world in order to live in it well" (Haraway 1988, 579). It is practices of poetics, to which Guattari, Haraway and Glissant assign the potential of a better, that is, *situated*, understanding of the world. Their poetics refer to an integrated aesthetic, epistemic, and ethical account that remains earth-bound and incomplete and that, at the same time, resists the uniforming globalisation through Western capitalism of which the institutionalised art field as well as aesthetics as a philosophical discipline are part and parcel.

CONCLUSION

Let us summarise what we have established in this chapter: canonical philosophical aesthetics, which should rather be addressed as Western aesthetics, has been linked to politics since its formation in the 18th century. The main reason for this close relation between Western aesthetics and politics is the fact that philosophical aesthetics, as well as the artistic practices canonised by such theory, played an important role in the formation of Western bourgeois societies. These societies were and are structured by capitalism's manifold divisions of power along axes such as class, race, gender, or age, and they revolve around the assumption that so-called modern (as opposed to "primitive" or pre-modern) societies presuppose autonomous societal spheres like politics, science, art, or religion. Against this background it becomes more than understandable that aesthetic autonomy is such a contested concept. Whereas some theorists (e.g., Adorno or Rancière) claim that aesthetic autonomy should, and indeed can be used as a space of critique, others emphasise the harmlessness if not downright impotence of autonomous aesthetic practices (Benjamin, Brecht). In light of the myriads of repetitive debates for and against the political (or depoliticizing) potential of aesthetic autonomy, some aestheticians (e.g., Glissant or Guattari) have sought for a more radical alternative. Their suggestion is to widen the concept of aesthetics, so that it is no longer restricted to the confines of artworks and the field of art as a whole. Their proposal is to envision an aesthetics of sensual relations, oftentimes dubbed affections, that reach across the sphere of seemingly autonomous societal spheres and that transcend human relations as well. However, such thinking in terms of sensual relations is not entirely new. Traces of it can, for example, also be found in the writings of Baumgarten, who authored the first book on aesthetics.

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CHAPTER 9.

ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS ART AESTHETICALLY

ELIZABETH BURNS COLEMAN

INTRODUCTION: AESTHETICS AND INDIGENOUS ARTS

Historically, artworks created by Indigenous peoples have been treated by Western, non-Indigenous artists and art critics as "primitive art" and belonging to ethnographic museums rather than in art galleries. This chapter traces how Indigenous arts have come to be re-evaluated as arts and explores how the artforms of Indigenous peoples may be appreciated while recognising that these artforms are often created in artistic traditions quite different from those associated with the Western institution of fine arts. These traditions may not separate art from everyday life or ceremony and may involve quite different assumptions about the metaphysical nature of representation and the nature of beauty. Finally, it explores important ways to understand and appreciate the dynamic developments of Indigenous art, beyond the idea that "traditional" means without change.

In 2006, the Quai Branly museum opened in Paris to great fanfare. In the museum, Indigenous arts were to be appreciated *as arts,* as opposed to being studied as curios, or presented anthropologically as representative of vanishing cultures. While the claim that all people have art might sound obvious to a current audience, at the time it was not. The museum represented an important political claim—that all people were equal, because all cultures had art. Historically, the claim that Indigenous peoples did not have art was a reason given for thinking they were "uncivilised" and "savages," one of the justifications of colonisation. As recently as the 1990s, anthropologists and philosophers were debating whether Indigenous arts were "arts," and whether "aesthetic appreciation" of Indigenous arts was merely the projection of European concepts and values onto alien cultures.

Histories of the "discovery" and appreciation of Indigenous art from around the world have a very similar structure. As the philosopher Thomas Leddy has written:

> [F]irst, the art of X was treated as a collection of curiosities; then it was seen as art paradoxically created by people without any aesthetic sensitivity; then it was treated as art which has formal qualities strangely similar to those of Western masterpieces; then it was treated as art, but only when it is "authentic," which is to say, precolonial; then it was treated as art, but only properly so when seen in its actual historical and performance context (for example the tribal mask in the context of ritual practice); then it was treated as art best seen in terms of aesthetic concepts coming out of the culture in which it was produced. (Leddy 2017)

This short account of the history of the acceptance of Indigenous arts as arts is largely correct. To say that something is an art is to give it a special status, a recognition of the creators as civilised. Yet, it does not follow from this that aesthetic appreciation of it follows from its display in a gallery, or that its aesthetic appreciation is easy, or that questions about how it should be appreciated cross culturally do not remain.

The debate surrounding the establishment of the Quai Branly focussed on two issues. One was on whether the museum "patronises the cultures it wishes to invest with lustre," a problem James Harding thinks may have been ameliorated if the exhibition were not presented in "significant dimness," which, in combination with the plant motif printed on the windows, may be considered "dangerously close to a fantasy of pre-contact worlds adrift in benign and fertile obscurity" (Harding 2007). The second issue focused on how one should appreciate an object, "whether a Tuareg tent cushion, for instance, is an extremely pretty household object, a ceremonial device or a work of art" (Harding 2007). This catalogue suggests that different kinds of aesthetic appreciation and valuation might apply depending on how we categorise objects. The question of categorisation assumes that whether something is decorative art (a pretty household object) involves different aesthetic standards for appreciation than ceremonial objects which have deeper religious and social connotations (consider the symbolism of the Orb carried by Queen Elizabeth on her coronation), to "a work of art" (which might mean a fine art object produced by an artist). In the *New York Times*, Michael Kimmelman explained, "The familiar aesthetics-versus-ethnology question came up: 'Will religious, ceremonial and practical objects, never intended as art in the modern, Western sense, be showcased like baubles, with no context?'" (Kimmelman 2006). Such a question assumes that to appreciate something aesthetically as art is quite different from appreciating it as an artefact.

How something is categorised as an art object is directly relevant to its evaluation, and whether or how it is appropriate to appreciate it aesthetically. To understand these issues, we need to delve deeper into the history of how Indigenous arts have been appreciated by non-Indigenous members of the Western art world.[1]

1. To present the issue this way suggests a monolithic "Western" culture and contrasts it with a similarly monolithic "Indigenous" culture. The oversimplification overrides multiple differences within Western cultures, and within Indigenous cultures. Indigenous societies and arts may be considered as varied and diverse as those of Western societies. The English, French, Greeks, and Italians all have different cultures,

This chapter is broken into three sections. The first section explores the history of the "discovery" of Indigenous arts by people in Western societies. Artworks created by Indigenous peoples were re-evaluated, from "hoaxes" to "primitive" art to "masterpieces" as formalist approaches to art developed. The second section focuses on the debates related to the philosopher Arthur Danto's reinterpretation of Indigenous arts as being primarily related to their relationship with a discourse within the society of production, and criticisms of his theory. The objections to this theory provide valuable points to consider in relation to contemporary Indigenous art. Finally, in the last section, I explore what a fusion of horizons in relation to Indigenous aesthetics might look like and sketch how Indigenous works might be engaged with aesthetically through the paradigms of comparative aesthetics and etiquette.

THE DISCOVERY OF "PRIMITIVE ART"

Naturally, Indigenous arts had no need to be "discovered" within their own societies. The discovery occurred among European colonialists and anthropologists, and later, by artists and art theorists. Discovery in this sense simply means that something was formerly unknown from a particular perspective. Yet, Indigenous peoples with histories of colonial invasion are rightly disturbed by the idea that Europeans "discovered" lands or species that they have lived on and known about for thousands of years. What follows shortly after is dispossession. The same is true of art. In this section, I explore the historical relationship between theories of art and the appreciation of African art, which enabled Indigenous arts to be valued differently. They also enabled their appropriation. The remainder of the chapter will draw out these philosophical connections between Western theories of art and how Indigenous art is appreciated in the context of Western societies more explicitly.

A popular theory of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in colonial societies was that Indigenous peoples lived in "primitive" cultures, and as such, were living at an earlier evolutionary stage.[2] Initially it was believed that hunters and gatherers were closer to nature and therefore did not produce art (Morphy 1998, 13). For example, in 1837, when Sir George Grey had come across the Wadjina rock paintings in the Kimberly Ranges in Australia, he thought they could not possibly have been painted by Australian Aboriginal peoples: "It is scarcely probable that they could have been painted by self-taught savages," he wrote (Morphy 1998, 20). And, when Aboriginal carvings of animals were found at Lake Eyre

languages, and artistic traditions. Similarly, Indigenous societies are distinct, with their own languages, lifestyles, and artistic traditions. Nevertheless, some generalisations hold, even if they do not capture all Western or Indigenous artistic practices or modes of appreciation.

2. The use of the term "primitive" in this context stems from the evolutionary theory of society, the idea that some cultures and people were less evolved, more primitive, than others. This contrast between "more" and "less" evolved was applied to different societies, the people who lived in them, and the material culture that they produced. European cultures were considered the most highly evolved and European people were considered more "civilised," in contrast to "primitive people" whom Europeans considered "savages."

in 1906, many commentators felt they could only be some kind of hoax (Sutton, Jones, and Hemming 1988, 196). Similarly, some people thought the First Nations peoples of the Americas did not have music (Coleman and Coombe 2009). If Indigenous peoples did not have art (along with other institutions such as law), then it was possible to justify their colonisation by a presumed superior (European) civilisation.

However, some anthropologists and art historians thought that the artefacts Indigenous peoples produced were art, albeit "primitive art."[3] The establishment of museums in the late 18th century and the development of art history and cultural anthropology as academic disciplines played an important role in shifting ideas about whether Indigenous societies produced art. These emerging disciplines enabled the first studies of Indigenous art. Alois Riegl (1858-1905), a curator at the k.k. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Austria and one of the major figures associated with the establishment of art history as a discipline, developed formalism as a method for the scientific study of the evolution of pattern in his 1893 book, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament.* Inspired by this, another curator, German-born American Franz Boas (1858–1942) drew attention to the evolution of design and the creativity of Indigenous artists in his essays "The Decorative Art of the North American Indians" and "Decorative Designs of Alaskan Needlecases," before completing his groundbreaking work that established a place for the study of art in anthropology, *Primitive Art.* Inspired by Kantian ideas, Riegl and Boas postulated a human will to create beauty and postulated this drive as the basis for how we should understand the universality of artistic forms in human cultures.

Nevertheless, the concept of primitive art remained mired in elitist thinking and presumptions of European superiority. Primitive art was considered by many to be less sophisticated than the art produced by European artists. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the dominant theory of art was expressivism, the idea that a work of art expresses an artist's thoughts and feelings. As Susan Mculloch has observed, expressivism as "the *raison d'être* of much Western art—the artist's desire to communicate thoughts or emotions, to present the world through his or her eyes, or to comment in a highly individual way on imaginary or real life" does not generally apply to Indigenous art (McCulloch 2001, 23). The lack of emphasis on individualism and creativity led Europeans to think of Indigenous arts as repetitious and based in tradition. The objects produced by Indigenous peoples were artefacts rather than "fine art," and so, the thinking went, they belonged in ethnographic museums not art galleries. That they were "traditional" rather than the work of individual "creative artists" justified their appropriation.

3. The term "primitive art" was used to categorise material culture of sub-Sahara Africa, Oceania (the Pacific Islands), Americas, and Southeast Asia. It was not generally associated with the artefacts of Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, or Greek or Roman civilisations, which Europeans considered major cultures, or cultures that existed before the stone age (prehistoric).

In the early twentieth century, primitive art was "discovered" a third time, by European artists. This was the first re-evaluation of Indigenous arts as having something particularly valuable to offer. Primitive art was reinterpreted as the direct expression of an aesthetic emotion lacking in Western civilisation (Köpping and Köpping 1998). At first, the imagery and motifs of Indigenous peoples began appearing in an art style known as "primitivism," such as in the Tahitian paintings of Paul Gauguin. Primitivism became a trend among the expressivist French and German avant-garde. African masks brought back from French colonies were particularly influential for Parisian artists and the evolution of modernism. Henri Matisse and André Derain were influenced by Gambon and Congolese (Babangi) masks. Yet, the revolutionary change in attitude towards the masks occurred one day in 1907. During a visit to the ethnographic museum Palais du Trocadero, Pablo Picasso experienced a "revelation" (Fluegel 1980, 87). According to Arthur Danto's account of Picasso's visit:

> There, amongst the emblems of imperial conquest or scientific curiosity, amidst what must have been taken as palpable evidence of the artistic superiority of European civilization and therein palpable justificatory grounds for cultural intervention, Picasso perceived absolute masterpieces of sculptural art, on a level of achievement attained only at their best by the acknowledged masterpieces of the Western sculptural tradition. (Danto 1988, 18)

Danto suggests that what enabled this discovery were changes to the practice of art that enabled the values of African art to become visible to those who had previously not recognised them: "In liberating himself from his own representational traditions, Picasso liberated the art of Africa from those same traditions, in the light of which they could not be seen for what they were" (Danto 1988, 19). The influence of what was called "Negro art" on art practice became apparent in Paris from 1907, and by 1912 had spread through Berlin, Dresden and London art scenes (Encyclopedia of Art, n.d.).

These developments quickly influenced art theorists and critics as well. What distinguished the artefacts made in Indigenous cultures, it was thought, was their lack of representational naturalism, their "savagery" and "emotional rawness." In 1914, the formalist theorist Clive Bell argued that "As a rule primitive art is good. … In primitive art you will find no accurate representation; you will find only significant form" (Bell [1914] 1931, 22). For Bell, what was so impressive about primitive art, all primitive art, he thought, was the absence of representation and of technical swagger he associated with the fine arts (23). In 1920 Roger Fry, another formalist critic, was to write of an exhibition of African sculpture at the Chelsea Book Club that "some of these things are great sculpture—greater I think than anything we produced even in the Middle Ages," adding that "it seems unfair to be forced to admit that certain nameless savages have possessed this power [to create expressive plastic form] not only in a higher degree than we do at this moment, but than we as a nation have ever possessed it" (Danto 1988, 19). The idea that "nameless savages" produced the work underscores an attitude of the superiority of European civilisation. It does not suggest that there was a re-evaluation of their status as primitive, nor that the makers of the works

were creative artists, regardless of the quality of their work. If anything, the focus on form encouraged people to ignore the ceremonial and religious meanings of Indigenous arts because, on a formalist understanding of art, this was what it meant for arts to be appreciated aesthetically.

The admiration of Indigenous arts by Western artists was accompanied by a hierarchy of values that, in their minds, legitimised using their forms in any way they liked. The highly stylised figures of African sculptures became influential in Cubism, and later, Surrealism. By the 1930s, Oceanic, First Nation Indian, and Eskimo art also became sources of inspiration (Encyclopedia of Art, n.d.).

For instance, in Australia, the modernist painter Margaret Preston saw in Aboriginal painting the well-spring for an "Indigenous art of Australia." According to Preston, for this "Indigenous" *Australian* fine art to be invented, all it needed was an "all-seeing eye of the Western Artist to adapt it [Aboriginal art] to the 20th century" (Angel 1999, 33). The relationship of Indigenous art with tradition is precisely what enabled it to be reinterpreted by the Western artist in the service of creating their own "great art." This practice is embedded in contemporary Western legal systems in copyright law (Coleman 2005), and aesthetic appreciation and the value of self-expression remain used as justifications for cultural appropriation.

As widely observed, there are significant differences between Western and Indigenous art practices. First, in some Indigenous cultures, there may be no lexical terms for "art" or "aesthetics." Second, art production in Indigenous societies is not an autonomous realm, and the Indigenous products the Western artworld calls art are often used in ceremonial or other socially significant contexts and were not produced as objects for sale (Davies 2010; Dutton 2000). It was highly controversial when, in the 1950s, Australian art galleries first started adding Aboriginal art to their collections. These controversies did not focus on the quality of the artefacts so much as the issue of whether or not they were art and should be displayed in galleries (Morphy 1998, 23–29). Debates about these issues became especially prominent as museum practices changed and Indigenous arts started to be displayed as art in the second half of the twentieth century, and especially from the 1980s. One of the most influential accounts of why aesthetic appreciation (understood in terms of disinterested contemplation) cannot be thought of as a cross-cultural concept was presented by Pierre Bourdieu in his article "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic" (1987). Bourdieu argued that the aesthetic attitude is not shared by all humanity, or even by all people at all times in Western societies. He argued that art is not defined by a type of creation, but a kind of social institution, and that it follows from this that the aesthetic attitude is also historically produced. In 1988, when the Center for African Art in New York mounted the exhibition Art/Artifact, it explicitly explored the questions, "How do art museums deal with art made by people who do not call it art? How do we decide what objects to select, and how do we determine quality among

objects of a similar type? How should our museums present art made for purposes unfamiliar to the audience and remote from the museum's own purposes?" (Vogel 1988, 10).

The issue of whether Indigenous arts were art and whether anthropologists should explore aesthetics was still being debated as late as 1996 (Coleman 2011). One of the arguments against the position that aesthetics was a cross-cultural concept was that the fact that the term "aesthetics" was created by the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735 shows that its meaning is intrinsically historical and not universal. Joanna Overing suggested that the study of aesthetics simply means the study of fine art, and she defines fine art as art that does not have a purpose. Overing suggests that the Piaroa notion of beauty "cannot be removed from productive use," and that the conception of beauty is different because "beautification empowers" (Overing 1996, 265). Yet such an account of aesthetics cannot explain why we find stories, songs, performances, and paintings, items we consider to be aesthetically important, in every culture. Moreover, one can concede that Indigenous peoples did not have an "institution of fine art" involving galleries, critics, and fine artists without accepting that they did not have artistic practices. Further, if such an account of art and aesthetics were true, one would need to accept that music, performances, and paintings produced for religious purposes in Western societies were also not art. As many people do think that it makes sense to speak of ancient Greek art or icon painting and hymns as art, a better response is simply to reject the claim as too narrow. If ancient Greek statues and icons can be shown as art in art galleries, then so can Indigenous artworks. However, often such objects are held to different standards than works produced in European traditions. As the anthropologist James Clifford has shown, Indigenous arts become appreciated as masterpieces in galleries primarily through their relationship between being "traditional" and "authentic" (Clifford 1988, 251-252).

In the space of 150 years, ideas about whether Indigenous peoples had art, and whether their arts were aesthetically valuable, changed dramatically. This history shows that the history of colonisation is woven throughout the collection, display, and appropriation of art, and this history relates to dominant ideas about aesthetic appreciation and the nature of art. Aesthetic appreciation is important in several respects in this cross-cultural history. First, it is what enabled the recognition that Indigenous peoples have art across cultures—that is, aesthetic appreciation has an epistemic function. Second, it has an explanatory function in terms of why we might consider some attributes, such as the capacity to create art, to be particularly human capacities in terms of how they interpret the world. But third, a theory of aesthetic appreciation enables, and even justifies, the appropriation of Indigenous arts as if such appropriation was a sign of respect for the culture of other people. However, history is not a philosophy. To explore the philosophical debates regarding the appreciation of Indigenous arts, I contrast formalist accounts of art with Arthur Danto's institutional theory and explore some of the criticisms that have been raised in this context.

RE-EVALUATIONS OF INDIGENOUS ART

In addition to being a method for the study of art history, formalism is the philosophical theory of art that defines art in terms of those objects created by an artist that have "significant form." For theorists such as Bell, significant form is the apprehension of the world in terms of arrangements and combinations that elicits an aesthetic emotion, the sense of beauty. This kind of apprehension of the world, Bell thought, is beyond mundane usefulness, and moral or political considerations. The focus of form is lost when the emphasis of an artist is on naturalism and the demonstration of skill. Bell wrote, "formal significance loses itself in preoccupation with exact representation and ostentatious cunning" ([1914] 1931, 23):

> Naturally, it is said that if there is little representation and less saltimbancery in primitive art, that is because the primitives were unable to catch a likeness or cut intellectual capers. The contention is beside the point. … Very often, I fear, the misrepresentation of the primitives must be attributed to what the critics call, "wilful distortion." Be that as it may, the point is that, either from want of skill or want of will, primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful—the creation of form. Thus, have they created the finest works of art that we possess. (23)

As noted above, this enabled a re-evaluation of Indigenous arts by Western, non-Indigenous artists and critics in that what had previously been considered a "failure" or lack of representation was reconceptualised as a virtue. While the re-evaluation was important in recognising the beauty of the work, it denied the religious significance or meaning of those forms as important.

In the introduction to the catalogue of the Art/Artifact exhibition, Arthur Danto presents a very different theory of Indigenous art to that of Bell. If what was important to Bell was the lack of representation and the focus on form, for Danto, what makes Indigenous art "art" is how the art embodies meaning. For Danto, all art is created by artists within a social and historical context that has an interpretive discourse about those objects. This discourse sets these objects apart from everyday life. His theory addresses the question with which I began this chapter, "whether a Tuareg tent cushion … is an extremely pretty household object, a ceremonial device or a work of art" (Harding 2007). For Danto, there is always a clear line between art and artefact, or art and a household object. While something may be both a useful object and a work of art, a work of art cannot be a mere tool. This distinction is drawn on the nature of how an object is related to a discourse of meaning and evaluation. It allows us to distinguish between otherwise identical objects, between an actual Brillo box and Andy Warhol's Brillo Box. An actual Brillo box is something used and discarded. It is not something created for contemplation. In contrast, Andy Warhol's Brillo Box contributes to debate within the artworld about the nature of art and its relationship to modes of production. For Danto, "An artifact implies a system of means; to extract it from the system in which it has a function and display it for itself is to treat a means as though it were an end. The use of an artifact is

always its meaning" (Danto 1988, 29). In contrast, art is an end. Its meaning, and the discourse that sets it apart is what gives it a special status or value. This implies a difference in value that determines whether something belongs in an art gallery or a museum.

