International Association for Aesthetics
Association Internationale d’Esthétique

Editor: Wang Keping

Diversity and Universality in Aesthetics

International Yearbook Of Aesthetics

Volume 14
2010
Diversity and Universality in Aesthetics

International Yearbook Of Aesthetics

Volume 14
2010
Acknowledgements

Sponsors for this publication include Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, and Institute for Transcultural Studies of Beijing International Studies University. Special thanks go to Dr. Liu Jian for her helpful translation of a paper from Chinese into English, to Miss Lindsey Wang for her proof-reading of the whole volume, and to Dr. Zuo Yurong for her timely assistance to fix the layout required.

© The authors and the International Association for Aesthetics

Beijing Municipal Commission of Education
Beijing International Studies University

Editor: Wang Keping

Institute for Transcultural Studies
Beijing International Studies University
100024 Beijing, People’s Republic of China

Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
100732 Beijing, People’s Republic of China
Email: wkp550519@yahoo.com

ISSN 1402-2842
INTERNATIONAL YEARBOOK OF AESTHETICS

Contents .Volume 14, 2010

Foreword ................................................................................................................1

Section I: Aesthetics and Beauty

Of Human Nature and Aesthetic Metaphysics.............4

Li Zehou

An Ounce of Prophecy .........................................................15

Joseph Margolis

Aesthetics: Retreat, Advance and Fragmentation ...40

Peter Lamarque

Edification and the Experience of Beauty...............62

David E. Cooper

Section II: Somaesthetics and Aesthetic Perception

Somaesthetics and the Utopian Body .................82

Richard Shusterman

The World Is My Body: Ecology and Aesthetic Perception........................................95

Jale Erzen

Section III: Tradition and Intercultural Aesthetics

Man and His Relations with Society and Art: A Case Study of On Music.........................106

Gao Jianping

Nishida on the Beautiful and the Good.................120

Robert Wilkinson

The Corporeity of Self-awakening and the Interculturality of Cultural Self-awakening: Motomori
Kimura’s Philosophy of Expression .......................142

Tanehisa Otabe

Section IV: Public Art and Avant-garde

Toward an Understanding of Sculpture as Public Art.................................................................161

Curtis L. Carter

A Geography of Dispersion: Central Europe and the Symbolic Spaces of the Avant-Garde...............180

Tyrus Miller

Section V: Artistic Creation and Imitation

At Point Zero of Creation.................................................200

Wolfgang Welsch

The Platonic Mimesis and the Chinese Moxie ........214

Wang Keping

Notes on Contributors ..................................................234
Foreword

At the 2007 Ankara congress of the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA), the Executive Committee agreed to hold the 2010 IAA World Congress in Beijing on the theme of “Aesthetics in Diversity” from an intercultural perspective, and meanwhile appointed me as the editor for the 2010 International Yearbook of Aesthetics. I am aware of the general concern with the scientific and dialogue-based approach to aesthetic studies today with regard to its specific and universal dimensions and features altogether. Hence the theme of this volume is accordingly proposed to be “Diversity and Universality in Aesthetics.”

As has been discerned from antiquity to the present, East-West philosophers have developed a variety of theoretical hypotheses concerning aesthetic values, aesthetic categories, and art creation, among others. Most of them tend to explore and offer universal paradigms even though they are apt to verify certain specifics at large. However, their work turns out to be fruitful to the extent that it travels from one culture to another, stimulating a great deal of reconsideration under diverse conditions, and thus conducive to intercultural communication especially in the current context of globalization and glocalization. As a consequence, the twain of the East and the West openly meet and interact in between here and there in spite of the fact that each holds up to its identity in its fundamental aspects. Yet, this does not hinder any truth-seeking efforts to ponder over the significance of and the gap between the diversity and the university in aesthetics that is often conceived as an inter-discipline or intercultural discipline in some domains.

This volume attempts to probe into the interaction and interrelationship between particulars and universals in aesthetics by providing a dialogue-oriented discussion on philosophical grounds, aesthetic tastes, modern art, artistic creation, intercultural explorations, eco-environmental concerns, some new trends and the like. In order to facilitate the reading with varied interests, the papers included are
divided into such five sections as (1) Aesthetics and Beauty, (2) Somaesthetics and Aesthetic Perception, (3) Tradition and Intercultural Aesthetics, (4) Public Art and Avant-garde, and (5) Artistic Creation and Imitation. As is mentioned in the Call for Papers circulated among the contributors, the Chinese translation of the whole volume is to be arranged and tackled later. For I firmly believe that the publication of the Chinese version will benefit more readers who are keenly interested in the current issues and new trends of aesthetic research and art criticism the world over.
Section I

Aesthetics and Beauty
Aesthetic Experience and Human Nature

The concept of human nature has been so widely and ambiguously used in China and abroad, and from antiquity to the present. Sometimes it refers to man’s animal nature or sensuous desire as is implied in the accusation of asceticism for its inclination to “strangle humanity;” sometimes it refers to man’s social nature or rational character as is denoted in the condemnation of carnalism for its “beastlike behavior.” As I have claimed in my previous writings, to put it simple, human nature is neither divine nature (since man has physical needs to maintain physical existence), nor animal nature (since man has the capability to control physical needs). Instead, it is the interwoven synthesis of the two aspects aforementioned. The reason why the concept of human nature remains ambiguous lies in the fact that the two aspects in the synthesis are too complicated to be clearly distinguished from one another.

As I have mentioned in my essay “Emotional Substance, Two Kinds of Morality, and How to Live,” what underlines human nature is human capacity that mainly refers to the moral psychology distinguishing human race from animal species. This capacity is comprised at least of three elements, namely, the “rational coacervation (lixing ningju)” in terms of man’s moral psychology and will power (free will), the “rational internalization” (lixing neihua) in view of man’s rational

---

1 This note was drafted out at Sanya Yintai Resort Intime Hotel on December 7, 2006, with the ocean waves beating against the shore outside the window.
cognitive faculty for logic, mathematics, dialectic concepts, and aesthetic capacity characterized by “rational infusion (lixing ronghua) in accordance with my previous exposition of “aesthetic sedimentation (shenmei jidian) in a narrow sense”. All these three elements constitute only a kind of psychological formation, which cannot be separated from “material substance” (Aristotle) or “content” (Hegel). “Material substance” or “content” is provided by social times, and it changes and develops accordingly. In contrast, “form” is gradually accumulated and developed, accompanying a long process in human history. Therefore, form does not appear first and “human nature” is not given by God or divinity, which differentiated historical ontology from transcendentalism and formalism in general.

I have often asserted that in cognition (rational internalization) and morality (rational coacervation), reason plays a dominant role whereas physical desires are suppressed or controlled. With respect to “rational infusion” in aesthetic appreciation, reason is not dominant while sensation and individuality are prominent and distinctive. The relationship between the rational part and its sensuous counterpart and their respective state of being in aesthetic appreciation are more complicated and diversified, endowing aesthetic capacity with unique openness and possibilities in the formation and development of human nature. Even though each individual is checked by the same reason (internalization and coacervation), he has his own human capacity (cognitive and moral capacity) due to different kinds of innate gift, upbringing habit and educational impact. For instance, people usually make different decisions in the same situation, have different opinions on the same issue, and understand things differently on the similar occasion. Hence there arises the distinction between the wise and the foolish, the good and the evil, in spite that this distinction is reconfirmed by virtue of rational norms and standards.

In contrast, aesthetic experience is the other way round. In this scope reason does not control but mingles with sensation, and the possible rational norms are not to be observed. Likewise, aesthetic pleasure

---

2 Cf. Li Zehou, Pipan zhexue de pipan (The Critique of Critical Philosophy, Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2007); Shiyong lixing and legan wenhua (Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Optimism, Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2007).
differs from physical pleasure felt at a time when basic needs are met. Meanwhile, aesthetic pleasure also differs from pure rational pleasure (such as the intellectual pleasure in the pursuit of knowledge and scientific discovery, the spiritual satisfaction in the fulfillment of obligations and morality). On one hand, aesthetic activity is associated with such basic sensuous powers as those involved in sexuality, unconsciousness and violence (e.g. Nietzsche’s so-called destructive pleasure, and the sadistic or masochistic pleasure). I assume the human genetic research will help us attain more insights into the animal aspect of human nature. On the other hand, aesthetic feeling can be a kind of super-sensuous psychological state, including such mysterious experiences as those of divine revelation and of heaven-human oneness. All this is to be further explored and deciphered by future science.

The aesthetic dimension of human capacity is pointed out by Kant a long time ago. But it is often misunderstood or mistreated, just as it is reflected, for instance, in the objection to Kant’s theory of disinterestedness in contemporary aesthetics.

In a broad sense, almost all the activities and mental states of human race are generally pointed, helpful, beneficial and conducive to the satisfaction of the basic needs for human existence. Hence they are interested or utilitarian. It is even the same with the functions of human unconsciousness and dreaming, among others. Of course, aesthetic experience is no exception. But in a narrow sense, there are two non-utilitarian and non-causal modes of human behavior and mentality. The first mode transcends the individual (the small self) interest, namely, the ethical behavior and the mental state. This mode is still controlled by reason and contains concept, purpose and certain big interests (such as sacrificing one’s life to God, national or group interests). The other mode of human behavior and psychology is aesthetic by nature, excluding concept, purpose and the big interests alike. The concept of “disinterestedness” in the Kantian aesthetics describes this psychological aspect, and it is also inseparable with the notions of “conceptlessness” and “purposelessness.” This aesthetic mode makes up the unique “common sense” as a special kind of human capacity. This could be regarded as the highest achievement of human nature.
The reason why we call it the highest achievement is not merely because it goes beyond the individual interests, but also because it transcends the self-sacrificing moral purpose for others or God. It is a kind of “purposiveness without purpose,” which aims at the all-round human development or human fulfillment, and involves what I call “illuminating truth through beauty (yi mei qi zhen),” “accumulating goodness through beauty (yi mei chu shan),” and “making life worth living through beauty (yi mei li ming).”

By “illuminating truth through beauty” is meant to make the most of aesthetic feeling of free imagination in the “aesthetic double helix” that may lead to the discoveries and inventions in science and technology. By “accumulating goodness through beauty” is meant to draw from aesthetic feeling the belief in emotional substance and inspiration to pursue thing-in-itself. By “making life worth living through beauty” is meant to free oneself from any concern about life and death in order to live one’s live without care and fear. All this is exposed in my writings like Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Optimism, and so on. Thereby I would like to propose aesthetics to be “the first philosophy,” because aesthetic capacity is both the bud and the fruit of human capacity, and the most open part of human nature such that it can be neither defined by any definite concept nor controlled by any rational purpose. Moreover, it involves various psychological factors that interact, intertwine, interpenetrate and conflict with each other, thus making aesthetic capacity uncertain and non-standardized. For all these reasons, it can open up many possibilities, so to speak.

In sum, human capacity under discussion is a formal structure. I assume future progress in brain science will provide a most intelligible answer. For example, the physiological basis of the rational coacervation might be the establishment of certain special channel between the cognition-thinking area to emotion-will area in the central nervous system (CNS), formed in the long process of praxis (human) and education (individual). This is what I call “the cultural-psychological formation” or “sedimentational form of human capacity.” “Rational internalization” and “rational infusion” are similar to certain extent. The nerve channel for aesthetic feeling is more fundamental, and can be developed in a more complicated and open form. This is the philosophical perspective of the transcendental
psychology in its pre-scientific form or the viewpoint of historical ontology. The historical ontology and practical aesthetics hold that all those come from human culture instead of God, and argue that the establishment of this psychological formation is crucial to human as human. This being the case, they can provide a profound theoretical basis for educational science. To my mind, this can be seen as the core issue of human nature.

**Aesthetic Metaphysics**

Aesthetic experience is related to sensuous and animal desires. For this reason, pleasures drawn from music and sex have become prevailing in pop culture today. However, aesthetic experience attempts to go beyond such desires, and strives for “transcendence” in a pure spiritual scope. It is therefore differentiated from mere entertainment and decoration, and intended to pursue a super-biological state and life realm. However, it is not “pure” in the sense that man cannot abandon the physical body, just like what ascetic monks did in the Middle Ages. On the contrary, man can only pursue transcendence within the physical body. This could be perceived in the mysterious experience of “heaven-human oneness”, which results from the correspondence between the body-mind cultivation and nature-cosmos rhythm in the “naturalization of human”. This is what I call “emotional substance.”

“Emotion” is related to “love.” The Christian doctrine concerns with two kinds of love: *eros* as love of the body, and *agape* as love of the soul. As I have mentioned in my book *Historical Ontology*, the fourth period of Confucianism appears to centers upon the theory of bodily love; actually it involves these two kinds of love as they are intertwined in a complicate and interactive manner therein. So it is simply because there is no hypothesis of the other world in Confucianism.

Because of the strong animal-like instinct, man always wants to live on (man still maintains a number of animal-like instincts including those for survival, eating, sleeping, and sex); yet, he is to die for certain and he is self-conscious of it. With regard to the former, man has all kinds
of activities and mentalities to sustain his existence; With respect to the latter, man has various kinds of self-deceptive beliefs, hopes, conversions and subordination. It is not easy for him “to live on” because there is nothing to rely upon. Therefore, he worries about life and fears for death. “If he pursues spiritual transcendence, it is Christianity; if he thinks it better not to live on, it is Buddhism; if he takes things as they come to exist with deep affection, it is Confucianism.”

Life is often conceived as difficult and meaningless. In this sense it is better not to live. Nevertheless, one is born into this world and finds it not easy to commit suicide. Even though he realizes that “everything in this world is void; all is vanity and emptiness,” he has to live on. Then what shall be done in this case? The Chinese thinkers already made efforts in pursuing the traditional ways of life that range from Zhuangzi’s dream of the butterfly, Hui Neng’s notion of “living a good life by carrying water and chopping wood”, Ma Zu’s belief that “every day is a good day”, to the Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism’s conception of “living naturally and affectively with all things without being entangled within emotion.” There is no transcendental conversion that separates the spirit from the flesh. However, there is aesthetic transcendence in this world. This involves “being-in-time” and “timeness.” “Being-in-time” is the objective time in possession of space, that is, the specific time, date, month and year in terms of social objectivity. Life and death are related to the possession of the body that occupies space and time in a concrete sense. “Timeness” is associated with the subjective time in light of Dasein (Heidegger). The so-called “immortality” (eternity) is the spiritual home for this subjective time without possession of space. It seems that only when one experiences “nothingness” (no meaning, no cause and effect, no utility) but still exists, he possesses “timeness.” What Heidegger says about care and fear is being-in-time with possession of space. For this reason he brings forth the idea of being-toward-death.

According to the traditional Chinese thoughts, one is still alive while sitting in self-forgetfulness for spiritual freedom or doing meditation for Zen enlightenment. Either of the activity seems to be delusion-like if one still clings to the belief in “void”, “nothingness” or “being-toward-death.” Heidegger’s critique of such ideas as reflecting on existence, with respect of the existent and making existence existentialized, seems to feature some Chinese characteristics. In a word, his philosophizing never breaks away from the key pivot or fundamental basis of “human living.” Therefore, the idea of attaching importance to life and taking death easy is similar to that of speaking of existence with respect of the existent, but different from Heidegger’s ideas of speaking of existence without mentioning the existent, and of striving for life while worrying about death. No matter whether it is in the West or in China that “being” (that means in Chinese “change”, “flux” or “becoming”) comes before “nothingness” and stays more original. “Nothingness” is created by man, that is, man realizes other’s “nothingness” through his own “nothingness.” As a result, “being” is “nothingness.” Only by virtue of transformation can “being” be created out of “nothingness.” Only when one realizes that “care” and “fear” are all void can he enjoy a poetic form of existence. Under such circumstances, one finds that “Every day is a good day,” and accordingly, “He finds it pleasant to live along with all things that are varied from one another.”

The Chinese tradition emphasizes both the emptiness and hardship of human life. The intertwining of the two aspects makes up the tragic sense of human life in terms of “void but real.” Without the protection of God or gods, man can aesthetically reach the “natural state of being,” in which the existent meets his being, and leads a bleak, sentimental and tough life. In Lu Xun’s prose The Passing Traveler, the traveler staggers on an endless and hopeless path beset with difficulties. Though he knows it is hopeless and impossible, he keeps trying resolutely; though he knows life is void, he keeps heading forward courageously. The significance of life lies in the process (flux) of living a life itself. Here it is oriented toward becoming rather than being; it is action (activities, acts, practice) instead of language; it

---

4 Li Zehou, Shi yong lixing yu le gan wenhua (Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Optimism, Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2005).
signifies the fact that “Heaven does not speak” rather than “In the beginning was the Word.” This is the Dao in the Chinese heritage. Accordingly, all kinds of circumstances and feelings will emerge in the process of becoming that is sustained by the “emotional substance” itself. It does not have any rigid and fixed type of noumenon, and it is neither moral metaphysics nor cosmic metaphysics that focuses on God, soul, reason, energy (qi), mind or nature.

Augustine says in The Confessions that the present has no extension or length. Heidegger argues that the limitation of Dasein (being-there) is the hidden evidence for historicity. The poetic statement that “The flower that bloomed yesterday withers today” is the historical account of “being-in-time.” In contrast, the statement that “The flower that withers today bloomed yesterday” is the historical sentiment of “timeness.” Man feels sad about the reflection on “being-in-time” as it leads to the aesthetic transcendence of the short and limited life.

As is indicated in The Confucian Analects, “Once when the Master was standing by a stream, he said, Could one but go on and on like this, never ceasing day or night!” Confucius’ great sentiment is directed to the aesthetic transcendence of the short life span, and to the “emotional substance” of “timeness,” because the latter gives man much more strength to live on.

Therefore, the basic category of “emotional substance” features “cherishment.” Nowadays the sensual pleasures and spiritual loneliness underlie the individual contingency and uniqueness of “being-in-time,” and become the normal state of modern life in a general sense. In the trend of homogenization stemmed from commercialism, and in all kinds of homogenized pleasure, confusion, loneliness, isolation and anxiety, the way how one grasps his own unhomogenized timeliness is neither to look into the future nor to enjoy the present. What one can do is to “cherish” peoples, changes, events, occasions and incidents being in time, and to make them into “Dasein” of “timeness.” If one wants to grasp the infinity and reality in his limited span of life equated to his incidental and finite physical existence, “cherishment” becomes

---

a necessary and sufficient condition. Instead of seeking the homogenized mind, nature, reason and energy (qi), “emotional substance” only admits all occasional things and events in this short span of life per se, because man “cherishes” the short and contingent life, events and everything related. Thus man has the poetic form or poetic sense of existence. Therefore, every individual is only a passing traveler “in time,” and he can only find the eternity or immortality of “timeness” in the “emotional substance” of “cherishment.”

As has been observed from the male-female integrative cultivation to the Truth on the Cross, from the poetical elegies and the Nineteen Ancient Poems of the Han Dynasty to “the family love and happiness”, from the deep affection for life in the classical poetry of the Tang Dynasty to the understanding of life in the ci poetry of the Song Dynasty, from Su Shi (one of the major poets of the Song Dynasty) to The Dream of Red Mansions in the Qing Dynasty, from today’s you, me and him (her) to the past, the present and the future, man can only find the wonder and glory in the cherishment of “timeness.” There is no transcendental existence, but “emotional substance” of “timeness” which create being out of nothingness in the life of void.

Therefore, it is clear that this being is not pure Spirit or ideal Form, but a state of mind related to the physical body. One does not need to get rid of the “imperfect” body in order to pursue the pure perfect spirit, since the “perfect” spirit is in the “imperfect” body after all. The “perfectness” without the body is only a self-deceptive illusion. This illusion is only a transient experience which cannot last long. Actually it is not at all the case “to retain the soul and abandon the body” with reference to Kang Youwei and Tan Sitong. The reason why Cai Yuanpei advocated aesthetic education to replace religion is not merely because aesthetic education does not oppose the search of such “perfect” experience full of religious spirit, but also because he clearly realized that “one’s true existence before one’s birth” is still a certain kind of psychological state which leagues the physical body with the unconscious cosmic rhythm. It is still the life realm connected with the physical body, and meanwhile, the aesthetic transcendence associated with the state of mind.
Hence the object of worship confirmed by anthropological ontology is not pure spirit or spiritual God, but the whole universe. Although it does not have blood and flesh like the human body, it is still the matter. The existence and the laws of the universe are not known yet. They are the “thing in itself” which goes beyond anthropology, and remains somewhat mysterious. Just as Confucius says, “Heaven does not speak; yet the four seasons run their course thereby, the hundred creatures, each after its kind, are born thereby. Heaven does no speaking!” \[6\] Then, correspondingly in Zhuangzi’s words, “Nature evolves soundly, seasons alternate distinctly, and things develop readily: All this goes with no utterance.” Isn’t all this awe-inspiring and worth pursuing? If we took the Big Bang that occurred 15 billion years ago as the outset of the universe, wouldn’t it be more shocking and awesome than the Genesis of the Bible? Just like what God means to Christians, Being means to Heidegger, life means to Chinese people, “worshiping becomes a true aesthetic experience, an aesthetic experience that is one’s own, very similar in fact to the experience of viewing a sun setting behind an outline of trees on hills. For that man, religion is a final fact of consciousness, for it will be an aesthetic experience very much akin to poetry.” \[7\] This is the highest realm of “naturalized human” depicted in the historical ontology: one not only embraces the life in this world, but also comes back to heaven and earth, from illuminating truth through beauty, via accumulating goodness through beauty, to making living worth living through beauty.

Man is self-awakening in his own way. He accepts his accidental and limited existence, and struggles to survive without blaming God or others. He tries to learn from the bottom and then moves up to the top. This statement metaphorically means to approach spiritual freedom through personal cultivation. The human will is not easy to retain strong for too long a time; therefore, religious gurus set up religious beliefs by virtue of the personal God, and lead the masses to convert. However, in postmodern times today, religious magic manipulated by gods are not easily workable. Therefore, the ideas about “what is man?” and “man as the end” will be finally realized in the human

---


creation of the full-fledged “aesthetic double helix,” in the “emotional substance” of “timeness”, and in the pursuit of aesthetic metaphysics.

Translated by Liu Jian
An Ounce of Prophecy

Joseph Margolis

I

“Modern” philosophy begins with Hegel’s correction and continuation of Kant, hence with Kant’s innovation “sublated” (as the Hegelian idiom has it)—superseded and reclaimed—as the same vision affirmed at a greater Olympian height. That is, it begins with grasping the radical import of Kant’s and Hegel’s linked achievements regarding the analysis of the conditions of knowledge.

It’s one and the same lesson cast as paradigm and prototype, mythically and operationally, divinely and mortally, in terms of rational invariance and historied flux. I can put the point even more extravagantly but I will resist the temptation: philosophy’s trajectory ever since the small interval that bridged the end of the 18th century and the opening of the 19th has been searching for the best and leanest strategies for answering Kant’s original question—the most promising prototypes, as I am calling them, of a finitely impossible objective (the paradigm or myth) that nevertheless defines the perceived provisional progress of all such inquiries. To see matters thus is already a guess at the right continuity between philosophy’s grand past and the nearer pasts by which we are drawn to commit ourselves to the narrative that regards these two perspectives as one and the same. We are complicit in the same continuum that was first quickened by Kant’s and Hegel’s original daring.

There is no other option of comparable power to be had, but there is also, then, no rule to guide us in what must seem the infinite blindness
of our finite gains. And yet, to my mind, that is already a confirmation of sorts of Hegel’s primacy over Kant, a sketch of the conjecture linking the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, a deliberately paradoxical sign of philosophy’s best future. I agree with Hegel’s guess at the paradigmatic myth of our entire age, though its extravagance is no longer needed in the working models of all the post-Hegelian prototypes: in Marx, in Nietzsche, in Dilthey, in Peirce and the pragmatists, in Cassirer and the Hegelianized Kantians, in Heidegger and the late hermeneuts, and in the more puzzling, anarchic voices of our own time.

Kant is a Janus-figure who remains, in some way, a pre-Kantian, because, unaccountably, in spite of his having decisively defeated classical rationalism’s claim to its relying on a privileged faculty, he reinstates reason’s powers in an entirely novel way, ensuring its grasp of the necessary *a priori* conditions of the (transcendental) “possibility” of knowledge—without actually coopting the direct cognitive powers either rationalism or empiricism affirms. That’s to say, Kant violates “only” the spirit of his immense contribution, not the letter. Since, however, on Kant’s view, this requires a constructivist reading of “objective” knowledge drawn entirely from “subjective” sources, and since, true to his own argument against figures like Leibniz and Wolff, *that* requires, on the empiricist side, that sensory data somehow acquired from external sources be “passively received,” Hegel finds Kant’s proposal utterly incoherent and preposterous.¹ Kant’s paradigm must collapse or yield—and thus it fails to ensure its own innovation.

Viewed this way, Hegel’s ingenuity proves to have found the key to an entirely novel way of recovering Kant’s constructivism—abandoning *any* hint of facultative privilege, dependence on noumenal concessions, disjunction between subjective and objective sources of whatever we admit to be the data on which to construct a reasonable picture of

---

human knowledge. Hegel disallows any Kantian science of science or, alternatively, any sense in claiming to discover, by Kantian or pre-Kantian cognizing means, first-order or second-order, the true meaning of our knowledge of the world. Kant’s answer was meant to stalemate skepticism; Hegel’s, to obviate the skeptical threat of Kant’s answer. The historical lesson is negative, therefore: any conjecture that avoids the transcendentalist excesses of Kant’s first Critique, but concedes the “paradigmatic” import of Kant’s transcendental question is as reliable a constraint on philosophy’s future as any we may be able to advance. But the knowledge that we gain thereby is a construction rather than a discovery—or, discovery is itself a construction.

This is familiar ground. Yet recovering it this way obscures the full significance of Hegel’s philosophical strategy, which risks being misperceived (even where it is not actually betrayed) either by Hegel’s extravagant formulations or by the opportunism of the entire post-Hegelian cohort. Hegel’s constructivism regarding truth and knowledge and actuality is not, in any sense at all, a cognitive achievement of the Kantian or pre-Kantian sort: there is no convincing way to claim to discover, in anything like Kant’s verständlich sense, the right definition of the enabling concepts of our cognitive faculties, or the right criteria for their objective application, in confirming the true validity of what our inquiries yield. And yet, we cannot function without our sciences or a reasonable conception of what a science is—entitling us to claim to have achieved a palpable body of finite objective knowledge. Whatever Hegel’s prejudices regarding Reason (Vernunft) may be, Vernunft is not a cognitive faculty the exercise of which confers a passing validity on any of our beliefs or judgments.

And yet, knowing in the human way is (according to Hegel) the progressive work of thinking (Nachdenken) applied to what is “[given] in sensation, intuition, or representation”:

When we think about something, [Hegel says,] what results is a product of our thinking….At first glance…this seems to stand things on their heads, and to run counter to the proper purpose of cognition. But we can say…that what is substantial is only reached through the reworking of the immediate by our thinking about it….Because it is equally the case that in this thinking-over [Nachdenken] the genuine nature [of the
object] comes to light, and that this thinking is my activity, this true nature is also the product of my spirit [of me] as thinking subject.²

Hegel’s solution is remarkably spare, ingenious, soft-spoken, and unanswerable! It involves three elements. First of all, if, with Hegel, we abandon all forms of cognitive privilege—both with regard to what is “given” in any way phenomenologically and with regard to any vernunftig construction involving such data—what counts as knowledge is itself a reflexive construction rather than a discovery; second, what we should regard as the most compelling achievement of what we call knowledge cannot but be a construction of Vernunft itself, since there is no seat of cognitive judgment left to draw on, apart from a reflexive and consensual appeal to what recommends itself to our powers of reason however self-questioning those must be; and, third, if the central core of what we regard as the body of knowledge (the sciences, say) must favor the forms of generality inherent in language, as in predicative terms and affirmed propositions, then the model of what we treat as knowledge must join whatever we can achieve through our finite resources and what we may conjecture is the most reasonable projection of any such achievement for the finitely inaccessible infinite extension of our inquiries. These will be vouchsafed by Vernunft’s imagination and interpretive powers applied to our contingent and evolving experience and tested by the same fit: hence, holistically.

All this imposes conditions on what we may reasonably posit as essential to science, so that we are led to see that we actually construct what we call knowledge from our inherent interpretive powers (Vernunft) applied reflexively to whatever is given phenomenologically in perception and experience without any assurance of their disclosing the way the world is. We will have abandoned the presumptive cognizing resources of Kant and the pre-Kantians and will have

nothing to rely on save our rational imagination applied to what is “given” in experience. Hence, if we agree that we avoid arbitrariness by conceding that all the ephemera of phenomenological experience bear on the construction we need, and if Vernunft is inherently constrained by the sheer finitude of what is “given” at any moment of experience and by what reason finds promising in the way of the seeming general structures of the world, then there is no way to fail utterly and there is no way to succeed finally! That is the mythic theme spanning the Phenomenology and the Encyclopaedia Logic; it also exposes Hegel’s lack of a strong model or prototype of his own regarding the principal physical sciences. But that explains the sense in which figures like Peirce, Cassirer, and Kuhn capture something of the nerve of Hegel’s vision in an improved way that the post-Hegelian world has come to need.

What may have seemed like falsity to the cognitive pretensions of Verstand in the Kantian sense is no more than a contingent limitation that can be reinterpreted in a larger or altered context of experience. On that reading, it no longer makes sense to say that our picture of the world is wrong: there is nothing to compare it with. This is the reason Hegel provides a vernunftig reading in which the “true” and the “false” are no longer construed disjunctively.

The structure of this line of thinking is the structure of Hegel’s dialectical logic. It is not a formal logic, of course; it is no more than a heuristically postulated regulative thread of what we may now call the “material reasoning” of the entire process of inquiry that features the endless and unpredictable extension of fresh phenomenological experience and fresh vernunftig reflections within finite episodes. Furthermore, if you allow the argument, then there will no longer be any canonical distinction between realism and idealism: no ground on which to choose disjunctively between the one and the other. Here, the argument that Hegel effectively advances holds true for all those philosophers who may be described as Hegelianized Kantians. It is not that we may choose indifferently between realism and idealism: it is closer to the truth to say there is no longer any such choice to be made; “each” apparent option supports a complex commitment to a higher conjecture in which its own affirmation implicates something of the other within that same choice.
But if this is a fair summary of Hegel’s master stroke, you may agree with me that, as matters now stand, the slimmest and most salient “strong” adaptations of Hegel’s contribution to modern philosophy appear in a surprisingly well-formed way in Charles Peirce’s “fallibilism” (spread over Peirce’s entire career) and Ernst Cassirer’s neo-Kantian “philosophy of symbolic forms,” which are remarkably convergent despite their different histories. In any event, I venture to say that the main theme of the near-future of Western philosophy will appear in one or another form of a “Hegelianized Kantianism” of the sort I claim to find (paradigmatically) in Hegel, that can be traced (prototypically) in Peirce and Cassirer and, by an even more generous reading, in T. S. Kuhn. The plan is entirely plain: I collect a yard of history and hope to extract an ounce of prophecy.

I am speaking of what I regard as the diverse prototypes of an evolving paradigm. The paradigm is an open-ended conception (beginning, roughly, with Hegel) of how the best modern philosophy should be pursued. It has been dawningly defined, I say, by isolating the thread of thinking that leads from Hegel’s critique of Kant down to various Hegelianized transformations of the Kantian question and method of answering—along the lines I have just been sketching. Fortunately, it is unfinished, incompletely grasped, impossible to grasp completely (on

---

3. For the briefest summary of my reading of Peirce’s fallibilism, see my “Rethinking Peirce’s Fallibilism,” Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, XLIII (2007). Cassirer sketches his own position in a remarkably congruent way in Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, vol. 3, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), Pt. III. I touch very lightly on the theme of this important convergence in my Pragmatism’s Advantage: American and European Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), Epilogue. I include there (and even feature) Thomas Kuhn’s implicit convergence in the same spirit, though, of course, Kuhn has a much more limited project than either Peirce or Cassirer and though he has very little to say about either Kant or Hegel. Still, I think he has caught the nerve of the Hegelian “correction” of Kant, which in a way he traces through logical positivism.

Hegel’s terms), and tested dialectically through one or another attractive prototype. The prototypes are determinate applications of the Hegelian critique: I personally favor the preeminence of Peirce and Cassirer along these lines and, by association with their large innovations, the cognate work of the post-Hegelians already mentioned, of other pragmatists and near-pragmatists within the American movement (Dewey more pointedly than James, C. I. Lewis on the pragmatic a priori, Josiah Royce perhaps in dialogue with Peirce), the more problematic inquiries of others influenced by the Marburg Kantians (the logical positivists’ empirical critique of Kant’s transcendental claims, Georg Lukács’ Hegelianized Marxism, the Frankfurt-Critical school’s pragmatized reading of the historicity of thought, and, even more promisingly in our own time, the work of such deviant Hegelian innovators as T. S. Kuhn, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Richard Rorty—also, then, of the entire cadre of third-wave pragmatists practicing around the world whose work signals that pragmatism has outstripped its American provenance and is moving toward a larger rapprochement among the principal movements of our day.  

Perhaps I have contrived, too artfully by half, to transform an overview of Hegel’s correction of Kant into a prophecy about pragmatism’s future and the future of Eurocentric philosophy. But the transformation being sketched is entirely a matter of philosophical invention, a guess at the best uses of the philosophical energies of our time. If you grasp the link between Hegel’s Phenomenology and the Encyclopaedia Logic, you grasp the simplicity of Hegel’s insight, perhaps too playfully or perversely obscured in some dark imitation of Kant’s more than doubtful transcendental discoveries.

May I put Hegel’s lesson this way? If you begin with Kant’s transcendental questions, then, revising them along the lines already indicated, you will still need some sort of rational myth to convey the sense in which—in the middle of an inquiry about the nature of knowledge, truth, and actuality—whatever you conjecture to be the “phenomenological” beginning (the “givens”) of inquiry and whatever you conjecture to be the final adequacy of our philosophical

---

5 This is, indeed, the theme of the third of a trio of books I planned on the history and future of pragmatism: Pragmatism’s Advantage, mentioned above.
construction of what is true about such concepts in their regulative role will always be contingent artifacts of reflexive reason (*Vernunft*) guessing at the infinite completion of a task that must forever escape (not in conception but in actual inquiry) being brought to a proper, finite close.

In this sense, “truth” and “falsity” have a distinctive philosophical use that interprets the deeper insufficiency of whatever appears, *disjunctively*, as true and false in the propositional sense, within the space of the sciences themselves. “Why bother with the false?” Hegel asks rhetorically. The *Phenomenology*’s answer is simplicity itself: “The disparity which exists in consciousness between the ‘I’ and the substance which is its object is [Hegel ventures] the distinction between them, the *negative* in general.” But, Hegel continues:

although this negative appears at first as a disparity between the “I” and its object, it is just as much the disparity of the substance with itself. Thus what seems to happen outside of it, to be an activity directed against it, is really its own doing, and Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject. When it has shown this completely, Spirit has made its existence identical with its essence; it has itself for its object just as it is, and the abstract element of immediacy, and of the separation of knowing and truth, is overcome. Being is then absolutely mediated; it is a substantial content which is just as immediately the property of the “I,” it is self-like or the Notion. With this, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is concluded. What Spirit prepares for itself in it, is the element of [true] knowing. In this element the moments of Spirit now spread themselves out in that *form of simplicity* which knows its object as its own self.\(^6\)

Now this, I say, is a philosophical myth—regulatively useful but not to be take literally—because it rejects any possible sources of certainty, treats whatever is “given” or elaborated in the *vernunftig* way as a

---

construction rather than a cognition, construes whatever (in the mythic sense) it finally affirms will thereby supersede the bivalent disjunction between the true and the false and will treat the false as dialectically ingredient in the final Truth Hegel postulates — hence, also, because that final objective will be acknowledged to fall completely beyond all finite inquiry, though in a way that defines that inquiry’s essential telos.  

Here, the simplicity and brilliance of Hegel’s maneuver may elude you. First of all, he’s exhausted all the sources and reasons for supposing there is any ground for cognitive security either at the phenomenological start of human experience and perception (the “given”) or at any merely verständlich reading of the apparent powers of rationally structured cognitive faculties: he’s outflanked the whole of Western philosophy in outflanking Kant. And, second, he’s done this in such a transparent way that it is now impossible to go wrong philosophically: all the corrective instructions are elaborated from the negative or “destructive” import of the need to avoid the indefensible assumptions of Kant’s master maneuver. Whatever is provisionally reconstructed as cognitively plausible is finally convincing only to Vernunft’s finite speculation about its own infinite outcome: there is the point! It disallows the free-standing adequacy of finite inquiry; it catches up the sense in which the true is false and the false is true in the amplitude of its governing myth; and it renders meaningless any disjunction between the real and the ideal, without refusing the constructivist use of either notion.

The power of Hegel’s correction depends entirely on our admitting that philosophy and its history have come to an ineluctable crisis in the discovery of the untenability of Kant’s best work. In that sense, as I read Hegel, my transforming an overview of the span between Kant and Hegel into a prophecy about the future of pragmatism and Eurocentric philosophy is little more than a tautology, though not for that reason unimportant. It is what may be drawn from that that is more interesting: for instance, the remarkable fit between the independent philosophical programs advanced by Peirce and Cassirer—and, as I say, 

7. “The true,” Hegel declares, “is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk,” Phenomenology of Spirit, §47.
what may be more inventively applied to Kuhn as well. If that could be shown convincingly, we would have constructed a rational continuum from Kant and Hegel to our own day and, plausibly, therefore, a line of reasoning that, as part of our paradigm, isolates the inseparability of analyzing knowledge and actuality from the very beginning of Western philosophy down to our own time, that finds its infinite future implicated in the ongoing limitations of finite inquiry:

From this point of view, [Hegel advises] the [subjective] moments of the Concept cannot be separated; the determinations of reflection are *supposed* to be grasped and to be valid each on its own, separately from the one opposed to it; but since in the Concept their identity is *posited*, each of its moments can only be grasped immediately on the basis of and together with the others.⁸

There is no way to read this but as confirming the *posit* of the seeming series of totalities of all the ephemera of experience, raised up by our *vernunftig* reflections, as signifying the unity and identity of the subjective and the objective—within the executive powers of human thought. This already confirms that Hegel’s entire ideal system (his myth, so to say) is itself a construction of finite reason. That, I take it, is the connective link between Hegel and Peirce, Cassirer, and Kuhn—*and*, accordingly, my conjectured site of the best future of Eurocentric philosophy.

This, then, is the meaning of Hegel’s terse advice: “We ought to recognize here [reflecting on the meaning of ‘aufheben,’ which Hegel singles out] the speculative spirit of our language, which transcends the ‘either-or’ of mere understanding [*Verstand*].”⁹ Hegel intends the double identity of the ideal, so-called “absolute” identity of subject and object (or thought and being), *and* the approximative, conjectured, provisional identities posited by finite inquiry—in effect, the self-identity of what Hegel calls God and the progressively affirmed identity of the

---

⁸ Hegel, The Encyclopaedia Logic, §164.
⁹ Hegel, The Encyclopaedia Logic, §96.
cognizing “I” and its “object” (the actual world) within the terms of Hegel’s myth.¹⁰

So much, then, for the excesses of right-wing Hegelianism. One cannot really grasp the centrality of the *Phenomenology* and its anticipation of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* without realizing how, though Hegel is certainly not a pragmatist, Peirce and Dewey were certainly Hegelians (or Hegelianized Kantians) committed to exorcising whatever is misleading in Hegel’s ingenious myth. But the point of the myth is to feature the endless flux of inquiry, the provisionality (and stability) of all that is reasonably taken to mark the general features of the actual world (including our best conjectures about its laws), the constructive (or constuctivist) nature of any of our “pictures” of the world (Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s shared term for what I am calling the prototypes of our philosophical paradigm), and the unavoidability of the infinite openness of inquiry itself. These are the essential marks of the remarkable convergence we find in the work of Peirce and Cassirer. I see no better directive on the philosophical horizon. But saying so invites a closer look.

Ⅱ

Hegel is too extravagant for our philosophical taste, but he is also tantalizingly sensible on essentials. If we yield, with Peirce and Cassirer, as “Hegelianized Kantians,” against the problematic strategies of “stubborn” transcendentalists like Karl-Otto Apel or “closet” transcendentalists like Jürgen Habermas,¹¹ our task will feature, one way or another, the attenuation of Hegel’s myth of the identity of the subjective and the objective or of thought and being or of the affirmation of the infinite totalizing of “absolute knowing”: we must transform Hegel’s abstract formulas into open experiments with whatever finitely provisional strategies of inquiry prove *empirically* promising to our own eyes; we must improvise whatever regulative

---

¹⁰. See, for instance, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, §36.
¹¹. See Margolis, *Pragmatism’s Advantage*, Ch. 4, for a survey of Apel’s and Habermas’s treatment of transcendentalism.
proposals we can for however long a season they may be cognitively productive and pragmatically supported.

I take Hegel’s rhetoric to be a profoundly humane joke, to give us courage in the face of the loss of false Kantian as well as false pre-Kantian certainties. I take Peirce’s well-known definition of fallibilism to be an attenuated version of the same joke, however originally hit upon but turned now in the direction of articulating the completely finitist task before us; I find Cassirer committed to much the same effort—in fact, like Peirce himself, primarily attentive to what the history of the natural sciences can yield in the way of confirmable instruction. These yield what I am calling Peirce’s and Cassirer’s strategies (or prototypes) of work in the physical sciences, tethered (in both, so I claim) to Hegel’s paradigm.