Danto applies this argument to African art by using an imaginary example of two African tribes of the same region, separated by a geographical feature that enabled their cultures to evolve in different ways. He calls these tribes the Pot People and the Basket Folk. Both tribes produce pots and baskets, and the features of the pots and baskets are indiscernible to an outsider, yet the pots of the Pot People belong in an art gallery, while their baskets do not, while the baskets of the Basket Folk belong in a gallery while their pots do not. The reason for this is the special role that pots play for the Pot People and the baskets play for the Basket Folk. The Basket Folk consider the baskets to have great meaning and special power. They express the idea that we carry youth within ourselves through their capacity to retain the scent of freshly cut grasses, which is released when the baskets are left in the rain. The Basket Folk view the world as a basket made by the great basket weaver God, and the basket-makers imitate God in her creativity. Pots, on the other hand, are "a piece with fishnets and arrowheads, textiles of bark and flax, or the armatures of wood that give shape to their dwellings" (Danto 1988, 23). In contrast, the pots of the Pot People are thick with signification, especially with the capacity to hold seeds for the next year's harvest. Human beings and especially women are like pots for their ability to carry their seeds of the next generation. Baskets, for the Pot People, however, are simply baskets (Danto 1988, 24). In this explanation, it is the religious interpretative framework applied to the pots by the Pot People and baskets by the Basket Folk that sets them apart from being mere utilitarian objects.

For Danto, such meaning is a part of the work: "An artwork is a compound of thought and matter" (Danto 1988, 31), and the form of an artwork is given by its content. An artwork embodies its meaning (Danto 2000, 133). Borrowing from Martin Heidegger, Danto suggests that art embodies the "lifeworld" of a culture (Heidegger 1971). For example, an ancient Greek temple embodies the cosmology and ideology of the people who created it. Accordingly, Danto writes, statues of ancient Greek Gods "express the powers they personify" (1988, 31). Accordingly, if African art is not representational, it is because resemblance is not a consideration for the artists; they invent forms that best embody the forces they intend to express (1988, 31).[4] The form of African art is powerful because the forms of African art are about the powers central to human life. Danto suggests that non-

4. Danto might be interpreted as essentialising African art here, as though there were only one Indigenous culture in Africa. However, the "essence" here concerns a theory of art rather than indigenous cultures. His critique of the 1984 Primitivism exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York suggests that the habit of designating cultures as primitive is a form of colonialism on par with Orientalism. He was particularly critical of a room showcasing figures from New Guinea, Zambia, Zaire, Nigeria together, asking, "what do they have in common, really, with one another, or with objects from Easter Island or the American Southwest or Papua or New Ireland or the Arctic?" (Danto 2006, 148).

members of African Indigenous cultures are severely limited in their understanding and appreciation of this art. If someone cannot see the philosophical content, then possibly they are unable to appreciate the work at all: "[W]e may … be unable to perceive them at all. If we do not know the powers, if we do not understand how those powers are lived in the forms of life they penetrate, and especially if we ourselves do not live those forms of life, we probably can see them only in our terms" (Danto 1988, 37).

Despite this change of focus from the form of the art to its meaning and the discourse that surrounds it, this theory also presents problems. First, as Danto acknowledges elsewhere, this theory excludes something that does not embody its meaning as art, and specifically excludes what might be termed "symbolic art," "the meaning of which, as in a name, is external to it" (Danto 2000, 133). However, this excludes some Indigenous creations we would intuitively consider art from being so. Secondly, his argument about the indiscernibility of the pots and baskets of the Pot People and Basket Folk does not correspond with our intuitions, or what we know about the care with which ceremonial objects are created in most Indigenous societies. And thirdly, Danto's argument has the unfortunate consequences of excluding the objects that Indigenous societies produce for aesthetic reasons *as* art, on the grounds that such objects are untraditional and therefore inauthentic.

Danto's theory suggests a direct relationship between form and meaning. However, this relationship is more complex than he suggests when, as in the case of Aboriginal painting in Australia, the meaning is encoded through polysemic iconicity,[5] and a particular meaning is expressed within a ceremonial context. In such a case, the form of the object does not determine its meaning. For example, the foremost authority of Yolngu painting, Howard Morphy, shows how its iconicity has multiple meanings. Yolngu paintings have two main elements: figurative representations and geometric forms. The geometric shapes represent the form of sand sculptures used in ceremony or other ceremonial objects. The painting is divided into different segments involving *rarrk* (cross-hatching) and different diamond structures that are clan designs. The clan designs are multi-referential. The diamonds and *rarrk* in a single painting "can represent the turbulent floodwaters, the ancestral fire, the marks on a crocodile's back, the cells of a beehive; its colours can represent flames or burnt wood, smoke and sparks, honey or foaming waters; and the distinctive variants of the design belong to different social groups and are part of the clan's identity" (Morphy 2008, 103). The meaning in any given context is enacted separately in specific ceremonial contexts, say, through the words of a song or the expressive movements of a dance (Morphy 2008, 97). Danto might accommodate this by pointing out that the forms still embody the forces an artist means to express, yet the point is that the meaning expressed in the painting is not determined by the artist, but by the ceremonial context and other participants in it.

5. The term "polysemic" means that there may be more than one meaning or interpretation.

Another criticism of Danto's distinction between art and artefact is that it is simply improbable as a distinction between art and non-art. It is highly unlikely that the Pot People and the Basket Folk would produce identical objects, where one produced art and the other produced mere things. Denis Dutton argues convincingly that this is simply unlikely to be true—the difference between the sacred and the mundane is expressed in care and attention to detail. Dutton argues, "if the pots and their associated mythology have the place Danto describes for them as having among Pot People, and if the making of pots among them has developed into their most treasured art—then it is hard to suppose Pot Peoples being anything but meticulous about the construction of their pots" (1993, 17). They would worry about finding the perfect clay and the process of firing the pots for the perfect finish. This is just what people do when they care deeply about a product they are making. Moreover, when an art form develops, presumably over generations, it develops a canon of excellence and requirements for good pot design and decoration. Aesthetic attention to form and material is perceptible in the making and the final product of an object made in another culture, even though the purpose of making the object does not involve making fine art. Whatever the purpose of making the object may be, it is possible to recognise that these objects, or products, involve skill, care, sensitivity, and intelligence.

Dutton's example is convincing in that it is intuitive in terms of the patterns of use of objects from other cultures. However, an epistemological problem with Dutton's objection is that care and attention to detail are not always apparent cross-culturally. An example of such a situation concerns Rembrannga digeridoos. Like the didgeridoos produced by their near neighbours, the Yolngu in Arnhem Land, Rembrannga didgeridoos are created with great care and attention to detail, however, they are not similarly popular with art collectors as the application of ochre to the object is messy rather than the neat application of *rarrk* found elsewhere in Arnhem Land. This messiness does not mean that the objects are not valued. Rather, what is important is the depth of colour of the ochre, which may be gathered from special sites and saved for particular purposes or works (Coleman and Keller 2006). This objection does not undermine Dutton's point that special care and attention has been paid to the creation of something intended for ceremonial purposes, rather it suggests that only people with an understanding of the aesthetic values of the Rembrangga and their techniques of production may be able to perceive those differences.

A more telling objection might be that the difference between sacred and profane objects in some cultures do not follow the patterns that Danto suggests. For Danto, it is the theory or religious discourse that distinguishes art from non-art. A contemporary example of Danto's conception of art might be objects such as dilly bags (woven baskets used to collect food) and fish traps produced by Aboriginal artists from Northern Territory, Australia.[6] Dilly bags and

6. See, for example, Kunmandj (Dilly bags), by Elizabeth Kala Kala, and Mandjabu (Fish Trap) by Susan Marawarr, on the Bábarra Women's Centre website.

fish traps may be totemic objects associated with specific parts of the landscape. According to the Aboriginal arts organisation Maningrida Arts and Culture, "the conical fish trap has become the ritual focus of certain clan ceremonies and often appears as a design motif painted on bark. Sacred sites for the fish trap are scattered across western and north-central Arnhem Land, and certain creation beings are said to have imparted the knowledge of fish-trap technology to human beings" (Bawininga Aboriginal Corporation. n.d.).

Thus, as Danto suggests, fish-traps may be artefacts used for fishing, ceremonial objects, or created as objects of beauty for galleries and are connected with ancestral stories. However, this also undermines Danto's account of the difference between art and non-art in terms of the value of objects, as these are not the exclusive disjunctions as he suggests. For Danto, it would be wrong to treat a fish-trap as an artwork if it did not have religious or ceremonial purpose. But fish-traps may be all these things. It is not that the category "fish-trap" has a special status, rather, the objects in that category are valued differently in different contexts. As such, the distinction between artefact and art breaks down. Spirit infuses all of life, as opposed to certain kinds of objects.

A further point of criticism concerning Danto's use of the spiritual discourse surrounding the objects as the feature that makes something a work of art is made by Larry Shiner on the basis that it excludes objects produced primarily for aesthetic reasons (Shiner 1994, 52). Shiner points out that on this theory, the insistence that an African Indigenous carving be authentic, that is, used in ceremony, creates a restriction on Indigenous art that devalues the works produced for aesthetic appreciation. Further, the sculptural works that are made by African Indigenous artisans for sale for their aesthetic features are demoted to "tourist artefacts" or fakes. This is a common feature of Indigenous work produced for Western art markets. Similarly, Navajo sand paintings are created as part of a healing ritual and are not preserved after the conclusion of the ritual, nor replicated. In respect of this tradition, artists producing for the market will intentionally alter the design from ritual-specific counterparts according to Navajo design principles. However, many collectors feel that this art involves a loss of "cultural authenticity" (Gracyk 2009, 156–159). A distinct problem for Aboriginal painting according to Danto's theory is that Australian Aboriginal peoples also had a tradition of painting that was non-ceremonial and was used locally for their aesthetic functions. Such works might appear on the walls of a bark hut, for instance, just as European paintings are used. They could not be important secret-sacred representations in such a context (Morphy 2008, 24). According to Danto, however, such paintings produced and used locally for aesthetic purposes, but without a deep discourse, would not be art.

The problem of the cultural authenticity of works produced for aesthetic purposes is emphasised when, according to an Indigenous culture's standards of authenticity, a work produced for sale as art may be considered authentic even though it departs from historic forms. A similar problem arose with Australian Aboriginal paintings, as these became

produced for sale as art objects (Coleman 2001). Critics were concerned that the paintings, produced in acrylics, could not be authentic given that they were not produced for ceremonial purposes or with traditional media. However, what cannot be "seen" in the artworks is their ontological structure.[7] We might discuss artworks as either "allographic," that is, as having a symbolic structure like words, which can be repeated and produced in different media and yet always remain the same word, or "autographic," meaning a single system produced by a specific author, like a painting. So, for example, the notation system of symbols and words means that any book with the same sequence of letters is an instance of the same book. There can be any number of instances of a performance of a play, and each interpretation can be quite different and have different aesthetic qualities while remaining the same play. However, a painting of sunflowers by Vincent Van Gogh is always a single and distinct painting, even though Van Gogh painted sunflowers many times. Aboriginal paintings are different from Western paintings in that they have instructions for correct performance, like plays or music. Accordingly, an Aboriginal painting can be reinterpreted in different contexts, and different mediums, because it is not autographic. Different interpretations are instances of the same work, regardless of the medium in which they are produced.

Those unfamiliar with the culture should not assume that they can always identify the skill or the aesthetic properties that make a work valuable or good from the perspective of an Indigenous person from that culture. Some properties, such as the messiness of paint, may be less important than the density of the colour, and the sensory qualities of value may differ even in closely related societies. The meaning of the object we are attempting to appreciate may only be given in ceremonial contexts. Nor can non-Indigenous peoples assume that only certain kinds of work are authentic. Indigenous arts may have a very different ontological structure, and this ontology will make a difference between what counts as an authentic instance of an artwork produced within a tradition. However, it is important to avoid essentialising Indigenous arts to those artefacts produced for ceremonial or religious contexts. Indigenous peoples may also produce artefacts for purely aesthetic reasons to be used domestically or sold within a cross-cultural arts market. Developments within those traditions make it possible for artists to modify works within cultural protocols, retaining cultural authenticity, as objects created within those traditions.

European tastes and current aesthetic standards potentially blind them to acknowledgement of the achievements of other people. If Europeans attempt to understand works of art from their own perspective, they impose their own standards of taste, and learn nothing. As with the Rembrannga didgeridoo, they cannot see the quality of colour because they are looking at the messiness. Similarly, the music of the Kaluli tribe of Papua New Guinea was dismissed as unmusical by missionaries because it was structured to involve overlapping voices rather

7. By "ontological structure," I refer to the structure of something that makes it an instance of that thing.

than harmony. People cannot make relevant aesthetic judgements based solely on what they perceive—that is, how an artwork looks or sounds (Higgins 2005, 2). They need information and categories that make the art's properties relevant as points of comparison (Walton 1970). If the Quai Branly were to take its mission seriously, it needs to help viewers direct their attention to the qualities the artists saw as particularly valuable. Yet this is not a simple lesson in "how other people think." To appreciate the art of another culture, there needs to be a willingness to allow differences between traditions to emerge, to accept that traditions evolve, and to explore different ways in which cross-cultural appreciation may occur.

APPRECIATING INDIGENOUS ARTS

Throughout the 1990s, as academic debates about the arts of other cultures and whether they should be considered part of the canon taught in universities raged, the philosopher Charles Taylor suggested that the validity of a claim to significant cultural value (and hence to be worthy of being taught at university) must be demonstrated from within the standards of the culture. "To approach a raga with the presumptions of value implicit in the well-tempered clavier would be forever to miss the point," he wrote; "what needs to happen is what Gadamer has called a 'fusion of horizons,'" which "operates through our developing new vocabularies of comparison, by means of which we can articulate these concepts" (Taylor 1994, 67). People who attempt such a fusion arrive at an "understanding of what constitutes worth that [they] couldn't possibly have had at the beginning. [They] have reached the judgment partly through transforming [their] standards" (Taylor 1994, 67).

One way to begin to interpret this claim is through thinking about how categories of art and structures of expectation inform our judgements. Formalist engagement with Indigenous cultures was historically important for the recognition of Indigenous arts as arts, as Boas' interpretation of design showed. Formalist principles also enabled musical form to be reinterpreted. When the Canadian musicologist Ida Halpern began studying the music of the First Nations peoples in Canada, it was widely believed that they did not have music. Halpern was among the first researchers to recognise that what some considered nonsense syllables in native songs had an important role and religious meaning (Chen 1995, 52). The problem of interpretation was not merely that no one believed First Nations peoples had art (though that applied as well), it was that it could not be "heard": there was no means to appreciate it. Melody and accompaniment were independent of each other; the vocalisation included sounds considered to be nonsense or meaningless syllables. To understand the music, Halpern had to free herself from the standard concepts and structures of Western music. Western concepts, such as notational scales, did not work. "Tonality seems to exist," she wrote, "but in no direct relation to any specific existing system" (Cole and Mullins 1993, 30). Her model for understanding the music was medieval chant, where finally the structure became apparent. Yet, to understand the music in this form is different from appreciating it aesthetically using the value structures of the society from which it originates. Such a

reinterpretation does involve a re-evaluation, because the music was recognised as music and as art. However, it is not yet the fusion of horizons that are necessary to determine whether it is *good* art.

Facts about the history of production play an essential role in the development of aesthetic judgements in that they determine what aesthetic properties something has. This includes the kind of broad categories that are established in the society in which it was produced, as well as the category in which the artist that produced the work expected it to be understood or interpreted. This process of categorisation involves coming to understand how a society categorises and values artefacts as well as the specific properties of those objects. We cannot generalise these categorisations across the broader classifications of societies, such as the categories African or Aboriginal or First Nations. For instance, the Navajo understand beauty as a property that affects things in the world, rather than a state of mind. Beauty is associated with harmony and goodness and "does" something in the world. Whereas beauty in Western culture is contrasted with ugliness, the Zuni people contrast beauty with danger. While, for Zuni, beauty might be used to describe flower bouquets, jewellery, songs, decoration, and other things that can be shared, danger is associated with shaggy, dark matted hair, ogres, and certain crudely naturalistic designs painted on ceremonial pottery. War Gods, for instance, are dangerous, and should not be shared or looked upon. Yet another people, the Kuna, have artistic practices involving the production of beautiful chants and speeches by creative individuals. These are structured in esoteric language full of metaphors, yet speeches are accompanied by a practice of interpretation, while chants are not (Webster 2005). We therefore need to be wary of overgeneralising, and to acknowledge that there will often be counterexamples to cultural claims. We also need to know how the features of artforms are assessed within the society. For instance, art historian Robert Faris Thompson showed that application of realism in form was not a relevant category through which to appreciate Yoruba sculpture. It was not that the artists did not have the skills to produce naturalistic forms. Rather they aimed for an aesthetic criterion of *ofjioa*, a term meaning "mimesis at the midpoint" between verisimilitude and abstraction (Higgins 2005). Similarly, my example of Rembrannga didgeridoos showed that what made them good was the depth of the colour of the ochre.

Another aspect of this valuation from an Indigenous perspective involves recognition of a different metaphysical structure, or the social role an artform plays. Many societies do not make distinctions such as fine arts and crafts, and arts are integrated into everyday life. Arts may show status or identity; they may also encode law or history (Coleman and Coombe 2009). A song may have the purpose of healing the sick, or a mask of transforming a person into spirit (Higgins 2005). The Zuni have sought the return of War Gods from museums because they are dangerous. These metaphysical aspects of aesthetics, as well as the different

social roles art may play, suggest that to appreciate the significance of the work, and how people relate or respond to it, is to treat the object, and the people who created it, respectfully.

There are norms of behaviour for relating to religious objects, and these norms express the relationship people have with them (Coleman 2008). For instance, an icon in the Orthodox Church is a sacred image used in devotion. The most common subjects are Christ, Mary, saints, and angels. The icon does not merely represent its subject, the image and the subject are considered inseparable. The acknowledgement of this relationship within a ritual or religious context is physical. A priest may kiss the icon in recognition. Other devotional responses to art include people lighting candles before them, crossing themselves and genuflection. Similarly, there are norms of responses to Indigenous religious objects. The Maori may greet certain objects. Other objects, such as the False Masks of the Iroquois, should not be viewed except within certain contexts. The Zuni do not want the War Gods gazed upon. These norms of behaviour establish culturally specific protocols for how people should relate to those objects.

It follows that another aspect of appreciation in cross-cultural settings is acknowledgement of the normative aspects of behaviour that follow from the metaphysical aspects of the symbol, as religious traditions involve norms about how an object may be produced, as well as how the symbol should be treated. This involves the imaginative interpretation of the metaphysics of art (Coleman 2008). For example, in the tradition of icon painting, Europeans understand that the Platonic background to these ideas inform how it is engaged with. There are some aspects of many Indigenous claims and Platonic thought that appear to be similar. One is the association of the object with what it represents in such a way that it makes little sense to say that something is "a representation." Similarly, when some Maori see images of the ancestors, they do not view or respond to the image as a representation but respond to the image by greeting the ancestors. In making such imaginative connections between metaphysical systems, non-Indigenous people may stretch their boundaries, expanding their categories of art, as well as how they engage with it.

The philosopher Thomas Heyd suggests that etiquette is a first step in the creation of a cross-cultural ethic that establishes a mode of approach that respects other cultural values (Heyd 2007). Heyd develops his idea of cross-cultural appreciation from the concept of civility in conversation. Civility involves distancing oneself from one's own concerns to appreciate things from other points of view. Moreover, civility displays good will in the participants of an interaction even in the absence of agreement about other values, and a respectful attitude towards difference. In relation to the aesthetic appreciation of those goods, etiquette implies "seeking out the aesthetic and artistic perspectives that may have contributed to the manifestations in question, and at the same time taking note that … we need to be cautious in our judgement as to the significance of the values found" (Heyd 2007, 196). Such an approach,

he thinks, would have the consequence that the value of cultural goods would be more likely to be understood, and they would be less likely to be misappropriated.

This idea of etiquette may be developed in terms of the observance of the protocols surrounding an object's use (Coleman 2018). The first and most important aspect of this engagement involves attention to the protocols that accompany an object in the society that produced it. This may involve changing how we approach works in a gallery setting. For instance, in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in New Zealand, one of the first exhibits on entering is a Maori meeting house with carvings of the spiritual Ancestors. Visitors are required to remove their shoes before entering the space as a gesture of respect. Yet note, this is not a simple engagement as though participants were visitors to new lands in past times. Rather, it is an active negotiation between contemporary participants. The meaning of the ritual, and the way in which respect is interpreted, are negotiated within a new context.

The expansion of boundaries and categories in a fusion of horizons is not a one-way process. Remote Indigenous artists often travel to cities for exhibitions and have some sense of what galleries are and how they function. They produce work specifically for the gallery. Indeed, the Indigenous people's negotiation with the secret sacred in the gallery context has been a spur to the creation of works of great beauty. Howard Morphy points out that the emphasis on dotting in Central Desert art occurs as part of a second wave of painting: "Early paintings showed an enormous diversity of form, technique and composition. … Although the acrylic paintings were soon to be popularised as 'dot painting,' many of the early works had no dotted infill, or had dotting restricted to certain areas" (Morphy 1998, 293-4).

According to the evidence, dots became an important element of Indigenous art after communities began enforcing secrecy restrictions on displaying sacred motifs. Vivien Johnson writes, "when it began, Papunya painting was perceived within most Central Australian Aboriginal societies as profoundly anti-establishment. The Papunya painters were generally regarded as a group of free-thinking radicals attacking what had hitherto been considered core cultural values" (Johnson 1994, 35). The radicalism of the movement was the context in which the paintings later appeared—a public gallery—which, according to Johnson, "tested the strict laws of Western Desert Society concerning the disclosure of secret/sacred knowledge" (Johnson 1994, 34). Widespread disapproval of this disclosure forced the painters to adapt their paintings if they wanted to be able to sell them. The painters began progressively attenuating the references to the sacred in order to protect their secrecy, "leaving out the offending images from the ceremonial context, reducing the design elements to essentials and filling in the background with dots" (Johnson 1994, 36). Such reinterpretations of traditions are not inauthentic, rather, we need to see the restrictions as spurs of creativity and innovation that make the traditions dynamic artistic forms.