For example, Hegel finally comes around, in the Encyclopaedia Logic to this splendid summary:

> The dialectic...is the *immanent* transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, that is, as their negation. That is what everything finite is: its own sublation.12

The whole of Hegel seems to be a preparation for this discovery, cast in two sentences, centered on general discoveries that can survive or can contribute to discoveries that can survive the test of time and history. Peirce and Cassirer (and, I would add, Kuhn) cannot quite abandon altogether their own attraction to the Kantian original, though they have no need for Hegel’s excessive absorption in the corrected myth: for instance, the Parmenidean flourish.13

Nevertheless, they noticeably flinch. Peirce is forever trying to transform abductive Hope into something closer to a logic of asymptotic confirmation of what will prove fruitful in the infinite long run; and Cassirer is much too willing to deny that he has subverted the

---

Kantian picture of the closed system of the transcendental categories in working out his "symbolic forms." I think this explains Peirce’s faulty insistence on a simpler realism than his "Hegelian" doctrine could possibly support. And what can you make of Cassirer’s tolerance of the obvious contradiction (if literally advanced) in the following pronouncements from the reconstructed fourth volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*:

The theoretical “world” [Cassirer is speaking of how he is remained true to the Kantian system of closed transcendental categories which he explicitly extends to the moral and aesthetic transcendentals] is essentially a unity, consisting in nothing other than the rule of a universal and strictly homogeneous regularity, in an *a priori* principle of strict necessity and generality….The course of the analysis of theoretical knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason* begins with “experience.” At the outset this is taken to be something immediately “given,” yet this analysis is never directed toward this given as such; rather, it is directed to the pure concept of experience as it is presented to us in rigorous natural science, in mathematical knowledge of nature….The essence of theoretical thought does not emerge in its preparatory and transitional stages, but only in its goal, in its completion and the perfection of its achievements. This end gives thinking its state of completion and makes it possible for us to know it. In it, its form becomes an *actus purus*; it attains its proper and true “reality.”

Pure Hegel masquerading as Kant!

But then, a bit later in the same context, Cassirer abandons his own rhetoric: “The life of *Geist* [he says] cannot represent itself except in forms of some kind, yet it can never put its totality into form and confine this totality to its limits.” You will find the same commitment in C. I. Lewis’s *Mind and the World Order*, formulated without any of the transcendentalist excrescences of Kant’s own formulation — more straightforwardly pragmatist in spirit, though equally respectful of
Kant and equally caught up in the need to interpret the Hegelian myth productively.\textsuperscript{14}

Of course! But Cassirer had already said, in the most explicit way, in the closing pages of volume 3 of the \textit{Philosophy of Symbolic Forms}:

Of course it is implicit in the character of this unity formation [he’s speaking of precisely the same Kantian unity he begins with in volume 4] that the objectivity toward which it progresses and aims can never be conclusively determined. Whereas the “thing” of naive intuition may appear as a fixed run of definite properties [he has in mind Kant’s naive treatment of Newton’s empiricism: the so-called “copy theory” of scientific explanation in which \textit{explananda} and \textit{explanantia} are cast as necessarily perceptual], the physical object by its very nature can be conceived only in the form of an “idea of limit.” [Cassirer is thinking here of Hertz’s view of his (Hertz’s) own conception of the innovative nature of physics.] For here it is not a matter of disclosing the ultimate, absolute elements of reality, in the contemplation of which thought may rest as it were, but of a never-ending process through which the relatively necessary takes the place of the relatively accidental and the relatively invariable that of the relatively variable.\textsuperscript{15}

In a word, the categories of nature cannot be completed at any moment in finite time and there is no approximative process to rely on in guessing beyond our finite data.

This catches up, very nicely indeed, the best themes in Hegel and Peirce. Though, for his part, Peirce fiddles in a compromising way with the would-be “phenomenological” categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. He says they are “universal categories,”


but they cannot be more than the posits of abductive Hope, since they are affirmed only phenomenologically: that’s to say, without presupposition. Also, although he holds that they are “invariably present” (in what is phenomenologically given), “a pure idea of any one [of them], absolutely distinct from the others, is [Peirce says] impossible; indeed, anything like a satisfactorily clear distinction of them [he continues] is a work of long and active mediation” (which raises questions about what precisely is meant by their being “invariably present” together). 16

Conjectures of these sorts expose Peirce’s profoundly uncertain oscillation between the realist and idealist formulations of his metaphysics. My own suggestion is not that Peirce (or Hegel) is a realist and an idealist by turns, but that each is committed to explicating one or another prototype picture of an underlying mythic paradigm that (under the circumstances given) cannot be directly tested. The relationship between knowledge and actuality, or thought and being, is no longer directly cognitive for either Hegel or Peirce—or for Cassirer for that matter: though we may be justified (cognitionally, let us say) in applying the rhetoric of our infinitist Hope to the outcome of finite inquiry.

Hegel’s and Peirce’s prototypes are needed pragmatically if they are needed at all; but they cannot be confirmed as true: they are, really, guesses at the infinite long run. To my mind, this suggests very forcefully that Hegel was right to imply that we cannot supersede Kant’s fundamental intuition about the new paradigm, even though we must dismiss Kant’s own apriorist prototype. 17 In fact, Peirce’s definitions of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness trade on both their separability and inseparability.


17. See my “Rethinking Peirce’s Fallibilism”; P. F. Strawson, The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason (London: Methuen, 1966); and Margolis, Pragmatism’s Advantage, Ch. 4.
Peirce specifically mentions Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (and, in other pertinent texts, the *Logic*). But if, as he says, “*Phenomenology* is that branch of science [that] seeks to make out…the kinds of elements that are invariably present in whatever is, in any sense, in mind”—in effect, whether in Hegel’s sense or his own—then the seeming claim that phenomenology *is* a science is itself a matter of abductive “suggestion”: both because phenomenology requires a conjecture about the infinite long run and because the categories’ being “invariably present” (together) depends on their being defined in a way that blocks the claim’s ever being testable by any familiar method of observable concomittance.

Furthermore, although Peirce seems to be following Hegel in treating phenomenology as presuppositionless, it’s hard to see how the categories themselves could possibly be completely presuppositionless—on either Hegel’s or Peirce’s view—since that would risk making the claim’s realist import questionbegging. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is in this respect, more forthright (and perhaps more consistent) than Peirce’s would-be improvement. Here, Peirce seems to conflate the merely heuristic formalism of his favoring “trichotomy” as an uninterpreted source of “suggestions” with his problematic claim about the universality of his trichotomous “categories.”

Insistent realists who follow Max Fisch’s pioneer reflections seem to have missed the most inventive feature of both Hegel’s and Peirce’s metaphysical “systems”: they are articulations of what I am calling prototypes or finite practices of inquiry and commitment, not the mythic paradigms by which they may be vindicated, impossibly, in infinite inquiry. This begins to define the pragmatist (or pragmaticist) minima of philosophical success for our own age.

Now then, if you see matters this way, you see the sense in which—attenuating the conjectural, empirical reading of the *a priori* (as opposed to Kant’s *apriorist* reading) along the lines of provisional abductions (Peirce) or along the lines of autonomous mathematized

---

explanatory proposals (or models) for physics, which (following Hertz and Hemholtz, according to Cassirer) are not drawn from any phenomenal vocabulary as they would be in Kant’s or Newton’s way of reasoning—we may, in a suitably diminished form, allow the old dispute about realism and idealism to continue. Nevertheless, if we cannot exceed Kant’s intuitions about the transcendental paradigm (corrected in the historicized and empiric way that collects Hegel and the best prototypes of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy), then the nagging debates of so much of contemporary pragmatism serve only as a waste of time: the matched “realist” and “idealist” qualifications that may still be needed are already safely entrenched in the conjectural constructions of the successors to Hegel’s extravagant rhetoric regarding Vernunft. This holds, for instance, as much for P. F. Strawson’s rereading of Kant’s first Critique as it does for Peirce’s gradual rereading of Hegel’s Phenomenology and Logic.19

This is, in fact, what I had in mind in drawing your attention to Hegel’s construing the “false” (read: “finite”) as ingredient in the “true” (read: “absolute”). It’s the continuum of the finite and the infinite that is, finally, Hegel’s best intuition about the excesses of Kant’s transcendentalism. As far as I can see, it remains the essential nerve of the entire achievement of the transformative work shared by Kant and Hegel: it also proves to be the best clue for the future of pragmatism as well (and, I suggest, for the whole of the future of Eurocentric

---

19. See, for example, Peirce’s remark about Hegel in MS 318, “Pragmatism,” in The Essential Peirce, II, p. 428. Peirce speaks here about his reliance on his trusty “trichotomy,” “a most useful polestar in my explorations into the different branches of philosophy”: “There is no fallacy in it [he explains]; for it asserts nothing [sic], but only offers suggestions.” He adds: “My trichotomy is plainly of the family stock of Hegel’s three stages of thought, —an idea that goes back to Kant, and I know not how much further. But the arbitrariness of Hegel’s procedure, utterly unavoidable at the time he lived, —and presumably, in less degree, unavoidable now, or at any future date, — is in great measure avoided by my taking care never to miss the solid support of mathematically exact formal logic beneath my feet.” I’m not clear how, if his trichotomy (Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness) “asserts nothing,” Peirce can fault Hegel or claim that they are (also) “universal categories”; or how, if he guides himself by the “solid support of . . . exact formal logic,” he can claim resources ampler than Hegel’s. Robert Main, a student of mine, drew my attention to these remarks of Peirce’s, but I can’t hold him responsible for my way of reading them.
philosophy)—wherever, that is, following Peirce and Cassirer, Hegel’s abstract formula may be fleshed out, more convincingly, in terms of the Secondness and Thirdness of explanatory laws, theoretical entities, semiotic options for imputing meaning to our perception and experience of the world.

I find it extraordinary, for example, that Hegelian scholars of H. S. Harris’s standing should have been drawn into the explication of Hegel’s dialectical reasoning by way of the separable and inseparable application of Peirce’s trichotomy, though, of course, I am glad of it. (It’s the separable application of Secondness and Thirdness, I remind you, that gives the illusion of our being able to decide between realism and idealism; and it’s their inseparability that subordinates the “prototypes” of every philosopher (who broaches the question) under the mythic “paradigm” they share.

Peirce’s most pointed contributions are centered in what may be made of Secondness (which he was inclined, particularly before he formed a rounded account of Hegel, to charge Hegel with neglecting); but then he also insists that the detection of the “effects” of Secondness always takes place in the context of Thirdness; Harris emphasizes that “Hegel is ‘a philosopher of thirdness’….But, of course, [he adds,] without secondness, there could not be any thirdness at all.” I take this part of the argument to be effectively settled, though always provisionally. What Peirce and Cassirer contribute, therefore, leads us, productively, to weigh the most promising strategies of the intertwining of Secondness and Thirdness within pragmatism’s evolving paradigm. What they share to a remarkable degree is a sense of the importance of the infinite telic limit of finite inquiry (particularly in the sciences) or, alternatively, the choice of finite strategies as in Peirce’s account of fallibilism and Cassirer’s close studies of the history of the physical sciences.

20. See H. S. Harris, “Thirdness: A Response to the ‘Secondness’ of John Burbidge,” *The Owl of Minerva*, XXXIII (2001); and John W. Burbidge, “Secondness,” *The Owl of Minerva*, XXXIII (2001); both are cited in Stern, “Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness.” (Stern himself notes that Peirce warns of philosophical errors “if we attempt to prioritize one of these categories at the expense of the other two” (p. 124).
Apart, then, from an unflinching commitment to naturalism, which Peirce and Cassirer share and which may be construed as the right way to read Hegel as well insofar as Hegel concedes that *Vernunft*’s speculations about the infinite are entirely subject to the control of finite reason, what may be drawn from the Hegelian heritage regarding pragmatism’s (and neokantianism’s) best philosophical prospects involves applying the notion of historicity to the whole of human inquiry and the idea of actuality posited at the provisionally changing “limit” of finite inquiry.

III

I have still to mention the most radical innovation — as I view the matter — of the pragmatism of the future or of the future themes of Eurocentric philosophy. I have elsewhere argued that that future will require a degree of rapprochement among the strongest currents of analytic, continental, and pragmatist sources — and I stand by that. But there remains an almost completely neglected line of speculation that (in my opinion) cannot rightly be ignored, that provides the strongest possible grounds for the unification of the entire transformative vision I’ve been sketching. It’s quite extraordinary, it seems to me, that it was never coopted by the classic pragmatists — or, in fact, by any other dominant movement of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy. It’s a posit of enormous power, particularly well-adapted for strengthening pragmatism’s advantage: it’s the natural source for ensuring the unity of transcendental questions (under Hegelian correction) and the strongest line of defense of the pragmatist construction of meaning, truth, and knowledge. Above all, it provides an entirely fresh direction for recasting in a forceful (and innovative) way all of the most distinctive achievements of classical pragmatism.

I venture to say it catches up in one stroke what I’ve been extracting from Hegel’s account of *Geist*, Peirce’s semiotics and emphasis on

---

21. See Margolis, *Pragmatism’s Advantage*, Ch. 3.
22. See my “Pragmatism and the Prospect of Rapprochement within Eurocentric Philosophy,” *Cognitio: Revista de Filosofía*, IX (2008), included (with minor revisions) in *Pragmatism’s Advantage*. 
Thirdness, and Cassirer’s replacement of Kant’s closed system of transcendental categories with his own open sweep of symbolic forms: in this sense, it promotes the rapprochement of the whole of Eurocentric philosophy that I take to be the key to any substantial advance in pragmatism beyond its American origins and against the would-be adequacy of any separable analytic and continental philosophical programs. More than that, its resources have been before us for about a hundred and fifty years and might easily have brought us to the economies we’ve now reached (by other means) much more quickly, possibly with more confidence.

But before I come to its formulation, let me suggest something of its promise by returning to Kant’s and Cassirer’s themes. I have already drawn attention to a certain laxity in Hegel’s and Peirce’s phenomenologies — which I now want to suggest are readily corrected by invoking the new theme I’m about to mention: I mean, positing the false universalities of a presuppositionless phenomenology that (in Peirce) goes somewhat athwart the deep provisionality of pragmatism’s characteristic themes and the excessively vacant formal characterization of the dialectical treatment of phenomenology (in Hegel) that adopting Peirce’s variant might offset. In any case, Hegel (as we have seen) includes all the encountered ephemera of perception and experience as “false” (or partial) but readily sublated into the “true” (or absolute); “absolute certainty, absolute exactitude, absolute universality,” Peirce declares, cannot be “attain[ed] by reasoning.”

Both maneuvers signify a state of inquiry in which our finite findings may be expressed in realist or idealist terms but not in any literally disjunctive way in either.

In a cognate remark initially cast in Kantian terms, Cassirer speaks of our “theoretical knowledge of nature” as “built up when the ‘given’ of sensation enters into the a priori forms of pure intuition and the pure understanding through a specific place of admission, which has been ready and waiting from the beginning.” But of this rather lame but familiar picture, Cassirer adds at once: if you take this to be “anything more than a methodological abstraction, …then this conception has been progressively refuted in the course of the development of our theoretical knowledge since Kant”:

[The transcendental] act [he continues] never comes to an end, [the] determination can also never be totally completed and can never be regarded as incapable of further modifications. The theoretical form also proves to be capable of an unlimited evolution— and this sacrifice of finality in no way defeats its universality….The concepts and propositions that the unity of our theoretical knowledge of nature, its divisions and systematic structure, are based upon, are never taken simply from experience. They are logically prior to it in the sense that they represent the line or direction for thought….The way is not prescribed from the beginning, and no markings exist; clearing the way is the true task of theoretical thought and it is in this that the achievement of the a priori consists.25

But this, precisely, subverts or corrects Kant along Hegelian lines. Furthermore, it deliberately obscures the full import of the fact that it completely dismantles the systematic unity of our a priori categories, since it abandons the “idea of the ‘singularity’ of Euclidean geometry and… the ‘singularity’ of classical mechanics,” because it tolerates the open-ended plurality of the a priori forms of every emergent inquiry, and because it locates the unity of the resultant “system” in “life” itself!26 But what does “life” mean here? If you add an appreciation of the strong sense in which even the continuum of physics and astronomy may be conceptually disjunctive—in Kuhn’s well-known sense of a paradigm’s failure—you see how thoroughly the Kantian

---

picture has been dismantled, and yet how easy it is for Peirce and Cassirer to imitate Hegel’s deliberate laxness in coopting terms like “necessity” and “universality” for what is palpably contingent and provisional.\(^{27}\)

This brings us in a very natural way to the end of the story. For if the unity of our transcendental categories rests with “life” itself—either with “life” as opposed to “Geist” or with “Geist” as life’s productive power of reason—then, truly, failure is all but impossible, since complete conceptual closure can never be secured.\(^{28}\) Every conjecture contributes in a “Hegelian” way to the provisional formation of the enabling categories of every distinct inquiry, and every provisional closure is the unifying work of Geist itself. Victory is invariably snatched, therefore, from seeming defeat! But what ultimately is Geist?

Here, it’s hard to deny that if you scan what in effect may be deemed the various pictures of human life or Geist offered by Hume, Kant, Hegel, Peirce, Cassirer, and Kuhn—to remain with the small clutch of important figures who have decisively shaped the history I’ve been tracing, there is remarkably little to be found in the analyses of any of them that begins to account for the rise and fall and transformation of Kant’s transcendentalism, in terms of a pointed examination of the human agent or subject (or self) as such. You have only to recall Hume’s famous inability to find any idea of the self among the sensory impressions admitted in his official empiricism, or what looks like a massive afterthought in §16 of Kant’s first Critique introduced as a sort of accompaniment to the would-be system of the categories.

Hegel, Peirce, and Cassirer are “better” in this regard because they give us a sense of the immensity of all that must be accounted for in any adequate theory of the self. I fault Peirce and Cassirer particularly, because they are the only ones on my list who have attempted (who could attempt) in any sustained way to come to terms with the deep significance of Darwin’s transformation of the problem. That is, with the immense constraint the Darwinian discovery imposes on


\(^{28}\) See Cassirer, “‘Geist’ and ‘Life’,” pp. 28-29.
philosophy: namely, that the Kantian question of the “possibility” of thought and knowledge cannot even arise except for the contingent, emergent constitution of the human self on terms biology alone cannot account for; and that whatever answer we give to the Kantian question will have to accord with the artifactual contingency of the self itself. There is a factual likelihood nearly the whole of Western science and philosophy had never hit on!

The point, of course, is more than prophecy: it’s the rationale for a directed prophecy. Cassirer, attempting, in 1928, to bring The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms to a proper close, cannot yet reach to the bold step just bruited, adumbrated, for instance, very neatly but insufficiently, in a view shared by Marjorie Grene and Helmuth Plessner, which Grene summarized (but, as far as I know, nowhere pursues in depth) as “the principle of the natural artificiality of man.” Grene fails to press the full implications of this Darwinian-inspired contribution. She sees, just as Cassirer saw, that “we become human...by relying on a complex network of artifacts,” which features “language and other symbolic systems” and the like; but she has no adequate theory of what a “symbol” or an “artifact” is—as, may I say, a proper clue to the “metaphysics” of the human.29 Nor, finally does Cassirer—or Peirce.

There is the point of the prophecy: the human person or self is, must be, a hybrid artifact of biology and culture, an emergent transform of the primate powers of Homo sapiens, largely as a result of mastering (internalizing) the full resources of one or another natural language, which is itself a hybrid achievement of an increasingly encultured transformation of the incipiently cultural improvement of prelinguistic primate communication proto-culturally transmitted without distortion.30

My bottom line is, simply, that the convergent powers of the best currents of Eurocentric philosophy can no longer fail to examine the prospects of a “philosophical anthropology” in which the unique mode of functioning that we call the self is seen to be the emergent self-construction or self-transformation of the primate (infant) members of *Homo sapiens* as competent selves, distinguished largely by their mastery of a true language and all the reflexive powers of thought and agency associated with what, following both Kant and Hegel, we treat as the unique forms of human freedom.

Cassirer begins, tantalizingly, with Kant’s clear grasp of the problem in the first *Critique*: “how is the faculty of thought itself possible?” (A xvii). Cassirer himself draws from Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* the essential lesson that “the phenomenon of expression” fixes “the very point at which the world of ‘natural’ being changes into that of ‘intelligent’ being and at which therefore, if at all, the continuity between them both seems to be immediately exhibited.” He challenges the straightforward continuum of biological evolution, however—for instance, in Wilhelm Wundt’s Darwinian assumption “that the entire intellectual content of language stems originally from the expressive function.” But, as far as I can see, Cassirer cannot go beyond the conjecture that “the field of intellectual becoming follows not the law of evolution, but the law of mutation. Here [he says] there is not simply wave after wave in a uniform flow; rather, here one clear and distinct configuration confronts the next.”

The essential clue, however, is not “mutation” but the fundamental—the “metaphysical”—difference between biological and cultural continuity. Mutation is as fundamental a part of the biological continuum as any other form of genetic transmission: cultural transmission is *not* reducible to the merely biological (or biochemical).


There is the clue to the artifactuality of the hybrid self. Viewed in populational terms, the self is a self-constructed transform of the members of *Homo sapiens*, a creature whose emergent powers depend on the evolution of primate competence in the vicinity of some proto-cultural capacity (within the bounds of prelinguistic *Homo*) to begin to transform the incipient symbolic functions of its communicative skills into genuinely linguistic skills capable of being transmitted, *by cultural means*, without serious loss or distortion.

From that initial incipience, apparently, the process of self-construction (species-wise) accelerates in its remarkable way, so that what distinguishes the human self can no longer be explained in biological terms alone—that is, it has *become* historicized in the cultural way. An entirely new system of organizing competences begins to transform the world and the primate subject—“penetrates” nature, suffuses it with meaning and significance, and increasingly features all the forms of enculturated agency and freedom.

I shall stop here. Because what interests me for the present is only the content of the prophecy I have now fashioned as a piece of philosophical instruction for pragmatism and its principal allies. I say only that the lesson has been waiting a very long time for us to become aware of what has already been accomplished and how small a labor the crowning adjustment would require.
Aesthetics: Retreat, Advance and Fragmentation

Peter Lamarque

Aesthetics seems to be everywhere nowadays. Hardly any aspect of social and cultural life does not have a corner where aesthetics is invoked. Beauty parlours and hairdressing saloons lay claim to the term “aesthetics”, as do branches of cosmetic surgery, dentistry, and landscape design. There is a burgeoning literature on the aesthetics of management, with book titles like *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing* or *The Aesthetics of Organisation*. Recently I received a slim volume from Estonia—in English—entitled *Aesthetics and Government*.1 One of the papers in it had the delightful title: “Aesthetics of the Police Station in Three Countries: An Exercise in Using Fictive Material in Creating Aesthetic Profiles”. This is an intriguing study of the culture of police stations in Finland, Sweden and Russian, drawing on representations in modern detective fiction. On a similar theme, another paper from another volume is entitled “Tales from the Walled City: Aesthetics of Political Prison Culture in post-war Greece”.2

Aesthetics is making its mark also in anthropology. Recent book titles have included: *The Aesthetics of Action: Continuity and Change in a*...
West African Town;³  Body and Emotion: the Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in the Nepal Himalayas;⁴  Taming the Wind of Desire: Psychology, Medicine, and Aesthetics in Malay Shamanistic Performance.⁵  Aesthetics plays a significant role in sports science, in politics, in sociology, as well as, more obviously, in art history, in psychology, and in literary criticism.

So what’s going on? What is this renewed focus on aesthetics that seems to be gaining prominence? What do all these applications have in common, if anything? The focus is certainly not restricted to art, although art is not excluded. I think in very broad terms it is this: a renewed interest in the very idea of beauty and, relatedly, in appearance over utility, in form over function, in the pleasure of how something looks, in intrinsic qualities, in design, in the surfaces of things, colour, texture, the sensuous, the immediate, the visceral, the vibrant, the emotional and expressive. In a word, an interest in aesthetic qualities, the qualities of experience and feeling, rather than merely utilitarian, instrumental or physical qualities.

But does this mark a “return” to such things? Did they ever go away? Had we lost an interest in beauty, appearance, surface, design? Well, it’s a complicated story. In a sense, yes, there had been a retreat from aesthetics. For much of the 20th century notions like beauty or aesthetic experience had been viewed with suspicion. We had indeed lost those things, at least we’d lost the priority once given to them, we had lost the ability to foreground them in our discourse without embarrassment or qualification. We’d lost them in art and we’d lost them in theory.

The retreat from beauty in the 20th century

³ Kris L. Hardin, The Aesthetics of Action: Continuity and Change in a West African Town (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)
⁴ Robert R Desjarlais, Body and Emotion: the Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in the Nepal Himalayas; (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992)
⁵ Carol Laderman, Taming the Wind of Desire: Psychology, Medicine, and Aesthetics in Malay Shamanistic Performance (University of California Press, 1991)
The growth of conceptual art in the 1960s was only a further manifestation of a trend in art that had begun with Dadaism and the “readymades” early in the 20th century: a self-conscious turning away from beauty and aesthetic experience in the production of art. Tristan Tzara in his Second Dada Manifesto of 1918 wrote: “A work of art shouldn’t be beauty per se, because it is dead; neither gay nor sad, neither light nor dark ... A work of art is never beautiful, by decree, objectively, for everyone.” Sol LeWitt, one of the foremost conceptual artists, explained his own view of art in 1967: “What the work of art looks like isn’t too important. It has to look like something if it has physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea. It is the process of conception and realisation with which the artist is [primarily] concerned.”6 In other words in conceptual art the idea is more important than the appearance. Appearance, and thus beauty, counted for nothing. Perhaps Sol LeWitt’s death on 8th April 2007, aged 78, marked the end of an era, a turning point where beauty was to make a comeback. Another prominent conceptual artist, Mel Bochner, writing in 1974, also rejected beauty in art: “the ‘ideal Conceptual work’”, he states, “… could be described and experienced in its description ... It must have absolutely no ‘aura’, no uniqueness to it whatsoever”.7 The critic Lucy Lippard concurs: “Conceptual art … means work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, cheap, unpretentious and/or ‘dematerialized’”.8

The rejection of beauty in art went hand in hand with the rejection of beauty in art theory. There are many strands of this, of course. One strand is purely philosophical and is associated, in the analytical tradition, with the American philosopher Arthur Danto. Danto argued, to the satisfaction of many, that there is nothing in the concept of art per se that links it essentially to beauty or indeed to any particular kind

---

of surface perceptible property. Famously he sought to prove this by showing that two objects could be perceptually indistinguishable—like Andy Warhol’s facsimile Brillo Boxes and ordinary commercial Brillo Boxes—while one is a work of art, the other not. From this he concluded that what makes something art resides not in its appearance, how it looks—what is perceptible—but in its embeddedness in theory. As aesthetic properties relate to how something appears, aesthetics, on Danto’s view, becomes irrelevant to art. However, forty years after his paper “The Artworld”, where these ideas were explored, Danto came to reconsider his marginalisation of beauty in his important book The Abuse of Beauty.9

Another anti-beauty strand of theory is more political than philosophical. Postmodernist art theory in its many manifestations self-consciously turned against the aesthetic. Just as the concepts of truth, meaning, value, and reason, became radically relativized or dismissed as repressive and authoritarian, so concepts like beauty and the aesthetic were thought to be equally tainted ideologically, complicit in the dominant social order and inextricably bound to spurious meta-narratives. Theorists like Terry Eagleton and Pierre Bourdieu showed, at least under one perspective, how deeply implicated was the birth of aesthetics, in 18th century Europe, with a peculiar set of social and economic conditions, how the central conceptions of aesthetic theory at that time, like taste, sensibility, refinement, genius, the sublime, strikingly mirror the interests of a leisured class, filtered through a philosophy of idealism and Romanticism. But Eagleton does not see the aesthetic as all bad: he describes it as an essentially contradictory concept serving to define "dominant ideological forms", as he puts it, through its links with the "subject", "autonomy", the aestheticizing of morality, but also in other respects offering a "powerful challenge and alternative to them", notably in its emphasis on the sensory, the irreducibly particular and the unregulated. Post-modernist artists, not just conceptual artists, typically reject the easy consolation of the aesthetically pleasing experience, they denounce the false reverence of the art gallery or museum, and they deplore the distinction between "high art" and "popular art". The

fictional character Antoine Roquentin in Sartre’s novel *Nausea*, deriding those who sought consolation from soothingly melodic music, like that of Chopin: “… the concert halls are full to overflowing with humiliated, injured people who close their eyes and try to turn their pale faces into receiving aerials. They imagine that the sounds they receive flow into them, sweet and nourishing, and that their sufferings become music, like those of young Werther; they think that beauty is compassionate towards them. The mugs.” That was written in 1938. Similar sentiments, incidentally, can be found in Adorno, for whom only the more challenging and dissonant music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg could be true to fragmented modern society. The emollient tones of 19th century romantic music offered only false consciousness in the modern age.

The advance of aesthetics; and a paradox about beauty

Nevertheless, the retreat from beauty and the aesthetic was always going to be vulnerable to reaction the other way. So has anything changed? If that was the thinking until recently both in the world of art and in the world of theory, has there really been a return to aesthetics? The matter is complicated because in many respects, whatever happens in art and art theory, beauty never does, or can, go away altogether.

There is a paradox at the heart of the concept of beauty, arising from three seemingly simple facts: the *indispensability* of beauty in human life; its *ubiquity* across all aspects of human life; and yet its apparent *lack of practical utility* in the protection and preservation of human life, thus its apparent lack of political or social significance. How could something be so central in human life yet on the face of it devoid of practical function?

It is worth reflecting a bit further on each of these three core, if conflicting, facts

(1) *The dispensability of beauty*. It seems inconceivable that humans could live recognizably human lives without any
attention to the beauty / ugliness dimension of value. This would have to be a life where no attention is given to the pleasures of how things appear; where nothing is ever made or altered or criticised on account of (merely) how it looks; where no judgments are ever offered (or understood) about something’s intrinsic value, or about its attractiveness (or lack of such); where nothing (not even another person) is ever preferred over something else solely for its beauty. This does not seem like a human life.

(2) The ubiquity of beauty. Ubiquity is not the same as indispensability. There are many concepts that seem indispensable without being ubiquitous: colour, shape, solidity. What is extraordinary about beauty is that there seem to be virtually no aspects of human life where it is not applicable. The most abstract of thoughts—mathematical theorems, proofs, chess moves—can be judged beautiful. Human mental life—thinking, feeling, desiring—can be beautiful, as can the soul itself. We talk of a beautiful life or a beautiful death, even of Divine Beauty. Morality—moral beauty—is included, as are all aspects of physical appearance: the human body, all creatures in the animal kingdom, all human artefacts, not least works of art themselves, everything in the natural world (landscapes, mountains, sunsets, the stars), and everything in the designed environment (gardens, buildings, cities).

(3) The (apparent) lack of practical utility of beauty. The beauty of a mathematical theorem is, so it seems, unrelated to its truth, yet truth is what matters for theorems. The beauty of a teapot, a pair of shoes or a watch is independent of whether these are useful for pouring tea, walking or telling the time. The beauty of the countryside might have no relation to its productivity in feeding the people who live there. The efficiency of a factory might be quite consistent with its ugliness. If you need rescuing from a burning house or a sinking ship don’t look for a beautiful person but someone strong or resourceful. Beauty seems to occupy the realm of contemplation rather than action, appearance rather than function, pleasure rather than practicality.
What can we make of this seeming paradox? How can anything be indispensable yet useless, ubiquitous yet constantly challenged as marginal or unproductive? Even if we grant the basic intuition of indispensability it calls for explanation. If beauty is indispensable in human life why are there, throughout history, reactions against beauty, whether through the imperatives of stoicism, Puritanism, fundamentalism, asceticism, iconoclasm, self-denial, or, as we have seen, through cyclical developments in the arts where periods of indulgent or flamboyant beauty (the baroque, aestheticism) are followed by a return to the ‘pure’ or austere or simple or conceptual? We have seen, all too briefly, how different are the discourses associated with reactions to beauty: as, for example, are the discourses of Tristan Tzara, Sol LeWitt, Arthur Danto, and Pierre Bourdieu. Can there be such a thing as too much beauty? Can beauty be overwhelming or oppressive, thus in need of periodic rebalancing? What does this say about the value of beauty and the pleasures it affords? Are developments in the arts a driver for changes in attitudes to beauty or merely a further manifestation of those attitudes?

Furthermore, if beauty is indispensable why is it a source of conflict? Why do differences in ‘taste’ often seem to count for so much (in certain contexts) while on the surface they might seem so trivial or insignificant? Nothing could be further from the truth than the old adage that “there is no disputing about taste”. Disagreements about taste are constantly a matter of dispute. One familiar story about the indispensability of beauty comes from evolutionary theory, where the instinct for beauty is sometimes grounded in sexual selection. But is this explanation too reductive? Does it not make even more problematic both the historical reactions against beauty and its divergent forms?

Evolutionary explanations also pose the question of how far beauty can ever be purely ‘natural’ or to what degree it is, as Bourdieu thinks,

---

‘ideological’ or cultural or ‘political’? Beauty seems always subject to cultural appropriation. Is beauty indispensable because it satisfies certain cultural necessities, such as social conformity, shared values, exclusion of ‘the other’, etc? Or does it go deeper still, as the evolutionists maintain, with a human dimension below the cultural?

The unicity of beauty across all aspects of human life clearly relates to the burgeoning interest in aesthetics with which we began. But if judgments of beauty have such wide application does that show that the instinct for beauty goes deep or only that there are shallow commonalities of value across different domains, perhaps vaguely associated with “pleasure” or “experience”? This is where philosophical aesthetics has an important role to play in asking whether there is a serious, substantial and interesting concept of beauty that spans its multiple applications: whether, for example, there is anything substantial in common between the beauty of a theorem, an idea, a face, a lyric poem, or a landscape. And does any commonality point to an attitude of mind, a phenomenology, an abstract value, a species of judgment, or something else besides?

It was Frank Sibley who taught aestheticians to widen the scope of their enquiry beyond simple “judgments of taste”, simple beauty. He drew our attention to the extensive vocabulary of aesthetic appraisal, including elegance, gracefulness, delicacy, daintiness, serenity, the sublime. Mere beauty in itself came to seem less interesting, perhaps just a generic term for any ‘thin’ aesthetic evaluation. Surprisingly, even less attention was given to the opposite of beauty, the many forms of ugliness. Is the ugly also just a generic term of aesthetic disapproval? Could the opposite of beauty also include the profane, the immoral, the dangerous, or the unknown? Is ugliness as ubiquitous as beauty? (It seems more selective and narrowly focused, although it is not clear why that should be.)

Perhaps the ubiquity of beauty is no more than the ubiquity of pleasure. It seems like an anodyne truth that humans are (broadly speaking) pleasure-seeking creatures. Many ethical systems are based on that idea, even if pleasure itself is sometimes contrasted with the Good. However, it is often thought that aesthetic pleasure takes a distinct form. It has been a central task of philosophical aesthetics to try to
characterise what form that is. How does it relate to the more sensual pleasures of food or sex or play? These pleasures are not species-specific. Might beauty be a distinctively anthropocentric concept? It is arguable that the quest for beauty is the very mark of the human.

Our ‘simple fact’ that beauty contrasts with utility soon comes under pressure from different quarters (including that of evolutionary theory mentioned earlier). Yet that contrast seems to rest on a strong intuition, one that gives shape to our initial paradox. This too, then, needs explanation.

The distinction between craft (useful) and art (intrinsically valuable) is an ancient one that surfaces repeatedly in the history of the arts and in aesthetics, at times strongly defended, at other times challenged. But its relation to beauty is complicated. It cannot be denied that crafts exhibit beauty (more obviously so in some cases than art) yet the distinction might be drawn between those aspects of an artefact that make it useful and those that make it beautiful. Architecture suggests, though, that even that distinction is in doubt: the ‘form’ of a building, in virtue of which it has beauty, might be indistinguishable from its function, as a place to live or work or worship.

Is it right that the aesthetic contrasts with the useful? Are there not obvious uses to which beauty is put? Music can be therapeutic, the colours of hospital walls are carefully chosen, the built environment helps to shape community solidarity and social wellbeing. But how does this fit with the deep and familiar discourse of beauty as an intrinsic value, valuable for its own sake, inviting ‘disinterested’ contemplation? Perhaps the calm state of mind (contemplation) paradigmatically associated with the appreciation of beauty can be appropriated for instrumental ends. Without doubt, the instinct for beauty is vulnerable as a tool for social or other forms of coercion. Where beauty is made useful or manipulated for practical or political ends there is a danger of destroying or weakening (by exploiting) an underlying ‘pure’ or natural instinct.

Is the aesthetic sense not itself useful for living a contented life? How things appear, how pleasing they are to look at and live with,
hardly seems peripheral to a state of mind of calm and happiness. Although an object’s practical usefulness is often determined apart from its surface appearance, clearly its appearance is not a matter of indifference. Yet why does appearance matter? In human sexual behaviour appearance matters, or can matter, for practical purposes. Beauty, conventionally conceived, is associated with health and reproductive fitness. The appearance of food can be a sign of its fitness to eat, the texture of cloth indicates comfort or wearability. Of course appearances can be deceptive – Sirens can lure us to our death. Beauty can be dangerous.

The idea of beauty as an intrinsic value, as a mark of appearance, as a pleasure arising from a distinctive kind of attention, seemingly at odds in so many cases with practical utility, still sits uncomfortably with its ubiquity across all human endeavours and its indispensability in human life. Only by a much deeper understanding of the role of beauty in all its manifestations—an understanding that draws fundamentally on philosophy, art history, anthropology, psychology, and evolutionary biology—will its paradoxical elements yield to any kind of satisfactory resolution.

Recent trends and the fragmentation of aesthetics

If the indispensability of beauty in human life and its ubiquity across all aspects of human life help explain why retreat from the aesthetic can only be temporary, there are still difficult questions about what contribution philosophy can make as the realm of the aesthetic seems to grow more and more broad.

Those of us who work in academic philosophical aesthetics do a multiplicity of different things. Over thirty-five years ago when I first became interested in topics in aesthetics, I wrote about fictionality, fictional reference, and fictional names. Was this really a branch of aesthetics? I wasn’t talking about beauty or the sensuous immediacy of things or appearance or indeed any of the phenomena I listed earlier. What I was really doing was a branch of philosophy of language. I had things to say about literature but my focus was not on the
particularities of individual works or the values they exhibited or their place in ideological formations but on matters much more abstract: What does it mean to refer to a fictional character? What kind of entities are these? What is the ontology of possible non-existent beings? This was a kind of applied philosophy of language or analytical metaphysics.

And that’s the point, for the philosophy I do is analytical philosophy. When I do aesthetics it is philosophical aesthetics in an analytical mode. That makes my interest in aesthetics doubly specialist. Being philosophical it sets my work apart from that done by anthropologists or art teachers or educationalists or art critics. Being analytical it sets my philosophical work apart from that done by poststructuralists or phenomenologists or students of Heidegger and Gadamer. Is this so narrow as to be of negligible interest to those seeking wider and more practical applications of the aesthetic?

I hope not, and I believe that original and important work has been done by analytical aestheticians in the past forty or fifty years—I will offer some illustrations in a moment—but I also think that this approach poses deep problems for the future of aesthetics. Not to put too fine a point on it, I believe that work by analytic philosophers threatens to pull the subject of aesthetics apart. Philosophical aesthetics as a unified field of enquiry is literally fragmenting at the very moment when the turn to aesthetics is growing apace elsewhere. I do not think, however, that this fragmentation is altogether a bad thing, not least because it promises to give the component parts a new lease of life. What are emerging are semi-autonomous intellectual domains, with their own questions, methods, and reference points, all loosely gathered under the heading of aesthetics.

So what exactly is fragmenting from what? First, there is a methodological split between analytic based approaches and historically based approaches. I will return to that later. More substantially there is an ever-widening split between aesthetics as a study of a kind of experience and philosophy of art. The former goes back to pre-Hegelian philosophy where the emphasis was not on art but on a certain way of perceiving objects, a way of evaluating them. Philosophers have sought to characterise what it means to regard
something from an aesthetic point of view, a distinctive kind of interest and value. The experience might or might not apply to individual works of art. But given what I said about the rejection of beauty in art and in art theory it is of no surprise that this examination of aesthetic experience and aesthetic qualities has increasingly been carried out independently of any application to the arts. The philosopher Graham McFee, for example, takes a strong stance on this, arguing that aesthetic terms like “beauty” or “elegance” do not even mean the same when applied to works of art and non-art objects. He explicitly rejects the “unity of the aesthetic”. Philosophers interested in aesthetic experience will tend to look to the aesthetics of nature and the environment to illustrate the kinds of experience they are studying. This has led to a blossoming of interest in the aesthetics of nature—an attempt to understand what it is that humans appreciate in their natural environment and whether all judgments about natural beauty are just in the eye of the beholder.

Here I think we can find another reason for the turn to aesthetics. If beauty is still treated with suspicion in the arts it certainly seems to be valued more and more in the environment where we see not only the destruction of natural habitats but also the monstrosities of unrestrained urban development. Here the defence of some kind of objective aesthetic value seems to have real political urgency—the utility of beauty has genuine substance—for if it is true that beauty is just in the eye of the beholder, just a matter of private personal taste, then the developer who is happy to ruin pleasant environments for the sake of profit can simply shrug off criticisms from an aesthetic point of view on the grounds that these are just subjective opinions and his opinion is as valid as anyone else’s. Those inclined towards an easy subjectivism in aesthetics should bear this in mind; the consequence can be that appeal to how something looks and the pleasure it gives is simply dismissed as irrelevant and whimsical.

There is much of interest in the study of aesthetic experience but in fact my focus will be on the other side of the dichotomy, the philosophy of art. There is noticeable fragmentation here as well, for

---

example, between philosophy of art tout court and philosophy of the individual arts. The former investigates the very concept of art itself, the aims, functions and values it exhibits and the place it occupies in human social and political life. The latter investigates distinctive features of individual arts and there are recognized divisions now between philosophy of music, philosophy of literature, philosophy of film, philosophy of the visual arts, and so on. My own work now finds a niche with its own name: philosophy of literature. Does this count as work in aesthetics? Under the general umbrella, certainly it does. I have much to say about the idea of experiencing literature, the pleasures and values it affords, but it needs further argument to show that these experiences share common features with the pleasures and values of painting, say, or dance. However, other aspects of philosophy of literature, relating to meaning, interpretation, truth, metaphor, and ontology can, as I mentioned earlier, point more towards philosophy of language or metaphysics.

The dividing up of philosophy of art into the philosophy of individual arts seems to threaten the autonomy of philosophy of art itself. Why ask about the definition of art per se—a holy grail for analytic philosophers that has proved so elusive—when it might seem more promising to ask about the definition of literature or sculpture or film or music? And is it helpful to talk about the value of art in general as distinct from the values of the different art forms?

A benign fragmentation is happening all round. Philosophical aesthetics is fragmenting into, on the one hand, philosophy of art and, on the other, the aesthetics of nature or the environment. Philosophy of art is fragmenting into the philosophy of the individual arts. But it doesn’t end there. I think the philosophy of the individual arts is fragmenting into specific applications of other branches of analytic philosophy. Take a recent book by the philosopher Julian Dodd on the philosophy of music. Its title is Works of Music: an Essay in Ontology and it advances an ontological thesis about the nature of pure, instrumental music. It defends a type-token theory whereby such works are eternally existent types of sound-sequence-events, the tokens of which are performances. These event-types are discovered rather

---

than created by their composers. Composers are more like mathematicians discovering pre-existing abstract theorems than potters fashioning a vase out of lumps of clay. The book also defends a seemingly simple thesis entitled “timbral sonicism” whereby musical works are identical just in case they sound exactly alike. This is a rejection of the view held by some that it is possible in principle for two distinct works to have a type-identical score. It is all carefully argued and undoubtedly of great interest to those working in ontology. But is it aesthetics? Surely only in the very broadest sense, which follows lines of enquiry through an ever fragmenting philosophy of art. It is far removed from an investigation into beauty, pleasure, experience, appearance, intrinsic value. The sub-title “An Essay in Ontology” seems to suggest its real home. But increasingly it is typical of the kind of contribution made by analytical philosophers to the philosophy of the individual arts. It points, I think, to a quite new direction for philosophical aesthetics.

**Analytic aesthetics: aims and prospects**

I want to pursue this enquiry into philosophy of the arts to see just where the limits and aspirations of aesthetics might lie when undertaken by analytic philosophers. The key is in the peculiar nature of analytical philosophy. Let me take a moment to say what I take that to be. One of the salient features of analytic philosophy relevant to our enquiry is the predominance of logic and conceptual analysis in its methodology. This is not as anodyne or theoretically innocent as it might seem for it connects with a second feature namely that the method is essentially ahistorical. The logical analysis of concepts contrasts with the historical analysis of concepts which is the mark of so-called Continental philosophy. On the historicist view a concept can

---

only be understood relative to the historical conditions under which it arose and the discourses in which it is embedded. For the analytic philosopher a more abstracted timeless approach is possible and desirable. If we want to understand what knowledge is or mind or consciousness or moral goodness it is not enough to engage a historical enquiry into what the Greeks thought of knowledge or medieval philosophers or Enlightenment thinkers or 19th century idealists; rather the concept must be tackled in its own right. After all these earlier thinkers might well have been wrong in their analyses so why dwell on mistaken views. The analytic philosopher seeks the truth about concepts, and timeless truth as far as that is attainable. If there is such a thing as the human mind then the philosopher’s task is to say what it is; the fact that the Greeks said one thing, medieval theologians another and the Hegelians something else is neither here nor there.

So we have the famous clash of philosophical methodology, both sides convinced that their approach is correct. But how does all this apply to aesthetics or philosophy of art? Surely, it might be thought, when we are talking about cultural concepts like art or beauty the historicist position must be right. There just isn’t any single ahistorical concept to define; the best we can do is track changing concepts across cultures and across time. Beauty is not a static idea fixed in stone for all generations and all peoples; and isn’t art ever evolving and reinventing itself? And anyway isn’t applying logic and conceptual analysis to art and beauty a kind of absurdity, a sacrilege? As Keats said: “Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy?”

But here I want to come to the defence of analytic philosophy. Not all philosophy destroys what it touches. Logical methods can give us insights into the very nature of concepts and definitions, which can help any kind of systematic enquiry. One distinction, for example, is important, that between the meaning of a concept and its extension. The extension of a concept is the set of objects to which it applies. Of course, the objects that we call beautiful might not be identical with the objects the Greeks or the ancient Egyptians called beautiful but it is not obvious that they had no recognizably similar concept of beauty or that they didn’t find things beautiful in much the way that we do. After all, when Shakespeare writes poignantly in Sonnet 2:
When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty’s field,
Thy youth’s proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tottered weed of small worth held

do we not understand perfectly what he means by beauty and share his anxiety at the loss of beauty with advancing age? Is it not worthwhile trying to explore what that meaning is, what Shakespeare’s concept has in common with ours and indeed with Plato’s? No doubt our judgments of beauty differ from theirs. We might not find Helen of Troy beautiful but that doesn’t mean that we cannot understand what Homer means in calling her beautiful.

Perhaps the concept of art is a tougher case. The Greeks we are told had no concept of art (in our sense) and the idea of “fine art” is a quintessentially modern, i.e. 18th century, creation. But it is not as if analytical philosophers are not aware of the historicity of art. The idea that different cultures at different times take radically different kinds of things to be art and to be revered as art is hardly a revelation. But must we say, as seems a consequence of extreme historicist views, that other cultures at other times simply cannot be said to possess art, that we are only entitled to call something art that falls within a narrow Eurocentric domain? This seems to me at best a kind of cultural parochialism, at worst an attitude both patronising and condescending that seems to say that only we civilized Europeans have art strictly so called—we might appropriate the works of other cultures into our own artistic ambience but really the concept of art that we use applies only to us.

Against that view, analytical philosophers at least don’t rule out the thought that there is a concept of art that is genuinely trans-cultural and genuinely explanatory, something that unites us with, rather than divides us from, other cultures and other traditions. The distinction between meaning and extension is again important but an even more significant contribution by analytical philosophers is to identify different forms that definitions might take. It is no longer assumed that to define art we must seek common intrinsic qualities, be it beauty, significant form or subject matter, that all works of art share. There are other kinds of properties. Perhaps all art shares functional properties,
such as engaging certain kinds of interests or promoting certain kinds of experiences. And if functional properties won’t do the trick what about relational or institutional properties? What makes something a work of art might well be nothing to do with, as Danto thought, what it looks like, or what purpose it fulfils, but rather to do with the role it plays in complex social networks, in an “artworld”.

The point about institutional definitions of art is that they are quite neutral on the forms that art takes or the content it expresses; this conveniently embraces both the diversity of art, from music to film to dance to poetry to installation art, and the cultural variability of art, from ancient Egypt to China to aboriginal Australia to pre-Columbian America. All that matters is that some objects are assigned a special cultural status which confers value on them. Some analytical philosophers, in so-called historical definitions of art, which are variants of institutional definitions, build historical variability into the definition itself, thereby sealing off the major objection to analytic philosophy by the continental historicists. Mind you, analytic philosophers are not always at their most perspicuous in this endeavour, as evidenced by Jerrold Levinson’s historical definition:

\[ X \text{ is an artwork} = X \text{ is an object that a person or persons having the appropriate proprietary right over } X, \text{ nonpassingly intends for regard-as-a-work-of-art, i.e. regard in any way (or ways) in which prior artworks are or were correctly (or standardly) regarded.}\]

Or consider this by Gregory Currie:

\[ \ldots \text{ an art work will be an action type with two ‘open places’ (one for a person, one for a time) and having three constitutive elements, a structure, a heuristic and the relation } x \text{ discovers } y \text{ by means of } z.\]

---

This can seem dispiriting in its awkward complexity but maybe it just shows how difficult it is to grapple with a concept like art independently of the individual arts. In fact I don’t think it is any less perspicuous than the efforts of, say, Heidegger in the same area:

> In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. ‘To set’ means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining.\(^\text{16}\)

These kinds of offerings can give philosophy a bad name. But it is not the density of their expression that is the main worry rather the fact that they are purely formal definitions; they tell us little of substance about the nature of art and they don’t afford any practical method of determining which objects are and are not art.

This brings us back again to deep and intractable issues about the scope and ambitions of philosophical aesthetics. If the analytic philosopher really seeks to say something universal and timeless about the key concepts in aesthetics or philosophy of art then a dilemma raises its head. On the one hand, to achieve true universality the philosopher, it seems, must retreat to a level of generality that threatens to deprive its subject matter of any substance; on the other, if it is to attain substantial and specific truths about art or the aesthetic must it not abandon the search for universality and slip back into the relative and the parochial? Is the situation really as bad as that? To a certain extent I think the dilemma is real and it partially explains the fragmentation of aesthetics that I described earlier.

Let me take up the challenge and end with some fairly speculative observations about a role for analytical philosophy—or indeed any philosophy—in aesthetics that can save it from the charge of mere vacuity. First we must return to the distinction between aesthetics as the study of experience and philosophy of art: the role of philosophy is

different in these contexts. Aesthetics in the narrower sense, independent of art, highlights distinctive kinds of experiences and interests. Are there any elements in aesthetic experience itself that are characterisable at what might be called a human rather than a cultural level? Yes, I think there are. I think there are kinds of aesthetic responses to the world that rest not on cultural factors but on something deeper in human nature, even if they manifest themselves in different ways in different cultures. Fundamentally this is an interest in how things appear, in their form, apart from their function, and a distinctive kind of pleasure that arises from a sense that things, as they appear, are ‘right’ or ‘well suited’ or ‘fitting’. This can apply to one’s own physical appearance, one’s hairstyle, the clothes one wears, the house one lives in, the arrangement of furniture, the decorations in a room, outside spaces like gardens or parks, physical surroundings of all kinds. It is not reducible to the Kantian ‘judgment of taste’ or a contemplative attitude or ‘disinterested attention’, although those were the forms that the phenomena took in 18th century Europe. I believe this phenomenon is a genuinely human, not merely culture-relative, disposition, by no means restricted to art (perhaps nowadays not applicable to art at all), and that philosophical enquiry can help identify and characterise it as distinct from other human dispositions. The idea of giving value and significance to the perceptible qualities of objects is peculiarly human. It lies at the heart of aesthetics.

Perhaps the philosophical notion of an intentional object, or object of thought, can be invoked to cast light on it. The natural human capacity to make physical objects into intentional objects, to endow objects of perception with value and meaning, crops up in many contexts including religion, art, and game playing. When a piece of metal is transformed into a coin, a piece of wood into a religious icon or bodily tattoos into a symbol of power, this capacity is being exercised. Although it has multiply varied cultural uses it is not itself a capacity peculiar to any one culture or to particular times and places. In this sense it is universal and transcends culture and is apt for philosophical investigation.

The picture with regard to the philosophy of art, as distinct from aesthetic experience, is more complicated. Here cultural factors seem deeply entrenched. I think we can distinguish two roles for philosophy
here: a role that is indeed culture-specific and a role that has more universal aspirations. Much philosophy of art that purports to be universal is in fact culture-specific. Immanuel Kant’s philosophical analyses of genius and the sublime in the 1790s are hugely important in the development of Western aesthetics but can make no claim to cultural universality. There are other cultural traditions that find no central place for such concepts, any more than they would for genre concepts such as the sonnet, the stream of consciousness novel, or absurdist drama. Similarly key terms in, for example, Japanese aesthetics, such as *mono no aware* (the sadness of things) in Waka poetry or *yugen* (mysterious beauty) in the Noh theatre, do not find application in other cultural contexts. Even Aristotle’s concept of tragedy, along with its attendant concepts of *mimesis* and *catharsis*, in the *Poetics* is also culture-specific. Indeed there was lively debate in the 18th century whether Shakespeare’s tragedies fitted the Aristotelian paradigm.

What emerges from these examples is far from a negative or pessimistic picture. Yes, indeed some philosophy of art is culture-specific and forfeits a claim to universality. But it has a vital and important role nonetheless. It explores the discourse associated with a particular artistic tradition, it examines the concepts that underpin that discourse, it provides a rationale for the critical evaluations and interpretations that mediate between canonical works and their audience, and it identifies and analyses, in the manner of Hegel, significant stages in the history of the tradition. That’s not bad for a supposedly limited prospectus.

But is there no scope at all in philosophising about art to transcend cultures and find genuinely universal truths? I think there is but again it takes us back to another aspect of the fragmentation issue. One way to secure trans-cultural rather than culture-specific truths is through what I call theoretical abstraction. There are two forms this might take: either, first, seek out aspects of culture-specific concepts, such as genius or taste, tragedy or the sublime, that are not themselves culture-specific (perhaps some concept of mimesis, for example, might transcend its culture-specific roots); or, second, retreat to a metaphysical, psychological, or semantic level, bringing to the fore more abstract concepts like expression, meaning, symbolism, ideology,
truth, or morality.

Consider my own interest in fictionality. In trying to define fictionality, to distinguish the fictive from the non-fictive, to characterise the semantics of fictional discourse, I have not seen myself as engaged in a culture-specific enquiry. Some notion of fiction, of make-believe, of imaginative story-telling, making things up rather than finding things out, has manifested itself throughout history and throughout cultures. The analytic philosopher can pursue and perhaps illuminate such a concept, however thin it might be in its trans-cultural guise. The same I think is true for a notion of representation in pictorial art, expression in music, meaning in poetry, symbolism in religion. The philosophical enquiry into these concepts might genuinely seek to transcend cultural variability. Recent work by analytic philosophers on the logic of depiction, how it is possible to depict three-dimensional objects in two dimensions, is a case in point; as is work on the possibility of expressing emotion in music. Even though they draw on scientific theories of perception or psychological theories of emotion, such efforts are readily described as aesthetics but, if done properly, surely not the aesthetics of any particular culture.

Nevertheless, there is a price to be paid in all this, the price in effect of fragmentation. The trans-cultural interest in art can indeed attain a kind of universalism, rising above the parochialism of individual artistic traditions, but at the cost of losing the specific application which links philosophy of art with art history and art criticism. The culture-specific role, in contrast, serves the important function of underpinning and explaining a cultural tradition and its attendant concepts, but forfeits the claim to speak universally of the human institution of art per se. To go the trans-cultural route, via theoretical abstraction, is to dissipate aesthetics into sub-branches of other areas of philosophy, like philosophy of language, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. To go the culture-specific route, and focus only on concepts drawn from a single artistic tradition, narrows the scope of aesthetics and fragments the subject along cultural lines, leaving only European aesthetics, Chinese aesthetics, Japanese aesthetics, African aesthetics. And how narrow should that go? Do we need an aesthetics of each micro-culture? And how do we individuate those? Are there specific aesthetic or artistic concepts for each of the thousands of living
languages in the world? Surely that is a *reductio ad absurdum* of relativism. The best thing is to leave culture-specific aesthetics to those cultures that desire it. Of more importance is that we recognize when we are being culture-specific and when we are transcending cultures. I suspect that Aristotle writing about tragedy and Kant about genius were both mistaken on this score.

A final word, though, on the “turn to aesthetics”. For those of us working in aesthetics it is encouraging to see the huge diversity of interests that come under the umbrella of aesthetics, a diversity much wider than that within philosophical aesthetics. Yet for all this commendable diversity, there seem to be shared core interests, whether among hairdressers, anthropologists, students of management or politics or religion, or among philosophers, analytical or Continental. The aesthetic point of view on the world is a distinctive one and difficult to pin down. I have argued that it is not merely a cultural phenomenon but a human one, indispensable and ubiquitous in human life, an outlook or attitude that helps us make sense of the world and to derive pleasure and value from it. I have spoken of the philosophical contribution to understanding this phenomenon. I have also identified a benign fragmentation within philosophical aesthetics in moving out from the purely aesthetic to the artistic. Perhaps a renewed aesthetic interest in art will help close that gap. When we study the aesthetic from different perspectives I plead for an open-mindedness to new approaches, imagination to see the multiple ways the aesthetic impinges on our lives, and a vision of the future where aesthetic concerns e.g. for the environment and the preservation of nature, are never overridden by the commercial, the material, the reductively utilitarian, or the philistine that can threaten that beauty, in Shakespeare’s words, “Whose action is no stronger than a flower”. 
Edification and the Experience of Beauty

David E. Cooper

Experience of beauty: two rival accounts

People sometimes experience beauty of a kind that is new to them, one significantly different from any beauty they have hitherto recognized. A person might, for example, come to find beautiful the artwork of an ‘alien’ culture, or a face very different from any that he or she has so far admired, or a strange landscape unlike those previously experienced.

What might an illuminating description or explanation of such cases look like? On one very influential view—one that has been dominant in Western aesthetics for more than two hundred years—there is very little to describe or explain. The experience of something as beautiful is too facile, simple and immediate to invite informative description and explanation. We might call this the ‘facilist’ attitude to experiencing beauty. On this approach, illumination and explanation are no more necessary, or possible, than when someone happens to enjoy the taste of a food that he is eating.

There is, for the facilist, more perhaps than a mere analogy between experiences of beauty and pleasures of the palate. After all, ‘Beautiful!’ is not an unusual way of registering the pleasure that a mouthful of food can give. In addition, just as there are causal explanations of someone’s enjoying the taste of a food, so there may well be such explanations—physiological, say, or in terms of growing familiarity—of a new experience of beauty. But, in both cases, the causes in
question are not a person’s reasons for finding something beautiful, not grounds for appreciating it as beautiful. On the facilist approach, there are no such grounds or reasons: if there were, the experience of beauty would not, after all, be an immediate, facile one.

The facilist attitude to beauty has been complicit with a number of important tendencies, over the last two centuries, in aesthetics and art criticism. It surely encouraged, for example, the rejection of beauty, by many twentieth-century modernist artists, as a goal of serious art. ‘Beauty is dead!’ exclaimed the Dadaist Manifesto of 1918, not least because it was regarded as too facile, too superficial a thing by a new breed of artists ambitious to produce ‘difficult’ and challenging works.

More relevant to my theme has been the encouragement given by the facilist approach to those positions—familiar in Western society at large as well as among aestheticians—to which slogans like ‘Chacun à son goût’, ‘De gustibus non disputandum est’, and ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’ give popular voice. Cultural relativists, subjectivists and related theorists often reason in the following way. Only if the recognition of new beauty were an achievement or accomplishment of some difficulty could those people who do not recognize it be accused of failure to recognize a beauty that is there to recognize. If experiencing something as beautiful is as easy, immediate and ungrounded as facilists maintain, then the whole vocabulary of success or failure—of finding or not finding what is there to find—is inappropriate. Put in another way, differences among people or cultures with respect to what is experienced as beautiful could only be adjudicated—could only be worth arguing about—if explanations are available as to why the beauties perceived by some are invisible to others. But, on the facilist approach, no such explanations are in order, in which case we should be as relaxed about differences in aesthetic taste as we generally are about differences in tastes for ice-cream or instant coffee.

In opposition to the facilist approach is what I will label the ‘edificationist’ one. On this approach, appreciation of new beauty is grounded, is founded on something—recalling, perhaps, the older sense of ‘edification’ as building. For the edificationist—now drawing on the main modern sense of the term—appreciation of new beauty is
educative, for it requires initiation into traditions, practices and cultural contexts that allow for beauty of a certain kind to become visible. Like other educative processes, this appreciation is an achievement or acquirement that, typically, calls for effort, imagination, and intelligence. Finally, the appreciation is, typically, edifying or improving. The life of a person who comes to recognize beauties of a new kind has become a better one, for he or she has made good a lack that has hitherto occluded beauties that are there to be experienced.

If the facilist’s preferred analogy for the experience of new beauty is enjoyment of a tasty meal, the edificationist’s is initiation into and mastery of a new language. For mastery of a foreign language, too, is a difficult enterprise—requiring intelligence, sensitivity, and effort—and one that is perfected only when the traditions, practices, even ‘forms of life’ of the native speakers are understood and, to a degree, made one’s own.

The contrast between the facilist and edificationist approaches is real enough. Still, it may be less stark than at first it looks, and certainly each side can make concessions. The edificationist, for example, can concede that just as learning one’s first language—at one’s mother’s knee—need not be effortful, so it is with relative ease that people become responsive to the beauties conventionally recognized in their home culture. Still, the edificationist will insist that, just as focussing on the learning of a foreign language exposes important aspects of what is mastered when learning a native language, so attention to initiation into hitherto alien beauties exposes the complex achievement that is involved, but usually overlooked, in the appreciation of beauties closer to home.

For their part, facilists can concede that experiencing the beauty of something for the first time need not happen ‘just like that’. Rather as a person may need to have sampled it several times before enjoying the taste of miso soup, so finding an alien style of painting beautiful may require looking at the works on several occasions. In both cases, familiarisation may be necessary. Still, the facilist will insist that, even if appreciation of a new beauty does not always happen ‘just like that’, it nevertheless happens. It is a happening, not an attainment; a response, not an achievement. If difficulty is involved at all, it is that of
preparation for an experience through familiarisation. It is not the difficulty referred to by the edificationist, of mastery, understanding and an exercise of the imagination.

If the concessions mentioned slightly soften the contrast between the two approaches, a crucial disagreement remains over the significance of the fact that people in a certain culture experience beauties that people in others do not. For the facilist, differences between experiences of beauty are of no more moment or interest than ones between preferences for ice-creams, so that they confirm the relativity or subjectivity of beauty. For the edificationist, these differences are evidence that there are many more types of beauty to experience than anyone is able to experience, just as there are many more languages than anyone could master. The failure to be open to new types of beauty is, however, one that each person can partially overcome, precisely by an edifying initiation into the ways and perceptions of other people.

Later, I shall be developing a case in support of an edificationist approach. But it will be helpful, first, to look at the rival accounts in a historical light. This will confirm that facilism has not only been the dominant modern view of beauty in the West, but has encouraged the idea that there can be no sensible argument over differences about beauty.

**An old quarrel**

Quarrels between facilists and edificationists have continued since the beginnings of modern aesthetics in the eighteenth century, and in the works of one of its founders, Francis Hutcheson, all the main ingredients of facilism are present. ‘Beauty’, he tells us is the name for a certain simple ‘idea’, by which he means a pleasure that we have a ‘power’ for receiving through an ‘internal sense’ of beauty. This sensation is no more complex than that of sweet or bitter. If objects are called beautiful, this only means that they are ‘occasions of pleasure’, just as sweet foods are those that occasion a sensation of sweetness. When people reach a certain maturity, they cannot but feel the pleasure
occasioned by a beautiful object. This is an entirely ‘natural’ process that, Hutcheson insists, neither requires nor allows for ‘instruction or education’.\(^1\)

In 1714, ten years before Hutcheson’s first *Inquiry*, a very different approach was taken by Jean-Pierre de Crousaz in his *Traité de beau*. De Crousaz denies the equation between the experience of beauty and a sensation of pleasure. We can, he says, recognize something as beautiful ‘even if it fails to please’—and this is because the relationship between beautiful things and ourselves is much more complex, a matter of how they impact on our ‘understanding’. It may be in virtue of ‘speculative principles’ we employ that an object is found to be beautiful. For de Crousaz, a better analogy for the experience of beauty than a pleasant taste is the recognition of something as ‘healthy’. This is a recognition that will typically require educated understanding, intelligence, and some acquaintance, if only indirect, with medical practices. Health, moreover, is a good, important to achieve and maintain if human beings are to live well.\(^2\) In de Crousaz’s account, we find most of the ingredients of edificationism.

The facilist approach, I suggested, has been closely implicated with relativistic and subjectivist attitudes towards experiences of beauty. But that was not Hutcheson’s intention. On the contrary, the ‘internal sense’ for beauty is said to be universal, so that where two people differ as to something’s beauty, then at least one of them is suffering from some ‘defect’ or ‘deformation’, analogous to a ‘flu which spoils one’s sense of taste. But writers and artists sympathetic to Hutcheson’s facilism soon drew a very different conclusion. For the painter Joshua Reynolds, it was clear that variation in perceptions of beauty are due to differing ‘customs’, not to deviations from human nature. Challenging a claim popular at the time, Reynolds dismisses as absurd the idea that black people are perverse in admiring the looks of black people. It is perfectly reasonable and ‘very natural’ for a black artist to paint ‘a goddess of beauty with thick lips [and] flat nose’. Voltaire, using the


\(^2\) In *Art and Theory 1648-1815*, op. cit., 389-93.
same example, concurred and concluded that, since there is no good reason to denounce alien perceptions of beauty as defective, ‘beauty is ... very relative’, in just the way that fashions in clothes and table manners are. For Reynolds, Voltaire and other writers of the time, it is only if appreciation of some beauty were an accomplishment of some difficulty that the ‘failure’ to recognize it could be properly described as a failure, as evidence of some lack or ‘deformity’. By treating the experience of beauty simple, immediate and ‘uneducated’, Hutcheson had—against his own intentions—guaranteed that where judgements of beauty differ, it makes no sense to discuss which are justified. For talk of justification has no place in the domain of beauty.

A very different response, however, to the cultural diversity of experiences of beauty was made by writers closer to the edificationist spirit of de Crousaz. In 1796, for example, the youthful German author of Confessions from the Heart of an Art-Loving Friar, compared criticism of Africans for diverging from European canons of beauty to the complaint that they are not native speakers of German. And he goes on, as later edificationists were also to do, to compare the appreciation of beauty in both art and nature to the mastery of a language. Sixty years later, Charles Baudelaire wrote an unmistakeably edificationist manifesto in the opening section of a review of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855. Focussing on the—in French eyes—‘weird, contorted’ buildings admired as beautiful by the Chinese, Baudelaire writes that the European observer must ‘bring about within himself a transformation’, and by exerting ‘will-power acting on the imagination ... learn by his own effort to share in the life of the society’ where such beauty is appreciated. The process is not simply one of ‘familiarization’ or ‘acclimatization’: the observer must also develop a ‘sympathy ... so penetrating’ as to open up for him ‘a whole new world of ideas’. For Baudelaire, both those who privilege a single style of appreciation and those who lazily conclude that, in the realm of beauty, there can be no standards are mistaken. Both fail to recognize that beauty is plural, ‘multiform and multicoloured’. The proper response to

---

3 Reynolds and Voltaire both quoted in Art and Theory 1648-1815, op. cit., pp.537 and 551.
diversity is neither dogmatism nor a shrug of the shoulders, but cultivation of a ‘virtue’—which Baudelaire calls ‘impartiality’—that encourages a person from one culture to undergo that ‘transformation’ necessary to experience the beauties visible to people in another culture.5

During the twentieth century, in both the art world and the discipline of aesthetics, there were replays of earlier debates between facilists and edificationists. Conflict between the two helps, for a start, to explain the sharp dispute among artists and critics of the place, if any, of beauty within the enterprise of modernist art. One author captures the mood of the dispute well when he distinguishes between those for whom ‘beauty had died around 1895, except to refer to movie starlets and chrysanthemums’ and those for whom contemporary art strives to present a beauty that has ‘become much more difficult and strange’.6 Either, that is, one views beauty in the facilist manner (as something easy and immediate to discern) and concludes that it has no place in modernist ambitions, or—in an edificationist spirit—one endeavours to communicate ‘new’ and ‘strange’ forms of beauty different from those conventionally associated with art. Some artists, certainly, did want to rid art of any association with beauty. Barnett Newman, for example, applauded ‘the impulse of modern art to destroy’ beauty, that ‘bugbear of European art’. Modernist art works have their values, but these do not include beauty. However—and despite the popularity of books with sub-titles like ‘The Rejection of Beauty in 20th Century Art’—a number of avant-garde artists took the edificationist line of seeking for, and educating people into, what Georges Braque called ‘a new sort of beauty’, very different from the sort possessed by pretty women. The sculptor David Smith, for example, speaks of trying to achieve a ‘new beauty’, that ‘will not conform to the past’ of European art, and which, he readily concedes, will be difficult to appreciate.7 For Smith, Braque and others, rejection of ‘conventional’ beauty (of movie starlets, flowers and so) as a respectable aim of the new art is not a denial of

hitherto unrecognized kinds of beauty that - with a ‘transforming’ effort, openness, and understanding on the part of artists and audiences alike – can be rendered visible.

In 1903, G.E. Moore published *Principia Ethica*, a work whose impact owed almost as much to its remarks on beauty as to those on the good. In aesthetics and ethics alike, the work marked a revival, in some respects, of the approach to moral and aesthetic properties of Hutcheson and other ‘inner sense’ or ‘intuitionist’ thinkers two centuries earlier. Beauty is a simple property that one ‘sees’ things as having. While many different things have this property, the property itself is uniform and simple: no education or ‘transformation’ is needed to discern it, and there can be no ‘criterion’ for recognizing it. The fate of Moore’s proposal was similar to that of Hutcheson. People were impressed with the insistence that judgements of beauty are criterionless responses to perceptions, but not by the further proposal that beauty is an objective simple property of things. The prevalent view soon came to be that judgements of beauty are criterionless responses because, in a sense, they are not *judgements* at all—but, as A.J. Ayer was to put it in 1935, are uttered ‘simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response’ in other people. There is, he continues, ‘no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgements, and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics’.

Facilism has, it seems to me, remained the prevailing attitude. When a recent author, James Kirwan, proclaims that beauty is ‘a sensation [of pleasure] in the subject’, so that ‘feeling is the necessary and sufficient condition’ for calling something ‘beautiful’—in which case the idea that there can be any difficulty in recognizing beauty is absurd - he speaks for many contemporary aestheticians. And so he does when he argues that beauty is too ‘irreducibly subjective’ and ‘not a serious enough concept’ to be a significant concern of art and aesthetics. The rejection of edificationism is robust, with various authors being taken to task for proposing that ‘not everything that people take to be beautiful is beautiful’, or that there may be things that are beautiful but

---

which, as yet, people are unable to find beautiful. ‘Beautiful’, it is concluded, ‘has completely lost its meaning’ once it is treated as a predicate for something that a process of edification is necessary to experience.\(^9\)

But if facilism is the prevailing attitude among aestheticians—and one that surely reflects a popular public rhetoric about beauty—edificationist voices are still heard. Some of these voices will be heard in the course of my arguing for the attractions of edificationism.

**Beauty and the expression of virtue**

In this and the following section, I address the question, ‘What must experience of beauty be like in order for an edificationist account of beauty to be compelling?’ Different answers, no doubt, may be offered to this question, including ones that propose an essential connection between beauty and truth. But I shall focus on, and sympathetically present, just one answer. For the edificationist, the experience of beauty is intimately and indissolubly related to the good - to the discernment and practice of what makes for a good, virtuous, authentically human life.

It is not hard to see why this ‘virtue-centric’ account of beauty should appeal to the edificationist.\(^10\) After all, it seems in a rather direct way to ensure that coming to experience beauty is indeed a valuable attainment, an *edifying* one. Moreover, the account serves to explain some things that, for the edificationist, certainly stand in need of explanation. To begin with, it explains why beauty *matters* to so many people. There is nothing here to explain for facilists, for whom beauty is ‘not a serious enough concept’ to command discussion. Testimonies by countless people to a central importance that beauty has in their lives indicate, however, that there is something to explain, and an appeal to what, self-evidently, matters to people—leading a good

---


life—is surely a promising one. Second, virtue-centrism helps to explain why experiencing beauty may be ‘difficult’, why it is an attainment that requires imagination, understanding and effort. For, of course, all of these may need to be exercised in coming to recognize what is—or is intelligibly held to be—virtuous. An education for beauty, the edificationist maintains, can be no simpler than an education for virtue.

Finally, and relatedly, the virtue-centric approach explains historically shifting perceptions of beauty, including those, referred to earlier, that have occurred in relation to twentieth-century modernist art. It is no accident that Braque and others who spoke of conveying ‘a new beauty’ through their art were critics of the moral ethos of earlier, ‘conventional’ norms of beauty. In effect, they shared the same moral perception as those who called for ‘the death of beauty’ in art: they differed from them in their openness to ‘new’ forms of beauty that registered another ethos, another perception of the good. If the ‘new images’ of modern art are beautiful at all, this will not, pace Umberto Eco, be because they afford ‘the same pleasure that Raphael’s paintings gave’.

To take an older example, it would be difficult to explain the shift in medieval Japanese taste that produced the so-called wabi-sabi aesthetic - its appreciation of the weathered, humble and simple - without reference to the emerging conception of human virtue taught by Zen Buddhism. Readers will be able to supply their own examples of large changes in the ways people experience beauty that are puzzling except in relation to equally large changes in an understanding of virtue and the good. These examples suggest, against the facilist, that shifts in the experience of beauty are not, typically, ungrounded or ‘mere’ changes in fashion or taste.

An edificationist, virtue-centric view of the experience of beauty is at the confluence of two lines of thought, each focussing on one or other aspect of the Janus-faced concept of experience. One line is focussed on the content or object of experience; the other, on the process of experiencing. On the first line of thought, to experience something as

---

beautiful is to recognize it as expressing or manifesting features that, when possessed by human beings, are virtues. On the second line of thought, to experience the beautiful in this way is itself an exercise of human virtue. So let’s call them the ‘expression’ and ‘exercise’ lines respectively. In the remainder of this section, I attend to the former, before proceeding to the latter in the next section.

The ‘expression’ line was given an especially clear statement in a neglected section (§17 - ‘The Ideal of Beauty’) of Kant’s *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*. This ‘ideal, he says, is found in the first instance in ‘the human figure’, precisely because the ‘moral ideas that govern men inwardly’ find expression or become ‘visible in bodily manifestation’. These ‘ideas’, in effect, are virtues like benevolence and equanimity. Kant then proceeds to the bold claim that, considered apart from this ‘expression of the moral’, no object at all could ‘please universally’.\(^\text{12}\) For an object to be found beautiful, it must have the very qualities—boldness, say, or delicacy—that, ‘visible in bodily manifestation’, are human virtues. Something is appreciated as beautiful when it is an exemplar of features that are admired in human beings. If it can sound odd to some modern ears to apply to ‘mere’ things terms whose original reference is to human virtues, this is surely no more untoward than the familiar practice of applying ‘emotive’ terms, such as ‘sad’ or ‘poignant’, to things as well as feelings.

The idea that beauty is expressive of virtue is an ancient one. It lurks, for example, in the Platonic notion of a ‘beautiful soul’ that confers beauty on the body and comportment that manifests it, and in the Daoist insistence that a sage’s *de* (‘power’ or ‘virtue’) shows itself in beautiful demeanour and speech. It is an idea that recurs, as well, in Buddhist writings. The Buddha himself remarked that ‘beauty for a monk’ is found in his ‘perfect behaviour and habits’.\(^\text{13}\) Nor is the ‘expression’ line without its modern proponents. Alain de Botton, for example, argues that buildings are beautiful when they ‘evoke...the most attractive, significant attributes of human beings’, such as


'kindness' and 'friendliness', so that we 'sense [in them] a character we would like if it took on a living form'. Another author, inspired perhaps by Wittgenstein’s remark that ‘the human body is the best picture of the human soul’, seeks to return the notion of the ‘beautiful soul’ to a central place in our thinking about beauty – a soul that must more or less successfully be manifest in the demeanour, behaviour and discernible ‘energy’ of the person whose soul it is.

There are several ways in which the ‘expression’ line of thought might be defended. One is to emphasize its power to explain aspects of the experience of beauty. We are now in a better position, for example, to understand and confirm the claim that it explains why beauty should matter so much to people. Few things matter to us more than the virtues and vices of our fellows and ourselves. If, therefore, beauty is—or is intelligibly related to—the expression of human virtues in people’s looks, talk, comportment and bodily ‘energy’, then it is the object not of casual pleasure, but of an appreciation located in the economy of our most central concerns.

Another way to defend the ‘expression’ line is to distinguish it from several other, but more vulnerable, attempts to establish a close relationship between beauty and the good. Let me mention just two of these, both of which invite the label ‘moralism’. First, there is the view that beautiful objects—buildings, say—must inculcate morally desirable attitudes and, more generally, have morally beneficial effects. Now the virtue-centrist may hope, even expect, that some beautiful buildings will have such effects: but this hope is separate from the virtue-centric claim that buildings are beautiful in and through expressing one or more human virtues. Second, there is the idea that a discerning person will not recognize as beautiful something known to have a morally pernicious provenance. This idea has some currency at present among environmental ethicists and aestheticians who have argued, for example, that once a person knows that the fresh green lawns of gardens in New Mexico seriously deplete vital water resources, ‘aesthetic disillusionment’ should occur and he or she will

---

now find the lawns vulgar and garish. One suspects, here, a confusion between an aesthetic response being changed—from positive to negative—by morally relevant information and a suspension of aesthetic response on the grounds that it is inappropriate to admire what one now knows to be so damaging. But, anyway, this idea ignores what is crucial on the ‘expression’ line, namely that beauty (or ugliness) must express or manifest virtue (or vice). The mere fact that something is implicated with a morally questionable practice does not mean that it is an expression or epiphany of the practice. To take an analogy: a face may look ugly when we discern in it an expression of evil, but not when we simply find out that its owner is an evil person. To be ugly, as Wittgenstein might put it, the face must be a ‘picture’ of an ugly soul.

**Beauty and the exercise of virtue**

The second virtue-centric line of thought, the ‘exercise’ line, may seem independent of the one just discussed, but will turn out to be intimately related to it. The focus, now, is on the experiencing of beauty, rather than on what is experienced, and the claim is that experiencing beauty is itself an exercise of virtue, an important ingredient in the psyche of a person whose life goes well.

The ‘exercise’ line is itself the confluence of two initially distinguishable but finally merging directions of thought. The first is prompted by a famous and enduring feature that has been attributed to the experience of beauty—its ‘disinterestedness’. By this term, Kant intended an experience uncontaminated by practical, utilitarian concerns, by ones for the moral law, and ones for conceptual categorization. This independence of the experience from considerations of duty has tempted many commentators to regard Kantian disinterestedness as demonstrating ‘the autonomy of aesthetics’ from the ethical sphere. This ignores Kant’s remarks, discussed above, on ‘the ideal of beauty’ as well as his proposal that beauty is a ‘symbol of morality’, that there is a deep analogy between

---

experience of the beautiful and moral consciousness. But whatever the case with Kant himself, later philosophers have certainly found ethical significance in the disinterested character of experiencing beauty. Schopenhauer, for one, maintains that in the ‘silencing’ of the individual will and of self-consciousness that takes place in this experience, there is not only the promise of real knowledge of ‘the true nature of things’, but of the arising of selfless ‘compassion’ and an ‘abolition’ of the ‘suffering’ that proceeds from preoccupation with the self. More recently, a main theme in Iris Murdoch’s writings was that it is through an absorbed perception of the beauty of, say, birds, that ‘unselfing’—release from control by ‘the fat relentless ego’—is possible.

The connection between virtue and experience of the beautiful was, of course, perceived long before the authors referred to in the previous paragraph. Both Schopenhauer and Murdoch, with their talk of ‘abolishing the self’ or ‘unselfing’, are aware that they are recalling the wisdom of the Buddha. Even if one is not, on metaphysical grounds, especially fond of such talk, it is hard to resist the ethical appeal of cultivating disinterested experience. For, it is an experience that invokes such virtues as openness to and mindfulness of things, of allowing things to show up for what they are, independently of our preconceptions and prejudices. From describing the experience of beauty in those terms, it is a short step to investing it with such virtues as respect for the integrity of things. Thus we find Heidegger linking the central virtue in his later philosophy, Gelassenheit (‘releasement’, ‘letting be’), to the experience of beauty as ‘liberating’ us to the ‘disclosure’ of things as they are. More than two millennia earlier, a Daoist thinker whom Heidegger admired, Zhuangzi, spoke of how, if we can only ‘negate’ prejudices and ossified ‘likes and dislikes’, we may come to appreciate things by ‘follow[ing] along the way each thing is of itself’.

---

In short, if openness, mindfulness, and selfless respect for the integrity of things belong among the virtues, then disinterested experience of beauty is an exercise of virtue. But disinterestedness is not the only form of this exercise. For, in at least one attractive vision of the good life, there are further virtues that are engaged and flexed in the experience of beauty. These might be called the virtues of spontaneity—not in the sense of capricious, ‘spur of the moment’ behaviour or indulgence in actes gratuits, but in the sense of an attentive yet flexible and goalless experiential responsiveness to things. These virtues will include what Kant intends when writing of an aesthetic experience that ‘quickens the cognitive faculties’ and of the ‘free play’ of imagination and understanding that a sense of something’s beauty prompts. They will include, too, what a modern aesthetician has called ‘psychic vitality’, something available only under ‘favourable circumstances’ where we are free from the pursuit of aims and the pressures of rules and conventions.

These virtues of spontaneity are not unconnected with disinterestedness. Indeed, one writer, taking to task those who construe disinterestedness simply as the absence of certain interests and desires, claims that Kant’s disinterestedness just is what he calls a ‘quickening of the cognitive faculties’, hence a ‘heightening of consciousness, [a] state of activity’. It is legitimate, at any rate, to regard the openness, mindfulness and selflessness of the disinterested stance as conditions for the exercise of spontaneity, conditions that are in turn encouraged by an incipient heightened responsiveness to things.