The artist's use of religious designs may also be personalised as self-expression. For instance,

Tjungkaya Napaltjarri (later known as Linda Syddick), was the first Pintupi modernist painter. Napaltjarri appeared to have turned her back on Aboriginal traditions, however, after her adopted father's death she painted two images using Aboriginal iconography, which she described as "her story." One of the paintings showed Emu Men, ancestral beings whose representation is part of the Tingarri song cycle, which is usually painted by men. In doing so, she claimed an inheritance from her adopted father as being in control of these stories, insisting that she had inherited these rights. Her use of the cycle not only represented her life story but made a political claim against Pintubi tradition. The emergence of artists with a self-conception of themselves as creative artists, the creation of new forms of art produced with no other function than to be appreciated as art, and the level of self-expression of artists provide good reasons for considering the art they are producing to be fine art in the Western sense of the term. At the same time, such works remain traditional Aboriginal art in that they operate within and respond to Aboriginal values and practices (Coleman and Keller 2006).

Indigenous peoples may also appropriate the space of museums and galleries for their own purposes. In a recent collaboration between the peoples of Martu, Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra lands, the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia, The "Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters" exhibition enabled Aboriginal peoples to represent the story of Ancestral beings who travelled from one end of Australia to the other in their efforts to evade a lustful figure in the guise of a man. This representation was important to the elders, and a response to their needs. "You mob gotta help us … those songlines they been all broken up now … you can help us put them together again" was the request by Aṉangu elder David Miller to curator Margot Neale (Neale 2017, 14). The representation in the gallery context enabled Aboriginal peoples to represent an epic story, recovering and piecing together a jigsaw puzzle of narrative, and for non-Aboriginal Australians to grasp something of the deep relationship between country, culture, and cosmology, and at the same time to discover an *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, an elemental tale of "intrigue, desire, drama, passion and beauty that connect[s] people and distinctive places across the desert lands" (Trinca 2017, 11).

A *fusion* of horizons is more than an attempt to understand something from the maker's perspective, or according to their values. The fusion of horizons is a result of negotiation and reimagination from both perspectives. Non-Indigenous peoples not only come to understand another culture's forms, but how to relate to them, changing the modes through which they engage with works, and changing their ideas about art. Indigenous peoples, for their part, have reinterpreted their cultural forms as fine art, with new audiences. Artistic traditions have been reinterpreted and developed to create new cultural forms for the gallery context, and new artistic modes of expression. Moreover, Indigenous peoples have begun to appropriate gallery spaces for Indigenous cultural purposes.

CONCLUSION

To accept that Indigenous peoples produce art is quite different from being able to appreciate the work produced by those cultures. This chapter has shown how this acceptance has followed theoretical changes to the concept of art, which allowed it to be re-evaluated. This process is not necessarily a celebration of enlightenment, as the discovery of art is also associated with its appropriation. To appreciate a work of art requires more than an admiration of form. Formalism, which focussed on the forms of the Indigenous arts rather than their meanings, though encouraging appreciation, is also associated with the widespread (mis)use of Indigenous motifs in Primitivism. This process at once acknowledged the visual power of Indigenous artforms while re-affirming the non-Indigenous artist's "right" of artistic self expression. Danto's institutional theory, which focussed on the religious meaning of much Indigenous art, devalued works deemed to be utilitarian objects, and those produced and sold for aesthetic purposes. Such a theory raises a series of questions about the difference between utilitarian objects, ceremonial objects and works of art raised by the opening of the Quai Branly Museum. However, it cannot tell us how to appreciate different works of the same kind. This is because aesthetic appreciation requires us to have an understanding of the aesthetic values of the culture of production, the ontology of the works, and the traditions within which the objects are created. What is involved is a fusion of horizons.

A fusion of horizons may involve the creation of new theories and new ways of thinking about art and aesthetics. The engagement with the arts of other cultures leads to the development of what is now known as comparative aesthetics (the study of beauty in different cultures) as well as everyday aesthetics (the study of how we engage aesthetically beyond the domains of art). The creation of new forms of Indigenous art for gallery contexts shows that the idea of a fusion of horizons may also be expanded beyond the appreciation of the art of another culture, to the creation of new cultural objects, and finally, it seems, to new forms of engagement and appreciation. Non-Indigenous peoples have slowly expanded their ideas about art and begun to (re)learn different ways of engaging with it. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples are beginning to transform the Western "sacred" space of the art gallery.

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CHAPTER 10.

AESTHETIC EDUCATION, NEGLECT AND CULTURE TODAY

VALERY VINO

INTRODUCTION: A CULTURAL CONCERN

Notwithstanding its ambivalent reputation, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) marks a historic moment, as the text cements the independence of aesthetic inquiry from other branches of philosophy. However, Kant was not interested in developing a theory of aesthetic education, an experiential model attending to individual and collective welfare. Nevertheless, he provides a convoluted (and still stimulating) argument suggesting that aesthetic reflection is conducive to moral life (§§ 42, 59, 60), a significant claim picked up by Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* ([1795] 1977). On one hand, Schiller follows Kant and argues that by cultivating aesthetic judgement one learns to feel freedom, thereby clearing a way to the embodiment of our moral predispositions (Letters 2, 3, 8). So conceived, aesthetics may serve as a means to actualise the ultimate goal of practical philosophy, that is, collective flourishing. On this view, aesthetic activity is of secondary importance to flourishing, for it does not directly influence one's moral life. On the other hand, Schiller also attempts to develop an alternative position—culminating in the political notion of "the aesthetic state"—and argues that the collective practice of aesthetics is in and of itself the hallmark of a flourishing society (Letters 6–7, 17–27). While Schiller never reconciled the two positions, confounding many readers, his work is nonetheless notable in the context of this chapter for two reasons.

Firstly, it appears that for Schiller it is necessary to design and foster aesthetic education (or literacy) to be in a position to evaluate its prospects for human flourishing in the world. Secondly, as he develops his thoughts on the matter, another crucial insight emerges, namely that no such flourishing is attainable in the absence of aesthetic literacy. It is also noteworthy that, with respect to cultural impact, Kant's grandiose theory has eclipsed Schiller's pragmatic orientation of aesthetic inquiry.

A study of aesthetics implies a systematic and critical overview of a multiplicity of canonical, marginalised, and fresh topics, a task undertaken in this volume, though a considerably more extensive collaborative effort is required to do justice to the expanding discipline. By highlighting the principal areas of conventional neglect impeding the maturation of contemporary aesthetic literacy, this chapter analyses two major movements, Everyday Aesthetics and Somaesthetics, illuminating a new cultural framework for aesthetics. The following provides an introduction to these two aesthetic sub-branches and then critically evaluates their cultural aspirations. Everyday Aesthetics and Somaesthetics indeed radically deepen, widen, and diversify our appreciation of humanity, a mission of aesthetics envisaged by Schiller, but do these philosophical projects live up to contemporary global circumstances?

As a scholarly discipline, philosophical aesthetics is in full bloom.[1] While it is not uncommon amongst philosophers to think about aesthetics as a theoretical concern, one can discern a tangible pragmatic shift in aesthetics, promising new lifestyles. At the level of culture, involving social norms and preferences, institutional praxis and, above all, our aspirations and values, this fact can be explained as follows. As a practical discipline, aesthetics is nascent. Many factors contribute to this problem, among which two deserve our attention here. The division between cultural value spheres peculiar to the highly-specialised spirit of our globalised world has led to the loss of the once common experience of aesthetics as an integral part of one's life, evident in many non-Western traditions. Furthermore, academic philosophy, a commanding contemporary approach to philosophical activity, is, by and large, a theory-oriented venture. Currently, an academic who is "groomed" to theorise, to use Ian Hunter's term, is the kind of person most identified with the figure of the philosopher (2002, 2007).[2] Each philosophical lifestyle has its limitations! While the philosopher can nominally engage in any critical activity (such as, for example, working with prisoners or journalism), tertiary training centers around engagement with professional philosophers, texts, and fellow students, as a way to learn to write, present, and publish papers.[3] But philosophy cannot really flourish as a theoretical exercise, and this brings about a wide gap between philosophical

1. This fact is evidenced by the establishment of a number of new journals, e.g. *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2006–), *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* (2009–), *Evental Aesthetics* (2012–), *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* (2014–), *The Journal of Somaesthetics* (2015–), and *Aesthetic Investigations* (2015–).

2. It is essential to study the lives of philosophers to learn about the diverse ways to be a philosopher. Anyone can be a philosopher, be it the wealthiest young man in Europe like Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), who only flirted with the academy, or Diogenes the Cynic (412–323 BC), another noble who embodied the philosophical alternative to the first academy by living on the streets of Athens, or bell hooks, a thinker born in a segregated town to a working-class African-American family.

3. Academic training typically involves neither field work nor unconventional praxis. Philosophical insights can be communicated and provoked using many styles, ranging from literary dialogues and science fiction to poetry and aphorisms. At CUNY, for example, Jesse Prinz runs Phil-arts, a group for graduate students aiming to break away from academic norms by practising to write "fiction, popular writing, songs, comics, blogs, even comedy" (personal communication). At the University of Arizona, Keith Lehrer employs dancing to unearth

education and the public. Aesthetic education is yet to escape the realm of a stimulating theoretical discourse and have a tangible influence on everyday culture. Both Everyday Aesthetics and Somaesthetics seem to be mindful of this problem and develop pragmatic models in response.

To foster a practical culture of aesthetics, which would finally emerge as a viable option, it is essential to entertain the aesthetic as a mode of existence one may choose to learn to appreciate our world. Teaching us to engage with, evaluate, and cultivate sense perception, feelings, and affects, the aesthetic is an essential way to experience life, a way that has been codified and alienated from our everyday activities. We are fortunate to live in an age when the following fact has become tangible: cultivating aesthetic intelligence is necessary to understanding the human person, our relations with one another, our environments and our responsibilities. To a significant degree, it is thanks to two contemporary philosophers, standing on the shoulders of giants, that this shift in thinking about aesthetics has taken place: namely, Yuriko Saito and Richard Shusterman. This chapter highlights two pragmatic projects that push the limits of contemporary aesthetic inquiry. Both projects advocate for new ways of thinking that entail practical considerations conducive to correcting the optics through which we gauge aesthetic education as a cultural enterprise. Saito's Everyday Aesthetics (henceforth: EA) and Shusterman's Somaesthetics (henceforth: SA) are both counter-cultural phenomena: they aim to advance culture by subverting some of its bases. Hence, our consideration of the respective models will coincide with a critique of several major entrenched cultural norms. As we shall learn, the path leading to the possibility of thinking about a vital educational niche of aesthetic literacy is twisted by a history of neglect, which is an erroneous and harmful judgement. To establish the forward-thinking grounds of literacy, therefore, it is essential to come to terms with the past errors.

This chapter aims to elucidate EA and SA drawing from the relevant literature, in conjunction with the history of philosophy, which is always to inform the philosopher's judgement. In the first section, the crux of Saito's approach to the re-discovery of the neglected sphere of EA is explained. Next, to be in a position to appreciate Shusterman's project, we consider a number of perspectives—by Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, and Nietzsche—on the body's status in philosophy. In the third section, we encounter the "soma," a living and enhanced body, an object and subject of firm neglect in philosophy, aesthetics and, more generally, Western culture. In the conclusion it will be argued that, despite the considerable potential for re-orienting our ways of thinking about aesthetic life, both EA and SA represent the philosophies of urban care that neglect wild nature and fall short of matching up to current global circumstances.

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meanings of abstract art. That said, we are yet to see a norm of philosophy students sharpening their judgments by doing philosophical work in their communities, and on the streets.

RE-CREATING AESTHETIC LIFE: EVERYDAY AESTHETICS

"At every turn of my research and investigation, I found a gem lying around, ready to be polished and brought to life," Saito invites the reader into a discourse on the aesthetics of the everyday (2007, 2).[4] Like many contemporary aestheticians, Saito feels at odds with the prevalent belief presenting aesthetics as an arts-oriented philosophical inquiry. While indeed much of the West's aesthetic history is drawn to art-related matters, Saito takes pains to establish that aesthetics encompasses a wider territory than art, a much wider, life-encompassing terrain. Hence, one important issue that Saito addresses throughout her seminal book *Everyday Aesthetics* (2007) is the problematic scope of Western aesthetics. By neglecting ordinary objects as sources of philosophical (aesthetic) insight, the Western philosophical tradition has neglected the potential for developing a theory capable of ameliorating global issues in virtue of such seemingly trivial findings. According to Saito, it is plain that this pervasive shadow of neglect is cast upon the marginalised gems of aesthetic life by the long tradition that identifies the aesthetic with something extraordinary.

Let's follow Saito to distinguish between two dominant types of experience that consumed aesthetics up until now: "art and special aesthetic experiences" (2007, 11; see also 52). Such aesthetics fosters an attitude of the spectator, a person who by default engages with aesthetics in a contemplative or reflective manner (2007, 4). Special aesthetic episodes stand out from the ordinary in that they draw out striking aesthetic responses. For example, partaking in the sublime natural phenomena of blizzards and aurora, or simply memorable events like "a comical episode witnessed on a street" (2007, 4; see also 10, 43, 52)—such objects directly and often dramatically prompt our aesthetic sensibility and invite us, as it were, to contemplate them. The canonical Western theories, moreover, entice readers into an aesthetics defined by a deep association with art. As Saito observes, an artwork "is almost always regarded as a quintessential model for aesthetic object" (2007, 13). For Saito, art is "something highly specialized and isolated from our daily concerns"—art envelops objects we attribute to the so-called artworld (2007, 12). Aesthetics of this kind provides a narrow access to aesthetic life. Specifically, due to a set of cultural expectations, we are inclined to "abide by the framed character of an art object and the conventionally agreed manner of experiencing it" (2007, 22). A Venus sculpture at a local cafe, Bosch's *Ecce Homo* at Städel Museum, pornographic graffiti on a parliament house—however far we expand the bounds of art, Western understanding of artistic practice compels us to reflect on such objects and estimate them as being made by the figure of an artist who created that which is announced to be nothing else but a work of art. As a result, one is curious "when, where, under what circumstances, and with what sort of intention the object was created" (2007, 22; see also 33, 39–40). In addition, given we ascribe to such objects the status of art,

4. The reader interested in the origins of everyday aesthetics should also consult the work of Katya Mandoki (2007).

our reflection is expected to be guided by means of the norms fashioned in the artworld: for instance, this Venus sculpture is an amateur junk, while the Bosch piece a timelessly disturbing masterpiece, and the graffiti designates an artistic weapon exposing the farcical and the obsessive in politics. In any event, such human-made objects acquire a privileged status in our culture, insofar as "art is conceived as something different from our daily affairs" (2007, 36; see also 40). Therefore, this pervasive perspective on art precludes us from affiliating artworks with the regular flow of everyday life. As Saito has it, art is "an exception to or commentary on everyday objects and affairs" (2007, 40).

One major issue for Western aesthetics is that when aesthetics is affiliated with special events or the arts, the objects and practices exhibiting no identifiable special or artistic features are prone to be dismissed as irrelevant to aesthetic education and life. Moreover, insofar as aesthetic practice is confused with activity in the realm of special objects, it is confused with a strictly contemplative, rather than a hands-on, approach. The value of such privileged objects of aesthetic interest, at a deep normative level, currently overshadows the value of the more common objects (including, as Shusterman argues, the human body). To counter this norm, Saito suggests "broaden[ing] our perspective by adopting a multi-cultural, global viewpoint," based on which, "we realize that what has been regarded as mainstream aesthetics based upon art and its experience turns out to be specific to, and circumscribed by, the practice primarily of the last two centuries in the West" (2007, 12).

One way to characterise EA, then, is to note that this approach challenges the limits of the Western aesthetic tradition by urging us to look beyond our immediate culture so as to entertain, and possibly adopt, perspectives influenced by other traditions. In this creative endeavour, the immanence and diversity of aesthetic life comes to the fore (Saito 2007, 52–3). A popular aesthetic approach, on the other hand, inhibits an understanding and appreciation of a more expansive aesthetic life:

> This spectator mode, while most appropriate and rewarding with respect to paradigmatic art, may not provide the most satisfying experience of non-art. We can appreciate the aesthetic value of a chair, an apple, a landscape, and rain as if they were a sculptural piece, a landscape painting, or a music piece, by becoming a pure spectator/listener. However, more often than not, we experience a chair not only by inspecting its shape and color, but also by touching its fabric, sitting in it, leaning against it, and moving it, to get the feel for its texture, comfort, and stability. (Saito 2007, 35)

To supplement the conventional spectator's mode, Saito draws from the Japanese tradition and posits an independent way to aesthetically engage with one's surroundings, one that is characterised by a hands-on attitude allowing one to appreciate the ordinary as it is. The spectator's mode, by contrast, not only is often guided by artistic norms, but also does not necessarily lead to decision-making (2007, 128). While reflecting on a pattern inscribed on a Persian tile in a shop, one may venture to explore the Iranian culture, but such an encounter is first processed in a reflective fashion, entailing only a possibility of consequent decision-

making. In contrast, EA is an "action-oriented" approach that locates the aesthetic in the "all-too-familiar" environments (2007, 4; see also 51). Saito encourages us to look carefully at "those environments and objects with which we work or live every day in the most literal sense" (2007, 52). Aesthetic lessons hide in the most common things: EA "illuminate[s] the ordinarily neglected, but gem-like, aesthetic potentials hidden behind the trivial, mundane, and commonplace facade" (2007, 50). By paying attention to the ordinary, our "aesthetic life becomes diversified … [and] hence, enriched": when each object is considered "on its own terms," rather than in some hierarchical fashion, we may happen to ascertain its value, as it stands before us, and thereby learn something about our agency (2007, 11, 128).

The commonplace aesthetics permeates life, and it is urban life that Saito tends to refer to "widen our aesthetic horizon": dining out, strolling the street, shopping at a market, passing time at work, home and the neighbourhood (2007, 130). Countering the Western aesthetic sensibilities, Saito calls attention to "everyday surface aesthetic qualities" exhibited by the objects in our usual environments, the qualities that we are subject to irrespective of our social standing, "training or cultural sophistication" (2007, 153). Thus, to supplement the more evident (and still interesting) aesthetic value of artistic and special objects, Saito advances a new form of aesthetic literacy by highlighting the qualities of mundane objects.

In the realm of the ordinary, the messy, abandoned, disorderly, decaying, ruined, all these "eyesores" tend to communicate curious and potentially significant facts not only about our changeable environments, but also about our attitudes to them. Unlike artistic qualities, often the prerogative of the fortunate classes, "everyday aesthetic qualities are of universal aesthetic interest," and require no special training to engage with (Saito 2007, 153). Such qualities are routinely registered without giving too much thought to experience, and that is precisely the lacuna Saito fills in. Ordinary practices, objects and their qualities are integrated into our daily routines, and hence an acute attentiveness to them may entail serious practical considerations. A home's exterior or a bowl, a pair of shoes or facial skin, a public toilet, or a highway—typically, all such objects originally come in a mint condition which, as all transient things, deteriorates over time. Transience—known as *wabi* in the Japanese tradition—is the most common property of EA objects (2007, 199). Of course, things can be taken care of to age gracefully, but everything loses functionality over time, particularly when ignored. It is a convention to be indifferent or neglectful to that which is not useful or appealing, be it a mosquito or a worn-out shirt—in a word, things displaying little explicit value to us. However, according to Saito, attentiveness to our responses to EA qualities may instigate thinking and acting in a mindful manner: "Our negative reaction toward their appearance prompts us to engage in the business of rejuvenating, restoring, sprucing up, renewing, renovating, refinishing, rebuilding, refreshing, and breathing a new life into old objects, unless they are too far gone for salvaging in which case we simply discard them" (2007, 159; see also 202).

This passage illustrates the pragmatism of Saito's aesthetic theory, which underscores the key elements necessary for moral and civic growth, culminating in a moral life: "understanding, appreciating, and respecting the reality of the Other, understood as not only other people but also other-than-humans" (2007, 130; see also 240). In a nutshell, Saito is hopeful that daily aesthetic attention to the everyday will influence the more dispositional attitude of interest and care for the Other. Suppose the edges of a shirt's collar are worn out. One option is to feel an urge to discard it (and buy a new one instead). Another is to feel upset and try to tailor it, because a good shirt (or anything, like a relationship), after some years of use, tends to acquire a character of its own, reflecting the person's values.

By the same token, the force of Saito's theory is manifest in the fact that it can be applied to different kinds of phenomena exhibiting surface properties that can be taken for granted in certain circumstances. Saito uses a striking urban example of "a ghetto area" displaying "broken windows, boarded-up windows and doors, weeds- and rats-infested abandoned lots, gang members loitering on street corners harassing passers-by, garbage-strewn streets reeking of urine and rotten food" (2007, 140). In this EA setting, a discerning person may discover "a sense of desperation and hopelessness," a stimulating existential state, as well as an incentive to reflect over "the most eloquent illustration of social ills," among which we can also mention those exhibited by the opposite examples of "the almost obscene expression of excessive affluence" (2007, 141). Mansions, luxurious jewellery, elite vehicles, and other material possessions and investments marking a sense of prestige and costing us the earth, when considered via the EA lens, are also potent enough to throw one into a rebellious state of angst. It is hard to reconcile, for example, the luminous shine of one's platinum watch with the devastations caused in order to extract that shine.

To conclude this section, let's consider two questions. Firstly, given Saito's emphasis on the separation from the artworld and its norms, what guides EA activity? Unlike an art-focused theory, EA offers no established standards to guide and motivate us. As Saito puts it, due to "the absence of conventional or institutional agreements concerning how to experience non-art objects and activities, we are also free to engage ourselves literally in the aesthetic experience in any way we see fit. … The only guide, if we may even call it that, may be in terms of what is aesthetically more rewarding" (2007, 20–1).