The virtues of disinterestedness and spontaneity come nicely together in the notion of reverie articulated in Rousseau’s final work. Reverie is, for Rousseau, the appropriate experience to enjoy in the face of ‘the beautiful system’ of nature. It is, he writes, a ‘pure and disinterested contemplation’ during which a person ‘forgets himself’, with everything that might spoil the enjoyment of plants or other natural

---

21 The Critique of Judgement, op.cit., Sections 9 and 49.
phenomena, like attention to one’s ‘needs ... and practical concerns’ set aside. But, he emphasizes, it is not at all a purely passive, somnolent form of contemplation. Rather, reverie is a state in which the mind is ‘entirely free and ... ideas follow their bent without resistance or constraint’.24 As a later French thinker, much influenced by Rousseau, put it, reverie is the state in which ‘we open up the world’ and explore it; reverie takes us into ‘the space of elsewhere’.25

The ‘exercise’ route to virtue-centrism will only be compelling, naturally, if the various virtues discussed over the last few paragraphs really are virtues, really do belong in the make-up of a good, fulfilled, authentically human life. It is well beyond the remit of this paper to establish that they do. The most I can do here is to draw attention to various conceptions of the good life that, despite their differences, find in spontaneity, reverie, responsiveness, disinterestedness and so on components of a life well led. Conceptions like that of the mature Rousseau or, perhaps, the Zen tradition of Buddhism. A dispensation that clearly accords ethical status to such exercises is found in the classical texts of Daoism. In just a few words, Zhuangzi draws together the themes of selflessness, respect for the integrity of things, flexibility of mind and psychic vitality, and relates them all to the Way that our lives, like everything else, should follow. Through letting the mind ‘roam’ and through your ‘vital energy’, you ‘follow the rightness of the way each thing already is without allowing yourself the least bias. Then the world will be in order’.26

**Beauty, virtue and edification**

In this concluding section, I want briefly to make or expand on a number of connections – first, between the two lines of virtue-centrism

---


26 Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings, op.cit., p.51.
I articulated; second, between virtue-centrism and edificationism; and finally, between the notion of beauty and a number of concepts that might elucidate that notion in manner congenial to the edificationist.

It might seem that the two lines of thought considered in the two preceding sections are quite separate. Is it not possible to agree that beauty is expressive of virtue without agreeing that experiencing beauty is itself to be exercising virtue – and vice-versa? But, in fact, there must be the following close connection between the expression and exercise of virtue in the experience of beauty. Someone who exercises virtues —selflessness, respect for the integrity of things, and so on—in appreciating the beauty of things will presumably manifest this in various ways: through demeanour, comportment, style of speech and the like. But, then, precisely because this is a manifestation or expression of virtue, it must itself be recognized as beautiful. If it is generally true that something is experienced as beautiful when it is appreciated as an expression of virtue, then the point will apply in the particular case of the behaviour of someone who exercises virtue through the appreciation of beauty. Put succinctly, there is beauty in the appreciation of beauty.27

Next, it may be useful to expand a little on the connection I made between the virtue-centric approach to beauty and the edificationist account of the experience of beauty discussed earlier. In a fairly direct and obvious manner, virtue-centrism provides edificationists with what they want—a view of beauty which renders the experience of beauty edifying and explains why coming to experience beauty is not a facile procedure, but one that requires understanding, imagination, openness, and so on. Indeed, what have now been identified as virtues exercised in the experiencing of beauty turn out to be components in the processes of experience described by the edificationist. This helps to secure the claim that the experience of beauty is indeed an edifying one. In a rich passage, Baudelaire elaborates his claim, cited earlier, that in coming to experience beauty that is new to one, a ‘transformation’ is typically necessary. Among the elements

27 This is, perhaps, Michael McGhee’s point when he writes that to ‘seek moral beauty in others is already a formation of moral beauty’ in the seeker. *Transformations of Mind, op.cit*, p.190.
contributes to this transformation that Baudelaire lists are sympathy, patience, modesty, impartiality, and openness. Only when these are exercised may hitherto ‘strange’ beauties ‘penetrate ... like the steam of a scented bath house’. The relevant point, in the present context, is that these prerequisites for the edifying transformation of which Baudelaire speaks are among the virtues exercised in experiencing beauty.

Special attention, perhaps, should be paid to virtues like openness, for these are of special relevance to the issue of variety and difference in aesthetic experience with which we began the discussion of edification. There exists, these days, a reasonably wide consensus that ethical virtue is ‘plural’, in the sense that many dispositions or character traits belong to the make-up of the person whose life goes well and is fulfilled. There is some consensus, too, that one virtue may be very different from another and difficult to combine with it (compassion and justice, say, or tolerance and commitment). This implies that we should expect to find different ‘tables of virtues’ in different cultures and that, where we do, this is more likely to reflect differences about the priority of certain virtues than blunt, irresolvable differences as to what is virtuous. If so, the task when confronted with a different ‘table of virtues’ is to try to appreciate why, in the culture in question, certain virtues are salient—an appreciation that will typically demand reflection on why, in one’s home ‘table’, these virtues are obscured or marginalized. If all of this is right—and if there is the intimate connection between virtue and beauty that I have urged—then it justifies the edificationist’s claim that differences over beauty are contextualized, deep and explicable ones, not ‘mere’ differences in facile subjective responses about which there’s nothing to be said. The discourse of beauty will, one might say, inherit the seriousness generally accorded the discourse of virtue.

Facilism, we saw, is encouraged by simple characterizations of the experience of beauty as ‘a sensation of pleasure’ and of beautiful things as ‘occasions of pleasure’. This suggests that the virtue-centrist and edificationist will characterize beauty and its experience in a different way, one that will not encourage a facilist response and that will allow for an intimate relationship between beauty and virtue. So, if not with pleasure, then with what should the notion of beauty be connected? An answer is not to be found in the ordinary use of the term ‘beauty’. The
term is used too variously for one to speak of the ordinary use, and some familiar uses are surely too casual for a general conception of beauty to be constrained by. For example, ‘Beautiful!’, said by a very thirsty man as he drinks a bottle of Pepsi-Cola. Arguably, one should attend only to those ‘serious’ uses where speakers would not be willing to replace ‘beautiful’ by ‘nice’, ‘pretty’, ‘attractive’ and other adjectives more closely tied to simple feelings of pleasure.

If the characterization of beauty is not to be arbitrary, however, it must be more or less faithful to some tradition of thinking and speaking about beauty. It is not, I think, too difficult to identify such a tradition, one that stretches back to ancient Greece and in which the experience of the beautiful is connected with those of love, yearning and longing. ‘Beauty is the object of longing’, writes one contemporary philosopher, may not be an adequate definition of ‘beauty’, but it does provide ‘a basis for trying to find something common to certain kinds of human experiences and relations to things’ 28 — experiences and relations of a kind that a long tradition of discourse about beauty, from Plato to Aquinas to Ficino to Schopenhauer to Baudelaire and James Joyce has explored. There is no space in this paper to defend this tradition in which the experience of beauty is in the vicinity of longing and love: but it is in such a tradition that an edificationist and virtue-centric account of this experience might be grounded.

---

Section II

Somaesthetics and Aesthetic Perception
Somaesthetics and the Utopian Body

Richard Shusterman

I

When the Englishman Sir Thomas More coined the term “utopia”, he relied on Greek etymology to designate the ideal state he envisaged but which existed as yet in no actual place. The term utopia literally means “no place”, but though the prefix “u” (in Greek “ou”) denotes “no” or “not”, it is homophonic in English with another Greek prefix “eu” which denotes “good”, thus giving More’s book *Utopia* a punning title that provocatively suggests that its good place is really no place. If More’s utopia portrayed an ideal, fictive society in an imaginary site, I wish in this essay to explore a very real place that can also be paradoxically described as both a no-place and a good place.

I refer to what I call the soma—the lived, sentient, purposeful, dynamic human body that forms the focus of my project of somaesthetics.¹ I

---

The soma or lived body is clearly a site of real existence but, as some astute philosophers have realized, it cannot be simply defined as existing only in the realm of physical, measurable space. For in its dimension of perceptive subjectivity and purposive intentionality, the soma defies localization as a mere object defined by spatial coordinates, but rather is the active perceptive center that generates our sense of place and defines the spatial coordinates we live in—our sense of up and down, forward and backward, left and right. Moreover, if the body can be claimed to be a crucial locus of human good, the site where we experience most if not all our human pleasures (even those of the mind), these goods seem paradoxically most present when the body, in which they are anchored, is somehow absent from consciousness, effaced in the fullness of what it experiences.

In this paper I want to explore these ideas of the body as a no-place that is a good place through some texts of Western and East-Asian philosophy. I will then try to describe my efforts to explore these ideas experientially rather than merely conceptually, to explore them through my practical training in zazen with a distinguished Zen master in Japan. It is not easy to formulate the philosophical arguments for conceiving the soma as something not definable by place and whose experience of good is an experience of absence. But it is still much more difficult to explain or describe the good no-place of zazen’s meditative experience. Even if it seems impossible to capture that somatic experience conceptually, it may nonetheless be worth trying to describe it through my narrative. At the very least, such a strategy could be a way of pointing to meanings that resist conceptual formulation and require the having of a direct or immediate experience for their proper understanding (yet tend to require the mediation of disciplined training for such experiential immediacy). In any case, as my failures in zazen training were instructive in directing toward better understanding and practice, so my narrative (despite its limitations as one person’s story that can claim no universal validity) may nonetheless be useful to

Shusterman, Rorty, Foucault”, Human Studies, 27 (2004), 241-258. The most detailed account of somaesthetics is found in my Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For Chinese discussions of my project of somaesthetics, see, for example, ....
prompt scholars toward similar experiments so that our experiences can be collectively pooled and analyzed.

II

I cannot take the time to outline the diverse roles that the body plays in the often very different utopian theories of Western culture. In some they are working bodies (though never bodies overwhelmed with punishing labor) while in others they are more bodies of leisure, where bodily needs are supplied without the need for bodily effort. In some the body’s sensual pleasures are emphasized while in others they are put more in the background. If we turn to East-Asian culture, we must face the question of whether it indeed has a real utopian tradition. Of course, there can be no doubt that the communist revolution in china was inspired by Utopian ideas, as was perhaps Mao’s Great Leap Forward or even the late Qing Reform of 1898. But the utopianism in these movements could have well been derived from Western utopianism. If some scholars argue that classical Chinese thought has no real utopian tradition because it is much more pragmatic than teleological, other scholars will quickly counter by pointing to the famous but very short story by the Chinese nature poet Tao Yuanming (365-427), whose Chinese title 桃花源記 (in pinyin, Tao Hua Yuan Ji) can be translated literally as the “Tale (or Record) of the Peach Blossom Source” but whose translation on the internet bears the title “Peach Blossom Shangri-la,” where the term Shangri-la is clearly a Western importation, the term being derived from the name of the fictional Himalayan paradise in James Hilton’s 1933 novel Lost Horizon, which however can be seen as based on the Tibetan Buddhist notion of Shambhala—a mythic place of utopian tranquility, which is also often interpreted as a real geographical place somewhere in Asia. In the brief Peach Blossom story, there is little talk of the body, whose presence is only felt through its role in work, clothing, food and drink: where the lone fisherman visitor to the area saw that the “men and women working in the fields all wore clothing that looked like that of foreign lands” and that they prepared him a meal of chicken and wine.
Let me then turn from historical notions of utopia to the philosophical idea of the soma and its relationship to place. With respect to the soma, or its more common yet misleading term “body,” we find in both Western and East-Asian philosophy rich traditions of philosophical inquiry from which our discussion can draw. I will concentrate here on some modern Western and ancient Chinese sources, though I should begin by making some of my own general remarks about the soma or the body as a living, sentient, perceptive, purposive entity. When I speak of body in this paper, I will speak of it in the sense of soma, and not in the most general sense in which a corpse or lifeless body (human or non-human) is a material or physical body. In traditional Chinese thought, there are a number of words used for body. If the body is today denoted by the compound character 身体 (shenti), in classical times it was often designated each of these individual characters separately and was also sometimes symbolized by other characters, such as 形 (xíng) and 軀 (qu) to express more particular aspects of embodiment (largely connected with form, shape, or mere size). If the ti body in classical thought is closely associated with generative powers of physical life and growth and the multiplicity of parts (such as the bodies four limbs), the shen body is closely identified with the person’s ethical, perceptive, purposive body that one cultivates and so it even serves as a term for self. The concept of shenti thus suggests the soma’s double status as living thing and perceiving subjectivity.

The soma is particularly emblematic of the fundamental ambiguity of human existence. Both subject and object, the soma displays many features that together define the ambiguity of our human condition. The soma displays both power and vulnerability, both dignity and

---

2 The term 軀 qu as body has connotations of mere physicality and limitations (of mortality or of other limitation. It is is used in a famous passage of Xunzi’s “Exhortation to Learning” (1.9) where it suggests body as mere unrefined material that is measured in size; or in the Mencius (7B.29), where it is used to describe the body of a petty person who Mencius knew would soon die. The term 形 (xìng) for body relates specifically to form or shape, either the outside, visible physical frame or an inner shape like the skeleton. For more on these different body terms, see Deborah Sommer, “Boundaries of the Ti Body.” Asia Major Third Series Volume XXI. (2008): 293-324.
indignity, both freedom and constraint, the commonality of somatic
properties that all humans share and the individual differences that
make each person a specific individual. Moreover, as both an
indispensable source of perception and an insurmountable limit to it,
the body epitomizes our human situation of knowledge and ignorance.
Because the body is thoroughly affected by the world’s objects and
energies, it incorporates their regularities and thus can grasp them in a
direct, practical way without needing to engage in reflective thought.
Moreover, to see the world, we must see from it some point of view, a
position that determines our horizon and directional planes of
observation, that sets the meaning of left and right, up and down,
forward and backward, inside and outside, and eventually shapes also
the metaphorical extensions of these notions in our conceptual thought.
The soma supplies that primordial point of view.

As William James argues, in putting the body at the core of his
philosophy of experience, “The body is the storm-center, the origin of
coordinates, the constant place of stress in [our] experience-train.
Everything circles round it, and is felt from its point of view.” “The
world experienced,” he elaborates, “comes at all times with our body
as its center, center of vision, center of action, center of interest.” 3
But every point of view has its limitations, and so is that provided by the
body, whose sensory teleceptors all have limits of sensory range and
focus. Our eyes are fixed forward in the head, so that we cannot see
behind it or even our see our own face without the aid of reflecting
devices.

Yet paradoxically, because the soma constitutes our subjective center
of experience and thus defines our sense of space in the world and
determines our spatial coordinates, Merleau-Ponty argues that it cannot
be properly located in terms of other places or defined in terms of
physical space. In this sense, it is an experiential, intentional center that
is a sort of mysteriously obscure and generative place-defining
no-place (so in that sense a utopia). As Merleau-Ponty puts it, “The
word ‘here’ applied to my body does not refer to a determinate position
in relation to other positions or to external co-ordinates, but the laying

3 See William James, “The Experience of Activity,” in Essays in Radical
down of the first co-ordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, the situation of the body in face of its tasks. Bodily space can be distinguished from external space and envelop its parts instead of spreading them out, because it is the darkness needed in the theatre to show up the performance, the background of somnolence or reserve of vague power against which the gesture and its aim stand out, the zone of not being \textit{in front of which} precise beings, figures, and forms can come to light….One’s own body is the third term, always tacitly understood, in the figure-background structure, and every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space.\textsuperscript{4} In short, Merleau-Ponty defines the body’s space as “\textit{la zone de non-être}” (a zone of nonbeing) which is the primordial frame or no-place that allows other places and their objects, background and foreground, to be situated and become present to us.

Just as the crucial place of the lived body is expressed in its being a mysteriously indefinable no-place that defines other places, so the body seems to function most marvelously when it erases itself from our attention and takes no place in reflective consciousness, so that our entire focus is on the task at hand and not on the bodily means used to achieve it. William James argues, “We walk a beam the better the less we think of the position of our feet upon it. We pitch or catch, we shoot or chop the better the less” we focus on our own bodily parts and feelings, and the more exclusively on our targets. “Keep your eye on the place aimed at, and your hand will fetch it; think of your hand and you will very likely miss your aim.”\textsuperscript{5} Merleau-Ponty likewise insists that the body wonderfully “guides us” but “only on condition that we stop analyzing it and make use of it”.\textsuperscript{6}

I have elsewhere argued that James and Merleau-Ponty underestimate the importance of reflective body-consciousness and the dangers of relying on unreflective action, because our spontaneous habits are often defective and we need to examine them through reflective body

\textsuperscript{6} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Signs} (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 78,89.
awareness in order to correct them. But these philosophers are certainly right to insist that when the lived body is working at its utopian best, it occupies no place in explicit consciousness while constituting the place through which we humans perceive all of which we are consciousness and perform all we perform. Normally, we notice our bodies only when they fail to perform what we wish or when they give us pain, discomfort, or concern (for health, appearance, etc). In the satisfying experience of perfect functioning (sometimes described as “flow”), we only notice the object “at hand” not the hand that takes it. This idea is strongly expressed in some classics of Chinese thought, especially in Daoist writings. In the Zhuangzi we are reminded: “You forget your feet when the shoes are comfortable. You forget your waist when the belt is comfortable. Understanding forgets right and wrong when the mind is comfortable.” Moreover, elsewhere in the same book, we read how Yan Hui, Confucius’s best student, impressed his teacher by improving himself by forgetting his body (metaphorically expressed in the idea of smashing it into oblivion) by just “sitting down and forgetting everything.” This seems a remarkable foreshadowing of Zen’s practice of sitting meditation (zazen), which the Japanese Zen master Dōgen later describes as “sitting fixedly, thinking of no thinking.”

Pleasure provides a further example of the body’s utopian meaning as a good place that is also no distinct place. While pains are clearly localizable (e.g., headaches, backaches, etc.), our pleasures (which always, even when mental, involve the body) cannot usually be properly located in an isolated body part. For example, my enjoyment

---


8 See *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), the chapter “Mastering Life” 128; notice also how in the same chapter, wood carver, Qing says his skill derives from the calmness of “forget[ing] I have four limbs and a form and a body”, p.127. For the passage about Yan Hui, see the chapter “The Great and Venerable Teacher,” p.87. For Dōgen, see Carl Bielefeldt (trans.), *Dōgen’s Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 181.

9 There are, however, some possible exceptions to this Aristotelian concept of pleasure as an activity rather than a localized bodily sensation. We do experience
of a game of tennis is certainly bodily, but it is absurd to say that I enjoyed it in my feet or my racket-hand or any other body part. Though I may taste my food and wine only with my mouth and throat, my enjoyment of eating and drinking cannot be confined to these locations; neuroscience has shown that most of the flavor of taste comes through the aroma sensed through the nose; our pleasures of eating and drinking also include the motor actions involved in eating and drinking, which of course are not limited to the place of our organs of taste and smell. Nor does it make much sense to speak of our pleasures of eating and drinking as being located instead in every single part of my body as a material whole. Moreover, as already noted, our attention in such pleasures is primarily focused on the objects of pleasure (the food or drink) not the body parts through which these pleasures are realized. Indeed, some of our pleasures of eating and drinking are distinctively social pleasures of taking pleasure in those persons with whom we eat and drink, and also in the conversation we have them; and such shared social pleasures which often involve intellectual components cannot be easily located in one physical part of the soma.

III

I now turn to an account of my quest to explore experientially the Zen notion of working through the body to forget about the body and experience the somatic self as essentially a no-place, a no-self. The pleasures of zazen or sitting meditation require a great deal more mental concentration than ordinary eating and drinking. But their powerfully spiritual nature is perfectly consistent with their distinctive and demanding somatic aspect. One must sustain a strenuously strict focus on the breathing of one’s own body in order to reach a joyful experience in which the body seems to melt away into a no-place that is also a marvelously good place, an experience of the blissful though

some pleasurable sensations that we identify as felt in a particular bodily part. Even Wittgenstein, who resisted common tendencies to explain affective feelings or emotions in terms of sensations, speaks of “the delightful way the various parts of the body differ in temperature.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 11.
paradoxical self-recognition of the basic Buddhist truth that our conventional sense of individual autonomous selfhood is an illusion. I sought the path toward such a Zen experience when spending the academic year 2002-2003 as a visiting professor at Hiroshima University. It was not easy to find my way to a concrete experience of Zen, since the Japanese scholars who had invited me did not welcome my wish to spend some time training in a Zen cloister. Fearful that I would be disappointed or even mistreated there, or perhaps merely suspicious of Zen monastic life as an expression of outdated religious views that did not suit their academically nourished ideals of Western modernity, my Japanese hosts seemed baffled by my request to put me in touch with an accomplished Zen master who would be willing to give me personal, intensive instruction in a genuine monastic setting, somewhere beyond the superficial cultural tourism that some commercial Zen establishments have learned to market to visiting westerners in Japan and that my hosts had showed me on the internet. I explained my interest in Zen was not tourism, but nor was it real religious interest. I was not really seeking nor did I expect to find, through a brief taste of Zen life, an easy shortcut to supreme enlightenment. As part of my study of body-mind disciplines (which form a core area of my research in somaesthetics and body consciousness, I simply wanted to learn zazen practice from a master teacher in a genuine environment of Zen training. Fortunately, at one of my lectures in Tokyo I met a young researcher who specialized in the study of traditional Japanese teaching methods (including the Zen arts of tea, archery, and swordsmanship), and he found me an ideal place and teacher for my pursuit of Zen.

That ideal place, the Shorinkutsu-dojo, could also be described (in terms of the standards of big-city life I was accustomed to) as being a no place, since the cloister (small in size and most humble in furnishings) is situated far from the center and mainstream of bustling Japanese life. The dojo looks down from a hill, well beyond the edge of a tiny town, Tadanoumi, in a tranquil rural and mountainous area on the coast of Japan’s beautiful Inland Sea. The dojo belongs to the Soto school of Zen, established in Japan by Dogen (1200-1253) who developed this school’s teaching from his experiences of sitting meditation in China as a disciple of Ti’ien-t’ung Ju-ching. In contrast to the Rinzai school of Zen in which there is more emphasis on literary
texts and the study of koans, the Soto school is more strictly focused on the actual bodily practice of sitting meditation and on the strict, stern, uncompromising discipline associated with teaching it, where the teacher will sometimes resort to shouts or blows to convey his message to the student. Since my Japanese language skills in Japanese were very limited and seemed far inferior to my somatic skills of body-mind attunement (developed through my training as a professional Feldenkrais practitioner and my study of yoga and tai chi chuan), I thought the body-centered Soto approach would be best for me, despite the risk of unpleasant auditory and corporeal violence. The dojo’s Zen master or “Roshi”, Kido Inoue, who studied philosophy at Hiroshima University and is passionately interested in spreading the teaching of Zen to a world that he thinks is in dire need of it, was very welcoming of my visit, but his open and friendly disposition did not interfere with the strict disciplinary role he had to play as my teacher.  

It is, of course, impossible to convey the teaching of Zen in mere words; its true meaning has to be experienced to be understood. As Roshi Kido says, “if you want to know and savor the essence of [Zen’s] truth, you have to sit and see for yourself”, as the Bodhidarma “sat for nine years without expounding a word”, meditating in a cave – a hollow space connoting the emptiness of a no-place that nonetheless constitutes the place of enlightenment. But though words cannot capture the experience of zazen (or of other nondiscursive practices such as dance), they can be useful tools for guiding the student to deploy the right somatic and psychic methods for reaching the desired action and experience. So I carefully heeded Roshi’s instructions.

Concentration on one’s breath, he insisted, is the key to zazen, while the recommended “lotus” positions of sitting should be understood only as the best means for already well-trained practitioners to sustain such concentration for long periods of sitting. (If these positions are so uncomfortable for the beginner that they distract from one’s attention to breathing, then a more comfortable way of sitting should be employed). Yet, concentration on one’s breath is not the final end in itself; it is a means to achieve greater mindfulness of the concrete

---

10 Various texts of Roshi Kido, including translations into French and English) are available on the dojo’s website: http://www.geocities.jp/shorinkutsu/
reality of the present moment (what Roshi, following Dogen, calls “the now”) and ultimately a means to experience enlightenment or satori. Since breathing is always in the present moment, concentrating on the breath helps break the habits of thought that take us away from “the now”, chains of association that distract the mind with thoughts of past events and future projects, concealing the truth of the present with a veil of images ranging from regrets of earlier actions to worries about what lies ahead. The importance of focusing on the moment is why Roshi Kido, unlike many teachers of meditation, does not recommend the technique of counting breath (sosokukan), because its serialization tempts the mind to past and future. If we are counting our third breath, we are implicitly looking back to the second and ahead to the third. One reason why it is useful for Zen to work through somatic means like breathing is because the soma is always present in the here and now of real experience, even though it is typically absent from explicit consciousness and not (as perceptive subjectivity) defined in terms of mere physical place.

In concentrating on my breathing, I became gradually aware of many previously unappreciated aspects of my bodily experience. I noticed more precisely how my breathing changes when attention is directed to it. I discerned a difference, hard to capture in words, between thinking of my breathing (where I felt totally absorbed in its presence) and thinking of my “breathing” in a less complete way where it seemed more like thinking about the idea of breathing or thinking about breathing. I felt a difference between focusing my concentration fiercely (as if gripping tightly) and attending more tenderly (as if gently holding a delicate flower). I found that the latter way of following my breath proved better for sustaining my focus and generating pleasure, making each breath taste cleaner, sweeter, and fresher than I had ever previously experienced. I noticed not only the different rhythms of breathing and the different parts of my body in which they resonated but also learned to discern those parts in which each breath was initiated. By directing attention to these different aspects of my breathing and then noticing the changes this attention introduced to it, I was able to sustain a longer, clearer focus on my breath and resist the tendency for my mind to wander elsewhere.

On the sixth day of meditation, I suddenly felt a thrilling sensation of
“breathing through my ears”, an experience I had never even imagined and still cannot properly understand conceptually, but which I repeatedly achieved in my meditation and which Roshi seemed to know well and appreciate. While attending to such breathing the following day, I felt a whole symphony of movement in my head, neck, shoulders, chest, and abdomen. At the center of it all were the extremely clear sound of my heart and the feeling of its quiet rhythm as I sat tranquilly. I could hear its double beat and feel its different places (and directions) of contraction, sensing the flow of blood that was pumped out the aorta. The heart beat was clearest at my pauses in breathing, and I therefore lingered and prolonged those pauses, especially since it seemed to make the subsequent breath even more deliciously fresh and fragrant.

Roshi was neither surprised by my discoveries nor pleased by my manipulations. Once the mind is no longer distracted by its familiar habits of dwelling on images of the outside world, he explained, the phenomena of one’s inner bodily life manifest themselves much more clearly to our consciousness. But the aim of meditation is not somatic introspection in itself nor the intensification of pleasure through such tricks as holding the breath (which he argued was unnatural). The aim is a mindful consciousness that is so fully absorbed in the reality of the moment that it no longer feels itself as separate from that reality. My breathing tricks and somaesthetic diagnoses were vestigial intellectualist handicaps to my progress, holding me to a perception of my body as a distinct place to be objectified, explored, and manipulated through a separate, inquiring scopic consciousness (and thus keeping me somewhat ensnared in a body-mind duality). Though it proved very useful in strengthening my breath concentration and shutting out external thoughts, I had to learn to lose this analytic, manipulative consciousness of somatic introspection, so as to feel that I was not so much controlling my breathing as simply following and being absorbed in it.

Occasionally, by the end of my stay, I could reach this more radical experience of non-dualism where there was no longer a consciousness of self and breath but simply an overwhelming non-personal perception of breathing that pervaded all my consciousness and carried the breathing forward on its own accord, producing an intense feeling
of profound fulfillment enhanced by the delicious pleasures of fresh air and rhythmic motion. More than ever, the lived body or soma became a good place, but its sense of being a distinct place with well-defined borders (whether physical or phenomenological) completely dissolved into an expansively flowing field of experience, pulsating with joy and an unbounded wholeness whose fullness is also an emptiness of distinctions between consciousness and its different objects and places. The now of the moment is no enduring place, but by its essence vanishes into the next moment. Though it begins as an essential place for disciplined meditative practice, the Zen body or soma (which involves an integrated living body-mind) is then experienced as a no-place when that practice is successful, exemplifying (albeit in a more blissfully powerful form) the common way that the body effaces itself into the wider field of action when it is functioning at its happy best—a living, breathing paradigm of the double meaning of utopia.
The World Is My Body:

‘Ecology and Aesthetic Perception’

Jale Erzen

As a discipline that is concerned with the quality of the environment, Environmental Aesthetics cannot avoid the discourse on the earth’s condition from being on its most urgent agenda today. One can say that, with the growing threat on the earth’s ecological equilibrium, the issue of aesthetics within ecological concerns, may seem naïve and obsolete. However, this paper offers Environmental Aesthetics as a radical approach to environmental problems, basing its discourse on the belief that the major issue related to the future concerns how human beings regard their relation to the world.

From such a vantage point, aesthetics is not seen merely as concerned with beauty, art, and sensory qualities, but essentially as a matter of relationships and their congeniality to life processes. One of the basic understandings upon which the arguments of this paper are structured is that the earth’s deterioration is mankind’s own disease, of which s/he is unaware. The disease belongs to h/her own being, to h/her perceptual incapacity. The cultivation of awareness about the reciprocity between human beings and the earth can best be made possible through Environmental Aesthetics.

Perceptual Problems

One of the problems to be admitted is the fragmentation of sensory faculties, and how perception has been conditioned to function in limited and categorical fashion, through the exploitative manipulation of the environment. The unconscious rupture between the awareness of the body from the consciousness of the world, as well as the separation
of different realms of interest and knowledge create severe deficiencies in perception. These perceptual problems are the result of a historically evolved cultural approach which we can call ‘dialectical’ and which has given priority to technology and to industry, suppressing relationships with the environing world. Finally capitalistic modes of production are given priority over individual creativity. This means that there is no free space left for the free play of the imagination, which is possible through unrepressed perception. This incapacity can be repaired by a radical re-education of the senses through aesthetic means. In this regard, all kinds of art and participation in cultural events can be effective. Such an education can reform the awareness of the continuity amongst all existences of the earth. An effective art and cultural education will repair perception which has suffered when the sensory faculties have been impaired.

Another effective way of dealing with impaired perception is education of the senses through experiences in nature. Living in the city and being conditioned to specific behavioral patterns in urban life has dulled our senses. If we are in nature, we are surrounded by unpredictable and unexpected movements, sounds, lights, etc, which create an awakening of the senses, an attention to happenings in the environment. One of the reasons for our insensitivity to the environment is also being removed from nature, from the feeling that we are surrounded by an unfathomable world. The way human beings regarded their relation to the world, well before industrialization, is evident in the religious maps that were produced in the middle ages, with the body of Christ representing the earth. This may have been a religious outlook on the world, but it also reflects an unconscious relationship between the body and the earth.

The separation of art from science and of the aesthetic from the practical is reflected in the contemporary environment in the way the environment is zoned into areas of practical and aesthetic use. This zoning is conspicuous in today’s cities, where criteria of practicality and aesthetics follow basically economic concerns. The notion that perception should function according to prescribed aims not only creates a schizophrenic society, but also refutes congenial involvement in perceiving and experiencing the world. If one can repress or limit one’s perception to liberate it again when an appropriate context arises,
then the immediacy and sincerity of perceptual communication with the world is undermined.

In contemporary culture, aesthetic perception has been limited mostly to art or to recreation, while for the most part, people perceive and behave according to the fastest, easiest and most profitable interests, ignoring or being blind to a lot of information that would otherwise put them into closer and more responsible contact with the world. The approach which promotes artificiality by conditioning one’s responses to the environment creates corresponding artificiality, as in pseudo-aesthetic environments that are designed in today’s cities. Aesthetic experience, thus, is seen as something practical and its goal which should be the refinement of the senses and reception of meaning becomes distorted along with the environments that are designed and offered as ‘aesthetic’. In reality, usually what is aimed at is easy salesmanship, and aesthetic applications are geared towards media promoted taste. This popular taste is promoted and reinforced in exactly the same way that pseudo-aesthetics is applied to the environment. In most cases, then, the urban environment becomes a realm of dullness and sensory numbness through over-design, kitsch, artificiality and bombardment of the senses, or their repression.

Art and Nature

One may claim that today the realms of freedom and of aesthetic perception may be found only either in art or in nature. Art, when not merely commercial, seems to be for some people a necessary retreat into the poetic and the spiritual. Art invites and makes possible a vision which brings about an awareness of the subjectivity of the ‘other’, and which regards the perceived as a ‘being’ even if it is a lifeless thing. What makes the observer or the reader’s participation in an artistic or literary representation possible is its having been formed and articulated with an approach that viewed the subject as a live and participating agent in the present, with the observer. In contrast to this approach, today’s dominant rationalism starts with the contention that only the perceiver counts, and is an identity.
On the other hand, an aesthetic approach to nature and to the environment, creates the understanding that Being is a reciprocal interdependent process of constant becoming. Although Heidegger has articulated on this hermeneutic aspect of being,\(^1\) this notion can be put into practice, as a conscious awareness towards the environment. In this respect, aesthetics becomes related with ethics. If the ‘other’ is perceived as a subject with its own livelihood, with its own body of ‘being’ then manipulation and exploitation will be limited to the play of forces between the two beings. Approaching the perceived with respect that is due to any existence will check speculative attitudes, and will allow the perceived to reveal its own existential dynamics. It will allow the object its possibility of movement within its own time and its own space and within the common realm of perception.

An ethical sense also becomes implicated through the relationship of the perceived and the perceiver in the common perceptual realm. We can call this the time/space context in its widest sense; it is multidimensional and plural. Perception of the world and of each other, and the appearance or revelation of existence in whatever modality, are conditioned by the elements, qualities, or parameters, of this time/space context and, at any given point, by the perceptual faculties of the perceiver. As Merleau Ponty has shown in *The Phenomenology of Perception*,\(^2\) we are always somewhere at a certain time point and in a certain way. Such a common situational context creates an immediate fabric of relationships amongst all that is commonly situated in time/space. This means kinship amongst being. If the word ‘kinship’ comes from ‘being of kin’, then interaction and cooperation become necessary amongst beings. Being cannot be concentric. This ethical implication is revealed when we view the relationship to place. Biological and organic matter is possible only by the exchange through the environment. Place or the time/space context constitutes specific bonds amongst existence.\(^3\)


\(^2\) Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenologie de la Perception* (Gallimard, 1945).

Environmental Aesthetics and the Emergence of Meaning

The relationship of the words ‘aesthetics’ and ‘environment’ can be taken as a clue to understand Environmental Aesthetics. The infinite potentiality of the environment can be realized, and its qualities can be perceived only aesthetically, in other words, only when the perceiver allows these to reveal themselves and considers the perceived as alive.\(^4\) It is the quality of the relationship between the perceived and the perceiver that creates aesthetic value. Therefore, Environmental aesthetics presupposes, by definition, interaction and mutual movement between the subject and the object in the process of perception, through which also the production of meaning becomes possible.

As one of the most basic expressions of this mutual creation of meaning, one can give the example of *Haiku* poetry. In the *Haiku* meaning is realized by the active relationship of all the beings that the poet has included in his perception. *Haiku* illustrates quite explicitly the way the ‘object’ is also a realm of subjectivity and the way it reveals meanings:

The song of the nightingale
is soaking wet in the rain
this morning.\(^5\)

Here we see how the rain and the song of the nightingale are perceived together, and actually act together to create a specific quality. This kind of reality is generally perceived through an aesthetic perception. Otherwise a practical perception would maybe beware of the rain and not heed to the song of the nightingale.

Art is a realm where meaning is specified and made profound. Art is a concentrated representation of how anything that is perceived

---


\(^5\) Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828), *Song of the Nightingale*. 99
participates in our awareness in creating meaning. Essentially we can say that perception is a meaning creating activity, where object and subject are mutually opening up to each other; it is a poetic unfolding in the sense that every meaning has the specificity of the lived, of being situated in time and in space; it is not general and abstract but transcends the physical as meaning. Thus, Environmental Aesthetics which tries to understand the life forces and dynamics of being which surround us is the consciousness of the existence of a poetic world. The world is perceived as poetry.\(^6\)

The environment is the active field of convergence, coexistence and sharing. In order to experience the infinite Being of the environment, the phenomenological method of suspending prejudices and presuppositions, of leaving aside speculative, practical aims, is necessary. Only by suspending all judgment and letting perception project our existence into the common realm of the environment can we become aware and let the qualities of the object, of the ‘other’ appear in all their intensity. In aesthetic perception, both object and subject are expressive and perpetuate their individual being, because being and perceiving are reciprocal and reciprocally necessary.

Everything we assess about the world is so because there is a perceiving agent. Without the existence of a second being watching, perceiving, offering his/her body as reference, no qualitative expression is possible. This expression, which is the awareness of the ‘other, is the bird’s song, the smell of the flower, the roar of the thunder, the color of the sky, the many greens of the earth, etc. All these pass through my body; they are also partly my creation; they are also part of my self as I become aware of them. I am aware that I am looking and seeing, listening and hearing, touching and feeling, directing my attention in a certain way and receiving by adjusting myself to perceive, and I become aware. My awareness which is possible through my activity to perceive is my reaching out to the ‘other’, to all that I perceive. I have a form, a skin, a matter, which I know belongs to my self; it is the matter of my self. Yet, when I look and see the world, all

that I see becomes also part of my self, and enter my being.\textsuperscript{7} I see the world, direct myself to it in a certain way because part of what I see is me. My perception is geared in a certain way, because I am in a certain place, certain environment, which constructs my orientation and structures my process of perception. I am bound with the environment.

Nature, or the earth, is physically tied to our body, and without it no perception is possible. Therefore, what is outside of my body and inside my body are continuities; they are both infinite and finite as part of me. This is like the concave, convex reversibility of the spiral, which is the symbol of infinity and unity. Thus, my body is all that continues into the world and into my self at the same time. It is consciously perceiving and unconsciously receiving the world. It is acting upon the world, and it is being acted upon. My body is the world, and the world is the continuity of my body. Thus, I am there with the rest of Being. As I become the ‘other’ I am also the core from which all that is posited in my consciousness as being, projects. It is this duality and this continuous polarity which make consciousness possible. Consciousness is the activity between the core, and what is out there, correlating to each other.\textsuperscript{8}

If I am aware of the continuity between my body and the world, I can mediate towards participating more fully with the body of the world.\textsuperscript{9} I can identify with it; I can feel the pain and joy of the earth. The destruction of the body of the world will painfully hurt my being. If I can feel the water running up the branches of the trees in the springtime, I can equally feel when the earth is ill. All matter interacts and reciprocates. When this relationship and mutual identification stops, as is the case with mankind and the environment today, then the world becomes unhealthy.


The world is an exchange of beings and their limitless engagement amongst themselves, through and for perception. According to the Sufi belief, the world is god’s appearance in multiple forms, and it is there to be perceived so that it can be admired. This belief is similar to the understanding that the realization of the world and what constitutes the real is reciprocal perception. The world becomes real and reality, as it is realized through perception.  

In what I perceive dwell both I and the ‘other’. I, the subject, seem at first to be the one carrying the vision, the idea, the image, and the imagination and articulation. The nature of language shows the perceiver as active and the perceived as passive. But, in perception, all things are set into motion, into their own particular way of existing through this process. The realm of this process is the environment.

The structure of language, the way in which things are defined, and the logical necessity of drawing boundaries between things to be able to define them, all work together to create a tendency to see things either as something or other. The multiple, integrated and hybrid character of being is ignored. The exigencies of survival make the product of perception taken for granted. Thus, perceptual process which involves an active interaction between the perceiver and the perceived is reduced to an awareness of its end product, which is regarded to be the mirror representation of what there is. In other words, what we perceive is understood to be exactly the same as what we have directed our perception to. This means that the end product of perception and its object are equal. This reduces meaning to objectivity. It is like a=a. Between the object of perception and the end result, there must be a time/space that creates action and response and awareness, ending in producing meaning. The formula of a=a is a tautology that cannot produce any meaning. In fact, ‘Genuine tautologies exist only by definition, indeed that a perfect tautology cannot exist at all.’

Then, what we call reality is not a state of being ‘as it is’. This cannot

---

be. It is the difference between the thing as it may be and the thing in the end product of my perception. This shift in the perspective, or the discrepant space between the object in space and the object ‘in perception’, is what creates the movement of things towards each other and thus produces meaning. What we call ‘environment’, the placeless and unfixed geography that is situated in endless perspectives, is the realm of differences between the perceived, the perceiver, and the resulting appearance; it is the realm where differences are correlated. All this initiates and perpetuates constant movement amongst things and towards meaning. This meaning is aesthetic as it is the poetics of the world.

**Conclusion**

The environment, with whatever it contains visibly and invisibly, is an activity of the communication amongst object, subject, and in a chain reaction, again with the product of that communication. A similar ‘environment’ is created in the communication between artist, subject matter, and the artwork that is the result. With every act of perception and every act of expression, the world is reproduced and becomes more layered. The world which becomes alive through the interaction amongst all beings always possesses meaning. We can never conceive or experience or imagine a meaningless world.

*Aisthesis*, the world of sense perception is thus always a case of generating meaning, a case of interaction between beings of the world at multiple dimensions. This is the explanation that perception has always to be aesthetic. This is how content and form are evidently integrated. Meaning can be in what is felt in the revealed form. Before any verbal and cognitive sense is reached, any perception is meaningful in the way it is felt or received. Thus, the perception and awareness of the environment constitute our aesthetic creativity. It is our creating meaning and giving life to the world through our interaction and communication with all that exists. In a word, the body of the world is our body.