Thus, Saito's theory belongs to the philosophical lineage, instituted by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), that celebrates the experience of freedom as a mark of aesthetic life. For Kant, an ultimate example of aesthetic freedom is the mind's contemplative play with a flower (Kant [1790] 2002, 93). By breaking away from the established aesthetic preconceptions, Saito invites us into the terrain where one finds a sense of freedom engaging with any environment. "In the realm of 'the aesthetic,'" Saito argues, "I am including any reactions we form toward the sensuous and/or design qualities of any object, phenomenon, or activity" (2007, 10). Hence, Saito advocates for an expansive, and at the same time inclusive, theory

of aesthetics. In this vein, Saito's work emphasises "a pressing need to cultivate aesthetic literacy," one that has been overshadowed by merely contemplative approaches to aesthetics (2007, 243). With practice, the approach of EA develops a sense of belonging in the commonplace, engendering both the spontaneity and responsibility peculiar to an expansive aesthetic life.

Secondly, what is Saito's overarching goal? As an aesthetician, Saito is interested in investigating the threshold of aesthetic sensibility that has been left inchoate thanks to the trends in the Western philosophical tradition. Thus, the ultimate task of EA is a pursuit of self-knowledge, by means of aesthetic engagement—of being human in light of our attentiveness to both our surroundings and our responses to them. Correspondingly, Saito's theory is inextricable from moral concerns (2007, 238). A pragmatic theory, EA is the philosophy of "care," a deep concern with our world (2007, 240). Saito is hopeful that EA will entail a much-needed cultural change: "By liberating the aesthetic discourse from the confines of a specific kind of object or experience and illuminating how deeply entrenched and prevalent aesthetic considerations are in our mundane everyday existence, I hope to restore aesthetics to its proper place in our everyday life and to reclaim its status in shaping us and the world" (2007, 12).

Now, while the power of EA to influence culture is indeed potent, I do not share Saito's optimism, as her line of argumentation, while adopting a multicultural lens, relies on cultural preferences defining the Western (urban) way of life. As shown above, Saito is aware that, insofar as we entertain non-Western cultures, dead or alive, curious alternatives may present themselves, including one that can address a delicate tension between art and non-art. Equally important, while Saito's theory embraces all kinds of environments, the most expansive of all—wild nature—is considered from an urban vantage point. Both facts may mark stark differences between possible worldviews, and we shall return to this question in the conclusion.

DISCOVERING BODY-CONSCIOUSNESS

In the previous section we saw that aesthetic life is an expansive project, because our environments, the objects and events found therein, provide endless dynamic stimuli for thought and action. However, it is essential to observe that, in Western philosophy and culture, the role of one key element of aesthetic engagement has been silenced, and Saito's project only briefly deals with this significant problem.

This is not to undermine Saito's scope of philosophical vision, as she recognises the significance of the human body. She goes as far as to observe that "we are: body and mind" and hence "bodily-oriented aesthetic experience … [is] extremely important as … a barometer for our health and safety, ultimately determining the quality of life" (2007, 225). In her most

recent book to date, Saito even dedicates a section to "body aesthetics" that she links with moral life: "Body movements, facial expressions, and the tone of voice" (2017, 175; see also 176–186).

However, the unknown potential of philosophical understanding stemming from the human body remains a surprisingly neglected aspect not only in her work, but also in Western thought up until now. Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) noted in 1947, just after the massacres of WWII:

> Love-hate for the body colors the whole of modern culture. The body is scorned and rejected as something inferior, enslaved, and at the same time is desired as forbidden, reified, estranged. Only culture treats the body as a thing that can be owned, only in culture has it been distinguished from mind, the quintessence of power and command, as the object, the dead thing, the *corpus*. ([1947] 2002, 193)

Fortunately, aesthetics has recently witnessed another ground-breaking turn in Shusterman's SA. Advocating for the necessity to cultivate the human body to realise our humanity, an exploration that opens up further horizons, SA paves the way for an even more expansive aesthetic life. The reader may wish to skip sections the next two subsections to consider the gist of SA explained further below. However, if our goal is a cultural change, an attempt to ascertain the grounds of aesthetic literacy has to spotlight the deep roots of philosophical neglect of body in philosophy. An understanding of the epoch-making errors—beliefs that confine human flourishing on large scale—is a necessary task for fostering considerate education, be it in history, spirituality, politics, or aesthetics.

Plato and Socrates

We can discuss and aesthetically engage with all kinds of material body. Above all, the cosmos, or else asteroids, our planet, mountain ranges, cityscapes, sculptures, trees, plants and mushrooms, animals and insects, stars, snowflakes and water droplets—even atoms—are aesthetically and intellectually curious bodies! However, the most intimate and tangible of all—the human body—is singled out by a long-standing tradition of neglect. The body is merely a vessel, an intricate biological mechanism we need to maintain to learn to appreciate the life of the mind. What are the canonical reasons supporting the neglect of the body in philosophy? Is it possible that this stance, embraced by thinkers across epochs and cultures, has solidified and preserved a great deal of ignorance, a state philosophers traditionally aim to purge?

In the Western philosophical tradition, it is Plato (c. 429–347 BCE) who first draws a severe distinction between the mind and the body. The body is to be overcome. Plato channels an ingenious rhetorical force into a literary depiction of his teacher Socrates, whose true personality is more difficult to imagine than Plato's, and who still remains one of the most mysterious, daring, and influential sceptical masters. In Plato's dialogues, an array of claims

is fashioned while Socrates establishes, among many other important things, the bounds of philosophical inquiry. For Plato, the very drive to do philosophy is that which brings the philosopher closer to the divine, even at the expense of the body. Famously, this drive is called *eros* or loving desire, a term nowadays we may freely use with respect to the art of love-making. However, the art Plato refers to as *ta erotika* is that of *elenchus*, the back-and-forth process of affirmation and refutation of a philosophical position, aimed at understanding meaning, at fortification of the mind, ultimately having a moral foundation in Plato (*Symposium*, 177d8–9; *Lysis*, 205e2–206a2).[5] This intellectual exercise is inextricable from the passion or desire—*eros*—that drives and sustains one's pursuit of knowledge, and this desire deserves the careful attention of educators.[6] For both Socrates and Plato the knowledge one ultimately strives toward is that of moral virtue (*arēte*), by way of courage, temperance, or practical wisdom. It is crucial to emphasise that for Plato, the philosopher, in the first place, is driven neither by career prospects, nor prestige, nor comfort, but by a form of love, a passion for "the supreme knowledge whose sole object is that absolute beauty" (*Symposium*, 207b). The Socratic philosopher is satisfied insofar as she achieves practical wisdom, a totality of knowledge necessary to the examined life, the life worth living for, a philosophical task that appears to be impossible to completely fulfil, like the transcendent idea of "absolute beauty," or one's own death.

Equally important, Plato makes it clear that we should not confuse this lofty exercise with mere bodily cravings. In the *Symposium*, using the priestess Diotima as his mouthpiece to instruct Socrates (and us), Plato casts an epochal shadow of doubt on the status of the body for the matters conducive to flourishing:

> What may we suppose to be the felicity of the man who sees absolute beauty in its essence, pure and unalloyed, who, instead of a beauty tainted by human flesh and colour and a mass of perishable rubbish, is able to apprehend divine beauty where it exists apart and alone? Do you think that it will be a poor life that a man leads who has his gaze fixed in that direction, who contemplates absolute beauty with the appropriate faculty and is in constant union with it? (211d–212a)

The human body here is identified with "a mass of perishable rubbish" that the philosopher must be able to juxtapose with "the faculty capable of seeing … the truth," that is, the contemplative faculty we call the mind (212a). No worthy philosophical insight thus can be gained in virtue of body, a source of appetites that one ought to strive to moderate (*Phaedrus*, 64e–67a).

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5. Plato's works are cited by title, all of which can be found in Plato (1892). Specific locations are noted by using Stephanus numbers rather than page numbers, a common way to locate sections across different editions and translations of Plato's works.

6. Perhaps it is this passion for and in doing philosophy that unites philosophers across times. In the history of philosophy, some philosophers choose to channel it into practical pursuits, in ethics, politics, or education, while others can't escape fixation on the thrill of philosophising, and the experience of the drive becomes an affirmation of itself, rather than that of humanity.

This attack on the body is better understood in the context of two monolithic statements found in the *Apology of Socrates*, Plato's dramatised version of Socrates' speech at his own trial, leading to his death. First, Socrates addresses his fellow citizens, challenging their sense of civic duty, and also, by implication, us philosophers: "Best of men, you are an Athenian, from the city that is greatest and best reputed for wisdom and strength: are you not ashamed that you care for having as much money as possible, and reputation, and honor, but that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?" (29d–e).

A philosophical care in this Platonic sense, then, implies caring for one's mind, a way of life hinging on *elenchus*, the practice of which allows one to distinguish between what is worth pursuing in one's life, in a given cultural context, and what is not worthy of our attention and efforts. Plato insists in the *Apology of Socrates* that one should "not … care for bodies and money before, nor as vehemently as, how your soul will be the best possible" (30b). On this condition, a genuine philosophical life is possible, one that is inscribed in the immortal words of Socrates who committed suicide by drinking hemlock: "the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being" (38a). He was not afraid to die, allegedly, because the value of his mind's findings eclipsed the value of his earthly body's existence. As Plato argues in *Phaedo*, "the philosopher's occupation consists precisely in the freeing and separation of soul from body" (68a), and a dignified death in the name of the truth is not the worst option.

To sum up: Plato denies the body the status of an essential source to an examined life. However, before we move on, it is important to note that this strong philosophical position emerges in an ancient society that, in effect, would value bodily life, including not only a systematic practice of gymnastics, but also an explicit—by contrast with (post)monotheistic traditions—interest in erotic experience. In fact, both Xenophon (431–354 BCE), Socrates' less popular student, and Diogenes Laertius (180–240 CE) report that Socrates cautioned that we ought to cultivate our bodies to avoid making "serious mistakes" (Xenophon 1990, 172) or poorly informed judgements (Laertius [1925] 1991, 163). The body's condemnation, possibly, could be attributed with greater precision to Plato whose spirit was drawn to the transcendent realm of ideas and moral knowledge, rather than the streets and slums of Athens. How can we explain the fact that Plato condemns the body, despite being nourished by an aristocratic culture that took pride in the body's cultivation? One way to explain this is to note that, even if disciplined, the body can still function as a tool for exhibiting one's strength, power, and dominance: a tool for war, flirting, and sports, rather than a medium for the activation of an expansive philosophical care (see Adorno & Horkheimer [1947] 2002, 193–94). At any rate, one remains curious if it is justified to denounce the body as a source to a fulfilling life once and for all.

Descartes, Spinoza, and Nietzsche

The Platonic paradigm is entrenched into Western philosophical thought. As a means to stimulate aesthetic literacy, however, we should examine a singular antagonism revolving around the body's epistemological status. Found in the early modern period, this clash features two contemporaneous rationalist philosophers, René Descartes (1596–1650) and Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677).

Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* ([1641] 2004) is another canonical text that posits the superiority of the mind over the body. Written like many philosophical texts as a personal reflection, Descartes embarks on a therapeutic task of ascertaining who he is (§ 2.5), a sceptical task involving "the criticism of the principles on which all" of his "former beliefs rested," so as to discover an ultimate ground of knowledge that admits no "slightest doubt" (§ 1.2; see also §§ 1.11, 2.1, 2.9). Correspondingly, he goes on to question the certainty of sense data (§ 1.3–4), of being awake (§ 1.5), of mathematical absolutes (§ 1.8–9), of other people's rational agency (§ 2.13), and, less overtly, of God's existence and goodness (§ 1.9–10, 1.12, 2.3). Interestingly, to exercise this militant scepticism, Descartes, by default, adopts the Platonic lens to evaluate the body:

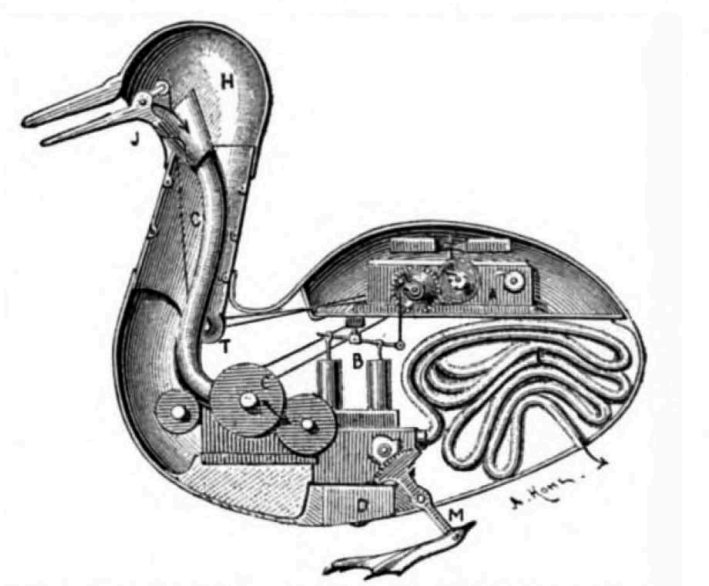
> I will consider myself as without hands, eyes, flesh, blood, or any of the senses, and as falsely believing that I am possessed of these; I will continue resolutely fixed in this belief, and if indeed by this means it be not in my power to arrive at the knowledge of truth, I shall at least do what is in my power, viz. suspend my judgment, and guard with settled purpose against giving my assent to what is false. (§ 1.12)

The human body (and sensibility in general) is thus considered by Descartes as that which can be readily pushed away as unreliable in one's pursuit of certitude and knowledge: "I believe that body, figure, extension, motion, and place are merely fictions of my mind"; in more eloquent terms, the fiction we are most interested in here also bears the name of "the fabric of members that appears in a corpse, and which I called by the name of body" (§§ 2.2, 2.5; see also § 2.7). Further, Descartes deploys a famous example to demonstrate that any body, like a piece of wax, can change shape, feel, and smell differently (§§ 2.11–12). For Descartes, wax/body can be melted/severed, while the idea of wax/body, and the mind itself, cannot (§§ 6.6, 6.19). It is therefore not surprising that we find Descartes entertaining a mental state in which neither his body nor the world external to his mind—all the things that can be doubted—in effect exist. It is within this context that he arrives at his dictum:

> Am I so dependent on the body and the senses that without these I cannot exist? But I had the persuasion that there was absolutely nothing in the world, that there was no sky and no earth, neither minds nor bodies; was I not, therefore, at the same time, persuaded that I did not exist? Far from it; I assuredly existed … it must, in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind. (§ 2.2; see also §§ 2.6, 2.16)

Descartes argues that it is not in the moments of facing a blizzard, or wax changing physical states on one's belly, not even at a random philanthropic deed—not in these kinds of moments that he comes to realise that he exists, but exclusively in an instant of self-cognition.

Who is Descartes, then, and what defines being a human person, "our whole essence or nature" (§ 6.9)? One who practices a form of *elenchus*: "a thinking being" (§§ 2.5–6, 2.8). A human body can once again be ignored, he argues, because unlike the thinking "I," it is "unknown to me"—"not sufficiently clear" (§ 2.7). After all, "the body of man," he remarks, is "a kind of machine … made up and composed of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood, and skin" (§ 6.15). One conventional way to understand the human body, then, is in terms of a functional mechanism, like Jacques de Vaucanson's *Digesting Duck*, the 18th century French marvel.



INTERIOR OF VAUCANSON'S AUTOMATIC DUCK.

A, clockwork; *B*, pump; *C*, mill for grinding grain; *F*, intestinal tube; *J*, bill; *H*, head; *M*, feet.

Digesting Duck, via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

Ultimately, Descartes' analysis pushes the Platonic paradigm to an extreme and, notoriously, splits the mind and the body into two distinct substances:

> Although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I, that is, my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it. (§ 6.9)

Descartes adopts a common position on the human body that treats it in terms of a utility:

body is good insofar as it serves the mind, the quintessential faculty that can think through passive "obscure and confused" bodily receptivity (§ 6.10; see also § 6.15). Like many philosophers before and after him, Descartes is sceptical of the body's potential, as he cannot come to terms with the fact that the body can't reason. Nonetheless, this conviction poses a problem to Descartes, that of "the union and apparent fusion of mind and body" (§ 6.13). In the end, Descartes resorts to a variation of early modern neuroscience and discerns a point of unity between the two philosophical ideas in the pineal gland, manipulated by "animal spirits," a cryptic borderline supernatural notion he inherited from the Dark Ages.

Descartes' overall position provoked a great deal of controversy in the history of philosophy, and the claim about the role of the pineal gland was soon found to be ludicrous by the Dutch rationalist Spinoza, a man of great acumen and wit. In another seminal 17th century philosophy text, *The Ethics* ([1667] 1955), Spinoza observes that, as far as philosophical understanding is concerned, Descartes "accomplishes nothing beyond a display of the acuteness of his own great intellect" (part III, Preface). Luckily, we do not need to consider here the philosophical claims against the unity of mind and body in the gland, but Spinoza's attack on Descartes is nonetheless worthy of our attention:

> Such is the doctrine of this illustrious philosopher … one which, had it been less ingenious, I could hardly believe to have proceeded from so great a man. Indeed, I am lost in wonder, that a philosopher, who had stoutly asserted, that he would draw no conclusions which do not follow from self-evident premises, and would affirm nothing which he did not clearly and distinctly perceive, and who had so often taken to task the scholastics for wishing to explain obscurities through occult qualities, could maintain a hypothesis, beside which occult qualities are commonplace. What does he understand, I ask, by the union of the mind and the body? What clear and distinct conception has he got of thought in most intimate union with a certain particle of extended matter? (part V, Preface)

Unlike Descartes, Spinoza is intrigued by the prospect of philosophical understanding of the "most intimate union" of the embodied mind. He refrains from dismissing the body as an irrelevant philosophical subject, and also, being aware of his own interpretative limits, does not attempt to explain philosophical matters by contentious means. Instead, in *The Ethics*, we find an elucidation of the possible grounds of this unity. Spinoza starts off arguing that "there [is] no comparison possible between the powers of the mind and the power or strength of the body; consequently the strength of one cannot in any case be determined by the strength of the other" (part V, Preface).

This insight strikes right into the heart of our discussion by pinpointing the fact that the capacities of the body should not be evaluated by intellectual standards. Human hands are not designed to grasp the notion of a tsunami's aesthetic value, and yet they can be adept at leading a surfboard; similarly, one's imagination is not destined to fold up an origami tarantula, but it can certainly come up with ways to create many. What is essential is that the philosopher is expected not to commit a category error and condemn the body in virtue of

the mind's powers, and the implications for aesthetics here, as we will see in the next section, are quite significant.

Spinoza offers one way to interpret the relationship between the mind and the body. A dualist like Descartes is keen to sever the mind from the body, his contemporary materialist thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) reduces the mind to the body, whereas Spinoza argues that both stem from one source—God, or we can also say: nature in its totality. Nature—and our place in it—is at the centre of Spinoza's work. The mind is a thinking thing that is not extended or movable, while the body is an extended and non-thinking thing, as Descartes argued. Both, however, are specific "modes" of the totality of nature (Spinoza [1667] 1955, part II, Preface). The mind thinks of the body as its object—my body is a representation in my mind—and yet Spinoza argues it is not only an image but, in effect, the "human mind is the very idea or knowledge of the human body" (part II, prop. XIX). Intriguingly, by paying attention to the life of one's body, not only does the mind learn about it, and the world is thereby opened up through perception, but it also learns about itself (part II, prop. XXII, XIII, XXIII, XXVI). Their relationship is in principle educational, and Spinoza, in a rather revolutionary manner, insinuates that to be human is not to overcome the body but discover oneself—in nature—through it!

Hence, Spinoza not only questions any thinker who holds the body to be a bag of flesh or mechanism at the disposal of the mind, but also goes as far as assert that "the frame of the body" is "so great a work of art" ([1667] 1955, part I, Appendix). It is in this soma-artistic context that we should invoke his classic proposition: "no one has hitherto laid down the limits to the powers of the body, that is, no one has as yet been taught by experience what the body can accomplish solely by the laws of nature … the body can by the sole laws of its nature do many things which the mind wonders at" (part III, prop. II).

Arguably, what underlies the neglect of the body in philosophy is nothing but ignorance, occasioning exploitation, denial, bigotry, repressed fears, shame, aggression, and other demons haunting humanity. To unearth the body as a work of art, one is to cultivate it and experiment with it, to try to actualise its potentials, and to direct them at the pursuit of an examined life. After all, our body, to borrow Saito's term, may be "a gem" that needs to be re-discovered to ascertain what we can do, and, therefore, the bounds of aesthetic life.

Spinoza is a 17th century rationalist, and hence we should not expect him to posit the body's autonomy, or individual character. And yet, he certainly does not identify body with passive receptivity or a corpse: as a part of nature, the body is full of lessons and surprises, and it can strive for excellence, like humans do. Thus, Spinoza's ingenious thought represents a drastic shift from the Platonic paradigm (and generally an inclination to theorise about the body) that would, nonetheless, dominate Western philosophy and aesthetics up until recent decades.

An untimely text in Western philosophy and spirituality, Spinoza's *Ethics* was lambasted and suppressed, his influence on the Enlightenment was negligible and secretive. In the times dominated by the monotheistic views on being, Spinoza was responsible for the rebirth of pantheism, even though he speaks about nature or God employing definitions, axioms, propositions, and corollaries.

The silencing of the body in Western philosophy extended into the 18th, 19th, and the first half of the 20th century. However, it is necessary to pose another question: can we identify a thinker who instigated the subsequent and irreversible philosophical curiosity about the body? Kant advanced supra-cognitive concepts like "the moral law" and "transcendental imagination," G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) the "World-Spirit," Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) "a leap of faith," while Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) only reminded his readers of the sexual drive. Among these male giants of Western thought, one provocateur deserves a mention.

Cultivating a mature attitude toward a multifarious artist of thought is bound to be complex and should be approached with discernment. Take the story of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), for example, who is notorious for savouring proto-fascistic and, arguably, anti-semitic sentiments, but also for understanding the value of everyday originality, solitude, and pain, for reviving *amor fati* and disarming honesty. Nietzsche is testing both himself and you, reader, and is also notable for inventing striking, satirical and naturalistic images related to the body. In fact, he went as far as to develop his own philosophical jargon drawing from the body, and philosophised with words such as "stomach" (for human "spirit") and "diet" (the discipline of the spirit) (see [1881] 1997, 42, 122; [1889] 2005, 17, 19). Let me borrow only one aphorism from his *Gay Science* ([1882] 2001), summing up a Nietzschean turn on the topic of the body, where, to counter Plato, he entertains the following definition of philosophy: "The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes frighteningly far—and I have asked myself often enough whether, on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a misunderstanding of the body" (5).

It must be remembered that Nietzsche's cultural influence is colossal, stimulating numerous prominent philosophers and cultural critics like Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Jean Paul-Sartre (1905–1980), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), who is notable for his invaluable work on existentialist embodiment, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), who developed a far-reaching concept of "the grotesque body," and, of course, the great humanists like Albert Camus (1913–1960) and Hannah Arendt (1906–1975). In any event, it is in Nietzsche that we find the audacious assertion that one can't engage in an open-ended activity we call philosophy by neglecting the body. By misunderstanding ourselves, our instincts, drives, and capacities, by neglecting

the workings of the body, we at the same time misinterpret and misrepresent the scope of philosophical inquiry and practice.

Interestingly, Nietzsche also read Spinoza, and, in *Daybreak* ([1881] 1997), we can find a follow-up on the question of the body's enigma that for millennia suffered "depreciation, neglect, and tormenting," the body "of which we still know so little!" (aphorisms 39, 86). It is timely to recall Spinoza's prompt at *Ethics* part III, prop. II: do we philosophers now know what the body can do? In search for a trustworthy response, I reached out to two contemporary philosophers, Graham Priest and Richard Shusterman. The former, a contemporary master of both logic and karate, remarks,

> Of course it is clear that there are physical limits on the body. No one can survive being hit in the head with a sledge hammer. We do not know, of course, exactly where those limits are. Someone has just run a sub-2-hour marathon. How fast is it possible to do this? No idea—though nothing can travel faster than light. And yes, of course the body can do amazing things that one might not think possible. Musical dexterity, climbing El Capitan solo, feats of qigong. All these things are amazing. (Priest, personal communication)

Before we consider the second response, allow me to sum up our findings in this section: the neglect of the body—an apathetic attitude to its cultivation—is entrenched into our philosophical tradition; it seems that it is the inclination to assert the mind's putative superiority, designating the access to distinctly human knowledge, that is responsible for this mode of self-understanding. Such a worldview can be manifest in a manifold of values, habits, preferences, and choices. Take one's personal clothing style, for example, an aesthetic domain readily open to experiments, as a way to express one's self, sense of belonging, and to feel comfortable in one's body. A choice of clothing often depends on a sense of cultural identity and also our attitudes and values: ethnic, religious, political, corporate, academic, nudist, and so on (see Novitz 1992, 107; Shusterman 2011, 150). Would it not be curious to look at the choices of experts in the field mirroring the prospect of caring for the body's expressivity and flourishing: namely, academic aestheticians? With this in mind, I showed Tamara Leacock, an ethical and futuristic clothing designer, the pictures of several contemporary high-echelon scholars. Interestingly, such pictures tend to feature similar backgrounds—stacks of books embodying serious mental work. Tamara's responses ranged between indignation, indifference, disgust, and interest. I wondered why she mostly appeared disappointed. Tamara remarked that world-class experts in aesthetic judgements are expected to exemplify "active taste" as opposed to wearing careless or formal pieces "like lawyers and politicians," who seemed to share the same tailor. There was one photograph, however, that elicited interest: a recent take (by Christophe Beauregard) of Richard Shusterman, to the consideration of whose theory and practice we now turn.

Finding Body-Consciousness in Somaesthetics

I appreciate Spinoza's perspective. I introduce the term "soma" to avoid all the prejudices about the

> body's limits and lack of intelligence and subjectivity and agency that automatically arise when the term "body" is used.

That is Shusterman's personal response to Spinoza's prompt, by which he thereby breaks further away from the Platonic-Cartesian paradigm. Like all humans, I am both in my body and in my mind. To be in a position to realise *my* humanity, I am to learn to cultivate them. Shusterman observes,

> The body-mind connection is so pervasively intimate that it seems misleading to speak of body and mind as two different, independent entities. The term body-mind would more aptly express their essential union, which still leaves room for pragmatically distinguishing between mental and physical aspects of behavior and also for the project of increasing their experiential unity. (2006b, 2)

The project of SA, by implication, is an attempt to bring to the fore the human body as an essential source for realising our humanity through practice. What is also noteworthy is that the body thus becomes a topic of revived philosophical interest through an aesthetic inquiry. To revive the interest in the body is to revive the interest in the essential component of our agency which is in and of itself aesthetic. After all, *aisthēsis* originally stands for sense perception inextricable from the pursuit of understanding, and there is no sense perception without being embodied. The aesthetic becomes more apparent inasmuch as the body is cared for, inasmuch as it is understood as *the soma*. Hence, in this section we shall unpack the soma, a term coined by Shusterman two decades ago (1997).

Semantically, the concept of the body differs from that of the soma in that the former typically stands for the mind's inferior, a scientifically constructed and instrumental servant-image, while the latter designates a source of "lived *experience*" (1999, 302). The body is a useful shell, a medium for movement, consumption of nutrients, and for other experiences, such as activities (protection, cliff-diving), sensations (burn, kiss), emotions (bitterness, serenity), and sensations of all kinds. However, the body is only a vulnerable source of self-esteem because it is merely a useful thing. The body can be developed as a means to all kinds of experience, to impress people, or yourself, but it is not regarded as that which manifests bodily agency, an accomplished state designating one's familiarity with one's somatic powers, which may deteriorate/deepen with time. A reliable source of self-esteem, the soma is "the living body," a sentient creation, or "a complex field of multiple movements, a surge of life, a projection of energy" (Shusterman 2006b, 3, 8). The mind, if we recall Spinoza, feeds off this source of life, and recognises itself in it, until there is nothing to recognise. The soma is a gateway to a new discipline "returning to some of the deepest roots of aesthetics and philosophy," one that helps to understand why some of these conceptual roots are to be shunned (Shusterman 1999, 299).

Interestingly, SA shares some significant traits with EA.[7] Both are inspired by the pragmatism of John Dewey (1859–1952). In Shusterman's view,

> If most philosophies readily recognize that culture is both an essential value and the ineliminable matrix of human life, pragmatism goes further by insisting that philosophy itself is essentially the historical product of culture, and therefore should (and does) change through more general cultural change. … Pragmatism, therefore, is also an essentially pluralistic philosophy. Insisting on the plurality of values and beliefs … pragmatism affirms its pluralistic open-mindedness (which is more than mere tolerance) toward individuals who adopt these different perspectives. (2012, 166)

Consequently, Shusterman's and Saito's projects are open to adopt a multicultural lens spotlighting the objects of significant neglect in the West (see Shusterman 2009). Correspondingly, both projects rebuke the essentialist and formal makeup of Western aesthetics, and inculcate an exploration and enhancement of aesthetic sensibility in virtue of new forms of aesthetic awareness. Both Saito and Shusterman argue that the practice of aesthetics enriches life at the personal and collective levels. More generally, EA and SA demonstrate that the contemporary practice in philosophical aesthetics is too narrow to live up to the available potential. Consider Shusterman recalling his experience leading to the emergence of somaesthetics: "Bringing aesthetics closer to the realm of life and practice, I realized, entails bringing the body more centrally into aesthetic focus, as all life and practice—all perception, cognition, and action—is crucially performed through the body" (2012, 140).

For the purposes of this chapter, let's follow the gist of Shusterman's foundational argument made in a seminal paper, "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal" (1999). At the outset, Shusterman defines SA as "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aisthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (1999, 302). In line with Classical philosophical values, SA addresses the questions of knowledge, self-knowledge, and orientation to the examined life (Shusterman 2012, 140). In other words, because "the body is an essential and valuable dimension of our humanity," SA explores our humanity in a vast world (Shusterman 2006b, 1).

SA is about a philosophical care, or more precisely, "somatic care," a notion that can be elucidated by responding to some prejudices inherent to Western philosophy (Shusterman 1999, 302). Firstly, Shusterman argues that the standards of excellence do not merely apply to the mind, and hence in lieu of treating the body as a perishable and unreliable source of knowledge and selfhood, and by implication, a source that can be neglected, we should "seek to improve the acuity, health, and control of our senses by cultivating heightened attention to and mastery of their somatic functioning" (302). A cultivated soma, he suggests and

7. Since the soma is the defining feature of human agency, SA covers not only the realm of EA, as alluded to by Saito above, but also all of aesthetic inquiry, including the arts, and even far beyond the discipline of philosophy into the interdisciplinary realm.

subsequently demonstrates, is a means to a more distinct and considerate knowledge of the world. Secondly, since philosophy deals not only with the world (and further, the cosmos) that surrounds us, but also with our inner worlds, the soma, which marks the material borderline between the two, is an agent of self-discovery and self-knowledge. More specifically, the cultivation of the soma results in "improving awareness of our bodily states and feelings," in a more lucid understanding of our affective natures (302). The soma is "the locus and medium" of sensory data, and hence the somatic mastery deepens our capacity for receptivity and feeling, to prolong or diminish, to savour, modify, or deny a certain experience (304). The mastery of the soma is a crucial means to the examined life inextricable from "right action" (303). Importantly, Shusterman is clear that the pragmatic focus of SA pursues one solid goal: "to improve certain facts by remaking the body and society" (305).

To this end, Shusterman demarcates between three interdependent dimensions of SA: "analytic," "pragmatic," and "practical." The first, theoretical dimension punctuates "traditional ontological and epistemological issues of the body," raised in the previous section, and the contemporary approaches constructing the human body as a socio-political phenomenon (Shusterman 1999, 304). The analytic inquiry is essential to the pragmatic dimension of SA, the bodies of knowledge that target cultural norms and change by "proposing specific methods of somatic improvement" (304). For clarity, Shusterman distinguishes between "representational" and "experiential" forms of SA methodologies. The representational dimension addresses the philosophical methods dealing with care for one's appearance, such as clothing or make-up, with an emphasis on restoring a link between "one's spiritual self" and their somatic expressivity, traditionally deemed a superficial external representation of the self (305–6). This charge is weakened in light of the experiential dimension that evaluates one's "inner" experience and "refuses to exteriorise the body as an alienated thing distinct from the active spirit of human experience" (306). Shusterman reminds us that "the [said] distinction must not be taken as rigidly exclusive," since "there is an inevitable complementarity of representations and experience" (306). The pragmatic methods and techniques of SA, then, inculcate the possibility of somatic consciousness and, if successfully applied, help one to resist the lure of caring for the body as a malleable shell, a rack for consumerist embellishment, and, more generally, a dummy subjected to an army of socio-political forces (see Foucault [1976] 1980; [1984] 1986). Taken together, these methodologies aim to render our experiences "more satisfyingly rich" and "our awareness of somatic experience more acute and perceptive" (Shusterman 1999, 305, 307). By contrast, so long as the potential "experienced depth" of somatic life is neglected, the soma retracts into the body's fragile shell, and, like the conformist mind, is likely to be manipulated by norms and practices maintaining docile levels of human agency and creativity (306). One Western example is single-sex schools, where all pupils are forced to wear the same uniform, and to act timidly and reverently in the presence of an authority, who only relatively recently, when confronted with disobedience, felt entitled to punish and piously whip dispensable

body parts. The soma is a marvellous source of insight: "blushes, trembles, flinches" and many other responses communicate to us curious hues about our agency, and our environments, including the oppressive ones (Shusterman 2006b, 6). The body often takes a blow when the human spirit strives to achieve independence, but the problem of agency *now* ought to factor not only the more familiar ethical, social, and political considerations, beliefs, actions, and commitments, but also the living and expressive soma. By alienating the body—as a decorative façade or an ideological canvas, the life of which can be ignored—we humiliate our humanity, and move away from the prospect of actualising our nature.

This observation takes us to the third and final dimension of SA, called "practical," the realm of activity, where one in effect practises somatic "care through intelligently disciplined body work aimed at somatic self-improvement" (Shusterman 1999, 307). In the words of Shusterman, "Concerned not with saying but with *doing*, this practical dimension is the most neglected by academic body philosophers, whose commitment to the discursive *logos* typically ends in textualizing the body. For practical somaesthetics, the less said, the better, *if* this means the more work actually done" (307).

Shusterman's project introduces philosophical problems that reason can't address on its own, as such problems necessarily stem from "an important nondiscursive dimension," that is, the soma (Shusterman 2012, 195). This critical point brings back the earlier concern with the dominant theoretical culture in aesthetics (and academic philosophy). Rationality imposes its norms and rules onto the body, "textualizing the body," which often leads to leaving the body on the fringes of philosophical vision. The body is an outsider. This trend in philosophy may finally come to a halt, and we can use an example of pain, customarily demoted as something undesirable and necessarily harmful. As a matter of fact, pain may divulge important lessons: "Pain itself—a somatic consciousness that informs us of injury and prompts a search for remedy—provides clear evidence of the value of attention to one's somatic states and sensations. Care of the self is improved when keener somatic awareness advises us of problems and remedies before the onset of pain's damage" (2006b, 12).

One may undergo an episode of pain while stretching, or reflecting on a skyline, inhaling the smog, or the smoke from a bushfire, and each such experience is mediated by the soma signalling ways to improve oneself and one's environments. Thus, Shusterman's seminal turn consists in offering "a comprehensive philosophical discipline that is concerned with self-knowledge and self-care," and, to accomplish this ultimate philosophical goal, "the concrete activity of body work must be emphatically named as the crucial practical dimension of somaesthetics" (Shusterman 1999, 307). Practice of SA develops "somatic attention," a care for the soma reflected in one's "somatic style," including one's voice, breathing, fragrance, posture, gestures, manner of eating, smiling, laughing, and more complex activities, like dance, teaching, and love-making (Shusterman 2006b, 12; see also 2011, 152; 2012, 312). Some elements of one's somatic style are voluntary and some are involuntary, and one of the

chief practical goals of SA is to become aware of one's bodily habits and comportments, and, if necessary and possible, to try to change and enhance them. It is in this way, again, that the body becomes "lived, sentient, intelligent," and Shusterman calls this process of cultivation, furthering the echoes of Nietzsche and Foucault, "self-stylising or self-creation" (2011, 157).

The epistemological and ontological parameters of SA are akin to martial arts: an idea of an SA theorist is as nonsensical as an aikido theorist. Philosophical activity becomes body-conscious. As a prospective pathway to a worthwhile life, one must do SA, to engage in serious embodied work. As Shusterman beautifully puts it, "though knives are most clearly means for cutting rather than ends of sharpening, we sometimes need to focus on improving their sharpness and other aspects of their use in order to improve their effectiveness" (2006b, 13).

The basic model of SA dovetails a rigorously-investigated theory and practice. The model is, in principle, interdisciplinary, as the soma cannot be claimed by philosophers. In aesthetics, the recent findings in SA branch out in many directions, such as architecture, photography, sound, and dance. But, perhaps the most acute cultural need is for developing an awareness of the rich import of one of the most natural human needs: erotic experience.

Regretfully, learning to make love is a marginalised cultural and educational topic. As a result, a non-professional would find such a choice of topic for discussion to be rather vexing. Probably reflecting our disregard for the body's (affective) powers, sexuality and embodiment are both neglected school and tertiary subjects. When the mind's striving to achieve excellence is oppressed, that is, by denying the practice of *elenchus*, one is likely to experience a sense of discomfort, frustration, and shame when confronted with testing philosophical questions. By analogy, when the body's strivings to achieve excellence are restrained, similar responses will ensue. To illustrate: one may still feel conflicted similarly to the Westerners encountering the Tahitian customs in Denis Diderot's (1713–1784) *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage."* In a fearless philosophy text on sexual education, written in 1772, *cosmopolite* Diderot assumes that his readers would uphold strong beliefs about nuclear family and sexuality and unveils a ceremony imbued with aesthetic overtones:

> The young Tahitian girl [who] blissfully abandoned herself to the embraces of Tahitian youth and awaited impatiently the day when her mother, authorized to do so by her having reached the age of puberty, would remove her veil and uncover her breasts. She was proud of her ability to excite men's desires, to attract the amorous looks of strangers, of her own relatives, of her own brothers. In our presence, without shame, in the center of a throng of innocent Tahitians who danced and played the flute, she accepted the caresses of the young man whom the young heart and the secret promptings of her senses had marked out for her. ([1772] 2001, 190)

This passage can still stimulate much thinking and feeling, still poses a problem for the conventional views on freedom, desire, motherhood, polyamory, intimacy, nudity, and many

others. What is also worth pointing out is the openness with which Diderot presents this rite of passage. It is difficult to determine how much this literary portrayal is an artistic invention (or, possibly, a mistaken interpretation of the event), but it is clear that Diderot is impatient to play with Western values. The vital hues of erotic life are respectfully—and one may say artistically—celebrated in the embodied performance aiming to evoke "wholesome feelings," the feelings where the erotic is an aesthetic component (Diderot [1772] 2001, 190). Such sensibilities may resonate with Shusterman, who dedicated two seminal papers to foster erotic SA education, a project that runs afoul of Western aesthetics, where "old prejudices and repressed fears" dominate our culture (Shusterman 2006a, 224-25; see also Shusterman 2007).

Discussions of aesthetics in relation to erotic experience elicit discomfort in a culture that "limit[s] aesthetic experience narrowly to the experience of artworks" and that "confine[s] sexual experience to unimaginative, thoughtlessly mechanical, and insensitive copulation" (Shusterman 2006a, 226). Indeed, even the terms commonly used to name our sexual organs—"vagina" and "penis"—are medical, influenced by anatomy, rather than by artistic, spiritual, or philosophical searches for meaning. Alarmingly, such scientific terms are typically deployed to evaluate our sexual life, and ourselves. As an exercise, I encourage the reader to practice the aesthetics of language by considering the following three words: "vagina,"[8] "cunt,"[9] and "yoni."[10]

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8. Originates in a Latin word standing for "sheath" and nowadays defined as "the passage in the body of a woman or female animal between the outer sex organs and the womb" (Oxford Dictionary).

9. While this word's meaning may come across as vulgar and derogatory in the common contemporary use, the reader should be mindful that, in the last fifty years, the word has been reclaimed by many feminist thinkers and artists (see Muscio, 2002). Please also consider Bakhtin reflecting on the words belonging to the lower bodily stratum, "in the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. In this new connotation they can no longer carry on their former philosophical functions" ([1965] 1984, 231). Bakhtin attempts to reanimate the unofficial spirit of the festive folk culture, "opposed to severance from the material and bodily roots of the world," a task achieved, contra our modern sentiments, by means of "degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is … coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time" (20–1). According to Bakhtin, then, such words are charged with repressed meanings that link us not to our private selves as such, but with the earth and, consequently, with "a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character" (19). Thus, Bakhtin exposes a centuries-long semantic gap, where we may rediscover a regenerative sense of the earthly life and languages of the lower bodily stratum: "Modern indecent abuse and cursing have retained dead and purely negative remnants of the grotesque concept of the body … almost nothing has remained of the ambivalent meaning whereby they would also be revived; only the bare cynicism and insult have survived. … However it would be absurd and hypocritical to deny the attraction which these expressions still exercise even when they are without erotic connotation. A vague memory of past carnival liberties and carnival truth still slumbers in these modern forms of abuse. The problem of their irrepressible linguistic vitality has as yet not been seriously posed" (28). "The best energies are often hidden behind the strongest

Shusterman is certainly hoping for a more progressive humanity, and his analysis draws from ancient Greek, Chinese, and, particularly, Indian traditions, and develops a vibrant and inclusive perspective. In line with the SA model, Shusterman posits that "human sexuality is motivated primarily by attractiveness and pleasures … and that human sexual performance therefore can and should be rendered more enjoyable and rewarding through the application of knowledge, methods, and refinements introduced by learning, thought, and aesthetic sensitivity" (2007, 61).

A carefully orchestrated erotic aesthetic experience may involve, but is not limited to, "staging of the sexual performance," various "modes of foreplay" and "coital positions," where one must take into account "size (and sometimes also texture) of genitals, force of desire, and time required for its satisfaction" (Shusterman 2007, 62–3). Crucially, one is to strive (and hence to learn) to improve aesthetic erotic experience, as opposed to expecting a fulfilling sex to transpire out of nowhere. As Shusterman notes,

> Unity in variety is among the most prominent of our traditional definitions of beauty. In Indian erotic arts, the richness of variety is found not only in the diversity of embraces, kisses, scratchings, bitings, strikings, hair fondlings, temporalities, love noises, coital positions (which include oral and anal sex), and even different ways of moving the penis inside the vagina, but also in the ways these several modes of variety are combined into an aesthetic unity. (2007, 64)

So construed, erotic enhancement is very different from our common understanding of sexual enhancement achieved by medical and pharmaceutical means. Instead of taking a drug and putting on a nurse's or doctor's outfit, an SA erotic practice aims to enhance performance "by paying particular attention to which elements of these various modes fit most successfully together so as to both stimulate and satisfy desire" (Shusterman 2007, 64).

Shusterman is convinced that such practice is deeply purposeful. More traditionally, an artful erotic experience is a cure for monotony (and boredom), and thus is potent to advance "the bonds of intimate friendship" and sustain "sexual attraction and sexual love" between partners that helps "to preserve domestic harmony and through it social stability" (2007, 65). More specifically, Shusterman observes that,

> *Ars erotica*'s rich stimulation and sophistication of the senses, together with its mastery and refinement of a wide range of complex motor coordinations and bodily postures, cannot help but bring significant cognitive enhancement to both sensory and motor abilities. Its cultivation of perception includes an education in recognizing the enduring dispositions but also the changing thoughts and feelings of others, so that the lover can properly respond to them. … Such perceptual

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swear words. It is as if all the maltreated backsides are waiting for their hour of revenge in the near future, when everything will again be falling flat on its arse,"—a comparable remark found in Peter Sloterdijk's seminal *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987, 148).