Every perception gets the world involved and makes its contents
participate and interact. Thus the world is continuously awakened, made alive. In everything that is perceived, with every image and sound, a whole world is recreated again, world that we are to dwell in.

With each perception humankind takes possession of the environment and recreates the world, a world where the self recognizes itself, by giving meaning to it. Each time the self creates and articulates its home. Aesthetics is perception creating meaning and resulting in meaning. This meaning has always to do with dwelling in time and in space. This meaning is the immortal aspect of humankind; it is what humankind leaves to the world and passes on to new generations. Therefore, environment is the realm of poetry as history and as consecrated space.
Section III

Tradition and Intercultural Aesthetics
Man and His Relations with Society and Art: A Case Study of *On Music*

Gao Jianping

*On Music* is one of the most important, and perhaps the first, treatise on aesthetics in China. It is generally considered to be a primordial and quintessential expression of the “Chinese art spirit”, and it has exerted a profound and lasting influence on the history of Chinese aesthetics and art criticism. Although the title is *On Music*, it does not discuss music from a technical point of view, but on the relationship of music to society, human mind, and politics. Thus, it touches upon some general issues of aesthetics. What it says about music is also relevant to other forms of art, such as poetry and dance.¹

1. The Ideological Background of *On Music*

¹ *On Music* was included in the *Liji* (*Book of Rites*) by some scholars of the Han Dynasty. We cannot say exactly by whom and at what time it was written. Some scholars consider it to be a part of the *Yuejing* (*Book of Music*) which was said to be one of the Six Classics edited by Confucius (551-479 B.C.). If this is so, it is very old and was written before Confucius. Others hold that it was written by Gongsun Nizi, a student or student’s student of Confucius. This would date the book to circa 450 B.C., the beginning of the Warring States period. Others again maintain that it was written by Liu De, a duke under Emperor Wu of Han (140-87 B.C.). I do not wish to discuss these opinions in this paper. However, from the point of view of the history of Chinese philosophy, I believe that it was written before the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.), but not as early as 450 B.C. In writing this paper I have consulted a modern edition translated and annotated by Professor Ji Liankang. See *Yueji*. Translated and annotated by Ji Liankang, collated by Yin Falu (Beijing: People’s Press, 1980).
On Music has much to say about heaven, earth, human society, political conditions and human behaviour; it concludes with the sentence “heaven is connected with human beings”. This is a correlative anthropo-cosmological concept which plays a key role in ancient Chinese musicology. In order to offer a clear explanation of this concept, we will first look at some examples from those books which are supposed to have recorded facts before On Music was written. The Zuozhuan records:

The people of Jin learned that the Chu army would attack them. Shikuang said: “Don’t be afraid of Chu. I have sung northern folk songs, and then southern folk songs. The southern folk songs are not strong, and there are many dead sounds in them. Chu will not succeed.”

---

2 Tian ren xiang tong. This was a key concept in ancient Chinese thought, meaning that human society and nature in some mysterious way are subject to the same laws.

3 Zuozhuan (Zuo’s Commentary [on The Spring and Autumn Annals]), “Duke Xiang eighteenth year” (555B.C.). The Zuozhuan is generally considered to be written by Zuo Qiuming, a scholar contemporary with, or a little later than, Confucius.
This event took place in “Duke Xiang of Lu, the eighteenth year” (555B.C.) in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.). During that period, China was divided into many states, among which Jin and Chu were the two largest. Jin was in the north of China and Chu in the south. These two states were often at war with each other. Shikuang was a musician serving Jin. It seemed to him that if a state was strong the folk songs of that state were also strong, and vice versa. He compared northern folk songs with southern ones, and found that the northern songs were strong and the southern songs weak, so he concluded that Chu could not be victorious.

Another story comes from *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*:

When Zhuxiangshi ruled the country, it was filled with wind and Yangqi [the masculine force] was accumulated; thus all things were dissolved and fruits would not ripen. Therefore, Shida made a five-stringed se [瑟 a musical instrument, somewhat similar to the zither], with which he attracted Yinqi [the feminine force], thereby giving all living beings a stable life. 

4 *Lüshi Chunqiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü) is a book written by adherents of Lü Buwei, a merchant and politician at the end of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). It records many ancient legends.
in the end, he succeeded. During the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods, two peculiar philosophical concepts, Yin and Yang developed. People thought that only when Yin and Yang were in harmonious accord could living beings grow well. Therefore, this legend was transformed into attracting Yinqi (feminine force, moisture, rain etc.) by playing the five-stringed se, an old musical instrument later developed into the se as shown above.

Music could play other special roles in social life. When a solar eclipse occurred, people beat drums. During spring ploughing, musicians predicted weather and wind for the farmers. During wartime, musicians foretold the decree of the Heavenly Way.

From the above we may learn that people in antiquity held totally different notions of music, heaven, earth, and social life from what people do today. A sentence in Sima Qian’s The Records of the Grand Historian sums up this notion:

Voice comes from the human heart. Heaven is connected with human beings, just like shadow with object, echo with sound.

It is a traditional idea that heaven (i.e. nature) is connected with human beings. Most of the ancient Chinese philosophers approved of this idea, although each of them developed it in his own way. If we trace the origin of this idea, and judge from the examples given above, we will perhaps come to the conclusion that it is no more than a form of superstition or primitive religion. But, as we know, philosophy originated from religion and never lost religious elements, especially in

---

5 Yin and Yang are a pair of complicated philosophical concepts. In simple terms, they mean that all things and events are products of two elements, forces, or principles: Yin, which is negative, passive, weak and feminine, and Yang, which is positive, active, strong and masculine.


7 The Guoyu (Records from the States), another important historical book which records the history of each of the various states during the Spring and Autumn period.

8 “Yueshu” (“The Book of Music”), from The Record of the Historian.
ancient times. Influenced by this idea, the author of *On Music* said:

Music embodies the harmony between heaven and earth.
Rites reflect the sequence of heaven and earth.\(^9\)

I consider this to be the theme of *On Music*; it is the key to our understanding of this treatise.

### 2. The General Theoretical System of *On Music*

In China, most of the essays dealing with *On Music* tend to explore the identity of its author and the time of its composition.\(^10\) I would like to avoid these questions and rather focus on its general theoretical system. The first sentence of *On Music* reads:

All voices come from the human heart, whereas the moving of the human heart is caused by substance.\(^11\)

A diagram can be drawn to illustrate this:

\[
\text{Substance} \rightarrow \text{Heart} \rightarrow \text{Voice}
\]

“Substance” (*wu*), “Heart” (*xin*), and “Voice” (*yin*) are all confusing words. Let me give some preliminary explanations here first, and offer a further analysis of these concepts later. “Substance” means what a person sees and hears. “Heart” means human feelings or emotions. “Voice” means what we now refer to as “music”. However, in the context of *On Music*, the word “music” (*yue*) has a special meaning: it refers to good and moral music, therefore “voice” means ordinary music or music in general.

The diagram above is meant to illustrate the origin and nature of music. It may seem to conform with our everyday experience but, in fact, it does not. Proceeding from this notion, the author puts forward a few

---

\(^9\) *On Music.*

\(^10\) Cf. *On Music*

\(^11\) *On Music.*
opinions. The first is “sound” and “voice” are connected with the political situation”:

In times of peace and prosperity, the music is mild, to express delight in the harmony of political affairs. In times of trouble and corruption the music is resentful, to show anger at the unnatural and unreasonable political circumstances. In a conquered nation the music is sorrowful and anguished, to display the people’s suffering.  

The point of this passage is that music originates from the human heart and is moved by substance. If substance, which mainly refers to social conditions, is different, it can produce different feelings or emotions, which in turn, find expression in different music.

Since good music comes from good social conditions, and bad music from bad social conditions, On Music suggests that music ought to be composed in a situation like this:

A good king composes music after succeeding....The greater the success, the more perfect the music.  

When a piece of music is composed in a peaceful and prosperous society, it can be the most perfect and beautiful of all. It is said that Confucius enjoyed the Shao music, music that is alleged to have been composed in a most peaceful and prosperous time. He enjoyed it so much that he lost his taste for meat for three months. In contrast, in some corrupting states, such as Zheng and Wei, only lascivious folk songs could be produced.

---

12 On Music.
13 On Music.
14 The Analects 7.13: “When he was in Qi the Master heard the Shao and for three months could not feel the taste of meat. He said, ‘I could not imagine that any music existed which could reach such perfection as this’.” According to ancient Chinese documents, Shao was supposed to have been composed in the times of the legendary Sage-King Shun.
Now we can see that the diagram above also works in the opposite direction:

\[ \text{Substance} \leftarrow \text{Heart} \leftarrow \text{Voice} \]

Different music may evoke different responses and therefore produce different effects. This diagram is also connected with a series of artistic theories.

The first theory is “ruling people with music” as it claims in the text of *On Music*:

Substance may arouse boundless feelings and desires in a person and since he cannot control them, he is transformed by the substance; as a result, the heavenly principle dies out and human desires spread unchecked. In this time, there are rebellions, cheatings and obscene doings. It is the way to chaos, so that grand kings made rituals and works of music, to control human desires.\(^\text{15}\)

This is to say that music can exert influence on the human heart (feelings or emotions) and in turn control man’s actions. In the end, music may promote a favorable political situation and prevent chaos.

Besides this “ruling people with music”, there is another function of music which is called “music education”. The meaning of this is not to train people to play or enjoy music, but to instruct them with music.

The author voices this function in the famous statement that music can “change customs”. He says that the aim of music is not to meet the desires of the mouth, the stomach, the ear and the eye, but to teach people how to behave. It follows from this that the ruler of a state may “control the hearts of the people with music” so as to heighten their moral level, make people believe and respect him, and show his power without losing grace.

Finally, music may have another purpose. We know that in ancient

\(^{15}\) *On Music*. 

112
times people were stratified into various classes. The author of On Music thought that this social stratification was necessary, but he feared that it might cause conflicts between people of different levels. He maintained that music could counteract these conflicts and make people live harmonious lives.

Combining the two diagrams introduced above, we can now get a new diagram:

\[
\text{Substance} \leftrightarrow \text{Heart} \leftrightarrow \text{Voice}
\]

3. Analysis of the Elements of the Diagram

In the diagrams mentioned above, we have identified three elements: (1) Substance; (2) Heart; and (3) Voice.

I have offered a preliminary explanation of these three concepts with a particular reference to the general system of On Music. Now it is time to make a further analysis.

Firstly, I would like to say something about “substance”. As we know, “substance” is a confusing concept both in modern and in ancient philosophy. Its meaning in modern philosophy is outside my concern here. Some Greek philosophers thought the world was made up of earth, water, air and fire, or one of them. But in ancient China, there were no corresponding theories of these kinds. Some critics thought that the Chinese concept of “five agents” (wuxing) is similar to the Greek concept of “four elements”. But in fact, these concepts are quite different. “Five agents” can be better translated into “five modes of action”. Although “five agents” refer to gold (metal), wood (vegetation), water, fire, earth, these are not conceived of as “elements” composing the world. Those ancient Chinese philosophers who advocated the five agents theory assumed that these five agents produced rather than composed the world in their special fashion. They considered that these “five agents” corresponded to the five planets including Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars and Saturn; to the five directions including east, west, south, north, and central; to the five
flavours including sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and salty; to the five organs including heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys; to the five colours including blue, yellow, red, white, and black; and even gave birth to them five by five. Although *On Music* does not say much about the “five agents”, it was evidently influenced by this concept.

Now let us return to “substance”. In *On Music*, “substance” means something which stimulates the “heart”. What may stimulate the heart are two sorts of factors: natural environment and social conditions. In *On Music*, substance mainly refers to the latter. Although *On Music* does not say much about the “five agents”, it was evidently influenced by this concept.

On further examination, we find yet another idea. “Substance” may be divided into two aspects: good social conditions (times of peace and prosperity) and bad social conditions (times of trouble and corruption). In ancient Greece, there was a special idea: “like knows like”. In ancient China, people believed that “like produces like”. Two different “substances” can produce two different “hearts” and, in turn, two

---

16 I consider that “substance” mainly refers to social conditions. Although *On Music* mentions heaven and earth — it says, e.g., “grand music shares the same harmony with heaven and earth” — heaven and earth are actually humanized. *On Music* says, “Heaven is respected and earth is petty, thus the status of the monarch and his subjects is determined”. The status of the monarch and his subjects is, in fact, not determined by observing the status of heaven and earth. On the contrary, the ideas of the status of heaven and earth are only an extension or a reflection of the classification of human society.

17 This is originally a primitive thought. Sir James George Frazier summarized one of the basic principles of magic to be “like produces like, effect resembling cause”. *(The New Golden Bough, New York, 1961).* After I completed this paper, I am glad to find that Professor Kiyohiko Munakata has also been paying attention to the idea “lei” (category) (see the monograph “Concepts of Lei and Kan-Lei in Early Chinese Art Theory”, which was included in the book *Theories of the Arts in China* Princeton University Press 1983). This monograph discusses the idea of “lei” in the *Zhouyi* (*The Book of Changes*), the *Huai Nanzi*, and some other ancient books, concentrating on the idea of “lei” itself, whereas I mainly deal with *On Music*, concentrating on how the idea of “lei” constructs a system of the relation of art to society and to the human mind.
different “voices”.

Secondly, let us discuss “heart”. As I have put previously, “heart” means feeling or emotion, or more exactly, feeling and emotion are the outcome of the “heart” stimulated by substance or sound. We have suggested that substance be divided into two parts: times of peace and prosperity and times of trouble and corruption. We can also classify “hearts” into two categories: “kind hearts” and “dissolute hearts”. Or we may say that a “heart condition” contains two sorts of “forces” (qi): a “smooth force” (shunqi) and an “adverse force” (niqi). These two sorts of “hearts” or “forces” correspond to the two kinds of substance mentioned above.

Thirdly, we should discuss “voice” (yin). Again, we find different sorts of ‘voices’. Some of them can be called ‘music’ (yue), some cannot. In On Music, many sentences illuminate their differences. Here I will elaborate on two points only:

1. “Voice” is ordinary music. Only those songs composed in times of peace and prosperity and those which can teach people to improve their behaviour can be called “music” (yue)\(^\text{18}\). The “voice of virtue is music”. These words from On Music illustrate this meaning.

2. “Voice” is folk music, whereas “music” (yue) is composed by sages, men of virtue and grand kings.

Perhaps it is confusing to readers that “voice” (yin) and “music” (yue) can be distinguished by two criteria, and it may seem possible to classify a song as “music” (yue) by means of one, but as “voice” (yin) by means of the other criterion. Yet, this possibility does not exist. According to the author of On Music, only sages and men of virtue can compose “music” (yue). Consequently, some pieces of folk music

---

\(^\text{18}\) The Chinese character 乐  has two pronunciations and two corresponding meanings. One is and which means “music”, and another is “le”, which means pleasant or glad. On Music once employs the latter to explain the former. It says: “Yue zhe le ye”, which means “music is pleasant”. But in another passage, On Music says: “Yue zhe shengren zhi suo le ye”, which means “music is the pleasure of the sages”. Therefore, as I am to explain later, 乐 (yue) has a special meaning.
could be regarded as “music” (yue) because they were allegedly composed by sages and men of virtue, whereas other pieces of folk music could only be regarded as “voice” (yin) because they were not composed by sages and men of virtue.19

As is noted in On Music, the use of the word “voice” (yin) is confusing, too. “Voice” (yin) sometimes means all music and is equal to our meaning of music, but in other contexts it is the opposite of “music” (yue) and only means bad music or “lascivious voice”. Consequently, we have two meanings for “voice”: one is music (yue) and the other is ‘lascivious voice’.

Thus, we may say that there are two sorts of “voice”: voice of virtue and voice of lasciviousness. This leads to the two diagrams as follows:

Time of peace → Kind → Virtuous
and prosperity ← heart ← voice

Time of trouble → Dissolute → Lascivious
and corruption ← heart ← voice

**Conclusions: Moving According to Categories**
—The Basic Principle of On Music

*On Music* says:

The principle prevailing in the whole world is that everything moves according to its own category.20

---

19 The difference between *yin* and *yue* is an interesting topic which cannot be discussed at length in this paper. I add only one piece of evidence here. There are two chapters about the origin of music in the *Lü Lüshi chunqiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü): one is “Guyue” (Ancient Music), the other is “Yin chu” (The Origin of Voice). After a careful study of these two chapters, we find that *yin* mainly implies what expresses the feelings and emotions, whereas *yue* mainly implies what was employed to rule the country and keep social order.

20 *On Music.*
Readers in China and in other countries have hardly paid enough attention to this statement. Perhaps they found it difficult to understand. After the analysis given above, I think we can assume that it is an idea which may be called “like produces like”.

Heaven, earth and social circumstances can stimulate human beings and arouse their feelings or emotions, just because similar elements exist in their hearts, and their hearts may resound with these factors. Voice (music) comes from the heart from which it gets similar elements. There is also an opposite orientation. The heart can be stimulated by different voices such that it can produce different feelings and emotions, thus making men behave differently under different social and political conditions.

In On Music we find some ideas analogous to, and at the same time, different from the aesthetic ideas of certain ancient Greek philosophers, especially those of the Pythagorean school.

Firstly, neither the author of On Music nor the Pythagoreans used the term “beauty” (in Chinese mei 美, in Greek “kallos”) to describe music, but rather employed the term “harmony” (in Chinese he 和, in Greek “harmonia”). Both of them endowed the term “harmony” with the sense of attunement and unification, signifying conformity and unity of the constituents, and regarded the harmony of sounds as a manifestation of a deeper harmony, as a representation of an intrinsic order in the very structure of things. But, as we know, the Pythagoreans explained harmony in terms of mathematics. They considered that it depended on number, measure and proportion. On Music, on the other hand, did not employ mathematical mechanism to discuss music. In On Music, the harmony of music comes from the harmony of the heart, not from that of number. It has an emotive property rather than a mathematical property. In other words, the Pythagorean school studied music through the use of science and based their theory on acoustics, whereas On Music pays more attention to human emotion and bases its theory on a particular kind of philosophical psychology. These became the two general orientations of musicology in subsequent years.

Secondly, both of these orientations consider music to be a unique
genre of art which enjoys a special mystical connection with the world. The Pythagoreans thought that the whole universe produces a “music of the spheres”, a symphony which we do not hear only because it sounds continuously. *On Music* maintains that heaven and earth have their own harmony and says: “Grand music shares the same harmony with heaven and earth.” The world, however, has different meanings to them. The Pythagoreans developed a sort of cosmology. They were convinced that the universe was constructed harmoniously and so gave it the name “cosmos”, i.e. “order”. Music and the universe are related because both of them are orderly and regular. *On Music* appeals to a kind of philosophical sociology, dividing society into various conditions, each of them corresponding to a relevant sort of music.

Thirdly, both of these orientations believed that music could affect people and change their spirit, but, as we know, they had different intellectual backgrounds. In ancient Greece there was the religious Orphic belief, which held that the soul is imprisoned in the body for its sins, and that it would be liberated when it was purified. This purification and liberation was the most important aim of man. The Pythagoreans introduced the idea that music, more than anything else, serves to purify the soul. They saw in music a “cathartic” power, which was not only ethical, but also religious. In China, as we have seen, the ancient notions of *Yin and Yang* and *Wuxing* implied that a good social and psychological state consisted in an appropriate proportion of different elements. *On Music* is influenced by this idea; it does not seek to eliminate the human desires (to liberate the soul from the body), but rather to moderate them and offer appropriate satisfaction.

Since the Pythagorean school affected the later Greek aesthetics through Plato, and *On Music* is one of the most important representations of ancient Chinese aesthetics, a comparative study of them reveals some characteristic features of classical Chinese aesthetics. Generally speaking, it does not treat art mechanically, but pays great attention to its emotive property. It lays much emphasis on the relationship between art and society, but pays little attention to its relationship to nature. Finally, it does not seek to eliminate all human desires but believes that music (and other forms of art) can channel these in such a way as to make them suitable and useful to society. In
short, art is irrevocably connected with human life and society and must therefore be studied from the point of view of this interrelationship.
This essay is a discussion of one theme in the aesthetics which forms part of the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, namely his views concerning the relation of two principal areas of value, beauty and goodness, the aesthetic and the moral. It was an issue to which Nishida retuned on a number of occasions, and which was manifestly of great interest to him. His way of approaching the subject typifies his procedure in his philosophy as a whole: he read and absorbed a great deal of European thought on the issue, and applied what he found to intuitions and experiences from his native Japanese tradition. The European philosophical method is used throughout, and the European sources are cited regularly; but the latter often undergo a sea change. Phrases and ideas are adopted by Nishida, but they have often changed their meaning, or are supported by considerations quite other from those which underpin them in the European sources. Crossing the Sea of Japan these ideas have been metamorphosed, as have others before and since, into something Japanese.

I

The first point to consider is the way in which this topic presented itself to Nishida, which is not primarily in terms of (for example) the issue of the effect the moral content an aesthetic object may have (if any) on its aesthetic value, or related questions which form the substance of many recent discussions of this subject in the analytic tradition. The question of the relation of aesthetic and moral value presents itself to Nishida as a question about the nature and relations of two types of consciousness, the aesthetic and the moral, and to understand why that should be, it is necessary to grasp the basic
Nishida’s philosophy exhibits in one respect a process of continuous development: he was an acute critic of his own work, and was rarely content to retain a given formulation of his ideas or arguments. In two respects, however, his thought does not change: (1) he retains throughout his career the assumption that philosophy has to be done on the model of the classical European tradition, and (2) he never deviates from the view that the deepest insights about what there is are furnished by Zen. His philosophical project was an attempt to formulate these Zen insights in terms of Western philosophical methods and concepts. The chief insights Nishida sought to conceptualize are present right from his first (and most enduringly popular) book *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū*, 1911). The central notion in that work he calls, borrowing the term but not its meaning from William James, pure experience.

Nishida claims that there is an ontological ultimate, pure experience, which is prior to the subject/object distinction. He describes it as:

…the state of experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination. The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be…When one directly experiences one’s own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified.\(^1\)

Such consciousness has no significance: in Nishida’s view, experience comes to have significance only when it has been to some degree conceptualised, become the object of deliberative discrimination, as he puts it here. To conceptualize an experience is to experience it under the description of my experience of something, i.e. to relate it to me,\(^1\)

---

\(^1\) IG, pp. 3-4. In these notes, the most frequently cited works by Nishida are referred to by initials as follows: IG = *An Inquiry into the Good*; AM = *Art and Morality*; IRSC = *Intuition and Reflection in Self Consciousness.*
and its significance derives from this relation, as I locate it against the background of my interests and beliefs.

One of the ways in which Nishida’s usage of the term ‘pure experience’ varies so markedly from that of James is this: for Nishida, pure experience is in some sense bedrock truth. It can be directly experienced by us in suitable circumstances, and such experience is utterly desirable. For James, the return to unconceptualized experience is a pathological abnormality, available only to neonates or the semicomatose; for Nishida, it is direct acquaintance with the ultimately real. In Nishida’s thought, the more elaborately experience has been conceptualized, the less clear it is and the more remote it is from reality. In *An Inquiry into the Good* he does not quite equate daily mental experience with a veil of *maya*, but he has considerable sympathy with that view. Pure experience plays much the same role in Nishida’s thought as does *mu* or nothingness in Zen and indeed other forms of oriental philosophy. It is the ultimate from which individuals originate and into which they return at their dissolution, and it is inexhaustibly, continuously creative. It is important to bear this point in mind when considering his description of aesthetic consciousness, a point to be returned to below.

In such a philosophy, it is not surprising to find the assumption that consciousness is of infinite depth, a recurring theme in many Eastern systems. This idea is always present in Nishida’s philosophy, though his treatment of it changes. It receives its most detailed examination in the third phase of his thought in which consciousness is analysed not in terms of activities (as in Kant, for example) but in terms of a series of planes which he calls places (*basho*) or universals (*ippansha*). Each place or plane includes a progressively larger subset of the realm of possible predicates, and each accordingly makes possible a more complex experience of the world. In this version of Nishida’s metaphysics, the ontological ultimate is characterised as the place of nothingness (*mu no basho*), the final universal which makes all the others possible. For present purposes, it is not necessary to master all the details of this intricate system, nor of the other metamorphoses in Nishida’s attempt to characterize the ultimately real and the way in

---

2 James, 1971, p.50
which individuals are related to it. The point to grasp, which is important in the present context, is the centrality to Nishida’s thought of the contention that consciousness has unsoundable depth. Ordinarily, we skate on the surface of consciousness, the realm of our daily experience; the realm of the world of individuals as characterised by common sense and by science. In certain privileged moments, however, we can escape from this superficial realm of experience, and more will be said of this matter below.

Nishida’s most extended statements on the relation of the beautiful and the good were made during the second phase of his thought, during a period of intense study of the ideas of Fichte and the neo-Kantians. The influence of the former shows itself both in the way in which Nishida conceived of the philosophical project in general, and more particularly in the way in which he comes to characterise his ontological ultimate as a pure will. The neo-Kantian influence is pervasive in this second phase, not least in respect of putting the idea of a value consciousness at the centre of Nishida’s attention.

The philosophy of value was the principal focus of the Baden or South-West German school of neo-Kantianism. Thus Windelband took the view that the central task of philosophy is the investigation of the principles and presuppositions of value judgments, together with the relation between the judging consciousness and the value in accordance with which the judgment is made. It is presupposed that there is a transcendental value-setting consciousness which lies behind (as it were) empirical consciousness. To the extent that all individuals appeal to these fundamental values, this transcendental consciousness forms a living bond between individuals. Windelband also claims that absolute values require an anchor in reality, the suprasensible reality we call god. The philosophy of value is not restricted, in Windelband’s thought, to ethics and aesthetics. Non-axiological judgments also presuppose a value, namely truth: thus logic, ethics and aesthetics are claimed to presuppose the values of truth, goodness and beauty.

Windelband’s successor Rickert accepted his master’s assumption of the centrality of value to philosophy. Rickert contends that values are real but yet cannot be said to exist. They are real, he contends, because
we do not create but rather recognize them. In value judgments, the individual brings together the realm of values and the sensible world, giving valuational significance to things and events. Before being there is meaning, and all consciousness involves consciousness of a value, a claim which preoccupied Nishida a good deal. Further, Rickert also adopted Windelband’s view that science and history have radically different logical structures. Science is concerned with phenomena only insofar as they can be conceptualised as repeatable types: it is a nomothetic or law-positing activity, and so focuses on aspects of the world which can be described in terms which satisfy laws. By contrast, history is concerned with events and persons insofar as they are singular and unique: history, as he puts it, is idiographic.  

Nishida does not take over any of these ideas wholesale, but they manifestly informed the framework of his ideas in the second period of his thought (within which the ideas which form the subject of this essay were formulated). Thus for example, he adopts the view that there is a radical difference between the world as described by science and what he terms the historical world, but not exactly as either Windelband or Rickert had formulated it. For him, the world of nature as described by science is a construct remote from pure experience, at a high level of abstraction. In this world we cannot create one single atom or particle. At a deeper level of consciousness occurs what he calls the world of history, and in this realm we are creative. This is the level of consciousness which includes the moral self. Consonantly, Nishida claims that the logical law of contradiction is a ‘projection’ of the moral law, and not vice versa: in other words, consciousness of values is at a deeper level of thought than the laws of logic.  

Some of these ideas will recur in different variants below: I have set out briefly these elements of the philosophical climate in which Nishida was working to try to make clear why his discussion of the relations of the beautiful and the good take the form they do. The situation is typical of the way Nishida approached philosophical problems in the first and second phases of his development: a framework of concepts, ideas, methods and problems largely taken

---

3 See Rickert 1986
4 See e.g. AM, p.87
from the European tradition are applied by him to foundational insights which are most definitely Japanese, and the product is a unique style of philosophy. Granted the above background, it will not be a surprise to find that his writings in this area address the following, closely related questions:

(1) what can be said about the nature of aesthetic and moral consciousness?
(2) how are they related?
(3) at what level of depth of consciousness do they occur?

It will be clear that, granted Nishida’s metaphysical stance, this last question is equivalent to asking: how close is each mode of consciousness to awareness of ultimate reality itself? His answers lead him to take a particular view on the issue of whether art can be said to be in some special way revelatory of truth.

With these ideas in mind, we can now examine what Nishida has to say about aesthetic consciousness and value.

II

Nishida places aesthetic consciousness at a very deep level of awareness, though he is careful to point out that this does not mean that it is merely instinctive: the aesthetic standpoint (both of the artist and the spectator of art), he claims, transcends both consciousness in general and cognition though it includes them both immanently (by ‘consciousness in general’ he means reason).\(^5\) The aesthetic point of view is that of what Nishida terms sometimes the free self and sometimes the pure will,\(^6\) meaning much the same thing by both of these locutions. Precisely what he has in mind emerges when one puts together his concept of pure experience with his remarks on the creative process of the artist.

\(^5\) AM, p.80
\(^6\) AM, pp.158-9
It will be recalled that in Nishida’s usage, pure experience is the ontological ultimate from which the world we live in is constructed, and it is prior to the subject/object distinction. Manifestly, the creative activity of the artist cannot be identified *tout court* with pure experience thus defined, since there would be no artist/artwork distinction at this level. However, it is clear that he wants to claim that aesthetic consciousness involves a far lesser degree of conceptualisation that occurs in our standard daily self-conscious awareness of the world of individuals and their relations, and that, as a result of this it is far more objective than standard awareness. Aesthetic creativity involves a mode of awareness which Nishida calls intuition (*chokkan*), a term which, in common with many other philosophers, he reserves for a uniquely direct, objective and accurate grasp of the world. Intuition is distinct from both sensation and reasoning, and prior to them both:

….intuition can be considered to be the basic source of the establishment of consciousness, and its content can be considered to be what is given to us. That perception and expression are considered to be the foundation of aesthetic feeling must be in the sense of this kind of intuition. The intellectual content included within perception and representation does not become an aesthetic object; but the content of the union of act and act becomes the content of the beautiful.

In the period of his development presently under consideration, Nishida changed the description of his metaphysical ultimate to pure will, and this is reflected in the passage above in the presence of the term ‘act’, here used in much the same sense as the term *Tathandlung* in the thought of Fichte. Thus what Nishida here characterises as ‘the union of act and act’ is nothing less than the creative activity of reality itself.

Applied in detail to the analysis of the process of artistic creation, these

---

7 IG, pp. 39-40
8 AM, p.19
presuppositions result in the following view: aesthetic creativity does not proceed by means of ratiocination (a property of more superficial levels of self-awareness) but rather involves a direct, intuitive grasp of what there is. The whole conceptual apparatus which relates events to the concerns of the surface ego is in abeyance:

....when the sculptor is sculpting and when the painter is painting, each becomes a process of seeing only. Plotinus states that nature does not create by seeing, but, rather, that nature’s seeing is creation. In this way the artist becomes nature itself. If we consider that the visual act is one great élan vital, then art is the overflow of the surge of that greater life that cannot flourish completely within the channels of the ordinary eye.\(^9\)

I noted above that Nishida cannot identify creative artistic/aesthetic consciousness \textit{tout court} with pure experience/ the activity of the will; but he does come as close to this position as he can. Thus he asserts that we cannot understand artistic creativity if we try to fit it into a model in which, for the period during which creativity is functioning, there is a meaningful distinction between the creator and the created thing, or between knowledge and action. In this state, intuition becomes creation.\(^{10}\) The activity of the artist is certainly closely analogous to the process of reality itself, a process in which intuition is constructive of reality, not merely reflective of it.

It follows further that aesthetic intuition does not result in knowledge but in something deeper than knowledge. Standard conceptualised awareness of the world produces knowledge, while direct unmediated aesthetic intuition produces something which Nishida regards as deeper than knowledge, an experience of unfathomable significance. In the presence of beauty, we are in the presence of something profoundly meaningful:

\begin{quote}
In the act of aesthetic creation, personal content appears in the world of immediate perception directly as reality,
\end{quote}

\(^9\) AM, p.27
\(^{10}\) Loc cit
without, as it were, passing through the world of cognitive objects constructed by reason....As something that is grounded on a unity of action that is deeper than knowledge, it has unknowable significance, in contrast to knowledge.\textsuperscript{11}

It follows further that Nishida can accommodate, for his own reasons, the Kantian thesis that statements that an object is beautiful embody a claim to universality. If in the creative state there is no distinction between mind and object, creator and created, then such creation cannot be said in any meaningful sense to be subjective: what meaning can be attached to idea of a subject which has no self-awareness? This being so, Nishida can add to his description of aesthetic consciousness (again for his own reasons, derived from his own metaphysics and epistemology) the assertions that it is disinterested and entirely objective. Again he denies the ancient doctrine that aesthetic consciousness is merely pleasant, \textit{dulce} in Horace’s vocabulary.

The assertions that aesthetic consciousness is both disinterested and objective are closely linked.\textsuperscript{12} It is disinterested because there is no self involved that could have an interest; and it is objective because there is no subject. In Nishida’s view, the content of aesthetic intuition has ‘an immovable objectivity similar to that of nature itself, in contrast to our psychological self,’\textsuperscript{13} and he takes care to emphasize this point by putting it in other ways. He claims, for example, that the artist lives among things in themselves\textsuperscript{14} or that aesthetic consciousness is close to direct awareness of being-as-is.\textsuperscript{15} It might perhaps be thought perverse to characterise as objective a condition in which subjectivity and objectivity alike are ruled out by the prior assertion that the subject/object distinction is in abeyance in this state of awareness; but what Nishida is driving at is clear enough: if the creative aesthetic state is constitutive of reality and not a reflection of it, then it is more appropriate to characterise it as utterly objective than in any other way.

\textsuperscript{11} AM, p.52
\textsuperscript{12} Cf, e.g. AM, p.167
\textsuperscript{13} AM, p.52
\textsuperscript{14} AM, p.167
\textsuperscript{15} AM, p.81
Again, the claim that aesthetic experience is not essentially to be regarded as merely pleasant also follows from the absence of any significant element of subjectivity, since pleasure can only be predicated of a self.\textsuperscript{16}

Having argued that aesthetic consciousness results in acquaintance with a species of significance which is deeper than knowledge, Nishida has to give a special sense to the claim he found in western thought that art (the result of creative aesthetic consciousness) can be a vehicle for truth, albeit in a special sense of the term. Consistently with his assertions about the special nature of the significance of art, Nishida dismisses the notion that it is the business of art to convey propositional truths:

In something truly beautiful we must come in contact with some immovably objective value at its basis. It goes without saying that art does not reproduce factual truth. Art, in essence, does not aim at the reproduction of conceptual, factual truth. It is not artificial in that it no longer has such goals, for artificiality which confesses to being artificial is not artificial.\textsuperscript{17}

The truth-value of intellectual content has no bearing on the aesthetic value of a work of art of which it forms a part. Descriptions of (for example) discredited scientific ideas in fiction have no bearing on the aesthetic value of the fiction; descriptions of false theories do not impair nor do descriptions of true theories enhance the aesthetic value of the work. Nishida is careful to note, however, that verisimilitude in the depiction of human nature does have a bearing on aesthetic value: as he puts it, the truth can be called beautiful in art when it takes man himself as object.\textsuperscript{18} Verisimilitude is not experienced by us as either factual truth or causal law, yet we regard it as having its own kind of objectivity.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} AM, p.154
\textsuperscript{17} AM, pp. 98-9
\textsuperscript{18} Loc cit
\textsuperscript{19} AM, p.99
Aesthetic depictions of nature apart from humanity, and of humanity itself, are according to Nishida the objects of different modes of awareness. Nature is conceptualised and we are aware of it via thinking, i.e. experience mediated by concepts, and he claims that such a reality cannot become ‘a complete object of personal feeling.’

By contrast, we can be aware of our self not only by means of thought but also by means of intuition (in the sense of the term mentioned above). In respect of the self, there is no difference between knowledge and feeling. We know what it is like to be human in a unique, epistemologically privileged way:

The content of aesthetic feeling of nature does not include knowledge; but the content of aesthetic feeling in respect to man does include knowledge itself….we cannot help thinking that a deeper truth of human life is included in great art and that because it is true it is beautiful….in the aesthetic act where man describes himself there must be a quality of knowledge in some sense.

We have seen that Nishida is emphatic that aesthetic consciousness occurs at a deeper level than standard awareness of the everyday world, and this position lies behind his acceptance of some of the ideas of the German sculptor and art theorist Adolf Hildebrand (1847-1921) whose essay *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts) had appeared in 1893. In that essay, Hildebrand argues that a work of art is ‘a total, self-contained effect, a reality in its own right as opposed to nature.’

Art does not merely copy or represent a form mechanically registered on the retina. Perception is an active process in which form is as much generated as registered. The unity of an artistic appearance has nothing in common with the unity of an organism or an occurrence in nature. Successful sculptures create an ideal space which is discontinuous with space as it is experienced in standard, non-aesthetic awareness. This Hildebrand takes to be

---

20 AM, p.83  
21 AM, p.82  
22 Hildebrand op cit in Mallgrave and Ikonomu 1994 p. 237  
23 Op cit, pp.237-41
confirmed by sculptures which are failures, i.e. which are unified only by the action depicted. Such purely narrative sculptures fail as a result of not having created the autonomous world which characterises successful works.  

Here Nishida found an aesthetic theory confirmatory of his own thesis that creative aesthetic awareness forms a world, rather than merely reflecting an independently existing world: he comments that the space that the painter and the sculptor take as object is not identical with the space of conceptual thought.

As so often, however, he has taken a conclusion from a western source, and underpinned it with his own epistemology and metaphysics. For Nishida, the homogeneous space we are aware of in standard self-conscious awareness, like clock time, is a highly conceptualised abstraction from pure experience, whereas the space of a successful work of art is the result of imaginative construction at a much more fundamental level of consciousness. For Nishida, this space is not derived from some form of abstraction from perception (itself a complex construction from pure experience). Space, like time, is derived from pure experience and neither is a condition for it. Pure experience is a single, internally unified experience, continuous and heterogeneous, to which no reflective thought has been added. Such a unity is not in itself subject to universal concepts. Accordingly, combining or arranging its elements by reference to a homogeneous medium like space or clock time is extrinsic to it and constitutes an addition to it. Pure experience creates both time and space: time is its quantitative aspect and space its qualitative aspect. Time is formed from the development of the self, and space from the distinction of the directions of this development. Thus while both Nishida and Hildebrand would accept the proposition that the space of a successful work of art is a construction of the imagination, they would not attach the same meaning to it. Hildebrand’s ideas are not based on a metaphysic of the same kind as that of pure experience.

There is a strong element of autonomist aesthetics in Hildebrand’s essay, and Nishida’s understanding of the way in which artistic

---

24 Op cit, p.266
25 AM, p.99
26 Cf. e.g. IRSC pp.17-18 and 151-2
creativity works inclined him to be sympathetic to the conclusions of such theories (of which there were a number current in Europe just before and during the period of his thought we are here considering.) His understanding of consciousness as layered in terms of depth, with artistic creativity located very deep among these layers, would incline him to be sympathetic to aesthetic theories which regard art as embodying experiences discontinuous with standard awareness, and art objects as manifesting their own world of experience, rather than imitations of the natural world, itself the construction of a much more superficial level of awareness.

A similarly autonomist strain can be found in the ideas of another German theorist to influence Nishida, Konrad Fiedler. In his essay Über den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit (On the Source of Artistic Creativity), Fiedler argues that art is not the physical realisation of a mental content, but a form of creation itself (a view to which, as we have seen, Nishida was sympathetic for his own reasons). It is no surprise to find Nishida arguing that the creative thought of an artist never takes place, as it were, in a vacuum, but always in terms of one of the media of art (paint; sound; words; stone, and so on). The thought articulated in art is not an abstraction for which some suitable material embodiment has then to be found: the thought is conceived of ab initio in terms of a medium. This assertion leads Nishida to two connected themes which recur in his aesthetics, namely the importance of technique in art, and the special limitations and strengths of the various arts. Thus he claims that painting manifests a beauty peculiar to painting, sculpture a beauty peculiar to sculpture, and so on. Creativity involves both knowledge and behaviour: the creative act of the artist takes place at the intersection of practice and knowledge. Nishida puts the point metaphorically:

---

27 The role of Fiedler’s ideas in Nishida’s thought has been exhaustively dealt with by Dr. Britta Boutry-Stadelmann in her thesis (see Boutry-Stadelmann 2003 in the bibliography), and there is a summary of her views in her essay Nishida et sa lecture de Fiedler pour la création artistique in Journeau, 2009.

28 AM, p.164. Elsewhere, he accepts the views of the German artist Max Klinger that painting and drawing (i.e. polychrome and monochrome images) have systematically different aesthetic capabilities. See his prefatory note to the Japanese translation of Klinger’s essay Malerei und Zeichnung, 1891 [Painting and Drawing] in AM, pp. 33-5.
We may say that there is an eye at the tip of the artist’s brush or the sculptor’s chisel. In this intentionality the artist treads in a world unattainable though knowledge.\textsuperscript{29}

The artist thinks via the technique of whatever art is in question: the medium, technique and experience to be embodied form a unity which can only artificially be split by analysis, and not in the process of creation itself. It may even be the case that the thought to be embodied has no conceptual or verbal form, but that does not entail, Nishida contends, that it is any less clear and distinct than what a thinker thinks.\textsuperscript{30}

This situation is most likely to be instantiated in musical composition. It will be recalled that for Nishida ultimate reality is pure experience, a mode of being prior to the subject/object distinction, and that consequently aesthetic experience becomes the more profound the closer it can approach this condition. The view of music to which these premises lead Nishida is reminiscent of the theories of early German Romantics like A.W. Schlegel or Wackenroder, and akin to the views of Schopenhauer, the latter (of course) not without an oriental inspiration. Nishida comments that music is:

\begin{quote}
\ldots a pure expression of the infinitely deep, internal self itself. In music conceptual judgment completely loses its authority, and there is only the dynamism of pure life.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Music can be thought to have the same position in the world of cultural phenomena as does sensation in the world of natural-scientific reality. Reason takes sensation and constructs the natural-scientific world from it. Analogously, it takes personal content such as that expressed in music and from it constructs the world of cultural phenomena.

Lyric poetry inevitably includes some conceptual content, and it might
be thought that on this ground Nishida would have to regard it as more remote from pure experience than music. To some extent he does, but emphasizes that while lyric must be formed to a degree that is appropriate to its content, that content is not thereby annihilated, or ‘blinded’ as he puts it. By the content of lyric he means the personal feeling of the poet which is expressed via language. This personal feeling is the content of a deep level of consciousness. Nature is an appropriate subject for lyric, since it evokes in us such deep feeling. When we view nature from the aesthetic standpoint, the spirit we see behind it (Nishida contends) is directly the spirit of the self. When Shelley wrote of the skylark, it was Shelley’s spirit that was expressed, not that of the bird. However, it is important to be clear what Nishida means when he writes here of ‘Shelley’s spirit.’ The heightened feeling which is embodied in the poem is not only predicable of Shelley himself but is also the:

substance of a profounder nature. True reality is not the content of a universal concept, but the specific content of feeling and the will. Shelley was simply this kind of medium of the self. [AM, p.81]

Nishida contends, accordingly, that lyric is typically the expression of an emotion of great depth, so deep that it can be regarded as in some sense transindividual. Just as in the classical aesthetics of Chinese painting, the successful, spiritually attuned artist is merely the vessel or vehicle for the development of $qi$, so for Nishida the lyric poet is the vehicle for the expression of the movements of the Will itself. Despite its conceptual content, Nishida regards language as being as much a means of personal expression to the poet as is sound to the musician or colour to the painter.

---

32 AM, p.84
33 AM, p.81
34 The reference to the aesthetics of Chinese painting is to the much discussed phrase $qiyun shengdong$ in Xie He’s *Guhua Pinlu* (*Essay on the Criticism of Painting*). See Lin Yutang 1967, pp.34-38 for a discussion of various ways of rendering this phrase into European languages.
III

It is now appropriate to turn to what Nishida has to say about moral consciousness. The joint influences of Zen and neo-Kantianism combine in Nishida’s thought in a special version of libertarianism in moral theory. We have already encountered Nishida’s basic metaphysical assertions concerning the construction of reality from pure experience, or, as he prefers to put in the period we are here considering, pure will. Further, the deeper the level of pure experience/will we encounter, the further we penetrate into the activity of the self (that is, the original face as conceived in Zen) the more we enter a realm of activity without an acting subject. We progress from the realm of knowledge to the realm of pure will. The realm of moral consciousness is precisely that of the pure will, and this will is creative.

The pure will creates the world of objective reality. How can this be, since in the world of nature we cannot create a single particle? Nishida’s answer is that the world of nature is not the world of true reality. At the base of the natural world (i.e. at a deeper level of consciousness) is the world of history, and we are creative in that world. The moral self has its own content which is more profound than the content of the natural world, and one can see the direct influence of German sources in the reasons Nishida gives for this claim. Thus he argues that consciousness of values is deeper than the laws of logic: the logical law of self-contradiction is a ‘projection’ of the moral law, and not vice versa. Our submission to duty is a submission to the law of contradiction between act and act. Again, at the basis of the principle of identity, he claims, is the consciousness of self-identity, Fichte’s Ich bin Ich.

It is Nishida’s notion of moral consciousness as being at a deep level of reality that leads him to reject certain aspects of Kantian moral thought. He rejects the Kantian view that we should act solely out of respect for the law on the ground that we cannot separate the idea of law from its content: a law without content is inconceivable. The reason Kant

---

35 AM, pp.86-7
36 AM, pp.87-8. Nishida also rejects the Kantian idea that it is intelligible to speak of merely formal beauty, cf AM, p.185; Kant *Critique of Judgment, Analytic of the*
says that the moral will must be formal and contentless, Nishida argues, is that Kant limits the content of consciousness to intellectual content. So long as we remain within the domain of cognition, we cannot see the fact of seeing,

but by “seeing seeing” we possess the infinite, objective world of art. We cannot hear the fact of hearing, but by “hearing hearing” we possess the infinite world of music. By being able to “will the will” the infinite worlds of history and culture open up before us.37

It has to be borne in mind that for Nishida there can be awareness which is non-cognitive, and indeed that such is the nature of the very deepest strata of consciousness. The will (in Nishida’s sense of the term) always has a content: the idea that there can be a moral will which is content-free is for Nishida an abstraction from a more superficial, more conceptualised stratum of consciousness, and false to the nature of the will which is in his view at the base of reality. Further, Nishida contends that with regard to the form and content of the moral will, there can be no distinction analogous to that between validity and soundness in argument. The form of morality demands the goodness of content, for it is the form of teleological unity. The moral will is the behaviour of the self seeking union with the absolute good. The content of the good will is not a means, but has value in itself: it must be the content of pure value consciousness. The purity of such consciousness is the reason why a person can be thought of as an end in her/himself.38

These ideas lead Nishida to a complex position vis-à-vis the notion of moral realism, as the latter is usually conceived. Moral realism I take to be the thesis that there are moral properties to which moral agents should attend, and about the presence or absence of which it is possible to make accurate or inaccurate judgments. Accurate moral judgments, which are truth-functional, record the discovery of these moral properties. Moral properties, on this view, are not the product of the

---

37 AM, p.89
38 Am, p.91
will, the emotions or wishes, and nor are moral judgments disguised expressions of such. Nishida accepts that moral beliefs demand universal assent (they are not subjective in the sense of reflecting only some aspect of the experience of individuals), yet they are in his view creations of the will. To make sense of this, it has to be recalled that the will Nishida is speaking of is not an individual will but could equally well be called the process of the unfolding of reality itself. Bearing in mind the assertions noted above about the abstract and relatively superficial nature of what we call the natural world, it is not surprising to find Nishida asserting that the moral good cannot be explained in terms of the world of objective knowledge. True moral behaviour, in his view, must be a creative act that constructs our free and personal world on the basis of those deep requirements of life that transcend knowledge, and it is from this that the moral imperative draws its authority. The good (like the beautiful) is grounded in the free self that transcends nature, and is latent deep within the surface ego or everyday self.\(^{39}\) The depth of our moral feeling reflects the depth of reality from which it comes: in recognising the good we are recognising a feature of the world of great depth. Morality draws its universality from its emergence from a pre-or trans-individual stratum of consciousness. [How evil is to be accounted for is, on this view, as in many others, deeply problematic.]

History, in Nishida’s view, is ultimately the product of the development or manifestation of the will, and its phases are unique. This view, combined with the rejection of formalism noted above, leads him to stress that moral conduct always has a historical dimension. The morality of an action cannot be worked out on the basis of whether it satisfies allegedly timeless moral rules or maxims of any kind, for there are none such: the moral significance of actions derives from their place in the unfolding of history.\(^{40}\)

With these points in mind, we can turn finally to consider what Nishida has to say about the relation of the beautiful and the good.

---

\(^{39}\) AM, pp. 154-5
\(^{40}\) AM, p.95
IV

It will be clear from the foregoing why I said at the start of this essay that Nishida’s thought on the relation of the good and the beautiful presents itself to him as a question about the nature and relation of two types of consciousness, rather than primarily a question about types of property of objects or situations. Ultimate reality is pure experience or will: what we call the world of cognition is not objective reality: objective reality is that which is immediately given, and it is established by the will. The actual will is precisely the self, in the Zen sense of ‘original face.’ Further, ultimate reality is contradictory in itself. It is at the same time both a unity and also infinite differentiation and development. Aesthetic and moral consciousness share a common origin in the will: as he sometimes puts it, they are the same in quality, by which he means that they both manifest the content of the pure will, and originate at a depth of consciousness which transcends conceptual knowledge.\(^1\) Pure feeling or will possesses its own content, which cannot be rendered conceptually. With respect to the objective world of conceptual knowledge, pure feeling or will is creative of it. This is why, in Nishida’s view, aesthetic content and the content of the moral imperative are both transcendental, by which he means that they are pre-subjective, and hence universal in their significance.

While the above is true, the beautiful and the good are in some important ways opposed (we will come to another important point of similarity presently). The principal difference, Nishida claims, is that aesthetic subjectivity manifests what he calls the direction of unity in concrete reality, while moral consciousness manifests the direction of its differentiation and development.\(^2\) Aesthetic awareness is for him in important ways pre-cognitive, and accordingly is located at a great depth in his scheme of the levels of consciousness. The less a level of consciousness is differentiated, the greater its unity: hence the above claim that aesthetic awareness or subjectivity manifests the direction of unity in concrete reality (i.e. pure experience/will). By contrast, moral behaviour is possible only where there are at least two subjects who can be affected by each other’s behaviour: that is, morality

---

\(^{1}\) AM, pp.162-3  
\(^{2}\) AM, p.104
presupposes (is in the direction of, in Nishida’s vocabulary) the differentiation of reality. In fact, moral behaviour is realized in the objective world of reality. Morality takes the form of an imperative to behave in a certain way in the real world, and its goal is the realization of an ideal. In this it differs, Nishida argues, from the realm of artistic creation. While the creativity of the artist may produce effects in the objective world of reality, it is the result of imaginative activity, which is not real:

Poetry and painting thus reflect only one aspect of human life. They offer no criticism of moral good or evil whatsoever; even evil things can become beautiful as the objects of art.\(^43\)

The aesthetic dimension of life is (he contends) unconstrained and free: art cannot ultimately avoid a playful mood; by contrast duty constrains us to a specific form of behaviour. He stresses that it is actual behaviour—what we do—that counts. He parts company with Kant in his rejection of the thesis that motive is of moral value: for Nishida, the motive on which we act, formulated in a maxim, has no moral value whatever.

Despite their being in this way different as manifestations of pure experience, Nishida argues that the aesthetic and the moral points of view have one more point in common, and that is that they both manifest disinterestedness. Aesthetic intuition sees things apart from every utilitarian motive: as he sometimes puts it, the artist lives among things in themselves—it has to be borne in mind that such a turn of phrase is not a paradox for Nishida. Since direct acquaintance with being-as-is or pure experience/the will is possible in his philosophy: we are not restricted to the realm of appearances, in Kantian terms.\(^44\) Morality requires that we regard our fellow human beings with the same disinterest as we regard the stars. With some poetic licence, Nishida comments that Kant’s kingdom of ends is a work of art created by our moral behaviour. Moral behaviour that is good in itself must be

\(^{43}\) AM, p.163.
\(^{44}\) AM, p.167.
Nishida’s views on the relation of the beautiful and the good exemplify a number of the characteristics of his thought in general. His model of how philosophy is to be done is derived from models from the European tradition, and he adopts a number of views from European, especially German, sources; but these views are quite regularly adopted for reasons other than those on the basis of which they were originally advanced. Thus in the present essay it has been noticed, for example, that he adopts the concept of pure experience from William James and the notion of the will from Fichte. There is evidence of a strong neo-Kantian influence in the assumption of a value-consciousness which is transcendental in the Kantian sense, and of the special influence of Rickert in the claim that the world of history and the world of science are of a radically different conceptual structure. He accepts the Kantian view that statements attributive of beauty embody a claim to universality and that the experience of beauty is disinterested. Again, he accepts some of the autonomist views from thinkers such as Fiedler and Hildebrand. It has been noticed, however, that in every case, there is some departure from the European models in the interpretation or grounding of the doctrine.

The reason for this interesting and repeated pattern in Nishida’s thought is, I would argue, that he is arguing (very consistently) from a position which is analogous to these models (especially Fichte’s idealism) but ultimately is incommensurable with them, a metaphysics based on Zen. For example, his theory that the imagination is formative of reality, and not just reflective of it, has a certain amount in common with the ‘imagination penetrative’ doctrine characteristic of European Romanticism; but the European doctrine stops short of the notion of reality to which the imagination penetrates having absolutely self-contradictory identity (the one and the many, *samsara* and *nirvana* being the same), the idea which underlies Nishida’s thought. Granted

---

\(^{45}\) AM, p.159.
his premises, Nishida must (and does) stress the basicity of the creative power of the imagination – it is the power of the unfolding of reality itself. This, as we have seen, leads him to a certain form of the doctrine of the autonomy of the aesthetic realm, but he is remote from accepting a doctrine of aestheticism, as that idea is exemplified in European thought, especially in the later nineteenth century. Even at the high point of western influence on his thought, as exemplified in the ideas considered above, Nishida remains deeply Japanese in his outlook.  

Bibliography


46 I have argued this thesis at more length in Nishida and Western Philosophy, Ashgate, 2009
The Corporeity of Self-awakening and the Interculturality of Cultural Self-awakening: Motomori Kimura’s Philosophy of Expression

Tanehisa Otabe

Motomori Kimura (1895-1946) was one of the representative philosophers in Japan in the first half of the twentieth century. He studied philosophy under Kitarô Nishida (1870-1945) at Kyoto University and later became the chair of pedagogy at Kyoto University. Introducing his own concept of “expressive love,” an expression he coined, Kimura argued that our self-consciousness or self-awakening is only possible by means of our corporeal expression, poiesis, and that our cultural self-consciousness or self-awakening presupposes an intercultural milieu. His cultural philosophy was outstanding at the Kyoto School. However, because of his premature death at the age of 50, he fell almost into oblivion and little attention has been given to his philosophy. This paper examines his cultural philosophy of expression.

From his graduation in 1923 until his death in 1946, Kimura’s twenty-three year career as a philosopher can be divided into three major periods. The first period spans the time from his graduation until 1933 when he was appointed to a professorship of teaching methodology at Kyoto University. During this time, addressing the

---

1 For the Kyoto School, see Rude Awakening: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism edited by J. Heising and J. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
2 Takuo Nishimura, “The Aesthetic and Education in the Kyoto School: Motomori Kimura’s Theory of Expression,” Concepts of Aesthetic Education, ed. by Yasuo Imai and Christoph Wulf (Münster: Waxmann, 2007) is the only monograph dedicated to Motomori Kimura written in English.
philosophies of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, he strove to formulate his own theories. The article, “Will and Action” (1932), written at the end of this first period, anticipates his theories in the second period.

The second period extends from 1933 until around 1938. The result of this second period is to be read in his 1938 article entitled “Expressive Love” (first part: “Body and Spirit” and second part: “Structure of Expressive Love”). Addressing the body and expression, Kimura proposed his own theory of expressive love, which opened a new path in philosophical aesthetics.

The third period was from about 1939 until 1946. By examining the late Fichte, Eduard Spranger and others, Kimura concentrated on reformulating the relationship between national culture and the culture of humankind. Nation and Culture (1939) and the posthumous Culture and Education in State (1946), his representative work of this period, provides many suggestions on issues currently being discussed in terms of interculturality.

In this essay, I reconstruct the development of Kimura’s theories of culture, primarily during the second and third periods, focusing on the concept of expressive love.

1. The body as mediator between the inner and the outer

First I would like to outline Kimura’s theory of the body as articulated in his article, “Expressive Love” (1938), especially the first part: “Body and Spirit.”

Kimura argues, “Undoubtedly, ever since they have existed on the face of the earth, human beings have made use of their bodies. However, as strange as it may sound, it does not date back to the old days, but is only in recent years that human thought began to discover the body as the body and understand it in itself.”

comprehended the significance of our bodies is that we have regarded our bodies as something self-evident existing in front of our eyes. No, far from it, the significance of the body has only been negatively understood as something to blur the idea, or even as a principle of evil. However, “everything human beings want to realize or regard as something worth realization is achieved solely through the body.”\(^4\) Thus, Kimura treats the body in terms of the principle of expression.

The question is what exactly Kimura means by expression. “Expression means to show the inner on the outer and to realize the spirit in nature. That is, the inner is made to be existent in the outer. In the world of expression, the outer is in fact the inner.”\(^5\) As long as we cling to a dualistic standpoint in which the inner and the outer are contrasted, we cannot understand the special characteristics of expression. Rather, we need to redefine the inner and the outer.

### 1.1 The outer for expression

Kimura first asks what the outer is. By the outer, people are likely to understand what is called the world of natural objects, that is, the objects of theoretical cognition, but this is not what Kimura means by the outer. For expression, the outer is first of all the matter that will be given a shape by the inner. Matter, however, has a double meaning. First, as far as this matter does not embody the appropriate form, it is against form in the negative sense of being an obstacle to formation. For example, a block of stone yet to be carved is at first such an obstacle for a sculptor. However, when the form is realized, this material secondly exhibits the positive significance of being the real bearer of the form. In a completed work, the stone embodies the form the sculptor intended. “In this way the material simultaneously negates and affirms the form.”\(^6\) It follows that expression has to overcome the obstacle as a momentum of the material. Kimura argues that such a viewpoint of expression was represented by the idealism of Kant and Fichte: “Fichte was the typical thinker who systematically established a *Weltanschauung* from this

---

idealistic viewpoint.”

However, the outer is not only the matter. Kimura returns to the example of a sculptor: “For Michelangelo one block of stone was not simply matter, but rather something deeply appealing to his artistic will.” That is, an artist creates by responding to the appealing matter. Generally, then outer is, thirdly, an “expressive milieu” or a “thou-like being,” which “not only waits for being formed by the subject, but also always talks to the subject.” The outer speaks to the subject because the outer is neither just a natural object nor a simple material, but “what is historically produced and expressively formed.” The outer talks to the subject as “objectified spirit.”

Here, an objection might be raised that the land belonging to the outer is not something produced by human beings. To this objection Kimura answers, “In advance of being a material for us, land seduces the will of human beings. Nowhere will you find mere land. It always takes a form of certain slopes or flatlands, or ridges that interrupt human travel, or the rolling hill going down to the ocean. Land has these various faces.” Generally, the outer does not exist by itself, but does so in expressive relations with humankind. From the standpoint of expression, human beings and the material “are mutually determining and determined, or forming and formed.” The idealistic point of view makes a mistake in that it does not recognize this expressive milieu, treating thereby the outer as a simple matter.

The outer is “given to the subject,” and in this sense, it is “essentially what is traditional.” For the expressing subject, the outer is “what belongs to the past.”

1.2 The inner for expression

---

The question then is what the inner that responds to the outer is. The inner is the subject that listens to the outer, but the subject is not simply passive. Rather, the subject determines the outer. The autonomy of the subject characterizes the inner. This autonomous subject gives birth to an Idea. In this way, Kimura stresses the one-sidedness of the materialistic perspective that denies the existence of Ideas.\footnote{Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 25-26.}

Regarding an Idea solely as something subjective is likewise a one-sided position, because such an Idea would be nothing more than a form seen in an inner way. Kimura argues, “An Idea is seen genuinely only when it is expressively formed from the inner to the outer. As far as an expressive life is concerned, viewing means forming.”\footnote{Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 26.} An idea is not to be internally contemplated, but to be externally viewed by a physical formation in a\textit{ poietic} manner. By such a formation an Idea becomes a genuine Idea. Therefore, the inner is inevitably associated with the physical that forms an Idea in the outer.

The outer then as the expressive milieu is of a past nature. Then the question of which temporal nature is the inner arises. Kimura answers, “Ideas in their essence are the forms of those which are due to become real, but have not yet become so. If an Idea lacked temporality, it would lose its essential meaning.”\footnote{Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 27.} Platonic Ideas are timeless and transcend time. As far as expression is concerned, Ideas constitute a future moment. Kimura denied the Platonic theory of Ideas: “Being separated from the time of expressive will, an Idea would be relegated to what is imaginary.”\footnote{Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 28.}

It follows that expression is possible when the futurity of ideas intersects with the past of the expressive milieu, that is, when tradition and creativity are mediated negatively.\footnote{Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 28.} From this perspective, Kimura moves to addressing the body.

### 1.3 Expressing body

Humans are “the beings having the inner in the outer, that is, the
spiritual and physical beings.” By the body, the formative realization of such dialectic beings is concretely possible. That is, expression is based on the body as an essential moment.

Expression, according to Kimura, is a self-awakening process in which an expressive subject as the inner knows itself by forming itself outwardly through the outer as a medium.” The body makes this mediation possible. As Hiroshi Ichikawa (1931-2002) later did in his *Structure of “Mi”* (1984), Kimura focuses on the polysemy of the Japanese term *mi*, characterizing the peculiarity of the body as “The term *mi* does have the meaning of body as a natural object, but it also has the meaning of self as is expressed in the phrase ‘*mi wo omou*’ (taking care of oneself), and even that of heart as seen in the phrase ‘*mi wo tsukusu*’ (devoting one’s energies). Thus, the human body is dialectic existence as subject-object. As a subject making inroads into nature, it is an apical end of the expressive will of a subject; alternatively, as nature making inroads into subject, it is a limitation of a subject by nature.”

The peculiarity of the human body is found in its mediating between the inner and the outer, as is shown in the Japanese term *te-gokoro* (literally: hand-heart). *Te-gokoro* means the “heart that dwells in hands and works through hands.” English naturally has such expressions too, and the English word with meaning similar to *te-gokoro* may be tact, which the *OED* defines as “Ready and delicate sense of what is fitting and proper…”

Kimura defines the actions of a heart residing in a body as art, that is, technique. Art is a kind of intellect that indwells in hands, an intuitive knowledge that delicately works in accordance with objects. Kimura notes that there are many “expressions related to body, in particular, to hands (*te*)” that describe the “forms of art”: For example, concerning working ways of technique *te-ren* (wiles), *te-kuda* (trick), *te-giwa* (dexterity), *te-sabaki* (manipulation), regarding technical properties of an object as material *te-goro* (handy), *te-gowai* (stiff) and with reference

---

21 Kimura, *Culture and Education in State*, 34.
to the work of art as a synthesis of working and material *te-no-konda* (elaborate), *te-garu-na* (easygoing), and *te-wo-nuita* (negligent). All these examples indicate that human beings are not only an inner existence, but also a physical existence.  

Referring to Ravaisson’s theory in his *Of Habit* (1838), Kimura explains the process in which technique is gained as follows: “It is the will that first makes the hands move. This process being repeated over and over, the hands gradually become purposively habituated. Then we gain the heart residing in the hands.” Technique as the “naturalized will that dwells in the body” is realized by habitual practice.

### 1.4 Human beings with difficulty managing themselves

Based on his theory of art or technique, Kimura then addresses what differentiates human beings from other living creatures. While animals other than human beings “are able to live their lives by themselves” soon after their birth, “only human beings among all living creatures have difficulty in managing themselves over their entire life.” That is, while the hands—or rather the feet—of other animals completely accord with their instinct and their instinct sufficiently functions, human hands are inadequate for human will. Human beings are characterized by *te-busoku*, which is literally hand-shortness. They cannot achieve what they want by themselves with their physical being. There is a disproportion between the will and the body. That is why “humans demand, on one hand, tools as prolongations of their hands and, on the other hand, cooperation by *te-wake* (literally: hand-division), cooperation in the division of work.”

*Te-wake* is nothing other than systematic unity of functions. Being short-handed, humans should borrow the hands of others to form organizations. In that sense, society forms a giant corpus. Humans prolong their hands beyond tools. Kimura argues that the human body “technically works mediated by tools, machines, organizations, institutions and more.”

---

23 Kimura, *Culture and Education in State*, 149-150.
There is clearly a strong similarity between Kimura’s theory and philosophical anthropology prevalent in Germany in the 1930s, especially the theory of Arnold Gehlen (1904-1976) who defines human beings as defective creatures. Viewed from Gehlen’s standpoint, the defect of human beings, their short-handedness, enabled human beings to create tools and institutions.

2. Culture: Eros and Agape

Next I would like to examine Part II of his article, “Expressive Love” (1938) to clarify Kimura's concept of expressive love. Although Kimura himself did not explicitly mention the relationship between the two parts, he reexamines the structure of expression already treated in Part I from the perspective of culture anew in Part II.28

2.1 Naru (becoming) and nasu (doing)

Expression is not autonomously made by an expressive subject in accordance with a principle of the inner, but presupposes the call from the expressive milieu as the outer. Expression comes into existence through “dialectic relations between the expressive outer and the expressive inner.”29 We have to consider expression not from the expressive subject, but from “what consists in the dialectic identity of subject and object.”30 Kimura calls what consists in the dialectic identity of subject and object expressive reality or expressive world. From this perspective, expression should be redetermined as “The self-awakening of a subject is none other than the self-awakening of a subject as a momentum of the expressive world. This means that the expressive world itself has self-awakening facets within it.”31 Seen from the expressive world that encompasses and mediates the inner and the outer, or subject and object, the self-awakening of individual subjects is the self-awakening of this expressive world itself. The expressive world

28 According to Kimura, the theme of culture acquires specificity only by viewing it as national culture, but I treat Kimura’s views on the nation in section 3.
develops by the self-awakening of individual subjects. Therefore, the expressive world is also called the historical reality or the historical expressive reality.

The historical reality exists in a peculiar way. Certainly it transcends individuals, but historical reality does not exist by itself. Rather historical reality develops through the expressive acts of individuals. In this sense, the historical reality transcends individual subjects and is immanent in them as well. It follows that the historical reality cannot be wholly determined by the power of mere individuals. In this sense, it is as a becoming that transcends the self-awakening of individuals, what historically becomes (in Japanese: naru). Because a becoming characterizes nature, the historical reality is also called the historical nature. However, the historical reality is not a blind, mechanical nature. This is a nature that embraces free, self-awakening and formative individuals within itself. Viewed this way, there would be no self-awakening of the historical reality without self-awakening individuals. As a self-awakening formative individual is marked by “doing” (in Japanese: nasu), the historical reality can be defined as “nature that becomes including doing.” Kimura defines culture: “The essence of culture is that, within the historical nature that moves itself in self-forming manner by taking the inner and the outer as mutually expressive momenta, human subjects are nurturing such activity of the historical nature in self-aware manner.”

That is, “Culture is a self-formation of the expressive being itself. Every individual, as a self-awakening, formative facet within such a world, has a fundamental mission in doing it in a self-awakening manner while being encompasses in the world that becomes unlimitedly.” Culture is in the chiasm of becoming and doing, the unconscious and the self-conscious, and the natural and the artificial.

Kimura’s definition of culture implies his confrontations with the early

---

Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. At first glance, one might conclude that Kimura’s position is close to Schelling’s philosophy of identity. However, Kimura indicates that Schelling failed to understand the dialectical mediation or dialectical relation between doing and becoming,\textsuperscript{35} fusing thereby their dialectical opposition into indifference.\textsuperscript{36} On the contrary, according to Kimura, Fichte who focused on the negative self-mediation regarding self-awareness understood the dynamism involved in the formative expression of the self, but overlooked the becoming of nature, since he regarded nature solely as something to be denied.\textsuperscript{37} Kimura further argues that Hegel who regarded nature as objective spirit was free from Fichte’s mistake, but made the opposite mistake by denying the doing of human beings because of his system of teleological determinism.\textsuperscript{38}

### 2.2 Eros and culture

According to Kimura, a self-awakening individual who sees Ideas formatively, that is, intuits them actively, is conscious of the distance between the present and the future, or between the real and the ideal. Humans cannot complete the task of overcoming the distance by completing the itinerary to the Idea, since the ultimate Idea itself that attaches to individual historical objectives their idealistic significance is an eternal objective which cannot be achieved in reality. Compared with the perfection of the Idea, human beings are inevitably finite and imperfect.\textsuperscript{39}

Referring to Plato’s \textit{Symposium}, Kimura attributes this state of human beings to Eros.\textsuperscript{40} As Eros always remains in poverty and yearns for the Ideas of goodness and beauty, “all finite beings, as long as they are finite, cannot realize the ultimate, infinite Idea and they inevitably remain imperfect.”\textsuperscript{41} Here is a crisis intrinsic to the standpoint of Eros: Humans long for unity with the ultimate Idea \textit{in vain}. The question is how humans overcome this crisis.

\textsuperscript{35} Kimura, “Essence of Culture and Essence of Education,” 237.
\textsuperscript{36} Kimura, \textit{Culture and Education in State}, 131-132.
\textsuperscript{37} Kimura, \textit{Culture and Education in State}, 30, 132-133.
\textsuperscript{38} Kimura, \textit{Culture and Education in State}, 138.
\textsuperscript{40} Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 60.
\textsuperscript{41} Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 60.
2.3 Agape and culture

Kimura asks again what Ideas are. Ideas are produced by the autonomous subject who responds to the call of the outer. In this sense, Ideas are nothing other than the subject itself, as far as it is seen objectively, the self as noema. It follows that the crisis of Eros consists in that the expressive subject as noesis throws itself into the future as an object, as an end to be achieved, without knowing that, in fact, it is seeing oneself.

The question is how it is possible for the expressive subject to overcome such a crisis. To answer, Kimura addresses the actual meaning of the Self knowing itself. Kimura argues that if such knowledge of the Self is a true self-awakening, “the Self should know itself in itself,” otherwise it would “lose itself in the other.” What is to be noticed here is that the momentum of in itself is a place in which the Self can truly know itself. The self-knowledge is to be embraced by the momentum of in itself. The question now arises as to what exactly it is that embraces self-knowledge, and how it is related to what is embraced by it. Kimura answers, “The non-objectifiable Self that lies at the deepest level projects itself onto itself within itself and has thereby the Self as an object. That is, the Self which absolutely sees and is not to be seen reflects its own shadow within itself, in order to see itself.” Seen in this way, Eros is nothing other than the Self as an object that is embraced in the non-objectifiable Self. In contrast to Eros, Kimura refers to what embraces as Agape. If Eros is an upward love, Agape is a downward love. By this Agape, individuals are affirmed and acknowledged as they are.

In the sense that what embraces can never be objectified, it is nothing (in Japanese: mu), although in another sense Ideas are nothing in that they are absent in reality. While Ideas are viewed objectively by an expressive subject and, therefore, should be called relative nothing, what embraces that cannot be objectified is to be referred to as absolute

---

nothing. Kimura explains, “Absolute nothing sees the absolutely non-objectifiable Self for itself as an object of Eros through the momentum of an expressive subject. Absolute nothingness noematically projects itself within itself. An idea as an object of Eros is nothing other than the reflected shadow of the absolute nothing.”\(^{45}\) What Kimura calls expressive love is Agape, which is not opposed to Eros, but embraces Eros and projects itself in Eros. Kimura says that expressive love is a “dynamic connection in which the non-objectifiable Agape sees itself for itself in a way of Eros and maintains hereby its non-objective nature.”\(^{46}\)

Viewed from the standpoint of expressive love, the meaning of culture should be reconsidered. As noted in section 2.1, Kimura regarded culture as a chiasm of becoming and doing. This definition of culture was still based on a transient historical nature and within the standpoint of Eros. Now Kimura concludes, “Historical nature finds itself within the transcending world that encompasses the former. The limitless flow of time is encompassed within the eternal present, and the limitless suffering of the will is encompassed by absolute love. The meaning of culture being deepened, history is transient and never transient here.”\(^{47}\)

The theory of expressive love that consists of two momenta of embracing and projection constitutes the pinnacle of the second period of his career.

### 3. The state as mediator between individuals and humanity

In his third period, Kimura addresses state and national culture. For Kimura, the transition from the second to the third period means a development from an abstract to a specific standpoint. Consequently, I would first like to return to his early social theory and trace the development of his thinking to examine the significance of his theory of national culture in the third period.

\(^{45}\) Kimura, *Culture and Education in State*, 174.


\(^{47}\) Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 84.
3.1 Human beings as the social existence

The article, “Will and Action” (1932), written at the end of his first period, shows the main gist of his social theories in the second period. Here Kimura addresses how the social whole is related to the individuals who constitute it.\(^{48}\) To exist as an individual means that an individual is independent from the whole, without being immersed into the whole. Due to separation from the whole, the “individuality of a person can truly be revealed. At the same time, however, a person is a member in relations with others and cannot exist separate from the whole.”\(^{49}\) It follows that the individual can truly “achieve completion of its existence only when it denies its ‘will to negate the whole,’ which constitutes an actual momentum of individuality, and returns to the whole, that is, when it denies its own individuality.”\(^{50}\) Consequently, such a movement of double negation underlies the true individuality.

Now the question arises of what kind of society does Kimura mean by the social whole, to what extent is the social whole universal, and is it ever worthy of being referred to as universal? Kimura certainly points out that, if ethics seeks universal principles, it will “progressively become separated from historico-social concreteness and go to address abstract and much more universal norms.”\(^{51}\) However, his argument does not go into details and remains abstract. In this period, Kimura’s theory of the social whole lacks specificity.

3.2 Human culture and national culture

In his third period, Kimura begins to contemplate the late Fichte’s theory of national culture. The development of Fichte’s philosophy is in some aspects analogous to that of Kimura’s philosophy from his second to third period. Referring to the late Fichte, Kimura reexamines his own theory of culture in the second period that is still subject to abstractness.

\(^{50}\) Kimura, “Will and Action,” 165.
Next, I would like to address Kimura’s new position expressed in *Nation and Culture* (1939), his initial work in the third period. According to Kimura, Kant’s idealism that “relates individuals to the human universal without any mediation” claims that “the perfection of individuality, namely the thorough realization of an individual life, is immediately the concrete realization of the human universal.”\(^{52}\) This view represents the culture of humankind. However, Kimura notes that “A human being is by no means directly born into membership in the human race. A human being is a member of a family and belongs to a specific region, a specific society and a specific era. These are all the universals that transcend individuals and make the latter belong to themselves. As compared to the universal of human kind, they are more limited universals or relative universals, that is, species between individuals and genus.”\(^{53}\) Based on Hajime Tanabe’s logic of the species, Kimura addresses his attention to species that mediate between individuals and genus.\(^{54}\) Certainly, there are various species ranging from those closer to individuals, such as the family, to those closer to genus, such as the society or era. However, according to Kimura, “among these species, that which has the most significant meaning for human life is the nation. An individual exists here as a member of a nation. A national culture is nothing other than an expressive self-awareness of the nation as a subject, and the national spirit here attains realization of itself.”\(^{55}\)

Kimura thus derives a pair of concepts: the culture of human kind and the national culture. They negate each other in that the culture of human kind seeks universalization, while the national culture seeks individual unity.\(^{56}\) However, just as the culture of human kind eliminating national cultures is only an abstraction, the national culture neglecting the culture of human kind is also an abstraction. That is, they are not in a simple either-or relationship.\(^{57}\) The question now arises as to how they are related.

\(^{56}\) Kimura, *Nation and Culture*, 11.
\(^{57}\) Kimura, *Nation and Culture*, 11-12.
Kimura argues that an individual being acquires individual significance only when it is mediated by other individual beings,\(^{58}\) and the ground that makes this mediation possible has to be something universal for these individual beings. It follows then that an individual national culture gains its individual significance only on an international ground and the culture of human kind is nothing other than this international ground.\(^{59}\) Therefore, the culture of human kind does not exist as a universal supra-national culture opposed to national cultures, but only as a ground that makes mutual mediations of individual national cultures possible. This ground is not a being, as an individual national culture is, but rather, if a name must be applied to it, is a “non-being mediator,”\(^{60}\) and the culture that consists in mutual mediations of individual national cultures is to be referred to as the world culture, instead of the culture of human kind. Kimura argues, “In the structure of world culture, the national cultures form mediating momenta as international beings, and not as independent beings, while a non-being mediator negatively mediates them as a world-cultural universal. . . . Except for dynamic processes of international culture, there would be no world culture.”\(^{61}\) To Kimura, who neither adheres to nationalism nor hypostatizes the world culture, the cultural self-consciousness or the self-awakening of each nation presupposes an intercultural milieu. What Kimura called historical nature in “Expressive Love” is now formulated as the world-historical universal.\(^{62}\)

In his third period, Kimura has sympathy for Eduard Spranger (1882-1963),\(^{63}\) who claimed that “we have not talked of the culture any more, but we have to address plural cultures.” Kimura regarded cultural contacts and cultural penetration as fundamental for culture.\(^{64}\) Referring to Spranger, Kimura argues that there are two conditions for each national culture to realize the world-historical universal.\(^{65}\) First, each


\(^{59}\) Kimura, *Nation and Culture*, 197.

\(^{60}\) Kimura, *Nation and Culture*, 197.


\(^{63}\) Spranger spent a year in Japan from 1936 to 1937.


individual culture needs to enhance its world-historical mediation. That is, individual cultures should not be closed in upon themselves, but rather need to open themselves to mutual relations with other cultures. The world-historical expansion of cultivation is the first condition. Second, to make relations with other cultures meaningful, each individual national culture needs to possess its individual value. Otherwise, the relations with other cultures would bring forth only fusion or uniformity of cultures. World-historical depth of the individual national values enables active inter-national relations. Kimura notes that these two conditions are mutually related. The expansion of individual cultures requires their depth and vice versa.\(^66\)

Now a question arises as to whether Kimura’s new position in the third period changes his concept of expression. Certainly, there is no fundamental change, but what Kimura referred to as expressive milieu in his second period is now redefined from the perspective of world culture. In his second period, Kimura argued that an expressive milieu is a “thou-like being that waits for being formed by the subject and always talks to the subject.”\(^67\) In the third period, Kimura says, “In its relation with other national cultures, a nation is not faced with thou-like beings as the objectified spirit, but with true thou.”\(^68\) International cultural relations are essentially intersubjective. Kimura refers to this as world-historical milieu to distinguish it from expressive milieu.\(^69\)

### 3.3 Postwar theory of Japanese culture

Kimura’s theory during the third period seems closely akin to the philosophy of world history advocated by many philosophers of the Kyoto School at that time, as is shown in his statement in the article, “The Problem of Teachers and Culture” (1940): “East Asia is now turbulent in order to establish a New Order, and Japan as a State has an immensely critical and difficult mission. Japan is rising to its feet while bearing a world-historical task.”\(^70\)

\(^{67}\) Kimura, “Expressive Love,” 52.
\(^{68}\) Kimura, *Culture and Education in State*, 244.
\(^{69}\) Kimura, *Culture and Education in State*, 244.
The mission of the philosophy of world history, however, came to an end with Japan’s defeat in World War II, as Tetsurō Watsuji said in March 1946: “Defeat in the Pacific War resulted in the destruction of the world-historical position assigned to modern Japan.” Now the question is what the defeat of World War II meant for Kimura.

A key to answer the question is found in the booklet published after the war, *On the Shape of Development of Japanese Culture* (October 1945). Kimura tries to shed light on past Japanese cultural development to conceive how it should develop in the future.

I will not go into details here but concentrate on the crux of how Kimura characterizes Japanese history. He argues that “The development of Japanese culture emerged not only from the inwardness of the Japanese race. Rather, it is by contacting other cultures and being mediated by them that Japan has given birth to individual, distinctive new forms of culture.” That is, a “mediated creation” is a “way of development peculiar to the Japanese spirit.”

The important point is that Kimura regarded the development of Japanese culture as “the thorough deepening as well as the expanding of Japanese life as a world-historical being.” These two elements correspond to what Kimura pointed out in *Nation and Culture* written in 1940, the world-historical expansion of cultivation and the world-historical depth of the individual national values (see section 3.2). Kimura’s theory of national culture does not represent the ideology for waging the war, as was the case with the philosophy of world history of the Kyoto school, but had the potential for developing after the war.

Because of his abrupt death in February 1946, Kimura’s philosophy has not been sufficiently evaluated outside the field of education. However, his theory regarding the corporeal self-awakening, his insights into the

---

human body which technically works mediated by tools, machines, organizations, and institutions, and his advocacy of interculturality without adhering to nationalism as well as hypostatizing the world culture have not lost their importance.
Section IV

Public Art and Avant-garde
Toward an Understanding of Sculpture as Public Art

Curtis L. Carter

Public art is work produced by artists for a public space as opposed to an institutional setting such as a museum. It is most successful when based on implicitly or explicitly shared meanings between the artist and the community, and consists of actions or works executed on behalf of the community as a whole. Public art is developed for particular cultural spaces and involves the participation of public officials representing the community in which it is displayed. Typically, public art is initiated and maintained at public expense and functions under public control. Some public art, for example the Parthenon in Athens or the Eifel Tower in Paris, acquires universal interest as when its symbolism commands universal human interest. Public art then consists of works of art, temporary or permanent, in virtually any medium such as sculpture, music, theater, murals, architecture, media arts, etc. that is intended for the public domain. Normally it occurs out of doors and is freely accessible to all persons.\(^1\) Added to these considerations are cultural differences within a community fostering differing expectations. For example, in a community made up of diverse cultures the term ‘public art’ may evoke different understandings in different minds. At the present time there is no consensus about what public art should look like, or what forms it should take. This point is emphasized, especially, by the expanding notions of sculpture as seen in relation to architecture and landscape.

The main focus in this essay will be on the role of sculpture as public art. The reason for the choice of sculpture is that it is arguably the most common form of public art, and is one that appears in some form

in virtually every culture. It will also include a discussion of public space, public sphere, the artist’s role and the audience’s role in public art, and assessment of public art.