10. A Sanskrit word of cosmic significance designating not only the female sexual organ, womb and home, but also a powerful metaphor for regenerative and creative forces (see Dinsmore-Tuli, 2014).

> training develops ethical sensitivity to others and to their diversity. … Conversely, ethical self-knowledge and self-discipline are similarly deepened and honed through erotic practices that probe our desires and inhibitions as they reshape them, while also testing and refining our self-control, through artful, pleasurable mastery of our senses and sensuality. (2007, 65)

This is only one example demonstrating that the practice of SA, aiming at the development of "somatic sensibility," eventuates in a more fulfilling life (Shusterman 1999, 303). To properly respond to our environments, people we engage with, and to the enigma of our own selfhood, it is necessary not only to fortify the mind, but also the living body. According to Shusterman, that is one of the essential grounds on which a well-rounded culture can be established: "one measure of a culture's quality of life and humanity is the level of body-mind harmony it promotes and displays" (2006b, 3). The bearing of SA (and EA) on the question of a life worth living, inherent to the phenomenon of culture, is taken up in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION: NEGLECT, CULTURE, AND WILD NATURE

Despite the different aesthetic realms that Saito and Shusterman spotlight, their views can be united in a caring philosophical position urging us to practise aesthetics, to *learn* to engage with ourselves and our surroundings, including other people and sentient creation. Saito and Shusterman, both thinkers and practitioners, take pains to stress that attention to the aesthetic in our lives influences not only our self-understanding, but also, relatedly, our values, commitments, and lifestyle. Therefore, as Schiller hoped, when collectively practised and explored, aesthetic education positively influences the creation of a flourishing culture and society. Let me dwell on the more specific claims that Saito and Shusterman make in this regard.

As we remember, Saito identifies the association of aesthetics with the arts as the central impediment to the evolution of aesthetics into a more expansive and culturally proactive project. Saito's entire line of argumentation hinges on the delicate tension between the two concepts, art and non-art, and it is an engagement with the latter kind of everyday aesthetic reality that is necessary to foster a new form of aesthetic literacy. By taking notice of the aesthetic dimension of the ordinary, my life becomes enriched. The ordinary is to be appreciated on its own terms, without trying to render it extraordinary or artistic, pulling us back to the conventions of the Western artworld and corresponding "sophisticated" aesthetic responses (Saito 2007, 50; see also 202–3, 245; Haapala 2005, 50–2).

Mindful of this tension, and having announced the adoption of "a multicultural, global viewpoint" (Saito 2007, xxi) Saito posits a crucial question: "is overcoming the boundary between art and non-art impossible?" (2007, 250). Is it possible to "break down this barrier" and traverse the border between art and the common life, where our artistic propensities are nonetheless fulfilled (251)? Insofar as we stick to the idea of an artist as a special persona who claims to present "a slice of everyday life *as a work of art*" we at the same time introduce "an

unbridgeable gap between art and life" (252; see also 39–40). This gap is a cultural peculiarity in the West, a normative trap, and one may submit to it, voluntarily or otherwise, or entertain an alternative perspective.

Saito's project is edifying because, unlike the influential aestheticians of the past, she is mindful of the legitimacy of non-Western paths: "We may consider those cultural traditions which do not provide a special place or status for art because every facet of life is conducted with artistic sensibility. In such cultures, everyone is an artist and every activity is an artistic activity in the sense that it is practiced with utmost care, skillful execution, and in pursuit of excellence and beauty" (2007, 41). Saito uses the examples of the Balinese who say "we have no art, we do everything the best we can," and the Navajos "who integrate their artistic endeavour into their other activities," simply because "art is a way of living"![11]

On these anthropological grounds, Saito admits that "if we were to enlarge the domain of art to include these cultural practices, it essentially amounts to abandoning the art-centered aesthetics that I have been reviewing … because there will be no distinction between art and non-art" (2007, 42). What is significant here is a matter of cultural inclusion. One way to address this problem is to note that in a multicultural world (or society), different culture groups are interested in each other, but their co-existence and striving to flourishing do not undermine the foundations of each culture. In a cross-cultural world (or society), inclusion implies a voluntary adoption of foreign ways of life, and hence a personal sacrifice. Thus, one viable trajectory is to disown the alluring notions of art and the artist altogether, and choose to actualise our predisposition to expressivity, vivid in children, to cultivate aesthetic sensibilities and creativity. Like wild nature, this way of life crawls on the fringes of Western culture.[12]

11. Saito 2007, 41; see Rader & Jessup 1976, 116; Witherspoon 1996, 737.

12. Philosophy as a way of life, rather than a career path or a hobby, is a common interpretation of philosophical lifestyle stemming from antiquity. Recently, this approach re-emerged thanks to the interest in work and lives of Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) and Foucault, Nietzsche, Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Pierre Hadot (1922–2010). The aesthetic/artistic elements in this approach to philosophical life are yet to be investigated due the arbitrarily special status of aesthetics and the arts in Western culture.

However, that is not where Saito's cultural preferences appear to lie. At the end of her book, we find a remark that, "I expect that there will be disputes over my particular views. Thus, I characterize my preceding discussion as an initiation for further exploration rather than a definite theory of everyday aesthetics" (2007, 243–4).

In what follows, I'd like to critique one overarching commitment of Saito's (and Shusterman's). Reminding the reader again that "I certainly welcome and endorse widening our scope of aesthetics by adopting a multi-cultural and global mode of exploration" (Saito 2007, lvii), Saito ultimately expands the bounds of aesthetic life on the terms defined by Western culture:

> The problem with examining *our* (*contemporary Western*) aesthetic life with the help of anthropologists' and historians' accounts of those aesthetic practices unfamiliar to us is that it gives an impression that the only way to acknowledge our multifaceted aesthetic life is to assimilate or proximate those unfamiliar cultural or historical traditions. … But, our aesthetic life in the everyday context is already rich and familiar to us. I do not think that we need to exoticize its content; nor should we have to become experts in Balinese, Navajo, Inuit, or Heian traditions or adopt their worldviews in order to investigate the heretofore neglected aspects of *our* everyday aesthetic life. (2007, 42; italics added)

Saito argues that there is no need to learn from the aforementioned traditions to be able to uproot the gems in "our [Western] multi-faceted aesthetic life" (2007, lvii). This implies that we can, of course, borrow ideas and approaches from other traditions (like Saito borrows from the Japanese, or Shusterman from the Chinese), but only to refresh the familiar Western life, dominated by urban lifestyle, to make it more interesting and sustainable. Should we choose to significantly reorient our ways and values in light of other traditions, we may run the risk of exoticising the contents of our Western (aesthetic) life. I find Saito's position on culture and well-being to be problematic. While I wholeheartedly applaud Saito's philosophy

and use of multicultural optics, I believe that presently "a global mode of exploration" confronts us with grave global issues, suggesting it is necessary to change our ways.

It is timely to ask: how do cultures evolve? Consider Shusterman adducing three different kinds of "culture politics." The most obvious way is when a government "is using its political power to advance certain cultural objectives that it feels are worth pursuing," such as erecting or burning down theatres and monuments, expanding or eradicating grant schemes (Shusterman 2012, 167). A more recent phenomenon is when ostracised groups "engage in political activities of a distinctly cultural form in order to advance not only their cultural aims, but also their political and social status" (169); and here we may recall multiculturalism and LBGTI+ as two prominent cultural movements. The collective activism of the latter kind, through theory and practice, can expand a government's cultural horizons. Finally, the third kind is concerned neither with policy, nor group interests, at least at its inception. This approach introduces a possibility of cultural change by "criticizing and reconstructing established ways of living, talking, acting, and thinking, but also by proposing new ways of life" (169).

Both Saito and Shusterman envision their projects bringing about cultural change by calling our attention to the major neglected aspects of the everyday, thereby advocating for new ways of life. However, the limits of such change are defined by their urban values and culture, which do not match up with contemporary global circumstances. I wish it was not the case; I wish we had more time. To sharpen and enhance the philosophical project of aesthetic literacy, Saito and Shusterman champion the cultivation of common, and yet unfamiliar, ways so as to enjoy a better life in the context of a familiar urban environment. Moreover, if Saito is right in arguing that ordinary objects in our lives have been neglected, and that our bodies have been similarly neglected as a source of self-understanding, as Shusterman insists, then this amounts to saying that we have failed to adequately engage not only with the most fundamental phenomena around us, but also with who we are. Neither formulation of the grounds for contemporary aesthetic literacy takes into account the intimate and most expansive domain of wild nature, neglected, depleted, and butchered as never before.

Neglect is the opposite of care; complacency and sacrifice share a similar dynamic. It is of paramount importance to flag a sense of urgency we philosophers must be able to channel in our work, insofar as our goal is a pursuit of understanding and instruction within specific global circumstances. Our shared environment is imperiled by global warming, directly undermining the possibility of flourishing, and there is little sign of such urgency in the work of the two philosophers (see Saito 2017, 141–45, 205, 215). The global environmental issues are dire, requiring immediate and dramatic changes in our lifestyles. To confirm this observation, I reached out to Bill McKibben, one of the world's leading environmentalists. Bill is clear on the issue at hand: "the planet is way outside of its comfort zone, so we need to be way outside of ours." Our comfort zone is located in city life, in buildings and other man-

made things, also structuring regional environments. And both Saito and Shusterman offer ways to care for our enigmatic, literally cosmic nature only from the vantage point of urban culture.

Saito's vision of cultural change, and of promoting aesthetically informed welfare, gravitates to civic solutions, and her references to wild nature are scanty (see Saito 2007, 132–3; 2017, 69). For example, endorsing the movement named "civic environmentalism," Saito argues that a much-needed change can transpire insofar as we participate in the everyday environments thereby forming "affection and attachment"—or care—and by "promotion of and support for sensitively designed objects and environments" (2007, 99, 239; see Sepänmaa 1995, 15). It's a city-focused care that Saito advocates:

> Care, respect, sensitivity, considerateness regarding the other, whether human or non-human, have to be the moral foundation of a good society, as well as a good life. Surrounded by and being able to enjoy the ease, comfort, and aesthetic pleasure provided by artifacts induces a sense of belonging; such an environment tells us that our needs, interests, and experiences are considered important and worthy of attention. In turn, it encourages us to adopt the same attitude toward others not only in our direct interaction with them but also in our dealing with objects and surroundings. We are more inclined to take *care* in maintaining the public space in good condition, cleaning our house and yard, planting flowers, composing a reader-friendly document, and serving a meal that is not only nutritious and tasty but also reflective of thoughtfulness and mindfulness. (2007, 240–41; see also 244)

For Saito, the radical change can only stem from within, from changing our attitudes and dispositions, from finding a sense of belonging *in* caring, rather than from insatiable theorising and, effectively, following conventions. Now, while I also believe that a significant cultural change is a matter of personal transformation, I am pessimistic about the prospects of such a change in ways of thinking to emerge within the urban environment. In 2021, it is hard to concede that the care for the hidden gems of urban life can mould a frame of mind and body for the kind of change that is currently at stake.

The same issue impairs the vision of Shusterman's project. It is true that somatic enhancement not only enriches one's experience and feeling of life, but also exposes an opening to "the depths of the self and character," and, by implication, to the depths of the collective project of culture:

> By critically examining our culture's oppressively narrow ideals of good looks and somatic satisfaction, while exploring alternative notions of bodily beauty and sources of somatic pleasures, somaesthetics can surely help improve "people's sense of who they are" and "what matters to them," and can promote new ways of talking about our embodied selves that are more liberating and rewarding. Through its comparative critique and exploration of various somatic disciplines and how they can be productively introduced into the project of philosophy as an art of living, and still further through the actual practice of such disciplines in one's life, somaesthetics not only offers suggestions for personal cultivation but also resources for "social hope" and "working programs of action." (Shusterman 2011, 158; see also Shusterman 2012, 189)

Like EA, SA has the potential to remedy many social ills, as both imply self-cultivation within a certain environment. In a multicultural society, Shusterman's project of understanding the soma, for example, is a way to undo "ethnic and racial hostility" often rooted in "deep prejudices that are somatically marked in terms of vague uncomfortable feelings aroused by alien bodies, feelings that are experienced implicitly and thus engrained beneath the level of explicit consciousness" (2006b, 4). Indeed, "the visceral grip of the prejudice" cannot be undone by means of the mind alone (4–5). However, Shusterman's philosophy as a way of life is a way of urban life. Interested in both pop and high culture, Shusterman persistently glosses over the natural environment, particularly over its wild forms, such as vast areas of water and land. Canvassing all kinds of artistic practice toward self-creation, Shusterman comes close to somatic consideration of wild nature while passing time at a Zen Dojo in rural Japan. Wilderness gets a mention along the lines of "the sublime natural seascape," a lovely background for a meditative activity (2012, 305).

What concerns me is the fact that self-understanding in both EA and SA is fashioned within the aspirations of urban culture, as if this form of human self-fashioning and cooperation was definitive of the potential of human makeup and inclination—of humanity as such. Both aesthetic projects advance remarkable philosophies of care. However, the dimensions of attention they open up are constrained by urban concerns; even if such concerns promote a much-needed cultural transformation, I struggle to justify the neglect of wild nature, a cosmically expressive body. Consider a definition of aesthetics of the everyday by Shusterman, who observes that the term has a double meaning: "Although both are concerned with appreciating ordinary objects or commonplace events, the first notion stresses the ordinariness of these everyday things, while the latter instead emphasizes how such things can be perceived through a distinctively focused aesthetic appreciation that transfigures them into a more richly meaningful experience" (2012, 303).

Both EA qualities and the body are indeed ordinary—we are in the habit of taking them for granted—and so is wild nature. It appears that both Saito and Shusterman aim to rescue the examined life understood almost strictly within the urban environment, one that takes a heavy toll on nature to flourish. One can only wonder why wild nature does not feature in these cultural projects as an object of the commonplace aesthetic engagement, the parameters of which can be transfigured by that which exceeds any human capacity, and any human

creation, like culture.[13] Possibly, because wild nature is that which is outside of our comfort zone.

What are the EA qualities in wild nature, how do they influence us, what do they suggest about our agency, and what practices and actions do they provoke? What will the soma teach us about our being when engaged with the wilderness?[14] What kinds of philosophers and meanings surface in the wild?

As our objective here is to determine the possible foundations of contemporary aesthetic literacy, it will suffice to determine some beginning steps. One simple example explains how, at a normative level, we are debarred from experiences in wild nature. Perhaps the most common way to try to spend time in nature is to go for a trip to a national park. Mostly surrounded by wild nature, we enjoy our travels to some destination, scarcely seeing any other humans. But all national parks are parks, after all, and hence are branded by roads and trails. Trails in nature are like major streets in the city. It is hard to get to know the culture of your city being guided in a line, designed by no one knows who or to what end. It is hard to discover a gig by an iconic underground post-punk band on a major city street. In a genuine city, like contemporary Berlin, the valuable marks of culture are often discovered off or under the main streets and shops, off or under the mainstream culture. Analogously, the infinite (and frequently inviting) natural phenomena emerge, perform, interact, age, decay, crawl, change colour, and fly beyond the trails, into the wild.

Extinct or still existing, ancient cultures have developed many impressive coming of age ceremonies to mark one's growing practical wisdom, some tested by means of long, solitary, and therapeutic stretches of time(lessness). One such wonderful and demanding ceremony is the Walkabout practised by Australian Aboriginals, the oldest cultures on our planet. We do not know much about this spiritual ordeal, and yet the ultimate goal of the Walkabout is to follow who you are becoming, a similar task to many Western or Eastern philosophies of care.

A primordial condition of experience, wild nature is our habitat. It offers its own ways to learn to be human, when we explore and taste our senses.

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13. Cf. Henry David Thoreau in "Walking" (aka "The Wild"): "Here is this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Nature, lying all around, with such beauty, and such affection for her children, as the leopard; and yet we are so early weaned from her breast to society, to that culture which is exclusively an interaction of man on man" ([1862] 2002, 199). And also Andrey Tarkovsky: "A person has no need of society, it is society that needs him. Society is a defence mechanism, a form of self-protection. Unlike a gregarious animal, a person must live in isolation, close to nature, to animals and plants, and be in contact with them. I can see more and more clearly that it is essential to change our way of life, to revise it" ([1977] 1994, 145).

14. A further discussion may benefit from considering the intersections with environmental aesthetics. At first, take a look at Yuriko Saito's chapter in this volume and the work of Arnold Berleant.

Leave behind your phone and notepad, go for a wander. Start with trails, with the familiar, seek guidance, try to avoid encounters with bears, sea snakes, black widows, and other unforgiving creatures. Fight the compulsion to source updates, to capture the moment, to crave food. Repeat. Take the shoes off, if possible, wander about seeking no destination, observe and respond, looking for no conclusions. Take precautions, keep attentive to yearnings, tap into instincts. To get acquainted, be open to being stung by a bee, latched by a leech. Learn how to react, in cold water and heat, to bleed, confront muscle errors and inhibitions, fears and aggression. See if play is possible, risk it. See what it takes to come closer to a bird, create sounds, climb branches, listen, dive for pearls.

Re-flect, re-frame, un-think, be-come, be-long. This free-styled form of para-historic practice is just one link to being in a position to evaluate one's ostensibly superior commitment to urban culture and lifestyle, a grand and now barely sustainable human endeavour.

Going outside of our zone of comfort implies taking risks. In the wilderness, we enter not only into a basic domain of aesthetic education, but also that which is viscerally more than can be perceived and learned. The wild alphabet is life-affirming and self-effacing. Tragically, if you were to offer your friend, lover, colleague, or a stranger, to go for a wild wander, you would probably bewilder them. A child may be surprised though, and will follow your lead and lead you. That's how far we are alienated from nature, and from childhood.

Photograph by David Pattinson.

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CHAPTER 11.

ANCIENT AESTHETICS

MATTHEW SHARPE

If one were being pedantic, one would say that there was no "ancient aesthetics," certainly in the ways that aesthetics emerged as one part of philosophy in the 18th century (Mason 2016, 3). Later moderns' exclusive focus on *aesthêsis*, on how art and beauty "makes us feel," is foreign to the Greeks and Romans. Beauty for them was firstly what we would call an objective thing. If one were being more liberal-minded, we could say that all of Greek existence was meaningfully "aesthetic," characterised by an overarching sense of the beautiful, *to kalon*. The arts were bound up from their inception with religious ritual and worship, and the classical Greeks could think of no better designation for the ethically excellent man than to call him *kalos k'agathos*, the beautiful and good man. Indeed, the very term *kalon*, designating beauty, could be used to describe nobility of action or character, as well as physical beauty (Mason 2016, 64).

This is not to say that the Greeks and Romans did not produce arts in great abundance. In the renaissance and enlightenment, their architecture, painting, sculpture and literature would be held up as timeless standards by artists and theoreticians of the arts. From the classical period (5th–4th century BCE), Greek artists joined the philosophers in theorising concerning beauty and the arts, and in the attempt to lay down "canons" for the production of music, architecture, sculpture, painting, rhetoric, and poetics (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 24–25, 49–63).

To give an opening generalisation, we can say that four different areas of concern emerge within "ancient aesthetics," if we take the latter term to describe ancient authors' attempts to theoretically comprehend beauty and the arts:

i. The attempt to understand beauty (*to kalon*) as an "objective" quality in the world that characterises some objects, people, and nature;
ii. The attempt to understand what we would call the "subjective" dimension involved in

human responsiveness to beauty and the arts: the way that beautiful things please or move us, and the way that their effect upon us can be edifying, purifying us from negative beliefs or emotions (*katharsis*), or morally elevating us to be better citizens or human beings (in *paideia*);

iii. Attempts to understand *how* artistic objects, from poems to sculptures, are produced, whether through madness or inspiration, or by following codifiable technical norms, and with what ends;

iv. As it were in between (i) and (ii), attempts to theorise the ethical and political significance of the arts, given their capacities to powerfully affect and transform individuals or groups. So, in both Plato and Aristotle, the arts are addressed very largely in their political dialogues, like Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, in ways we would not today associate with political theory.[1]

With these four concerns in view as a preliminary rubric, we will proceed in what follows in a more or less chronological fashion. We begin with the aesthetic practices and reflections of the preclassical artists and poets, and end with the Stoic philosophers' views on art and beauty. As we will see, in different authors and periods, different considerations become predominant and pass out of focus. This again reflects the absence of a codified (sub)discipline of philosophical thought of aesthetics, like our own, in the classical world.

THE PREPHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS OF THE GREEKS

As Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz has underscored, we must be careful before assuming that the prephilosophical Greeks' experiences and assumptions concerning the arts and beauty are identical to our own (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 25–30, 166–167). Firstly, the extensions of key terms, like *mousikê, poeisis*, and *to kalon*, differ from those of our own seeming equivalents—"music," "poetry," and "beauty" (Mason 2016, 64). Moreover, what the Greeks deemed worthy of expressing or producing in the arts, the nature, number, and classification of those arts, and their understandings of what an artist was engaged in when they created an artwork all differ greatly from modern views.

One framing consideration to approach ancient aesthetics must be that each of the arts, from architecture and sculpture to music, poetry, and drama, emerged from the ancients' polytheistic cults and worship. Homer and Hesiod each sang pre-eminently of the gods and semi-divine heroes. The preeminent achievements in archaic Greek architecture were temples; early sculptors carved gods, mythological reliefs, and documented religious events on the pediments of temples, or else shaped archetypal male and female nudes (*koroi*, *korai*) without distinguishing individuality (Durant 1939, 221–226). In music, an art associated mythologically with the lyre-playing god Orpheus, the paean was developed as a medium

1. In what follows, (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) in brackets will refer back to this rubric.

to praise Apollo, the dithyramb to hymn Dionysus, and prosodies as accompaniments for religious processions (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 18; Durant 1939, 228–230). Dance, too, emerged from religious ceremony, as did poetry, which was from the beginning closely associated with musical performance. The Greek word *choreuein*, from which the word for the "chorus" of tragedies would come, originally meant group dancing and singing. Flute (*aulus*) music was closely associated with the Dionysean cult, and lyre-playing with sacrificial and other sacred rituals (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 18–19). Consensus has now been established that Greek tragedies emerged from Dionysean rituals surrounding goat sacrifice, with the heroes' diegetic destruction coming to stand in for the sacrificial victim (Burkert 1970). Comedies, Aristotle tells us, hailed from the *kômos,* religious processions in which a company of males sang and danced around the likeness of a ceremonial phallus (*Poetics* 1449a, cf. 1448a;[2] Durant 1939, 230–233).

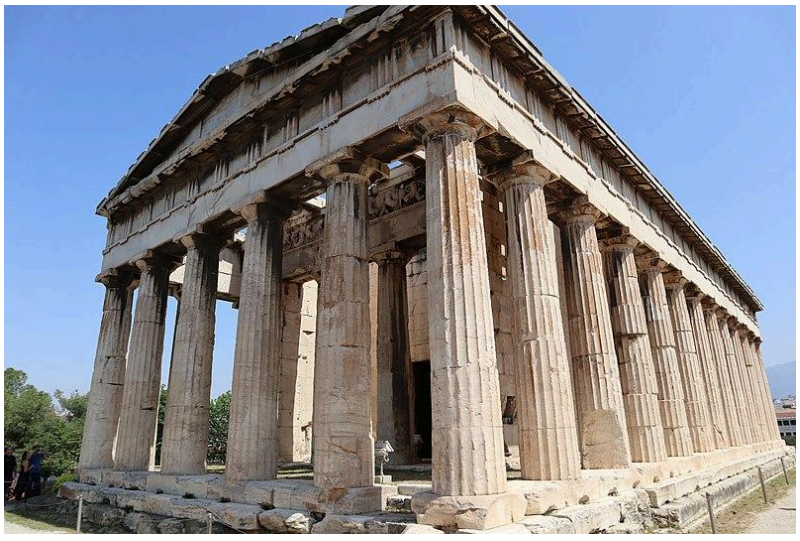
Again, unlike today, artists were not valued highly as a specific cultural type. Sculptors and architects would leave no individuating marks on their works. Whilst Terpander of Lesbos and Thaletas the Cretan are known to us for establishing "norms" in music (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 19), the actors in Greek theatres wore stylised masks. When the great tragedian Aeschylus died, it was as someone who had fought at Marathon that he wished to be remembered in his epitaph (Mason 2016, 7). There are several converging reasons behind these (for us) strange phenomena. The first is that the arts in general were considered species of *technê* or craft; they were not therefore essentially distant from the servile pursuits of cobblers, tanners, smiths, and the like. To the extent that the creation of art required knowledge, it was considered noble; to the extent to which it required manual work, for instance in shaping the stone, it was considered unfree (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 29).

The second consideration here is that the Greeks and Romans did not place any great value on novelty, creativity, or the imagination, three of the key features of the postromantic ideology of "genius" (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 24, 29). Over time, giants of proverbial stature emerged in architecture, like Iktinos, or sculpture, like Phidias or Praxiteles, or painting, like Apelles or Zeuxis (Mason 2016, 13–14). But their greatness was not exactly a matter of individual innovation. For the Greeks and Romans all art's greatness could only come from its beauty. But all beauty could only come from its approximation to, or idealisation of, the larger order that the artistic object expressed or represented. The closest approximation to the modern understandings comes in the ancient sense that poets, unlike other artists, were divinely inspired: they were more like soothsayers or diviners than craftspeople, a position most famously expressed in Plato's *Phaedrus* (244e–245a).

2. References to classical texts are given by the author, title, and locators that are consistent across editions and translations. Where quotations from English translations are given in the chapter, see "Translations of classical texts" at the end of the chapter for the specific English translations used or adapted by the author.

Music and dance were conceived by the Greeks as pre-eminently expressive arts, and poetry was only slowly differentiated from the former (Mason 2016, 14; Tatarkiewicz 1970, 18–19). Music, as the Pythagoreans would develop, was held to be able to reproduce or express the inner harmonies of the soul (Mason 2016, 3, 14). The very term *mimêsis*, which we usually translate as "imitation," was first used to describe the expression of dancers' inner feelings in dance, before being developed to encompass the representation of things in words, objects, and images (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 16–17, cf. 81–82). Alongside these expressive arts came the constructive arts of architecture and sculpture, although it is notable that neither of these arts had one of the nine mythological muses associated with it (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 28). Our category of fine arts also has no exact ancient equivalent, although the Greeks and Romans always divided the arts requiring manual work from other, "free" arts.

In all ancient arts, what stands out is the sense that what is beautiful and pleasing for human beings—for what is beautiful always pleases—is above all what has inner order, *harmonia* or *symmetria*: between the sounds, between the lengths of lines or columns, between shapes and colours, between the parts of a body (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 25–26; Mason 2016, 3, 66–67, 125). In Pythagorean philosophy, music was accorded the highest significance, insofar as the Pythagoreans were the first to discover the connection between mathematical ratios and musical intervals, like thirds, fifths, and octaves (Anderson 1983; Mason 2016, 14, 66–67; Tatarkiewicz 1970, 81–82). In the Greek temples, every part was crafted according to mathematical ratios, based on calculations building upon a unit module, usually half the width of the base of a column. Thus, the Athenian Temple of Hephaestus is a six-column temple with 27 modules. The relation of the column to the middle aisles is 5:8, and the triglyphs are each one module wide, with their widths relative to the metopes' again forming a ratio of 5:8 (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 51).



The Hephaestum in Athens, from the South-East, via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain (CC0).

Similar mathematical ratios were determined by Greek sculptors between the different parts of the human body, and even the three parts of the human face: forehead, nose, and lips to chin (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 57–59).

It is this sense of the mathematical ordering of reality, so that natural forms have their own intrinsic, governing rationality that underlies the emergence of "canons": works codifying the principles of beautiful architecture, sculpture, music, even vase pottery (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 24–25, 49–63). It is also the sense that underlies the Greeks' deep association of beauty *per se* with the natural human form, so evident in the great proliferation of sculptures of anthropomorphic Olympian deities, athletes, and later, of other human figures and busts (Durant 1939, 217–218). As the great Russian aesthetician, Alexei Losev comments,

> the beautiful in the antiquity presents itself in those circumstances when physical elements harmonise with each other in a perfect human body, when the principle of the unified bodily life, which the Greeks called "soul," fully subsumes all bodily elements. A body formed in accordance with this principle is the ideal in question. The phenomenon of beauty transpires as the ideal manifests itself in physical elements. (Losev [1963] 2000, I, 87; cf. Grube 1927, 629)

Hermes and the infant Dionysus, by Praxiteles, photo by Dwaisman, via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 4.0.

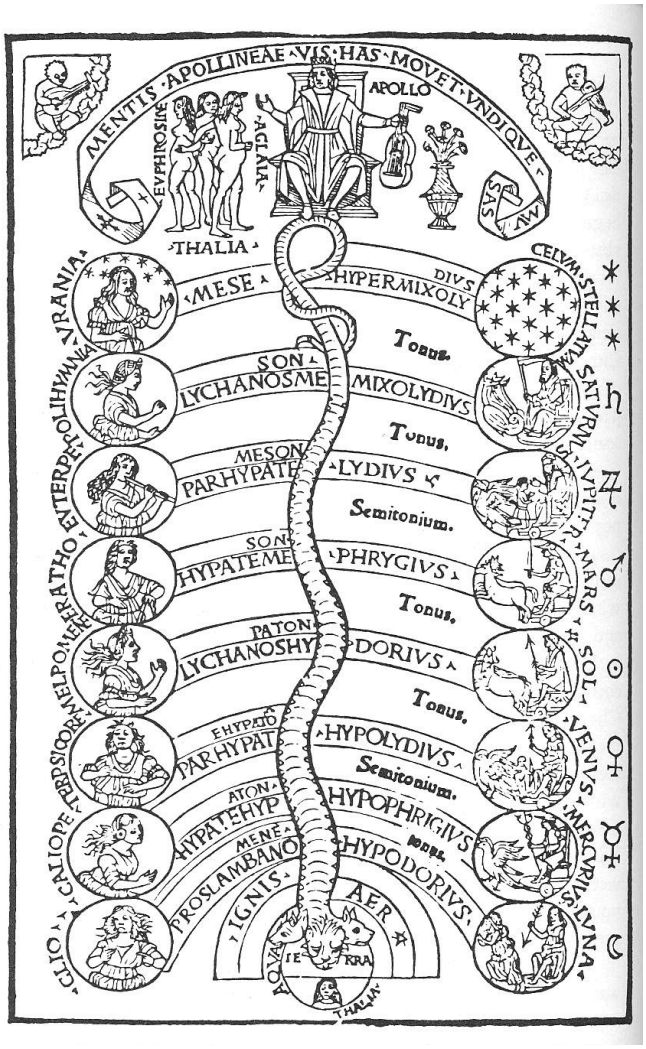
Let us close this section by nevertheless remarking that the beauty of non-human nature was not wholly lost on the Greeks or Romans (P. Hadot 2010a). Indeed, a sense of cosmic order and beauty is present within all of the ancient philosophies, perhaps excluding only the Sceptics, but including even the followers of Epicurus (341–271 BCE), who conceived of the world as the product of atoms, void, and motion. At different periods throughout antiquity, we find poets and philosophers raising paeans to the beauty of the natural world, and the surpassing excellence of rustic life close to nature. Many Greek temples are located in the most sublime natural locations, like the Temple of Apollo the Healer at Bassae and the Temple to Poseidon on Cape Sounion (P. Hadot 2010b).

The temple of Apollo the Healer at Bassae by Carole Roddato via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 2.0.

Many of the Roman residences unearthed in Herculaneum and Pompei in the 18th century are covered with delicately stylised landscape paintings (P. Hadot 2010a). If anything, an increasing sense of the beauty of the natural world can be traced as antiquity proceeds, as we will duly see.

FROM PYTHAGOREANISM TO PLATO

Pythagoras (c. 570–490 BCE) is said to have coined the term "philosophy." And it is in his school that the first developed set of theoretical reflections on "aesthetic" phenomena emerged. The qualification implied in the inverted commas is needed. As we have indicated, the Greeks owed to the Pythagoreans the developed sense that the principles of mathematics "were the principles of all things," based pre-eminently on their researches in acoustics (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 80–81; Mason 2016, 3, 14, 30, 66–67). But for the Pythagoreans, it was above all the cosmos itself, a perfect sphere containing all things, which was superlatively beautiful. Excepting music, they showed little interest in the other arts. The objective beauty at issue here (i) was characterised by *harmonia*, "a Unity of many elements and an agreement between disagreeing elements," like a musical harmony (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 80; Mason 2016, 30). Ultimately, it was held to characterise the orderly, spherical circuits of the planets, creating a harmony of the spheres which we cannot hear, since it is sounding all the time.



Shown in this engraving from Renaissance Italy are Apollo, the Muses, the planetary spheres and musical ratios. Music of the Spheres (1496) by Guillaume Le Signerre via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

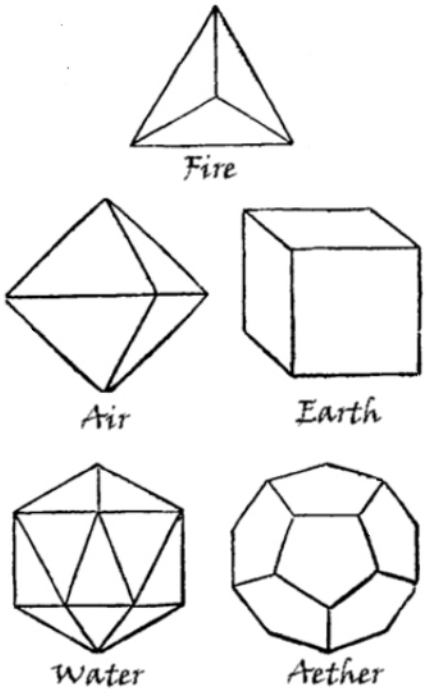
There is, however, a second decisive contribution the Pythagoreans made to ancient aesthetics. It concerns the subjective dimension of our experience of art (ii). Musical harmonies, the Pythagoreans maintained, had the power to both evoke and express feelings, due to their *mimesis* (imitation, reproduction) of the inner constitution of the *psyche* (psychology or mind; Anderson 1983). So different types of music, even different musical scales, could be used to affect audiences' souls in different ways. Music, that is, could be used as a means of *psychagogia*, the guidance or direction of souls, leading hearers towards "good" or "bad" forms of *ethos* or character. Indeed, adapting Orphic beliefs, the Pythagoreans believed that music could be used therapeutically, in order to purify people of negative affects: the process of *katharsis*. As Aristoxenus tells us, "the Pythagoreans employed medicine to purge the body, and music to purge the soul" (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 82). According to the fifth century Pythagorean, Damon of Athens, the singing and playing of music can form the young to courage, moderation, justice, and spiritual order or *eunomia* (Lord 1978). All of these Pythagorean claims were to abidingly affect classical aesthetics, including Plato's and Aristotle's political reflections on art (iv).

On the subject of beauty and the arts, as on many subjects, Plato (428/7–348/7 BCE) says different things in different places. Modern commentators have hence divided as to how we should read his corpus: some dividing earlier "Socratic" from "later" dialogues, others arguing that Plato aims to address different levels of readers in different texts (Strauss 1964), others again returning to the ancient idea that the dialogues are to be read in a single pedagogical order, tied to a project of shaping the ideal student (Altman 2013). Beauty and the arts are addressed in the *Ion, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Republic, Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Philebus, Statesman, Laws*, and *Timaeus.*

In both the *Gorgias* and *Hippias Major*, Plato's Socrates entertains and queries common Greek opinions on beauty, including views that the Xenophontic Socrates variously entertains in the *Memorabilia* (Grube 1927, 271–273; Sider 2012; Tatarkiewicz 1970, 100–102). *To kalon* would name here the "appropriate" or "fitting" (*to prepon*); whatever thing (from the sublime to the mundane) is well shaped to particular human ends and circumstances. Or else beauty is whatever gives pleasure. Or it is simply what is useful (*Hippias Major* 293e, 295c–296e).

Socrates expresses hesitation as to whether whatever pleases will be beautiful. For this seems to make aesthetic phenomena wholly subjectively relative, as we say. As for whether the beautiful is just whatever is fitting or useful, Socrates notes that many fitting and useful things can serve bad ends, like a beautiful sword in the hands of a murderer. Yet the beautiful is for him axiomatically always also good. Moreover, there are many things which the Greeks admire as *kalon* which are not simply useful. These include phenomena as different as ornamental statues or acts of self-sacrificing bravery (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 115–116).

In other dialogues, Plato has Socrates presenting different views, closer in orientation to the objective Pythagorean view (i). So, in the *Philebus* (64e) we are told that "measure (*metriotes*) and proportion (*symmetria*) are … beauty and virtue"; or again, in the *Timaeus*, we read that "all that is good is beautiful, and what is good cannot lack proportion" (87c). Plato's great innovation, here as elsewhere, turns upon how he develops this Pythagorean orientation into a fully-fledged metaphysical conception of Beauty as what he terms an "Idea" or "Form" (*eidos*).



The five Platonic solids and elements out of which the world is shaped by the Demiurge in Plato's Timaeus. The Platonic solids as classical elements by Edward Cresy via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

In *Hippias Major*, the relative beauty of particular women was measured against that of the goddesses (289a). Just so, in the *Republic, Philebus*, and *Symposium*, Plato will have his Socrates argue that all of the particular things we find beautiful in the physical world are all only relatively beautiful. And if we ask "relative to what?", the answer comes: to the very Idea of Beauty Itself (*Philebus* 51b–c). As the climactic passage in the famous "ladder of love" in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* makes clear (210d–211e), this Idea alone is absolutely Beautiful, neither coming into being nor passing away, not beautiful in some parts but ugly in others, neither beautiful for some only, not for others, but existing alone, the very measure by which all other beauties are adjudged. Indeed, all these other beauties are only beautiful at all to the extent that they "participate" in the Idea.

It is easy for moderns, in the wake of thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, to think that nothing could be more "life-denying" and abstract than such a metaphysical vision of Beauty. The sometimes-overlooked subjective side to Plato's doctrine (ii), very much carried forward into later Neoplatonists like Plotinus, responds to the sense that the Idea is what is most, eternally Real, the very source of order and life (cf. Mason 2016, 142–145). Indeed, the *Symposium* introduces a desiderative component into the ancient aesthetic, tying *to kalon* very closely to human *Eros* or desire (cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* VI, 7, 22). Beauty is what moves human beings to desire, Plato's Diotima argues in the *Symposium*, in a thought to which Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus* will give mythicopoetic form. Indeed, she tells us, "to love is to desire to give birth in beauty (*en tô kalô)*" (*Symposium* 206e): whether to other human beings through sexual union with a beautiful other, or to elevated speeches through the intellectual love of the Idea of Beauty characterising the true philosopher (210d–211e). Beauty intimates immortality to we hapless mortals, on Plato's view. It awakens the "wings of desire" of our souls, which have not wholly forgotten their other-worldly origins (so Plato seemingly believes), and still long to gaze directly on the generative, other-worldly Ideas (*Phaedrus* 248c–251c).

One might well imagine that such an elevated conception of the metaphysical place of Beauty would have led Plato into the deepest appreciation of the arts. Famously, however, in his political writings (iv), Plato delivers a very qualified assessment of poetry, positioning the poets as involved in an "ancient quarrel" with the philosophers (*Republic* 607b). One ground of this view, which we see in the *Ion* (533e) and *Phaedrus* (244d–245a), is the claim that poets "do not know what they do," but must be moved by divine madness to produce great verse. The philosopher, by contrast, desires knowledge above all things, and that knowledge should shape human speech and action. Another ground, evident in books II–IV of the *Republic*, is Plato's deep appreciation of the power of poetic representations of gods and men, as well as different forms of music, to move the young to emulation (*Republic* 377a–d, 397d; cf. Mason 2016, 31; Tatarkiewicz 1970, 126). "Homer and Hesiod, and the rest of the poets" were "the great myth-makers (*mythopoious*)" of the Greeks, Plato sees (*Republic* 377b). It is surely not stretching the interpretive bow too far to surmise that Plato wished for philosophy to take on this august culture-forming place, and that *this* was the real stake of his "ancient quarrel" (*Republic* 607b). Indeed, the Stranger in the *Laws* declares as much to the poets:

A winged Eros: for Plato's Socrates, Eros is a daimon between human and divine beings. Red-Figure Squat Lekythos (Oil Vessel): Eros and Woman via the Cleveland Museum of Art. License: CC0.

> Best of strangers, we will say to them, we also according to our ability are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest; for our whole polis is an imitation of the best and noblest life, which we affirm to be indeed the very truth of tragedy. You are poets and we are poets, both makers of the same strains; rivals and antagonists in the noblest of dramas, which true law can alone perfect. (*Laws* 817a–b)

Plato in the political texts approaches a deeply moralising, censorious approach to the arts. This would have them wholly serve the needs of government and education. His Socrates even famously proposes to expel the poets from the ideal city (*Republic* 607a–b). *Republic* X adds to this political dimension a criticism of the representative or mimetic (as against expressive) arts, principally painting (*Republic* 596b–598a; Mason 2016, 30, 34–36). Although he elsewhere recognises that artists aim exactly to produce idealised images of people, actions and things—*eikónes* (images) seemingly close therefore to his own Ideas—Socrates argues here that what "mimetic" artists produce are mere copies of the physical objects we see. These are as such "at three removes (*tritou*)" from the metaphysical Ideas that shape physical reality (*Republic* 597e; *Phaedrus* 248e; Mason 2016, 35–36). Small wonder that in the *Statesman*, we

can be told that all imitative arts none of them is practised for any serious purpose, but all of them merely for play" (*Statesman* 288c).

ARISTOTLE ON ART, BEAUTY AND POETICS

Outside of his *Poetics*, a treatise devoted to considering how a certain art is shaped and produced (iii), Aristotle (384–322 BCE) also gives most space to art in his political writings (iv). Here as elsewhere, however, he challenges his great teacher, Plato. The highest goal of government, Aristotle maintains, is to enable citizens to achieve "the actualisation and complete practice of virtue" (*Politics* 1332a9). Healthy peoples make war for the sake of peace. Yet the goal of all peaceable activities, including work and politics, will be the cultivation and enjoyment of activities which are their own ends in themselves. The goal of education in turn should accordingly be to teach citizens "to be capable of being at leisure (*scholazein*) in a *kalos* fashion" (*Politics* 1337b30–32; cf. 1329a1–2; 1334a36–39). Such leisure is not mere idleness, passing the time. Rather, it should be filled with the arts, whose pleasurable forms have misled many people (and perhaps Plato is intended) into considering them as mere games. Citing Homer, Aristotle protests that "Odysseus says that this is the best pastime, when human beings are enjoying good cheer and 'the banqueters seated in order throughout the hall listen to the singer'" (*Politics* 1338a27–29).

In Aristotle's more liberal purview, the arts "should be practised not for the sake of a single benefit but for the sake of several" (*Politics* 1341b35–37). Likewise, contra his teacher, they can be judged according to at least five different concerns, including the plausibility, consistency, and reasonableness of their subjects, their (non)adherence to specifically artistic norms, as well as moral considerations (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 149). A key part of the *goal* of political life in "pastime and *phronêsis* (practical wisdom)," the arts led by music also stand as a principal *means* to educate citizens towards a *kalos* leisure: "It is rather to be supposed that music contributes something to virtue, the assumption being that, just as gymnastics makes the body of a certain quality, so also is music capable of making the character of a certain quality by habituating it to be capable of enjoying in the correct fashion" (*Politics* 1339a21–25).

Significantly, it is in the context of reflecting in a Pythagorean vein upon the ability of music, and the different scales (Lydian, mixed Lydian, Phrygian, etc.) to shape character that Aristotle's longest passage on the famous thesis concerning art and *katharsis* (ii), also central to the *Poetics*, is found (Mason 2016, 89–94). Implicitly contesting Plato's Socrates' and his friends' exiling of certain musical modes from the best city in the *Republic* (398d–399a), Aristotle comments,

> It is evident that all the harmonies are to be used, but that all are not to be used in the same manner, but with a view to *paideia* [education, training, cultivation] those most relating to character. … For there are certain persons who are possessed by the passion of enthusiasm, but as a result

> of the sacred tunes … we see them calming down as if obtaining a cure and catharsis. This same thing, then, must necessarily be experienced also by the pitying and fearful as well as the generally passionate, and by others insofar as each individual has a share in these things, and there must occur for all a certain purification and a feeling of relief accompanied by pleasure. (*Politics* 1342a2–14)

Notably, when Aristotle considers beauty (i), he does so under the heading of theoretical philosophy, treating it accordingly in the fifth book of his *Metaphysics* (Marshall 1953, 228–229). Given his famous criticisms of Plato's post-Pythagorean idealism, it is also notable that one main thrust of his claims here is nevertheless to assert the mathematical dimensions of *to kalon* (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 151):

> Now since the good and the beautiful are different (for the former always implies conduct as its subject, while the beautiful is found also in motionless things), those who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good are in error. For these sciences say and prove a very great deal about them. … The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1078a, 32 ff.)

In the *Topics*, we are told that the beautiful is *to prepon* (102a, 6; Marshall 1953, 229). Nevertheless, there is no sense in which the beautiful in Aristotle would be reducible to what well fits human ends. Nature herself, for Aristotle, is the master craftsman of order and symmetry (cf. Marshall 1953, 229–230). His criticisms of Plato's Ideas aside, Aristotle thus affords a very high place in his aesthetic regard to the perfect, orderly movements of the heavenly bodies. It is an order and perfection to which we sublunar creatures can scarcely aspire, and of which we have no direct experience on earth. Above even the encircling heavens, however, comes the God of the philosopher, "who in might is most powerful, in beauty most fair, in life immortal, in virtue supreme; for, though he is invisible to all mortal nature, yet he is seen in his very works. For all that happens in the air, on the earth, and in the water, may truly be said to be the work of God" (Aristotle, *De Mundi* 399a 19–21).

Aristotle's most famous contribution to aesthetics is, however, his *Poetics*, which has survived in part, and contains an extensive discussion of the literary form of tragedy, and how it might be produced (iii). Tragedy, Aristotle famously declares, is "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions" (*Poetics* 1449b).

Oedipus and Antigone in The Plague of Thebes by Charles Jalabert via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain.

Poetry is generally afforded a much higher place, once again, in Aristotle's thought than in Plato's, reflecting his more favourably conception of *mimesis*. Poetry is more philosophical than history as Aristotle proverbially says (*Poetics* 1451a; Mason 2016, 84). For it deals with individuals who are also representative of entire types (heroes, villains, kings, priests, etc.), rather than being bound to report on actual events and people. What the poet "mimes," then, when he imitates reality is not historical fact. It is some idealised (or demonised) figure and action, like the fall of an iconic hero like Oedipus or a tragic heroine like Antigone. The tragedian should render people and actions "as they were or are … as they are said or thought to be or … as they ought to be" (*Poetics* 1460b). Aristotle hence praises Sophocles for rendering his characters as ideals, and Zeuxis for painting men as more beautiful than they were: "The ideal type must surpass the reality" (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 142).

How then does tragedy's idealised presentation of noble, fallen characters' actions and reversals purge audiences of pity and fear, and what does Aristotle contribute to the Pythagorean conception of art as a means of *katharsis* (ii)? The aim of art's idealisations, Aristotle says, is exactly to provoke emotions: "to make things more moving" (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 147). Through what we call identification with the tragic protagonist, as his fate unfolds, pity for his plight is awakened in us, as well as fear that something like this could happen to us:

> Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner

> structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. This is the impression we should receive from hearing the story of the Oedipus. (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453b)

The emotions of fear and pity, Aristotle maintains, can become debilitating, or even politically troublesome. However, through witnessing the virtual reality of what transpires on stage, audiences are able to experience and "let them out" in a controlled environment, without direct threat or consequence to themselves or the *polis* (Mason 2016, 91–94). *Katharsis* for Aristotle is thus akin to purging in Greek medicine (Jones 1962, 39–40; Tatarkiewicz 1970, 146; Mason 2016, 72–80). However, as we have seen, the thought clearly looks back to Pythagorean musical theory and beyond it, to Orphic ritual (see the first section of this chapter, above).

THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

The classical period of the Greek "golden age" is generally assigned no more than two centuries preceding Alexander's conquest of Greece in 338 BCE. The Hellenistic period, until the Roman conquest (146 BCE), and then the Roman epoch (generally dated until 476 CE) spans eight hundred years. A 19th century convention which is still widespread sees the Hellenistic period as one of decline, even as Grecian and Greek-inspired thought and arts were gradually spread throughout the Mediterranean world, conquering Rome culturally at the same time as Greece lost its political independence. It is the arts of this period that inspired the classicism and philhellenism of Winckelmann, Lessing, and Goethe. And even if we see the Hellenistic arts as in decline, despite great works like the *Lacoön and his Sons* or the *Venus de Milo*, the Hellenistic and Roman periods have bequeathed us invaluable theoretical works advancing the study of painting and sculpture (by Pliny), music (by Theophrastus, Aristoxenus), architecture (by Vitruvius), and literary theory (pre-eminently *On the Sublime*, long attributed to Cassius Longinus, and Horace's *Ars Poetica*) (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 173, 216–224, 235–237). Hellenistic and then Roman sculpture, turning ever-farther away from the austere, near-Platonic stylisation of the classical period, began more and more to model human actions and distinct individuals (Durant 1939, 616–626). The rise of Rome saw golden and silver ages of Latin literature, led by giants such

The Venus de Milo by Rodney via Flickr. License: CC BY 2.0.

as Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Lucretius, Seneca, and Juvenal, and the mastery of new genres, led by satire. The Roman textbooks in rhetoric, such as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De Oratore*, continue to shape rhetorical studies and reward rereading. The Romans made literally monumental advances in architecture, enabled by their mastery of brick, concrete, and the arch, and achieving engineering and aesthetic wonders like the dome of the Pantheon (Durant 1944, 357–362).

The period is also not without innovations in philosophical considerations of art and beauty, albeit reframed in the terms of the larger Hellenistic interest in philosophical ethics and self-transformation through practicing regimens of spiritual exercises (P. Hadot 1995; 1998; I. Hadot 2014). The lasting classical designations of beauty as characterised by order, symmetry, harmony of parts in relation to the whole, and appropriateness remain canonical. Despite Epicurus' advice that his students should flee *paideia* and the liberal arts, the greatest extant Epicurean work is the great Latin poem *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius, in which the hard truths of Epicurean philosophy are sweetened with the "wormwood" of vigorous verse (Book 4, Proem). Despite the Sceptics' attacks on music, musical, and literary theory (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 181–185), the eclectic Platonist Cicero (106–43 BCE) introduces the notion of an innate, distinctly human aesthetic sense: "And it is no mean manifestation of Nature and Reason that man is the only creature that has a feeling for order, for decorum, for moderation in word and deed" (*De Officiis* I, 4, 14). In his *Orator*, we find the first sketch of an adaption of Plato's conception of the metaphysical Ideas to explain the creative vision of the artist:

> For example, in the case of the statues of Phidias, the most perfect of their kind that we have ever seen, and in the case of the paintings I have mentioned, we can, in spite of their beauty, imagine something more beautiful. Surely, that great sculptor, while making the image of Jupiter or Minerva, did not look at any person whom he was using as a model, but in his own mind there dwelt a surpassing image of beauty; at this he gazed and, all intent on this, he guided his artist's hand to produce the likeness of a god. (*Orator* 2, 8; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 28a)

In Cicero, too, as in the Stoics, we find in the wonderful vision of human nature of *Laws* I the specification that humans have been uniquely formed to contemplate the beauties of the heavens: "while [nature] has debased the forms of other animals, who live to eat rather than eat to live, she has bestowed on man an erect stature, and an open countenance, and thus prompted him to the contemplation of heaven, the ancient home of his kindred immortals" (Cicero, *Laws* I, 26–27).

Amongst the Stoics themselves, the arts tend to be assessed pre-eminently in an ethical, if not political purview (iv). They are aids or hindrances for shaping people to the virtues. Like Plato (*Republic* 606b), some Stoics worry that the tragic poets' staging of extreme passions and suffering is a potential source of ethical corruption. The physical beauty of men and women so adored by wider ancient culture they deem as something "indifferent," being capable of

harming as well as helping their possessors, if not guided by wisdom (Tatarkiewicz 1970, 187–188).

Nevertheless, the Stoics' larger conception of the *kosmos* depicted the world as the product and embodiment of the "poetic" fire of the form-giving *Logos* immanent in all things. The *kosmos* for the Stoics was hence the supremely beautiful thing, as for the Pythagoreans. As the middle Stoic Posidonius wrote, "the world is beautiful. This is clear from its shape, colour, and rich array of stars" (at Tatarkiewicz 1970, 188). So, in Seneca (*De Otio* 5) as in Epictetus (c. 50–135 CE), there are passages assigning to the contemplation of the world and living things a much higher place than the enjoyment of human-made objects, even the most beautiful:

> God has introduced man, as a spectator of Himself and of his works; and not only as a spectator, but an interpreter of them … [people should] end where nature itself has fixed our end; and that is, in contemplation and understanding, and in a scheme of life conformable to nature. Take care, then, not to die without the contemplation of these things. You take a journey to Olympia to behold the work of Phidias, and each of you thinks it a misfortune to die without a knowledge of such things; and will you have no inclination to see and understand those works for which there is no need to take a journey, but which are ready and at hand even to those who bestow no pains! Will you never perceive what you are, or for what you were born, or for what purpose you are admitted to behold this spectacle? (Epictetus, *Discourses* I, 8)

For the Stoics, since the *Logos* shapes all things, the fully enlightened "sage" will indeed be able to see the value and beauty in even the smallest things, in their relation to the whole, as in this striking passage from Marcus Aurelius' (121–180 CE) *Meditations*:

> We must also observe closely points of this kind, that even the secondary effects of Nature's processes possess a sort of grace and attraction. To take one instance, bread when it is being baked breaks open at some places; now even these cracks, which in one way contradict the promise of the baker's art, somehow catch the eye and stimulate in a special way our appetite for the food. … Ears of corn too when they bend downwards, the lion's wrinkled brow, the foam flowing from the boar's mouth, and many other characteristics that are far from beautiful if we look at them in isolation, do nevertheless because they follow from Nature's processes lend those a further ornament and a fascination. (*Meditations* III, 2; P. Hadot 1998, 168–69).

In order to achieve such a vision, however, the philosopher must retrain his vision (ii) to "a thorough knowledge of the workings of the universe" (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* III, 2). This will involve cultivating the ability to see natural things as existing independently of and indifferent to the habitual purposes with which human hopes and fears usually clothe them (P. Hadot 1972). For such reasons as these, the philologist-philosopher Pierre Hadot has intriguingly argued that, if we were to seek the closest analogy to the modern concept of aesthetic perception, we should look at it in ancient philosophical discourses concerning the figure of the sage (1995, 251–263). Only a figure who has fully conquered their fears, prejudices, and desires could fully "see" and savour the world, and every one of their experiences within it, in the ways most of us only experience in moments of absorption in

beautiful works of art (cf. Sharpe 2018). The question of whether such a figure, one with deep parallels in near and far Eastern conceptions of the wise person, is possible today is a question worth deep reflection.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We can only hope here to have introduced readers to some of the key features, figures, ideas, and debates in the vast field of the ancients' reflections on art and *to kalon*. We have seen their overarching sense of beauty as order, symmetry, and harmony (i). We have approached the ways that this was at once shaped by as it shaped their understandings of music, architecture, sculpture, and human beauty. We have considered how, whilst the Greeks did not pre-eminently focus on the subjective experience of art and beauty, they nevertheless understood how the arts such as music and drama can powerfully affect us (ii). The Pythagoreans and Aristotle developed theories of art's psychagogic and psychotherapeutic, cathartic capacities. Plato and the Platonists stressed beauty's power to animate our desire. In Cicero and the Stoics, the notion of an innate human sense of beauty are spelled out (Mason 2016, 124–126). Throughout antiquity, artistic canons were produced codifying technical standards of beauty and excellence in the arts, a tradition in which Aristotle's *Poetics* may be placed (iii).

Plato and Aristotle, in these lights, centrally considered the arts in their political writings, each of them moved by a sense of the centrality which art either does, regrettably, or should, ideally, play in the education of good citizens and human beings (iv). Plato and the Stoics, in particular, were anxious that the powers of art could be used for evil as well as good ends. We saw that Aristotle nevertheless thinks that the leisured cultivation and enjoyment of the arts should be the key part of the goal or excellence of the ideal city. We closed by seeing how in the Stoics in particular—but examples from other philosophies could be given—there is also a sense that the fully enlightened person or sage would perceive the world with the same absorbed but impartial, captivated but contemplative mode of perception that modern theorists have assigned to aesthetic experience.

The classical achievements in the plastic, constructive, and literary arts, as well as in poetics and reflections upon art, continue to exert a determinative effect on Western and now global cultures. Their larger sense of order and beauty will attract admirers and may even be surmised to be something the modern world urgently needs to rediscover as great, destabilising ecological and political crises again beckon. As Albert Camus (1913–1960), a great 20th century philhellene, wrote in 1948,

> the Mediterranean has a solar tragedy that has nothing to do with mists. There are evenings, at the foot of mountains by the sea, when night falls on the perfect curve of a little bay and an anguished fullness rises from the silent waters. Such moments make one realize that if the Greeks knew despair, they experienced it always through beauty and its oppressive quality. In this golden sadness, tragedy reaches its highest point. But the despair of our world—quite the opposite—has

> fed on ugliness and upheavals. That is why Europe would be ignoble if suffering ever could be. We have exiled beauty; the Greeks took arms for it. A basic difference—but one that has a long history. (Camus 1970, 148)

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

CHAPTER AUTHORS

Andy Broadey is a Lecturer in Contemporary Art, History and Theory at University of Central Lancashire, where he co-curates the art space Hanover Project. In 2021 he curated the group exhibition *Cosmotechnics* (Cosmotechnics.net) and Jade Montserrat's installation *Learning in-and-within relation (after Édouard Glissant)*. In 2019, Andy presented a major solo exhibition at The Nehru Centre, London (2019). As a member of @.ac, Andy co-authored articles in *Research in Education* (Sage Publishing, 2019), *Rethinking Marxism* (Taylor & Francis, 2020) and *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research* (University of Barcelona, 2021).

Elizabeth Burns Coleman is a philosopher who lectures in Communications and Media Studies at Monash University. She is author of *Aboriginal Art, Identity and Appropriation* (Sage 2005) and numerous articles and chapters on cross cultural aesthetics and cultural appropriation. Most recently she has written on social aesthetics and the relationship between aesthetics and etiquette.

Pierre Fasula is a Research Fellow at the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, and is the author of *L'homme du possible. Robert Musil et la question de la vie juste* (Vrin, 2021) and *Concepts de l'ordinaire* (with Sandra Laugier, Editions de la Sorbonne, 2021). Co-organiser of the Seminar Wittgenstein at the University Paris 1 for almost 10 years, he is a specialist of Wittgenstein, philosophy of literature, and philosophy of emotions (particularly the nature and value of resentment). He also translated Hilary Putnam's *Ethics without Ontology* and *The Threefold Cord* into French.

Richard Hudson-Miles is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Yale's Paul Mellon Centre for British Art. He will shortly be publishing an introduction to the thought of Jacques Rancière for the Routledge Critical Thinkers series, and has written various articles on the politics and philosophy of art education.

Ines Kleesattel is an art theorist and philosopher, teaching at Zurich University of the Arts.

Her current research engages in situated aesthetics, relational critique, and artistic research in translocal and transtemporal entanglements.

Xiao Ouyang is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Peking University, China. He mainly works on comparative philosophy and is interested in various topics in aesthetics, ethics, and political philosophy. He has publications in journals such as *Philosophy East and West*, *Monumenta Serica*, *Rivista di Estetic*, and *History of Chinese Philosophy*. He also works on translations. Besides academic work, he devotes himself to Chinese classical arts, such as poetry, calligraphy, painting and literati music.

Matteo Ravasio is an Assistant Professor in Art Theory at Peking University's School of Arts. He works on various issues in aesthetics and philosophy of art, with a focus on the philosophy of music.

Yuriko Saito is a Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the Rhode Island School of Design, USA, and editor of *Contemporary Aesthetics*, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal. Her research areas are everyday aesthetics, Japanese aesthetics, and environmental aesthetics. She has lectured widely on these subjects, both within the United States and globally, and her writings have been published as book chapters, journal articles, and encyclopedia entries. Her *Everyday Aesthetics* (2007) and *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (2017) were published by Oxford University Press. The latter was awarded the 2018 Outstanding Monograph Prize by the American Society for Aesthetics.

Elizabeth Scarbrough is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Florida International University. Her research has focused on the beauty of immovable cultural heritage (including ruins, monuments, and landscapes), and our ethical obligation to cultural heritage. Her interest in ruins has given rise to a related interest in the ethics of travel and tourism, an underdeveloped area of applied ethics. You can find her work in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *The Philosophers' Magazine*, and more.

Matt Sharpe teaches philosophy at Deakin University. He is the author of *The Other Enlightenment: Race, Sexuality and Self-Estrangement* (in press, Rowman and Littlefield) and coauthor of *Philosophy as a Way of Life: History, Dimensions, Directions* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Ruth Sonderegger is a Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetic Theory at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria. She completed her PhD in Philosophy (1998) at the Free University Berlin, and from 2001 to 2009 she taught at the Philosophy Department of the University of Amsterdam. Since 2004 she has been a member of the editorial board of *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*. Currently, she researches the history of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline and its entanglements with the history of colonial capitalism as well as theories and practices of critique.

Alexander Westenberg completed studies in Classics, Philosophy, History, and Literature, including Honours in Philosophy of Language. His PhD examined the role of narrative fiction as a unique and important contributor to the discipline of philosophy, especially in its contribution to understanding as opposed to knowledge. He currently works as academic research officer to the Archbishop of Sydney, and teaches part-time at The University of Sydney Australia, the University of Notre Dame Australia, and the Australian Catholic University.

PEER REVIEWERS

Geoff Boucher is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University. He is the author of number of books on historical materialism and continental philosophy, including *Understanding Marxism* (2012), *Adorno Reframed* (2012) and *The Charmed Circle of Ideology* (2008). His latest book is *Habermas and Literature* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021). He is also the author (with Matthew Sharpe) of *Zizek and Politics* (2010) and *The Times Will Suit Them* (2008).

Gene Flenady is a Lecturer in philosophy at Monash University, and believes philosophical education should be a transformative one. His research is primarily in German Idealism, G.W.F. Hegel in particular. He is interested in the potential of Hegelian metaphysics to help in diagnosing the ethical limitations of reductive forms of materialism and contemporary liberal capitalism.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Series editor

Christina Hendricks is a Professor of Teaching in Philosophy at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, Canada, where she often teaches Introduction to Philosophy courses. She is also the Academic Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (2018-2023). Christina has been an open education researcher and advocate for a number of years, having been a BCcampus Open Textbook Fellow, an OER Research Fellow with the Open Education Group, the Creative Commons Canada representative to the CC Global Network, and a member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Legal Information Institute.

Copy editing and formatting

Chris Hubbard (copy editor) works part-time in social media and community relations and is an HR intern. He recently completed a Master's in English at Ohio Dominican University and studied philosophy and psychology as an undergraduate. Some of his philosophical interests include ethics, metaphysics, and aesthetics.

Toby Steiner (formatting in Pressbooks) currently works as project manager of the Community-led Open Publishing Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) project by day, and, together with Kim Akass, is co-editor of the Criticial Studies in Television blog by night. If he can find the time, he also volunteers his time to support open projects such as this one. With a background in Cultural Media Studies and an MA in Television Studies from Birkbeck, University of London, over the past ten years Toby has worked with a wide variety of open education, open access and open source projects and initiatives in Higher Education.

Book cover

Jonathan Lashley (cover designer) worked in the visual design industry before pursuing his career in education full-time. When he isn't supporting open, online, and technology-enhanced learning at public institutions across the United States, he enjoys lending his creative skills to projects like this one.

Heather Salazar (cover artwork) is an artist and professor of philosophy. She specialises in figurative charcoals and monotypes, as well as vivid oil paintings of landscapes and objects of meditation. Salazar's art is deeply impacted by her philosophical research in metaethics, philosophy of mind and East-West comparative philosophy. Her art graces the covers of philosophy books such as *The Philosophy of Spirituality* (Brill, 2018) and *Introduction to Philosophy of Mind* (Rebus, 2019).

Contributors to the photograph in the introduction

Soretti Kadir is an Oromo storyteller, facilitator and activist. She has authored two books of poetry and released multimedia work independently and collaboratively. Soretti is concerned with matters of truth and justice, and she strives to reflect this in her work.

Tamara Leacock is a designer and stylist who works with recycled materials, artisan techniques, and Afro-futurist aesthetics. As a designer, she integrates natural and recycled materials into shapes that are androgynous, often free size, and a fluid exploration of natural colour and mood. Originally from Lenapehoking (New York), Tamara has since relocated to Narrm (Melbourne) to launch her label in connection with the lands she now calls home.

David Pattinson is a self-taught photographer working mainly in portraiture and fashion. He is known for his work produced as part of the Art Comes First collective.

Many more

We would also like to acknowledge **the many philosophy students, faculty and researchers** who have contributed to the project by providing comments along the way, such as discussions on the Rebus Community platform when we were originally envisioning the series and what topics should be included, as well as giving feedback on drafts of chapter

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Peer reviewers:

Geoff Boucher, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia.

Gene Flenady, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

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1.0	December 30, 2021	Original	
1.1	January 31, 2022	Added an acknowledgement at the end of Chapter 5	Chapter 5, PDF p. 90