Historically, sculpture has been characterized as “the art of representing observed or imagined objects in solid materials and in three dimensions”\(^2\). Understood in this traditional sense, sculpture is one of the oldest art forms, clearly embracing artifacts found in the caves of prehistoric times as well as objects produced in all subsequent cultures. Public sculpture has existed as landmark, monument, architectural embellishment, cultural symbol, and independent aesthetic object. This traditional notion of sculpture serves as a point from which subsequent modifications of sculpture as public art evolve. Today, sculpture embraces many new forms representing new technologies and materials resulting in installation sculptures, light-based sculptures, and other forms of sculptural expression. In at least some of its manifestations, public sculpture offers a bridge between cultural particulars and the universal, which can be appreciated by all persons irrespective of their cultural origin.

Sculpture and architecture both differ from other fine arts. Unlike music, poetry, or theater, which may on a temporary basis participate in defining public spaces from time to time, public sculpture and architecture, typically persist in a fixed and determined space becoming more or less permanent features of the environment. Whereas, the spectator has a choice to avoid a theater or musical performance in a public space, sculpture and architecture sculpture remain accessible at all times to people using the environment. But with electronic media arts including cyber arts installations, the permanency of sculpture, if not of architecture, is called into question.

John Dewey has argued that the primary task of philosophy for the arts is to restore continuity between works of art and every day events.\(^3\) An examination of public sculpture, as one of the principal forms of public art, lends itself especially well to this process. As a process involving the consciousness of the community in which it functions,

---

\(^2\) (Encyclopedia Britannica 1958: Vol. 20, 198)

public sculpture eschews aesthetic experiences based on privacy and uniqueness. It is grounded in shared experiences that contribute toward a sense of community. In this respect, public sculpture calls for a refocusing of the logic of visual understanding. It requires a public source for its meaning based on the artist’s engagement with the community, to replace the private interior psychological meanings typically associated with the fine arts such as poetry or painting. Typically, public art in the form of sculpture exists in open space, in proximity to or inclusive of architecture or landscape, as in the confines of an atrium or other large space with ready public access. It is normally outside the walls of the museum.

Looking backward in history, The Parthenon in Athens and the Eiffel Tower in Paris will serve as important examples of public art. The Parthenon, constructed 447-432 B.C., stands as a monument to the aspirations of the Athenian citizens, which goes beyond the personal to commemorate civic and perhaps religious meaning. It embodies the common values and aspirations of the Athenians. Subsequently, the Parthenon has become a memorial to the shared glory of that exemplary period when Athens reigned as a center of enlightened and empowered civilization. To others the Parthenon exemplifies a collaboration of artists and the Athenian community that speaks to all humanity as a symbol of creative civic and artistic achievement.

The Eiffel Tower, constructed 1887-1889, arose under somewhat different circumstances. It is now a global icon of France, and arguably the best-known example of public art worldwide. The Eiffel Tower was created to commemorate the Paris World’s Fair of 1889. In this respect, its role as public art was intended as universal in scope from the beginning. Initially, however, the reception of the Eiffel Tower was met with criticism from citizens of Paris and prominent French artists and writers of the day, some of whom viewed it as an eyesore and unsuitable for placement in the setting provided by Paris architecture. Despite

---

4 Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and other Mythologies*, tr. Richard Howard (Belkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3-18. Wikipedia, Wikimedia, February 6, 2010. Some 300 artists, writers, architects signed a petition opposing the construction of the Eiffel Tower. Among these were the writer Émile Zola and Guy de Maupassant, the architect of the Paris Opera Charles Garnier, and the painters Jean Léon Gérôme, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, and Jean Louis Meissonier. The Eiffel tower was designed by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, structural
these initial reservations, the Eiffel Tower is now recognized throughout the world as a symbol of human creativity and technological achievement and is also a source of pride for citizens of Paris. By 2002, the Eiffel Tower had recorded its 200 millionth visitor. Even today it remains the most visited and the most recognizable public art works in the world.

My use of the Parthenon and the Eiffel Tower to characterize public sculpture calls for a brief explanation, given the historical association of sculpture with figurative representational art. It is based on the assumption that there is no rigid boundary between sculpture and architecture, and no presumption that public art must be representational. Dewey warns against any rigid classification separating sculpture and architecture. Since historical developments show that sculpture was for a part of its history an organic component of architecture. He represents their relationship as a continuum that enables us to distinguish sculpture from architecture without saying precisely where one ends and the other begins.\(^5\) Nor would Dewey hold public sculpture to any narrow view of representation, preferring instead to view the work of art as an expressive entity.\(^6\)

Rosalind Krauss in her 1979 essay, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” also recognizes the erosion of the differences between sculpture and non-sculptural arts such as architecture and landscape in contemporary art practices. In support of this development, she provides a diagram of relations between sculpture, architecture and landscape where humans impose their order on nature.\(^7\) Kraus’s analysis shows how sculptural practices since the postmodern era have witnessed a transformation that embraces work such as Robert Smithson’s site constructions, which combine landscape and architectural constructions (Robert Smithson’s *Partially Buried Woodshed*, 1970 and Richard Serra’s urban steel structures such as the controversial *Tilted Arc, 1981*).

On the architectural side where contemporary architecture assumes significant sculptural properties, are examples such as Santiago

---

\(^5\) John Dewey, *Art As Experience*, 1958: 228-234,

\(^6\) See Dewey, “the Expressive Object,” *Art as Experience*, 82-105.

\(^7\) Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* Vol. 8, 1979:30-44.
Calatrava’s Milwaukee Art Museum (2005) which was intended as much as a symbolic gesture toward building a new civic identity as a building to house museum operations. The same is true of Frank Geary’s art museum in Bilbao (1997), which was built to revitalize the image of a dying city. Hence, there is no clear line separating architecture and sculpture, and increasingly landscape also enters into the mix as in the examples cited from Smithson and Serra.

Yet, two features of sculpture stand out throughout these modifications: its societal purposes and its monumentality. Among the philosophers who have addressed the question of public art, Jurgen Habermas represents public art metaphorically as a discourse between the artists and the public emphasizing discursive relations among persons rather than market or state interests. Its purposes include: to inspire citizens and promote a sense of community identity, to record and celebrate important events in the history of a community, and to generate public discourse. Aided no doubt by its monumental scale, public art testifies to the importance of individuals and events as expressed through landmarks, monuments, architectural embellishments, and other forms of cultural symbolism. Unlike art intended solely for private contemplation, public sculpture does not function as an independent aesthetic object. Similarly it functions outside the realm of commodification in the art market place.

**Public Space**

Given the complexities surrounding the notion of public art, how might a philosopher begin to address the issues of public art in reference to public space and the public sphere? For our purposes, public space and public sphere are of special importance because they provide a framework for understanding public art. Public space serves as the principal site for public art, and the public sphere provides the social context in which public art exists. However, these notions are in need

---

of clarification. One problem with the terms ‘public space’ and ‘public sphere’ is that they are terms with a history of considerable fluidity and diversity in meanings, depending on local political settings. In the very broadest sense, public space refers to all space that exists. However since both private and governmental institutions lay claim to space, whether in the form of governmental sovereignty or designated private uses, this broad designation is not sufficient. Public space more narrowly construed refers to designated zones within a community which guarantee free access to the public for engaging in personal or communal activities as recreation, conducting civic ceremonies, display of public art, free discourse, and other non-commercial and lawful activities. In general, public space offers a greater tolerance for the unexpected or free actions in the public domain. Its principal defining characteristics are accessibility and useability.

Until the mid-twentieth century, public space when understood as a place for sculpture or architecture, was considered mainly as a three-dimensional physical environment in which some public functions might occur. Often, sculptural objects with volume and weight, in conjunction with architecture, establish the boundaries of public space and help define its uses. In such environments, the problems of architecture and sculpture are similar. Their common task is to physically and psychologically organize, fill, and give identity to space with the added value of an aesthetic solution. Sculpture, however, differs from architecture in at least some of its public functions with respect to the organization and use of public space, as it need not (but may in some instances) offer shelter or compartmentalize space for diverse functional needs, as does architecture.

Habermas introduces a social dimension to public space in his proposal that public space is defined by the discourse that takes place in particular cultural and political spaces. Today, much of the social discourse involving public space takes place by means of electronic media through the internet and cyber space. For many individuals active today, increasingly the main sphere of public space is indeed the computer screen with its access to electronic resources worldwide, replacing the traditional notion of public space consisting of actual physical space.

Hence, in order to fully comprehend the scope of public space, it is necessary to expand our notion of public space to encompass electronic space as well as physical space. This expansion of public space to include electronic space requires as well a broadening our understanding of public sculpture to include works generated by means of electronic media. Hence, public art works delivered over internet and cyberspace thus may also be candidates for public sculpture.

Extending public art and the notion of public space through technology requires that we think of electronic space as public space rather than merely private. This means that although we sit in private, or in isolation while engaging the internet, the experiences available through the internet nevertheless connects the viewer visually and conceptually with points of reference that may be shared by anyone who chooses to participate in the same electronic frame. Electronic space may not entirely fulfill the condition of accessibility claimed for three dimensional public space when it refers to actual physical space. However, given the widespread and growing accessibility of worldwide access to the internet, it is difficult to imagine that access will be a major drawback to public art in this new media. One example which comes to mind is work placed on U Tube, which has virtually become a public garden of media works accessible to all with access to an internet receiver and screen.

Public Sphere

It is also necessary to explore the notion of a public sphere in reference to public art. A first task might be to investigate further the distinction between public and private as this distinction applies to public art. In general, ‘private’ refers to the sphere of individuals and families, whereas ‘public’ refers to the sphere in which all stakeholders in a community have an interest and are entitled to some say either directly or by proxy. Hence, commissioning a portrait for enjoyments of one’s self and family, or friends does not as such count as public art. A decision of an agency of the government such as the United States Congress, to commission a work and a site to honor the soldiers lost in the Vietnam War would result in a case of public sculpture. For the moment, new problems of differentiating private and public are
exacerbated by unresolved issues such as those relating to the use of images accessed on a website through the public spaces of the internet. Ultimately, it may turn out that whatever is private is dependent on the public sphere and *vice versa*; however, it is useful for our purposes to assume that these notions indicate some important differences.

Of course, the term ‘public sphere’ extends over a range of uses depending on the particular cultural context in which it occurs. For instance, the public sphere in a monarchy might refer to ownership and control by the reigning monarch and accessible at the pleasure of the monarch, whereas in a democracy ownership and access reside in the hands of the people, or a representative government acting on their behalf. Within such entities there exist different segments of society characterized variously as the bourgeois and the proletariat, or the ruling class and the working class, each with differing interests and some shared interests.

Add to these broad categories influencing our understanding of a public sphere, the influences of the media, interest groups, political parties, a multicultural population, government bureaucracies, the legal system, and *ad hoc* protest groups centered on a particular issue that rise up from time, all of which may contribute to the process of defining the public sphere. Variances of this sort suggest differing and perhaps competing interests in the public sphere not easily subsumable under a common practice. Such competing interests might easily lead to different roles and expectations for public art. Hence no single view of a public sphere, or the art represented there, will satisfy for long the needs of a multi-faceted dynamic urban multicultural society.

As a result, rapidly changing communities may outgrow site and time-specific public art, as the political and ideological frames and other societal needs for symbolic representation change. One had only to visit Moscow or Saint Petersburg and view the massive piles of discarded sculptures of former party heroes just after the Communist government was toppled in 1991 to appreciate this point. Even what were once bold and innovative interventions intended to bring life to sterile urban settings in the United States, have now become problematic. For example, the “once optimistic beacons of urban rejuvenation” developed by the architect Lawrence Halprin, who provided notable public art projects throughout American cities during
In the 1970s and 1980s, “are now suffering from neglect and abandonment and are considered by some critics to be dated modernist eyesores out of step with their cities.”\(^\text{10}\) In Denver, Halprin’s “Skyline Park,” intended as a “place of downtown quiet,” gave way to downtown business interests and has been largely demolished. Halprin’s “United nations Plaza” in San Francisco, which had become a magnet for homeless and other marginalized populations, is surrounded by yellow chains and has recently been a candidate for demolition. These examples, and the countless forgotten civic heroes on horseback in parks and plazas across the world, attest to the impermanence of any particular public art work. Effective public art requires constant renewal in order to serve the symbolic needs of the public sphere in which it resides.\(^\text{11}\)

**The Artist’s Role**

The next consideration for our purposes here is to look at the particular role of the artist in public art. First the artist, when charged with making a public art, acts in the name of the community. One important role of public sculpture has been to create images that mythologize history. Operating in a utopian mode, public art might aim at fostering unity among people by idealizing the sentiments of the community, or by focusing on some areas of common agreement. In the past, heroic sculptures featuring beloved national figures were used to instill feelings of patriotism and national unity. However, in an age of anti-heroism a different approach is called for. One of the most successful anti-heroic sculptures is the Vietnam Memorial constructed in 1982, designed by Maya Linn and located on the mall in Washington, D. C. Here it was necessary to address conflicting sentiments including the feelings of unappreciated soldiers and the public’s divided views over an unpopular war. Despite an initial public outcry of opposition, the Vietnam Memorial has become an embracing symbol of “national mourning and reconciliation” as well as a “critical parody.”

---


reversing the usual role of war monuments. It has managed to satisfy the needs of many diverse groups resulting in a stream of visitors who often participate in the memorial by leaving gifts honoring the soldiers named on the wall.

Changes in the contemporary mood have generated increasing interest in the critical function of public art. As public art assumes a role of social critique, this means a shift in the artist’s function from one who marks important social events of historical significance, to the role of artist as activist. In its critical function, public art becomes a type of symbolic intervention, and it often confronts history, politics and society forcing a reexamination of painful moments in history. In 1988, Hans Haacke contributed the work, **Und ihr habt gesiegt** (And You Were Victorious After All), to an exhibition initiated by the citizens of Graz, Austria called “Points of Reference 38-88.” The exhibition was intended to challenge artists to “confront history, politics, and society” and remind the citizens of the atrocities committed fifty years earlier. Haacke’s sculpture recreated the Nazi draping of the Column of the Virgin Mary (located in Graz) and carried the same inscription, “And You were Victorious After All.” Haacke’s commissioned public art was destroyed by a Neo-Nazi fire bomber shortly after it was installed. The sculptor’s work generated an extreme reaction; it evoked powerful and unresolved feelings carried forth from the Nazi era about which there is still no consensus.

Such incidents raise broader questions concerning the artist’s role in creating public art. In entering the realm of public art, artists leave the familiar settings of studios, galleries and museums with their more or less prescribed conventions for interacting with the public through commercial exchange and aesthetics appreciation. In effect, the artist who chooses to participate in creating public art is in a unique and problematic role. The romantic view of the artist as an individual creator endowed with special gifts for making art, as directed primarily by the artist’s own individual ideas and sensibilities in acts of self-expression, does not easily fit into the notion of contemporary ideals of public sculpture. Conflict between artist’s personal aesthetic vision and community interests, particularly in a situation involving cultural

---

differences, is well illustrated by Christo and Jean-Claude’s “Umbrellas” project 1984-1991. Beautiful yellow umbrellas were placed over landscapes in Japan around the Sato River seventy-five miles north of Tokyo and in an uncultivated grazing area known as the El Tejon Pass fifty miles north of Los Angeles. From the perspective of the artists this public art work was an attempt to create beauty based on imposing their own personal aesthetic vision realized in locating the yellow umbrellas on the landscape. But both the native Americans and the Japanese, who were operating on other aesthetic visions, saw an already perfect order in nature, in which their spirituality is grounded, being violated by the intrusive Umbrellas.

For the artist to assume this traditional role of individual creator with its claim to special insights and privileges without taking into account guidance and participation of the community will surely lead to problems. This strategy is almost certain to collide with the process driven decision-making world of government and with the views of the community where the art is placed. Should the artist then simply absorb and represent the views of the community through non-controversial images? Or is the artist to assume the role of social critic and proceed according to insights deriving from her/his inner vision? Expecting the artist to become a spokesperson for the community, or a social critic addressing significant and sensitive aesthetic, political, and social issues has become increasingly problematic in culturally diverse, ideologically driven, advanced technological societies. This process is notably tenuous in an environment where substantial doubt exists about whether artists have the necessary knowledge or wisdom to dispense truth, and where interpretations of history shift rapidly with changes in ideology. From the artist’s perspective there is also the risk of her/his becoming merely an instrument of propaganda for the state, or for one of the many interest groups that make up the community.

When involved in the creation of public art, the artist becomes part of a team consisting of the public officials and others in the community responsible for the work. Unlike art created as an individual where the artist enjoys a great deal of freedom, public art demands a high degree of accountability to the needs and interests of the community where it occurs. These circumstances point to a need to expand upon notions of the artist and artistic creativity and perhaps to consider other models.
more suited to a democratic society. In a democratic society, public officials are charged with the responsibility for decisions concerning public sculpture and must take into account a diverse range of community interests and points of view. To put the matter succinctly, public art consists of a political act involving a complex series of negotiations with the community including debate and discussion, as well as administrative and legal processes.\(^{14}\)

Does this mean that the romantic notion of the artist driven by intuitive consciousness has become obsolete, or that it does not apply to public art? Paul Feyerabend has argued that the social aspects of creativity mandate that artists as well as scientists be subject to guidance and supervision of their fellow citizens.\(^{15}\) This view is consistent with the ancient Greek notion of community centered democracy as distinct from the modern Western individually centered democracy. And, with less democratic political aims in mind, Plato might have agreed. Feyerabend also questions the model of creativity on which the romantic artist presumably derives the authority for individual actions, preferring instead a holistic notion of creativity as an interactive process based on teamwork and respect for nature. It is not necessary to resolve the polarity between individual and cooperative models of creativity. It is, however, useful to note that successful public sculpture, past and present, is typically a result of a collaborative effort involving the contributions of artists, the state, and the immediate community.

The current climate for public art suggests a need for directing the processes guiding public art toward greater community participation. It suggests that public art is not about artists working in isolation to make beautiful works according to a personal aesthetic, or about artists and the state collaborating to impose certain aesthetic or political views on the people. The case of Richard Serra’s *Titled Arc*, 1981, created for the Federal Plaza in New York, resulted in a failed effort to impose an artist’s aesthetic statement in conflict with aesthetic interests of the community. After a lengthy court battle, the twelve-foot steel wall was removed in 1989. The artist’s argument that his site-specific sculpture was a critical work in his career, and that it gave shape to the featureless

---

space of the plaza did not prevail over citizens’ objections to its intrusiveness. Ironically, despite its removal, the public debate surrounding the Titled Arc incident actually heightened public involvement in the process of creating public sculpture in significant ways. It initiated thoughtful and passionate dialogue involving artist, representatives of the government, the legal system, and the public and forced them to confront the problems of public sculpture including competing interests of the artist, the community, and the state.

John Ahearn’s *Bronx Sculpture Park*, (1986-1991) suffered a similar fate. Commissioned by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Ahearn designed a park near a police station in his Bronx neighborhood. The park was envisioned as a positive bridge linking the police and the neighborhood. The park featured three free standing figurative bronze sculptures of actual people in the neighborhood: “a shirtless, overweight man held a basketball and leaned over a boom box, and a young man with a hooded sweatshirt knelt next to a fierce looking dog with a studded collar; a young woman wearing a Batman T shirt roller-skated between them.”

The response to Ahearn’s public art work was a sense of outrage from the community with charges of racial stereotyping, glorifying drug dealers, and unambiguous out of work African Americans. In this instance, the artist accepted responsibility, acknowledging an error in judgment and voluntarily dismantled the piece. Nevertheless, the piece generated considerable discussion on such issues as whether public art must always present a positive image and the artist’s responsibility to the community who must live with the art.

One approach intended to address the need for community participation in public sculpture is Joseph Beuys’ (1921-1986) social sculpture. A major shift in thinking about public sculpture was required when Beuys advanced his concept of social sculpture with *7000 Oaks* at Documenta in Kassel, Germany 1982-1987. The work began with “seven thousand large bassalt stones arranged in a triangular pile pointing to a single oak tree.” Beuys then called for individuals or organizations to purchase

---

the stones, replacing each stone with a person, to enable planting of 7000 trees in Kassel. This process resulted in extending the sculptural object into a process action, or perhaps in replacing the sculptural object by the audience, as North has suggested. The radical shift toward community involvement noted in Beuys and other late twentieth-century sculptors transfers the focus of public sculpture from the objects generated from the inner resources of the sculptor’s mind to the audience’s experience and actions. The audience through its experience and participation in effect becomes the sculpture.

The Audience’s Role

Just as there are questions affecting the role and concept of the artist in public sculpture, there are also important issues concerning the audience for public sculpture. It is necessary to ask, for instance, who is the audience for public art? The answer is that there are many publics, hence many audiences. Who, for instance is the audience for the monuments on the Mall in Washington, D. C. Immediately, there are many possible answers: foreign visitors, tourists from across the nation, the Congress and other government officials, the military, the regular citizens of Washington, who immediately subdivide into political, ethnic, gender, and countless other interest such as war veterans. And the variations multiply as the field is extended to culturally rich urban landscapes across the nation and the world.

One outcome of recent developments in public sculpture has been a radical shift in the relationship of artists to audiences. Part of the problem is a disparity between contemporary sculpture practice and the public view of what sculpture should look like.\(^{18}\) Many members of the public still think of public sculpture in terms of heroic representations of the human figure deriving from the Greek and Roman models as represented in the monuments to Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson located on the Washington Mall. These sculptures are intended represent values and beliefs that the public can easily identify with.

Yet, as traditional works such as these become inadequate to express increasingly pluralistic differences in social, political, and religious values, it is incumbent upon arts and the communities that they serve to find new approaches to public sculpture. This will not be an easy task, as agreement on artistic vocabularies through which to express these diversities may turn out to be as challenging as the task of sorting out the social and political differences themselves. The modern practice of placing giant abstract sculptures in public places has often led to tensions in situations such as the controversy over Serra’s “Tilted Arc” where the public is not prepared to accept the vocabulary of the artist.

There are nevertheless notably successful solutions such as the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Monument which opened in 1998 in Washington, D.C. By combining elements of the natural setting and contemporary representational sculpture with modern abstract forms to tell the story of Roosevelt’s four terms, Lawrence Halprin evolves a vocabulary that speaks to the radical nature of the New Deal without alienating the public. The humanizing effects of incorporating the individual names of the dead in the Vietnam Memorial also transcends the limits of what might otherwise be simply abstract sculptural forms.

Another, perhaps bolder model is found in the sculpture of Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), mentioned above. Beuys’ 7000 Oaks project takes a further step toward redefining the relationship of artist and audience, by allowing the audience to participate actively in the process of creating his “social sculpture.” He dethrones the notion of artist as one who creates for the audience and replaces this notion with a process where the artist creates with the audience in a common enterprise.

Experiments intended to address such questions are emerging in various cities across the United States. In the mid Nineties, Sculpture Chicago launched a series of public art experiments called “Culture in Action” in Chicago neighborhoods where artists could explore social and political concerns in the context of individual communities throughout the city. Sculpture Chicago is dedicated to engaging people who would not normally become involved in art, through its experiments in public art, and through fostering collaboration among community groups in the development of public art.19 The intent of this project is to establish

---

public sculpture that places equal emphasis on artist and audience, with the hope that art might become “a real part of people’s lives.”

This approach does not ignore the possibility that certain individuals might possess the special creativity necessary to the production of art, but it asks that the artists behave as citizens subject to the guidance of their fellow citizens, even inside the domain of their role as artist.

Arguably one might ask, is anything lost that is important to aesthetics in this shift from the romantic notion of the artist as individual creator to the role of artist who works interactively with the community? One result might be the need for public artists to surrender their allegiance with the avant garde approaches to art, which are often not immediately understood by the public. Here, it may be necessary to balance the need for innovative ideas against the value of public engagement. In the end, collaboration between artists and the public may reveal even greater possibilities for creative public projects, as some of the examples cited here would suggest.

Assessment of Public Art

Finally, the question of how we measure the success or failure of public art requires attention. Charles Griswold has found the appropriate words on which we may draw to begin: “It is necessary to understand the symbolism, social context, and the effects of the art work on those who experience it.”

Assessing a public art work is much more complex than judging the worth of a painting or other self-contained work of fine art where the principal considerations are aesthetics and/or market value. Measuring the success or failure of public art requires addressing questions of ethics and the broader social implications of the work together with aesthetics. Effectiveness, which refers to the outcomes measurable in changes in attitude, feelings, beliefs, values or understanding, is a useful standard by which to judge the success of public art. In some instances, public art can be considered effective

20 Olson, Berenson, Jacobs, *Culture in Action, A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago*, 10-14.
when the viewers take action that is inspired or motivated directly or indirectly by experiencing the public art. But as Suzanne Lacy has noted, effectiveness lacks the methodological precision necessary to deliver exact measurements of the social and critical impact of public art in a complex and changing world. For example, is a project that involves a large population more effective than a project engaging a smaller number of committed individuals? Do the aims or the actions being championed matter? Or How do we assess public art that itself becomes the target of public opposition?22

Open-endedness in public art often fulfills a role in a democratic society by encouraging new challenges to the mind and to societal processes. In doing so, public art signifies and also generates renewed vitality. Viewed in this light, public art can best be seen as “a process of meaning-making interactions” that enrich every day life by themselves remaining open to new and evolving interpretations.23 It may be that success and failure become provisional judgments subject to change as circumstances change.24 Hence, artists who participate in public art projects need to understand that their work will be judged by broader social criteria and may not turn out to be permanent. Some public art will undoubtedly be temporary experiments useful for a limited time.

Considering the assessment of public art from the perspective of its role as a measure of civilization, public art, even more than gross national product or the size of the armies, serves as an important indicator of achievement. It symbolizes a nation’s culture, as the pyramids and temples from ancient Egypt and Greece, as well as the skyscrapers of Chicago and New York attest. Both then and now public art is a function of a complex network of artists working in a context of political action, economic development, and other interests. Perhaps the most effective public art incorporates universal concerns that speak beyond the boundaries of a particular community or nation and attract the attention of visitors on a world scale as well as the interests of a particular community. Is this not why travelers yearn to

visit the great public art works past and present wherever they may be?

Concluding Remarks

Public art, perhaps even more than gross national product or the size of the armies, is an important measure of the power and influence of a nation. It is a key element in the spread of influence of a nation’s culture, as the pyramids and temples from ancient Egypt and Greece as well as the skyscrapers of Chicago and New York attest. Both then and now public art is a function of a complex network of artists working in a context of political action, economic development, and other value interests. Perhaps the most effective public art incorporates universal concerns that speak beyond the boundaries of a particular community or nation and attract the attention of visitors on a world scale as well as the interests of a particular community. Is this not why travelers yearn to visit the great public art works past and present wherever they may be?

What then, when taking account of developments in public art, has become of our initial definition of sculpture as the art of representing observed or imagined objects in solid material and in three dimensions? It would appear that the definition remains useful for traditional sculpture through most of history. However, it is necessary to modify the definition to include recent modern and contemporary developments in public art. For instance, at first glance, it would appear that social sculpture is not a form of representational art as it has been understood traditionally. Social sculpture does not resemble or copy, but it can refer to ideas in a broad sense. However, the main focus has shifted from sculptures made from solid materials to social and political actions. Social sculpture now embraces actions in social space as well as physical space, which are not necessarily three dimensional in the physical sense. The temporal dimension is of particular significance in public art, as it can involve history as well as thought and actions in real time.

Even more have the traditional boundaries of public sculpture been extended as, artists continue to create many variations including light
sculptures, earth art sculptures, installations, video, internet, and now cyber-art message boards. With the emergence of the internet and cyberspace, it is necessary to broaden our thinking again about the different form in which public art might appear. Today, public art also includes transient performance art as well as “action” works intended to convey a social message. A particularly challenging example would be, “Media Burn,” a 1975 performance art work of the Collaborative Art and Architecture group. Performed at San Francisco’s Cow Palace, *Ant Farm* represents a public art performance intended as a critique of the mass media’s control of information. In response to a speech, an artist portraying President John Kennedy, asked the assembled spectators, “Haven’t you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen? Amid roars from the crowd, and the playing of the “Star Spangled Banner,” two brave artist-astronauts rammed a customized 1959 Cadillac Biarritz at fifty-five miles per hour through a wall of fifty burning television sets.... The impact...hurled flame and smoke-filled television sets into the air. The crowd roared as burning television sets continued to implode.” Ironically, the event was dutifully reported on the local television stations as the lead news event of the day.²⁵

Philosophers may wish to ponder the implications of these changes for the future of public art. Similarly they may wish to reflect on the implications of the transformations occurring with respect to public art, for aesthetics. One might ask, for instance, what changes in aesthetics are required to accommodate the reconstructing of art to include public sculpture in the form of social practices and technological innovations such as those sited previously here. Possibly none, because certain artistic practices such as music, drama theater, and dance have always entailed collaborative efforts and technological innovation. In any event, there is much to gain for the public good by extending the benefits of enlivened joint participation of artists and the community in exploring new frontiers of public art. There is always the risk that innovative ventures may become stifled by unenlightened community forces who might render it impossible to produce significant public works. The antidote to this situation must be to educate the community through its participation in the art-making process.

A massive exhibition of Central European Avant-Gardes occurred in Los Angeles, Munich, and Berlin between March 2002 and February 2003, with a lavish catalogue published by the MIT Press.\textsuperscript{1} The catalogue contains essays on a wide and up-to-date range of topics and encompasses an impressive list of contributors, internationally known cultural historians, art historians, and art critics. In addition, accompanying the catalogue publication was a huge supplementary sourcebook of primary source materials, translated into English from German, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, and Slovenian.\textsuperscript{2} Mobilizing the resources of major museums, support foundations, research facilities, libraries, and individual scholars in several countries, this was more than just an item on the program of the Los Angeles County Museum. It was an "event," the happening, the coming-to-presence of something or somewhere or someones called "Central Europe" in the curatorial and scholarly discourse of the United States and Western Europe.

In a review article on the exhibition catalogue and sourcebook that I published in 2003 in the journal *Modernism / Modernity*, I discussed some of the productive difficulties in defining the object of study "Central European Avant-Gardes," the fluctuating approaches and geographical boundaries evidenced in the various contributors' treatments of the topic, and the value for scholars of the avant-garde to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2002).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
engage with both the wider range of empirical sources and contexts and with the historiographic problems that arise out of the wide transnational, multilingual reach of the 2002 exhibition. In surveying the wide range of uses and symbolizations of the map of Central Europe among the contributions, I developed two conclusions. First, that any historiographic use of this concept to discuss the art and culture of the avant-garde was a profoundly hermeneutical process of reactivating past meanings and projecting future ones. As I wrote, "The organizing trope of these two volumes—the metaphorical convergence of political, geographical, and cultural spaces under a complex, ambiguous designator ("Central Europe")—results from active cultural construction and rhetorical performances: a symbolic elaboration already underway in the historical period in question and continuing in and beyond the presentation of history by contemporary scholars" (Miller 564). Second, as was already suggested by the last quote, these volumes represent a sort of "performative speech act" (564) constituting and defining their object in the process of speaking about it. Current acts of displaying and discussing "Central Europe" ride ahead of the reference and significance of the term and reach out to publics to embrace or qualify or reject it.

In this essay I would like to elaborate and concretize these general theoretical observations, confronting them with some specific examples both from the artistic culture of the 1920s and recent scholarship on this period. What I wish to suggest, anticipating my conclusion, is that one of the prevailing historiographic frameworks used to define the specificity of Central European avant-gardes, that of nationalism vs. internationalism, particularism vs. universalism or local-national vs. European-cosmopolitan, needs much greater refinement if we are to understand the peculiar artistic expressions of Central Europe's "incomplete modernity." We need more nuanced,

---


more context-sensitive tools to avoid effacing the Central European avant-garde's peculiar mixture of direct inclusion, parallel development, and divergence with respect to those avant-gardes that have received greatest treatment in historical scholarship: the avant-garde movements of Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Vienna, Zurich, or Milan. In particular, I will later be concerned to offer a differentiated typology of "internationalisms," suggesting that different conceptions of the avant-garde's "international" commitments often represent fracture lines internal to national avant-gardes all over Europe, and hence that the national/international, national/European orientations of the various avant-gardes are far more complex than a simple East/West division can comprehend. I will be distinguishing at least four types of internationalism that figure in differing degrees in the historical picture of avant-gardes in Europe. These include the internationalism of national rivalries and competition; the proletarian internationalism of the communist movement; an internationalism of urban networks; and at my paper's conclusion, a zero-degree internationalism of those who disappeared and of the stateless, above all, the victims of the Nazi Holocaust.

I would like to begin by considering a book that was a landmark study in English, Steven A. Mansbach's *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890-1939*, published by the Cambridge University Press. Mansbach, a scholar connected with the National Gallery of Art in Washington, received an impressive array of institutional support in his preparation of this wide-ranging, empirically rich study, including the prize of the Confédération Internationale de Négociants en Oeuvres d'Art, the College Art Association, the Getty Grant Program, Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, the Fulbright Commission, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Freie Universität in Berlin, Title VIII program of the U.S. Department of State, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Soros Foundation. This was the first book in English to cover the range of

---


182
countries and topics and works encompassed by the book—from the Baltics to the Balkans—and indeed remains one of the few books in any language to do so. It obviously draws compendiously on the work of regional scholars, presenting the materials in a comparative and synthetic form and setting against the background of broader historical and cultural developments. My interest here is in the way this important, exemplary work, bound to remain an authoritative textbook and source for some time to come, frames its material geographically and historiographically.

A look at the table of contents reveals that the organization is national and regional, in the sense that this would have had in the period of the nationalist agitations of the pre-World War I period and the period of independence prior to the war and before the Nazi occupations: the Czech lands, Poland and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, "the Southern Balkans of the Former Yugoslavia" (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia), Romania, and Hungary. Moreover, this national-regional framing is not merely a convenient heuristic device, but is thoroughly motivated by Mansbach's guiding historiographic conception. "In the present study definitions of time, geography, and subject are necessarily relative," he writes. "Even as the cultural traditions, social structures, and political and historical formations differed considerably within the region, they departed essentially from those of western Europe (and the United States)" (Mansbach 3, emphasis mine). This "essential" difference lies in the nature and role of nationalism. Echoing political theorists who postulate a "two nationalisms" model dividing East and West, Mansbach suggests that in the West, nationalist energies found political channels of expression and expended themselves in the discourse of politicians. "[T]he nations of the West have often been free to express their identities politically" (Mansbach 4), he writes; implicitly, this meant that nationalism didn't need the arts and there was no nationalism left over to take cultural expression. In the East, where political life was constrained, however, the arts were the crucial vehicle of nationalism:

From Estonia to Slovenia the makers of modern art most often emphasized national individuality rather than universality. They responded variously to a public demand for expressions of national self-consciousness through which an emerging nation
might stake its claims to membership in a modern world. Such profession of national identity by means of avant-garde art was a cultural phenomenon as widespread in the East as it was rare in the West. (4)

In another passage, he suggests that in Eastern Europe cultural forms of "national awakening" were definitive and constitute the cutting-edge of geo-cultural difference with Western Europe:

Promoting cultural expression and preservation rather than the revolutionary political action and social reconstruction that occurred in the West—especially in Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia—informal groups of writers, poets, ethnographers, and musicologists originated the revival movements in countries from the Baltic north to the Adriatic south that then inspired visual artists to their own expressions of a distinctively national modern character. (4-5)

In his contribution to the 2002 Central European Avant-Gardes exhibition catalogue, "Methodology and Meaning in the Modern Art of Eastern Europe," Mansbach repeats this distinction, claiming that "As ethnographic reference has invariably been a building block of a modern national expression, allusions to historical myths, events, heroes, and folk styles are as common in Eastern avant-garde design as they are rare in Western progressive art." 6 In short, Eastern avant-gardes are nationalistic, folkloristic, and ontologically local; Western avant-gardes are internationalist, universalist, and cosmopolitan. The "essential" difference means, for Mansbach, that these "Eastern" avant-gardes dwell in a time of their own and in their own, nationally bounded space; they must be relativistically studied on their own terms.

Before discussing some specific examples that call this framework in question, I want to make a few preliminary observations. First is that in his actual discussion of individual artists, movements, and works, Mansbach is unable to sustain this radical relativism, for the simple reason that the contexts he is treating—and often describing in

---

6 Mansbach in Benson, Central European Avant-Gardes 296.
detail—is anything but nationally sealed. Artists go abroad, especially to Paris and Berlin; they read international periodical; they view the work of foreign artists, from Munch and Cézanne to Kandinsky and El Lissitzky, in their own countries and participate in international exhibitions; they correspond with other artists and intellectuals abroad; and they develop indigenous cosmopolitan, universalist responses against the obligation to represent national themes and aspirations in their art. Some Central European artists in some periods and in some countries lean more to national particularities, others do not, but it is impossible to reduce this rich cultural productivity to a single measure and schism it from developments in the West on this basis. In his catalogue essay on "methodology" of art historical study of Eastern European avant-gardes, Mansbach offers a more subtle appreciation of the interaction of local and Europe-wide elements that gave shape to different national contexts:

an awareness of local geography—social, political, cultural, and personal—will enable one better to appreciate how these artists chose to be influenced by the "foreign" artistic forms they encountered directly through exhibitions or, more frequently, at second hand through periodicals. By means of an awareness of what was expected of artists in Eastern Europe and of the choices available to them, one might better comprehend how styles were appropriated and then adapted to correspond to domestic needs (which often included achieving external recognition).  

While this is unquestionably good historical method, it is not clear how this dialectic of local and cosmopolitan influences distinguishes Western and Eastern artists, particularly in an "essential" way. For example, one might follow this precept equally with the English "Vorticist" artist Wyndham Lewis, who apprenticed in Paris and Munich and whose main early patron was the American John Quinn, but who put his stamp on the London art scene of the 1910s. Lewis's polemical "continentalism" in the context of British parochialism in the modern arts, coupled with a quasi-nationalistic rejection of German

7 Mansbach in Benson, Central European Avant-Gardes 303.
spiritualism and Italian futurist antics, was a key part of the specific flavor of his avant-gardism. While this is analogously true for Central and Eastern European artists as well, it does not serve the point at issue: defining a deep, essential distinction between the Western and Eastern avant-gardes.

In sum, Mansbach seems not to account for how profoundly his actual material contradicts his historiographic thesis. It must at the same time be acknowledged that the roots of this erroneous thesis lie in a well-meaning attempt to acknowledge cultural difference, to take Eastern Europe on what are putatively its own terms, and not treat its avant-garde developments simply as a belated appendage of Western European developments such as cubism, expressionism, or futurism. The ultimate effect of this relativistic attempt at cultural acknowledgement, however, is to lead Mansbach to misrecognize how much Central or "Eastern" or "Southern" European modernity was negotiated in a complex relation of mimesis, rivalry, and rejection of Western Europe; and so, too, it leaves Mansbach's broadminded "Western" perspective unmarked, untouched by the messy existence of other voices, other ways of conceiving artistic culture, across the East-West divide. To use a terminology developed in contemporary anthropology, in the name of cultural recognition and respect, Mansbach denies quite modern, quite thoroughly European cultures their "coevalness" (Johannes Fabian) or "contemporaneity" (Marc Augé) in difference. ⁸

I now turn to examples in taking up some of the individual propositions in this position, to see how they stack up against the evidence. I find myself quite skeptical about the idea that Eastern and Western avant-gardes are distinguishable by the commitment of the former to nationalism and the latter to cosmopolitanism. Unquestionably one can find close intersections of folk art and avant-gardism in the Latvian artist Romans Suta or the Ukrainian "peasant-futurist" Hanna Sobaschko-Shostak, although as the example

---

of Wyoming-born painter Jackson Pollock, with his interest in American Indian motifs and early training with Mexican mural artist David Siqueros suggests, this intersection is not absent from even highly canonical Western avant-garde art as well. One could indeed cite the example of Zenit editor Ljubomir Micic' as a clear instance in which Yugoslavian avant-gardism and Serbian political nationalism are fused, as in his essay "Morocco and once again for the salvation of civilization. Imperialism is the bible of Europe and the Europeans," which denounces the Croatians' wartime collaboration with Austria, Germany, and Turkey in the attempt to crush Serbia and predicts that imperialist war will return to Serbia soon over the issue of Albania; this was in 1925.⁹ Even in Micic's case, however, the issue is highly complicated. His journal Zenit published an international group of contributors, and often in the original language without translation, thus demonstratively militating against ethnic parochialism and specifically against the language policy of imposing a uniform "Serbo-Croatian" in the Yugoslav territories. But one would need only to turn to the radically anti-nationalist orientation of the Hungarian poet, editor, and artist Lajos Kassák or the cosmopolitan mobility of the Bauhaus-educated leader of the Ljubljana and Trieste Constructivist circles, August Cernigoj, to recognize that Micic' can hardly be taken as more than one possibility in a wide-spectrum.

Here I would like to introduce my first type of internationalism, that of national competition in an international framework. In the case of the arts, one can take this national competition literally, in the case of prize-awarding international expositions. For example, in San Francisco's Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, the Hungarian artist Béla Uitz, later a leading figure of the Communist avantgarde and an emigrant to the Soviet Union, won a prize in the graphic art category. My interest, however, is in the peculiar "symbolic geography" of Europe underlying such an event. To set the Central European participation in context, then, I will quote a lengthy passage in a contemporary account, Ben Macomber's *The Jewel City: Its Planning*

The International Section, in Room 108 and in the Annex, is peculiarly interesting in that it makes easy a comparison of the characteristic fingerprints of each country represented. . . . Unfortunately, because of the war, the gallery contains no special rooms for the art of England and Germany. Both countries are represented only by loan collections. . . .

France, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Portugal, Japan, China and several of the South American countries have installed representative collections in the Palace; while the Annex, made necessary by the unexpected number of pictures from Europe, contains a large exhibit of Hungarian art, a Norwegian display, filling seven rooms, a large British exhibit, and a small group of pictures by Spanish painters, showing that the influence of Velasquez is still powerful in Spanish art. The Norwegian display is one of the largest foreign sections, quite as characteristic as the Swedish, and certain to arouse discussion because of its extreme modernism. The ultra-radical art of Edvard Munch, who is called the greatest of Norwegian painters, and to whom a special room is assigned, is sure to be a bone of contention among the critics. The work of Harald Sohlberg (medal of honor) and Halfdan Strom (gold medal), differing widely from Munch's, though hardly less modern in style, will also attract much attention. The omission of Munch from the honor list is really a tribute to his eminence. An artist who has won the Grand Prix at Rome and awards in every other European capital was deemed outside of competition here.

The Italian Futurists are well shown in the Annex, and for the first time in this country. The Futurist pictures hitherto seen in America have been French imitations of the Italian originators of the mode. A sample Futurist title, "Architectural Construction of a Woman on the Beach," may or may not indicate what these pictures reveal. . . .

---

10 Ben Macomber, *The Jewel City: Its Planning and Achievement; Its Architecture*, 188
On the one hand, the international exposition represents a kind of delirious meltdown of the European map, in which countries such as Norway, Hungary, Spain, and Italy are in immediate proximity. At the same time, however, this virtual geography is nonetheless affected by the real competition and conflict of nations, as the absence of original entries from two principal combatant nations of World War I, England and Germany, demonstrates.

It is, however, on the border between East and West, the border that Mansbach so sharply draws, that I want to dwell for a bit, considering the crucial and problematic example of Futurism. There is from the start the troubling fact that Futurism was split between two authentic movements, one "Western," the other "Eastern"; one relatively concentrated, centralized, and highly nationalistic in Italy, the other existing in several cities including Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tiflis and generally utopian-cosmopolitan, eventually left-communist in its politics. One finds in the Russian orbit such expressions of utopian globalism as this passage from Velimir Khlebnikov's long visionary poem "Goodworld," which evokes cosmic unity in the form of the mythic, prelapsarian speech of the world's major rivers:

Where the Volga will say "I,"
The Yangtze will add "love,"
And the Mississippi—"all of,"
Old Man Danube will add "the,"
And the Ganges's waters—"world."
Thus will the river idol
Outline the lands of green.
Forever, always, there and here!
For all, forever, everywhere—all!
Across the star will fly our call.
Above the world the language of love soars,

By contrast, the Italian futurists, as is well-known, were highly nationalistic, militating for Italy's entry into World War I. Following the war, they became fervent participants in the fascist movement during its most activist phase. At the same time, however, they were also highly "internationalist" in their activity and outlook, publicizing and propagating the Futurist movement throughout Europe and in Russia as well. This seeming contradiction between nationalist and internationalist impulses, however, is no contradiction at all: it is definitive of internationalism: an "internationalism" that is the expanded field in which national competition is played out. Not merely a passive ethnocentrism, the form of nationalism that Futurism represented could not be satisfied with being confined within national boundaries: it was a nationalism with imperial dreams, addressing itself to an international audience, announcing Italy's aggressive re-emergence onto the European scene after centuries of decadence and weakness.

Further teasing out some of the implications of this for Mansbach's thesis of an essential difference of Western and Eastern avant-gardes, I would like to focus briefly on the relations of Italian Futurism to the Balkans, to the new Yugoslavia, and to the contested border area of Trieste-Gorizia-Istria. It is worth mentioning that the Yugoslavian territories—then under Hapsburg dominion—were anything but sealed off from access to Western avant-garde ideas: Marinetti's "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," published originally in Paris in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909, appeared in Ljubljana and Zagreb simultaneously only a month later. Although Marinetti's celebrations of warfare are well-known, it is often assumed, given the Futurists' vigorous campaigning for intervention in World War I, that the war texts refer primarily to this war. However, one of Marinetti's most important exemplifications of his onomatopoeic and typographically radical "words-in-liberty" texts, *Zang Tumb Tuuum*, from 1914, depicts not a World War I battle, but rather the battle of Adrianapoli, between the Turks and the Bulgarians in 1912. We can see well exemplified the interaction of nationalist and internationalist discourse, internationalism as the highest stage of nationalism, in Marinetti's diagrammatic "Futurist Synthesis of the War," which opposed such allied countries as Serbia, Belgium, France, England, Russia, England,
Montenegro, Japan, and Italy to Germany, Austria, and Turkey.

While such characteristics as "independence" and "ambition" are associated on the chart with Serbia or "intelligence" and "courage" with France (and likewise for all the allied countries), their enemies receive only a litany of insults ranging from German "sheepishness" and "constipation of industrial camelots" to Austrian "clotted blood" and "bedbugs--priests" to the dismissive ascription of "= 0" as Turkey's defining quality. The whole diagram of warring countries is traversed by a wedge, penetrating the bad German, Austrian, and Turkish alliance and marking a divide between "Futurism" and "Passéism." Attacks on symbols of a "passéist" Italy and publicity for international exhibitions, went hand-in-hand with agitation for definitive national claims on subjacent territories and cultures in the name of the Italian nation.

There is a fascinating document of the encounter between the Italian Futurists, by 1925, thoroughly in the camp of fascism, and the Serbian Zenitists, who were strong Serbian nationalists, pan-Slavists, and
supporters of Soviet communism, all this in the name of an anti-European "barbaro-genius" of the Balkans. In 1925, in issue 37 of the journal Zenit, Branko Ve Poljanski recounts a meeting with Marinetti in Paris, following the Italian poet's lecture on the inextricable bond between Futurism and Fascism. Poljanski sets a rather hilarious scene of imperfect communication, with the Zenitists knowing only Serbian and German, Marinetti speaking French to the translator, who understood Serbian poorly, and who, Poljanski adds, probably wouldn't have really gotten it even if they had spoken in her mother-tongue. Here is their dialogue, as published by Poljanski:

POLJANSKI: Mr. Marinetti! I greet you as the founder of Futurism and as the man who first raised the flag and called the youth to rebel. I do this as representative of Zenitism in Paris. That is my duty. Even the founder of Zenitism and director of Zenit could in no way have any reason not to esteem you in this capacity. But as a propagandist of fascism you have lost our sympathy. We must protest against such a Marinetti.

MARINETTI: Thanks! But you have no reason for that either, because fascism is a call to struggle, and struggle is healthy and necessary.

POLJANSKI: The Zenists esteem your struggle, but if this struggle is fascistic, then we cannot work together, since the fascists put the Slovenian "People's Home" in Trieste to the torch and two men threw themselves alive out of the third floor through the flames to the street.

MARINETTI: getting heated. Communists had hidden themselves there. . .

POLJANSKI: Idle pronouncement! Even communists are human beings!

MARINETTI: Besides, for a long time the Zenitists have enjoyed our sympathy.

POLJANSKI: Nice! The Futurists too have enjoyed our sympathies, but in Istria the fascists terrorize innocent Croats and close our schools?

MARINETTI: Are you Serb or Croat?

POLJANSKI: Serb!

Marinetti raises an eyebrow, his left eye flashes a little with astonishment.
POLJANSKI: Proof that our sympathies for you are really sincere is the fact that we have printed your work and that Mr. Micic' has always stuck up for you when you were attacked. We have organized conferences and Zenitist evenings, in which you too were honored. And what have you done for us? Have you written two lines about us?
MARINETTI: That's really difficult because of your language, which nobody understands. . .
POLJANSKI: What? God is also Serbian: there are Serbs everywhere--there are also Serbs and Slovenians in Italy. . .
MARINETTI: going uncertainly back and forth and becoming agitated: How many German poets are there too who because of their untranslatable language aren't translated in Italy. That I included Micic' and you in my last manifesto is nevertheless proof that I take account of the Zenitist.
POLJANSKI: But we aren't futurists, rather Zenitists. In our country there are only Zenitists. . .
MARINETTI: And as such I have called you up to struggle against the common enemy.
POLJANSKI: If the enemy is Europe, then forward! If the enemy is the old, bearded culture--we are ready.
DEPERO breaks in energetically: Lui dice! He said it!
POLJANSKI: We are joyful barbarians, we will make the beards of the wise go up in flames. We have to do something for humanity. The Zenitists are unpolitical people, since the politicians, along with their brothers, the Herr Professors, have condemned the world to death.
DEPERO: breaks in anew and even more energetically: Lui dice! Lui. . . Prampolini holds himself back prudently and stares.
MARINETTI: We Italians are also barbarians.
POLJANSKI: So it is! Bravo! Forward to the common struggle.
MARINETTI: Under these conditions Zenit will be translated and published in all our journals. Next year in Rome there will be a big international Futurist congress, to which the Zenitist will absolutely be invited.
POLJANSKI: But we aren't Futurists.
MARINETTI: Everyone will have the right to his own idiom.
POLJANSKI: I hear that with pleasure! And who will finance the congress?
Marinetti, the woman, a second woman, a man, Prampolini, Depero--laugh!!!
MARINETTI: Goodbye! Please send my greetings to your boss Ljubomir Micic'. I have great esteem for him and I much use for him.
POLJANSKI: Goodbye. Until Monday!...
Handshakes.¹²

The satirical overtones of Poljanski's account are unmistakable. But beneath the rather hilarious surface of this dialogue of the deaf is a more serious representation of a "minor" avant-garde in confrontation with a major one, in the context of serious nationalist rivalries. Poljanski throws in relief the dynamics of asymmetrical ignorance and non-recognition between the Serbian and Italian groups, and Marinetti's inclusive, internationalist gestures of generosity are exposed as masks of imperial annexation not without their analogies with fascist politics. Poljanski's repeated insistence that "we are not Futurists, we are Zenitists," thus is not simply stubborn Serb nationalist parochialism, but is itself a gesture of self-defense and resistance within an international field defined by national rivalries.

This resistant assertion of national particularity could co-exist with a second form of internationalism: proletarian internationalism. This hardly requires a great deal of explication, however, it often took the form of identification with either general forces of destruction or with the Soviet Union as a specifically anti-Western European alternative. In several Zenitist texts, for instance, Micic' praised "the greatest Slav--Vladimir Iliich Lenin." Yet he did not stop at this pan-Slavist ethnic identification: witness his poem "Made in England" (the original title is in English), included in his 1926 collection Anti-Europe. The poem celebrates the British General Strike of that year with the lines:

Today five million English workers roared
With an enormous curse on their lips

¹² Branko Ve Poljanski, "Dialog Marinetti-Poljanski" in In unseren Seelen flattern schwarze Fahnen, 143-145. Translation is mine.
That means--in the course of the hours after midnight the sparks leapt
In the guts of England of the leeches of the world
The General Strike is first the appendicitis
Then the engine drivers only saw green signals
In this night of the first collisions green signals mean death
And the red ones
Only the red signals mean switching into the new life of the new day of the new mankind
In England's harbors in the East hungry bayonets flash
There rifles groan and cannons have gone wild
Wounded by the gleaming ray of the revolution

O workers pitmen sailors
Proletarians you faithful to the balkan blood revenge
Along with our greeting only a childish question
Why are your callouses not diamonds
Or dynamite?¹³

Though more utopian and less evidently gleeful at the sheer upsurge of violent conflict, so too Sándor Bortnyik's graphics for the special numbers of the Hungarian journal *Ma*, one of which included an expressionist head of Lenin above an excerpt from *State and Revolution*, expressed a similar, class- and politics-specific form of internationalism during the Council Republic in 1919.

A third form of internationalism, and one that I think is representative of some of the best recent scholarship and exhibitions of Central European avant-gardes, is that of the network of interrelated urban sites. This particular vision of the symbolic geography of the avant-garde and of an historiography appropriate to it informs studies by Andrzej Turowski, Krisztina Passuth, the "Shaping the Great City" show and catalogue of 1999, and the aforementioned Central European

¹³ Ljubomir Micic', "Made in England" in *In unseren Seelen flattern schwarze Fahnen* 158-160.
Avant-Gardes show of 2002. I believe that this concentration on city-sites that generate distinct cultural environments, but ones that need not be nationally exclusive, offers one of the most productive approaches to the identity of Central Europe as a space of the avant-garde. Moreover, its latter-day use as a historiographic framework echoes a crucial part of the cultural imaginary of the various European avant-gardes themselves in the mid-1920s, during the period of stabilization, the period, in the words of the Berlin-based Hungarian critic Ernő Kallai, of the "twilight of the ideologies" and a resurgence of "free-market democracy and relativism" among the artistic tendencies, that is, a kind of post-modernist aftermath in what we normally think of as the heyday of high modernism. During this period, journals all over Europe, both Western and Eastern, began to consolidate links with one another—some substantial, with exchanges of work, mutual translations, and joint meetings, and others more virtual, projective, symbolic of a community still to be achieved in the future. But what is most interesting is to consider the appearance of a shared institution, a bit of paratext almost never considered important enough to make it into museum displays or catalogues: a page in which the titles of key avant-garde journals and the cities in which they are published stand side-by-side, as in this instance from the back cover page of the Hungarian activist journal *Ma [Today]*, published out of exile in Vienna in the early 1920s. These networks, I would argue, represent a different geographical imaginary of an international avant-garde than that represented either by the national internationalism I discussed in relation to Futurism or Zenitism, or by the proletarian internationalism of the communist avant-gardes.

---


15 Erno Kállai, "The Twilight of Ideologies" in Benson and Forgács 615-616.
I would like to conclude with a final, somewhat symbolic note about a last type of internationalism that is also part of the avant-garde legacy of Central Europe: the zero-degree internationalism of the expatriate and the stateless. Steven Mansbach, as I noted, argued that the artists of Central Europe, from the Baltics to the Balkans, tied their art to the project of national renewal, and it is against that overly exclusive backdrop that I wish to mention the case of the Estonian painter Karl Pärsimägi. After having fought in the war of independence in 1919, Pärsimägi enrolled in the newly-founded Pallas Art School in Tartu, joining the first generation of independent Estonian intellectuals. Studying and traveling, he absorbed influences both of French and German painting, adopting them to settings and subjects from his domestic existence and from the still largely rural or small-town Estonian countryside. In 1937, however, he moved to Paris, where he became involved in the French resistance movement. He was arrested in 1941 and deported to Auschwitz, where he was executed on 27 July 1942. Posthumously, however, during the Soviet occupation and annexation of Estonia, Pärsimägi fared no better. Branded a "formalist," he was kept from official display until the mid-sixties, when his work began to be recovered.16

One may certainly applaud the efforts of recently independent republics and post-communist countries to recover a heritage suppressed under communism—and hence, one can only welcome the spate of recent exhibitions of Ukranian modernism, modern art of the Baltics, Serbian modernism, Slovakian participants in the Bauhaus, and many others. It must not, however, become an occasion to efface this other history that I am taking Pärsimägi to represent. If Pärsimägi's art has a homeland, and that homeland is Estonia, it must be a reticulated Estonia wide enough to include the fractured, interlinked territories of Europe as coeval and effective parts of its national imaginary: an Estonia that is not only reclaiming its capitals of Tallinn and Tartu, but that also includes Budapest and Belgrade and Brno and Trieste as their kin; an Estonia that stands far more proximate to Berlin and Paris than its place on the Bay of Finland would suggest; and an Estonia that not so long ago was compelled to incorporate into its national destiny such far-away places as Siberia and Central Asia and such small Central European towns as Mauthausen and Terezin and Oswiecim.
Section V

Artistic Creation and Imitation
At Point Zero of Creation

Wolfgang Welsch

1. The Problem of Beginning

The problem of beginning is common to many artists. We can easily imagine an artist sitting in front of a white sheet of paper or an empty canvas unable to begin her work—maybe for hours. The first stroke, the first tinge of color, the first note would in a sense decide everything. It will provide the artist with possibilities but also exclude endless amounts of other possibilities. How shall she make this decisive step? Where from shall she take the certainty for it? Hence, the inhibition of the artist in the beginning—at point zero of creation.

We know this problem especially from modernity. Van Gogh wrote to his brother, “You don't know how paralyzing that is, that stare of a blank canvas, which says to the painter, ‘You can't do a thing’. The canvas has an idiotic stare and mesmerizes some painters so much that they turn into idiots themselves. Many painters are afraid in front of the blank canvas.”¹ We also know that Cézanne often spent hours sitting motionless in front of a canvas before making the first stroke.² The phenomenon is also well known in the cultural area of Asia.³

³ Tschang-Tsi, a Chinese Philosopher living around 800 AD, wrote the following poem entitled The White Sheet of Paper:

“My head heavy hanging in my hands, I stare
On the white sheet of paper that remains
As empty as it was ever since it is lying in front of me.
   I stare at the ink slowly drying on my brush,
But once the first move has been made, things are becoming easier. The first step provides further possibilities of continuation. Subsequently, one thing will lead to the next. A drive originates that almost automatically leads the artist onwards. The start has been extremely difficult; the continuation is easy in comparison.\(^4\) The only thing that matters now is that the artist is capable of giving in to the logic of the originating work. If she succeeds in doing so, her work will unfold all by itself. (Only stopping in time can then be a problem.)

2. Historical Limitations

Of course, beginning isn’t an issue in every artistic discipline and at

\[\text{My soul is asleep.}
\text{When will you wake up, soul of mine?}
\text{I jump up and hasten to the plain}
\text{On which the sun glows; I silently let}
\text{The hands glide over the high grass,}
\text{Above this place lies the forest, like velvet}
\text{There the graceful line of mountains,}
\text{The snow of which the sun covers in roses}
\text{I see the clouds floating in the blue,}
\text{Full of hope I return home, no sooner than}
\text{The ravens gloatingly screech their laughter past me.}
\text{And again I sit in front of the white sheet of Paper}
\text{And, with my head hanging in shame, I stare on it}
\text{Alas! The paper remains empty as it was before.}’’

\(^4\) From the philosophical perspective Hegel and Spencer Brown are suggesting themselves for the elucidation of the “problem of beginning”. Hegel has shown that the actual beginning can neither lie in the being nor in the nothing for these two initially are totally indifferent. (And therefore can very well be compared to the white sheet of paper, resp. the white canvas.) Rather the beginning happens in the transition to becoming, and as soon as this is done, everything unfolds until the end in coherent consequence. Spencer Brown made clear that the primal action is the “drawing of a distinction” from which all the subsequent distinctions follow. By the way, here we find an interesting relation to the \textit{Dao De Jing}: Spencer Brown placed the third line of the first chapter of the \textit{Dao De Jing} (in Chinese script) in front of the main text of his \textit{Laws of Form}: “Inconceivable are Heaven's and Earth's Origin.” This line is then followed by the famous formula “drawing a distinction.”
every point in time, but only under certain circumstances and in certain epochs. If there are canonical standards and guidelines with respect to topics, ways of representation or procedures, the problem does not exist. Such was the case in the art of ancient Egypt or in the medieval tradition of depicting saints. Where standards are to be fulfilled, the first steps are already made by the canon itself. Actually, everything is ready at hand there, nothing to invent or create. The artist only has to realize the canonical guidelines in the individual case.

In short, the problem of beginning arises only if the beginning shall be an absolute beginning, if the creation shall be a creation without preconditions and guidelines, if it is meant to bring forth a new world all by itself; or if it is an essential part of the canon to come up with individual, artistic variation, as it is the case in the European history of arts since artistic subjectivity became a standard in the Renaissance. In the fully developed modernity, the problem of beginning became increasingly important due to a more intense focus on individuality and subjectivity. Not by chance are all of the examples mentioned above artists that were working at the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th century.

3. An Utterly Impossible Ideal?

But now let us survey the idea of absolute creation, of creation from point zero. Isn’t it essentially paradoxical? Isn’t the mere idea of pure creation amiss from the outset? There are always numerous preconditions ranging from the artist’s personal experiences, and her belonging to artistic groups and movements, to the fact that the history of art itself and the development of art as a social institution have preceded her artistic practice. All this adds to the formation of an indispensable context. How can creation ab ovo then be possible? How can the artist start from scratch? Her work will always rest on a voluminous congregation of preconditions.

Artists that take pure creation as their aim are fully aware of this problem. Often they express the need to get rid of the burden of tradition and to leave behind all guidelines before they can start working. They
claim the necessity to forget and to become empty (here the Western statements remind us of a well known East-Asian topos). Cézanne, for example, said that the painter’s “entire will must be silent.” The painter “must silence all prejudice within himself. He must forget, forget, be quiet, be a perfect echo.” In Chinese aesthetics it is a widespread opinion that “the artist can only be able to create an outstanding work of art if he forgets his intention, his proficiency, his rules and maybe even his artistic skills.”

4. The Theoretical Background and Foundation of the Idea of Absolute Creation

Why do artists pursue the ideal of absolute creation, even though it is sheer impossible to live up to it? What is the driving idea behind it?

a. The Christian Conception of Creatio ex nihilo and its Limitations

The answer is plain in Western culture (and probably the ideal of starting creation from point zero is an essentially western ideal, I will come back to this later on). The decisive topos is the Christian concept of creation. Here, creation is conceived as creatio ex nihilo. Following this, artistic creation has on various occasions been understood in analogy to God’s creation. In this sense, Leonardo da Vinci, for example, thought of artists as the “relatives of God.”

---

6 Feng Peng, “On the Modernisation of Chinese Aesthetics,” in: Asian Aesthetics, ed. Ken-Ichi Sasaki (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2010) 139-154, here 144. Analogously we read in the Dao De Jing that, “great music nearly has no notes, the great picture is devoid of form” [Chap. 4]. Cp. also the famous metaphor of Yan Yu (ca.1180-1235) according to which the traces of conscious artistry hide themselves like a gazelle that hangs herself into a tree by her horns to sleep; the hounds may detect her scent, but they cannot find her out.
7 Leonardo da Vinci, Trattato della pittura [Reprint of Codex Vaticanus Urbinas 1270] (Neuchâtel: Le Bibliophile) 11 [8]. – By the way, already Nicholas of Cusa pointed out that every production of artifacts by humans comes close to divine creativity: “A
Of course, the Christian idea of creation is afflicted with some problems. Obviously the conception does not really equal the formula of *creatio ex nihilo* since creation does not simply follow from nothing, but has a very important precondition: God. He is supposed to exist prior to all creation, and only because of his existence creation can unfold. In so far, the Christian idea of creation does not really conceive creation as such, but solely the creation of the world and not of God. It is, so to say, an incomplete conception of creation unsuited to serve as model for absolute and full creation. The idea of an absolute creation would also have to incorporate the emergence of God.  

Apart from that, the Christian conception of creation is different from the artistic idea of creation from point zero in so far as God’s creation is meant to mirror God himself, to be a manifestation of his perfection. 

8 In addition, the Christian idea of creation is not devoid of any restrictions and defaults even if one neglects the condition of the existence of God himself for a second. Since God produces, so to say, within himself the ground plan i.e. the structure and logic of the world as well as its archetypes, the actual creation boils down to the material realization of the ideal forms designed beforehand. This is why Hegel (maybe not fully in conformity with his own line of thinking but consistent with the Christian idea of creation) could declare that the logic designed by him is “the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind.” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969, 50) By the way, it is for the preexistence of the archetypes that God could suffer the mishap which Plato described in his dialogue *Protagoras* with regard to *Epimetheus* and which Pico della Mirandola picked up in his *De dignitate hominis*: God depletes the supply of archetypes before he goes about the creation of mankind and therefore needs to find a makeshift.  

9 God is supposed to have created the world and especially us human beings “in his own image” (*Genesis* I, 27). And the purpose of our cognitive faculty lies in perceiving and praising God’s glory in view of his creation, “The Creator-Intellect makes himself the goal of his own works in order for his glory to be manifested; he creates cognizing substances that are capable of beholding his reality.” (Nicholas of Cusa, “De Beryllo,” trans. Jasper Hopkins. in: *Nicholas of Cusa: Metaphysical Speculations*, Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1998. 793)
Here, creation is thought of as a reflex of its own foundations. Hence, the artistic and the Christian ideal differ in two respects: what counts for the artist is *absolute freedom* from any pre-established restraints, and her work shall only stand for *itself*, not reflecting anything else. At first, one might have thought that divine and artistic creation have a common ground in so far as both presuppose a maker (God on the one hand and the artist on the other) but the big difference is that God wants to express himself while the artist wants to bring forth something *different* from herself, something genuinely new. In this respect, the artistic idea of pure creation exceeds the Christian conception of creation. The latter cannot be considered a sufficient model for the first.

### b. Cosmic Evolution as the Archetype of Creation from Point Zero

Now, does this mean that the artistic ideal of creation devoid of any restraints has no antetype at all, that nothing compares to it or even excels it?

No, because we know at least *one* process that fulfills the criteria mentioned before, a process that has no restraints and that generates all of its forms and contents solely from its own progression. What I mean is, of course, the one process through which everything came into being and that everything belongs to: the process of cosmic evolution.

The “Big Bang” literally started from nothing (in physical terms: the “vacuum”) and ignited a dynamic owing to which everything came into being. All of this occurred without any pre-established guideline or program, but in a strictly autogenetic manner. Cosmic evolution is a process of absolute creation. It does not have the form of the development or unwinding of something that has been (archetypically or logically) drafted or preprogrammed. Cosmic Evolution does not realize predetermined conceptions. Rather, it creates everything – the real and the ideal, the material and the logical – in an absolutely autonomous and autogenetic manner. In short, cosmic evolution really represents a *creatio ex nihilo*, a *creatio ab ovo*, a creation from point zero.\(^{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Cp. Wolfgang Welsch, “Absoluter Idealismus und Evolutionsdenken,” in: *Hegels*
And here the parallels to the work of the artist are obvious: the initial cosmic state of absolutely equal distribution and symmetry accords to the white sheet of paper; the minimal break in symmetry brought about by the Big Bang (understood as an effect of quantum fluctuations) parallels the first installment of a distinction within the artistic work. And as one step continually led to the next in cosmic evolution bringing forth a giant self-energizing process, so one step consequently leads to the next in artistic creation.\textsuperscript{11}

5. Depotentialization of Point Zero Ambitions

If the great model at the basis of artistic creation from point zero is evolution, what repercussions will this insight have on the creative ideal?

First of all, one will realize that one’s own creation, even though it might appear grand and successful, is infinitely small—sheer nothing—in comparison to cosmic creation. Even the best realization of the extreme artistic ideal of absolute creation must appear poor taking the cosmic model into account. So modesty rather than great expectations is appropriate. One has to give up on the pathos connected with absolute creation. Even the most genuine artistic production can at best be a distant echo and pale imitation of the long foregone and greater cosmic creation. The artistic idea of creation from point zero that originally was supposed to represent the maximum of creativity turns out to be irrelevant and insignificant in comparison to the true maximum.

In addition, it becomes clear that the structure at the core of the initial


\textsuperscript{11} By the way, there is a temporal relation between the emergence of the scientific idea of evolution and the development of the artistic ideal of creation without antecedents. The scientific idea of Evolution (first of cosmic and then of biological evolution) came up between 1750 and 1850, and soon after that creation from point zero became a central theme in the fine arts.
idea is not sustainable. The essential condition of being devoid of antecedents cannot be fulfilled – rather artistic productivity will forever and insurmountably be grounded on one grand condition, namely the course of cosmic evolution without which there would be neither earth, nor human societies, nor the institution of art. Neither the artist nor the work of art would be in existence.

Thus, the idea of creation from point zero breaks down. Even the most genuine artistic creation is merely secondary and dependent in comparison with cosmic evolution. From this point onwards, one has to conceive and interpret artistic creation differently – and probably search for a new approach in artistic practice too.

6. Due changes: Concepts of Artistic Activity Taking Evolution into Account

From now on, the artist can no longer understand her work just in the context of art alone, but must perceive it as a happening in the context of evolution. She will have to see her activity as belonging to and rooted in the most archetypical creative process there is: evolution.

But how can we further specify art within the scope of evolution? Being a moment in the course of evolution can be said pretty much of everything—of an earthquake, of road traffic, or of the happenings in the course of an evening with the family. How can art still or again stand out as something unique if we adopt, as it appears to be necessary, the perspective of evolution? Perhaps cultivating a special relationship with evolution's typical creative character is an option here. There are several possibilities to do so.

a. Art as an Analogy for Creation

A first one is the attempt of art to express the creativity of evolution. Surely the latter can not be depicted directly. But one can develop analogous ways of operating in the field of art that reflect and express the creativity of evolution, or one can even try to get in contact with the ultimate source of creation. What has happened on a large scale in
evolution shall micrologically be repeated within the work of art.

In this sense, Paul Klee spoke of art as a “simile of creation” i.e. of “God's work.” For him, “the relation of art to creation is symbolic. [...] Art is an example just as the earthly is an example of the cosmic.” Basically, this was the central thought in Romanticism. Romantic art was not concerned with the depiction of nature as it appears to us, but with capturing its innermost core, the active source at the bottom of all natural appearance as such: \textit{natura naturans}.

Artists following this line of thought do not see themselves as autonomous makers but as a vessel or medium in which nature itself is at work. To put it with Paul Klee again, “We are charged by this force even in our smallest parts.” The artist wants to contact and embrace the wellspring of being and finally become a direct agent of nature’s origin.

\textbf{b. Characteristic Features of Evolution as Central Ideas in Artistic Work}


\textsuperscript{13} Paul Klee, “Schöpferische Konfession” [1920], in: idem, \textit{Das bildnerische Denken} (Basel: Schwabe \textsuperscript{3} 1971) 76-80, here 79.

\textsuperscript{14} Cp. Gustav Mahler: “Just imagine a work of such magnitude that it actually mirrors the whole world — one is, so to speak, only an instrument, played on by the universe” (Gustav Mahler, letter to Anna von Mildenburg, June or July 1896, in: \textit{Gustav Mahler – Briefe}, Wien: Zsolnay, 1982. 164f). “I see it more and more: one does not compose, one gets composed.” (Bauer-Lechner, Natalie. \textit{Souvenirs de Gustav Mahler: Mahleriana}, Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998. 227).

\textsuperscript{15} Paul Klee, “Der Begriff ohne Gegensatz nicht denkbar – Die Dualität als Einheit behandelt” in: idem, \textit{Das bildnerische Denken} (Basel: Schwabe \textsuperscript{3} 1971) 15-17, here 17.

To commit oneself to the idea of modeling one's own artistic work on the prototypical creative model of evolution might as well—and in a less lofty way than by trying to get in to contact with the primordial source of nature—be done by taking essential characteristics of the evolutionary processes as central themes of the artistic expression and way of working. In this sense, the artist can, for example, choose chance and self-organization as guiding principles.\(^\text{17}\) In this way, art still operates analogously to nature, but now by expressing nature’s typical features and creating awareness for them. The main concern is not the actual work of art but the expression of and reflection on the prototypical kind of creativity, the non-artistic creativity of evolution.

c. Art Operates Like Nature—Nature Creates Art

Finally, the plain appearances of nature (rather than the source of creation and essential features of evolution) can become the point of orientation for the artistic attempts. Instead of the concept of *naturata naturans*, *natura naturata* is getting the center of focus here. The aim is to let things evolve within the work of art just as they do in reality: freely, on their own, and without being arranged and dictated by the artist.

In this sense, Emil Nolde admitted, “In painting I always hoped that through me, as the painter, the colors would take effect on the canvas as logically as nature herself creates her configurations, as ore and crystals form, as moss and algae grow, as flowers must unfold and bloom under the rays of the sun.”\(^\text{18}\) Cézanne followed the same line of thinking when, after demanding that the artist “must silence all prejudice within himself" and become a “perfect echo”, he declared that “then the full

\(^{17}\) For the first the works of the artist group “Zero” or of Mario Merz could be taken as examples, for the latter the aleatoric approach in music or that of Jackson Pollock in painting.

landscape will inscribe itself on his photographic plate.”¹⁹ Likewise, Morton Feldman did not want his works to be like mere objects but rather like evolving things.²⁰

One can come up with an even more extreme version of this thought by cherishing the idea that it is nature itself that procreates the work of art. This conception has been around for centuries. One can find it, for example, during Renaissance in Leone Battista Alberti²¹ and in the 20th

---

¹⁹ Conversations with Cézanne, loc. cit., 111.


²¹ Alberti was of the opinion that nature from time to time brings about pictorial images – according to him this was the origin of art. Thus nature often paints “in the breakages of marble […] centaurs and faces of bearded and curly headed kings.” (Leon Battista Alberti, On Painting, [First appeared 1435-36] trans. John R. Spencer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970. 19) Alberti goes on stating that, “It is said, moreover, that in a gem from Pyrrhus all nine Muses, each with her symbol, are found clearly painted by nature.” Nature already produces works of art and the anthropogenic production of art then builds on the artificial entities produced by nature. – The idea that art originally is an evolutionary product of nature and that the intentional production of art can be traced to the non-intentional workings of nature continued to have an effect on concepts in cultural theory that advocated a reconciliation of art and culture on the one hand and nature on the other. Schelling, for example, saw the task of the artist in the attempt to follow the “the spirit of nature […] working in the core of things” while creating artistic works and thereby “return to nature.” (Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, The philosophy of art, an oration on the relation between the plastic arts and nature, trans. A. Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845. 9-10). Accordingly, Caspar David Friedrich understood his artistry as a depiction of the deeper essence of nature. (vgl. Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen, ed. Sigrid Hinz. Berlin: Henschel, 1968. 95 a. 92). Schlegel’s aphorism that “man is a creative retrospection of nature upon itself” resumes this notion in its shortest form. (Friedrich Schlegel, “Ideen,” [written 1799, published 1800] in: idem, Kritische Ausgabe, ed. Ernst Behler. Vol. 2. München: Schöningh, 1967. 256-272, here 258 [Nr. 28]). Even Kant upraised the perfect impression of naturalness as a criterion of artistic success: the finality in the form of the artifact has “to appear so free of the restraints of arbitrary standards as if it were a product of nature itself.” (Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. J.H. Bernard. London: Macmillan, 1914. Div. I §45 187) Of course one has to be able to “realize that it is art and not nature” while beholding “a product of beautiful art” (idem. Div. I §45 188). Yet, beautiful art “must look like nature, although we are conscious of it as art” (idem. Div. I §45 188). In his writings on the philosophy of history, Kant thought even further and declared that the perfected state of culture will again take a natural
century in Max Ernst. Here, the appearances are meant to bring forth the work of art. The artist only is the medium by means of which nature produces a representation of itself.

7. The New Point Zero of Creation: the Dissolution of the Creative Ideal

Let us take a look back. Which steps have we gone through so far? First of all, there was an increasing dissociation from the artistic ideal of absolute creation in the sense of a creation starting from point zero. The insight that there cannot be a point zero for the artist since the great creation of evolution precedes any artistic endeavor was the decisive point that necessitated a break. It forced the artists to give up the claim on an autonomous creation and take over a perspective that sees their work situated within the evolutionary process itself. At this point three possibilities unfold themselves. (a) The artist can orientate herself towards the origin of all creation and perceive herself as its successor. Thereby, she can at least in a modified form stick to the creative pathos with the sole difference that the creation is actually not her own but that of evolution. (b) Or the artist can restrict herself to expressing typical process modes of evolution such as self-organization and contingency. (c) Or the artist can let go of all these high flown claims and dedicate her whole work to the sheer appearance of nature and depict the emergence form since it is the “ultimate goal of the moral vocation of the human species“ that “perfect art becomes nature again” (Immanuel Kant, “Conjectural Beginning of human history,” trans. Allen W. Wood. Anthropology, History, Education, ed. Günter Zöller, Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 171).

The frottages of Max Ernst are paradigm examples for this. The surface texture of objects is reflected in the work by means of the frottage technique. In this respect the objects themselves are participating in their depiction – it is as if they themselves produced their own image. Cp. Wolfgang Welsch, “Frottage“ – Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Geschichte, phänomenaler Verfassung und Sinn eines anschaulichen Typus (Bamberg 1974).

Cp. Cézanne, “An artist is only a receptacle for sensations, a brain, a recording device” (Conversations with Cézanne, loc. cit., 111).

of its elements. At this point we cannot talk of a creation on the side of the artist anymore. Art at this stage is merely bringing about a reproduction i.e. it is not constructing but reconstructing at best.

Thus, we have reached a new type of “point zero of creation”: the negation of artistic creation as such. Originally “point zero of creation” meant the ideal of artistic work as a grand and free endeavor creating new worlds. Now, we have reached the end of this ideal and its claims. It has shrunken to zero.25

8. Contemporary Art: Beyond Creation

To me, the dismissal of the old-modern idea of creation seems to a large extent to be characteristic of contemporary art.26 One does no longer intend to create works that are meant to stand for themselves. Rather, the artist tries to intervene in a context, to transform what is at hand, or to produce contingent and ephemeral things that, so to say, fully realize themselves in their disappearance. Today not only good design but good art as well is increasingly becoming invisible.27 This, then, might have been the general course of art in modernity and in the transition into a hereafter of modernity: that art at first sophisticated creation, but in the end merged into a state of no-longer-creating.

---

25 This is similar to what Roland Barthes diagnosed with regard to literature. Since the invention of literature, all forms it can possibly take have been played through. Contemporary literature is now concerned with the deconstruction of its own history, the reaching of a point zero and an adequate neutral mode of writing that Barthes calls “the zero degree of writing” (Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 5).

26 In this respect, the program of the last Biennale di Venezia (2009) was almost atavistic. Its motto was *Fare Mondi – Making Worlds*. The director Daniel Birnbaum declared, “a work of art […] if taken seriously must be seen as a way of making a world.” This was a retrograde conjuration of the old pathos, the antiquated ideology of creation.

9. West and East

It seems to me that this contemporary artistic attitude comes closer to East Asian ideas than the modern pathos of creation. The latter was a typically Western phenomenon anyway. The world is creation and the artist shall be a creator. This standard model has been deeply entrenched into Western brains. In the East, on the contrary, the idea of creation from point zero has no base. It appears to be completely amiss. In Asia one doesn’t count on creation but on articulation. The artist does not understand herself as the creator of a world but as an agent, a tool and a part of the world. Her work makes nature visible. And she finds delight in the fact that in her practice nature is coming even more to itself, is becoming more lucid than it was in its worldly appearance.

If this is true, then I would not only have depicted how the Western idea of creation falls apart, but also how the Western way of thinking about art is merging with the Eastern idea of non-creation. —Or is this only half the truth? Isn’t there a movement directly opposing to this? Isn’t it the case that Asian artists today take up the Western ideal of creation (that Western artists have dissociated themselves from)? Isn’t it a fact that today, all of a sudden, Asian artists want to ‘create”? Is, thus, —in this and perhaps also in other respects—the West preserved in the East, and the East in the West?

Translated by Gregor Stöber
The Platonic *Mimesis* and the Chinese *Moxie*

*Wang Keping*

The Platonic notion of *mimesis* is applied to painting above all, and so is the Chinese notion of *moxie*. Both of them are used at large to indicate the technique of imitative or representational art of certain kinds. They seem to be somewhat similar in appearance such that they are often treated as universals regarding art making under certain circumstances in modern Chinese aesthetics and art criticism. As a matter of fact, they are distinct from one another in principle due to their deep implications and philosophical ponderings each. According to Plato, *mimesis* produces phenomenal shadows or imperfect replicas, and its products are derived not merely from man-made artifacts, but also from natural objects. Reflected and revealed through the couch allegory in *The Republic*, it involves both a value judgment and a hierarchical structure of reality, structure that is composed of three levels, including the first reality in the ideal Forms, the secondary reality in the natural objects and artifacts as well, and the third reality in the visual images. With respect to the Chinese conception of *moxie* (copying and drawing), it denotes at least two kinds of interrelated practice: *linmo* and *xiezhao*. Quite briefly, the former refers to the studio learning of practical skills by making replicas of the well-recognized paintings of preceding masters, while the latter to the outdoor study of live objects or the vis-à-vis drawing of natural scenes. When developed further, they conduce to the final stage of *chuanshen* that means to express the vital power and spirit of what is known in Chinese as *tiandi* (Heaven and Earth). The three stages constitute a progressive process of cultivation, corresponding to a threefold development of perception and experience in the realm of painting. This discussion attempts to look into these two notions and their respective implications relating to art making in two different contexts of theoretical and practical hypotheses.
Mimesis and the Hierarchical Structure of Reality

The Platonic doctrine of mimesis is threading through the history of Western aesthetics and art criticism as well. The Greek ‘mimesis’ is usually translated into ‘imitation’ in some modern European languages. When the translation is taken as an equivalent to the source term, it could be misleading to the extent that mimesis means nothing more than copying an object through the craft of imitation. In order to retain the distinction, some philosophers attempt to render mimesis into, for instance, ‘representational action,’¹ ‘representation-cum-expression’² or ‘make-believe’³ with reference to its usage in the domain of artistic creation. When looking into these varied renderings along with etymological investigations, we still find something missing without a due consideration of Plato’s theory of mimesis in the light of his philosophical preoccupation with reality per se.

Then what is mimesis according to Plato? As is allegorically stated in the Book Ten of The Republic, mimesis is the action taken by the painter, ‘the producer of the product three removes from nature.’⁴ For he is unable to contribute anything to the creation of the ideal Form of the couch, and therefore chooses to take a mirror and carries it about everywhere, speedily producing the appearance (phainomenon) or phantasm (phantasmatos) of the things around, but not the reality or the truth (aletheias) of them at all. In a word, the painter himself is an imitator (mimetes) of appearance or image-maker. His painting is an imitation of a phantasm. The mimetic art in which he engages only touches upon a small part of the object(s) concerned. Accordingly, the theos or god is respected as the natural begetter of the couch eidos or Form in itself, and he creates the real couch in nature of a unique kind.

¹ G. Sörbom, Mimesis and Art (Bonniers: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1966), p.22.
The carpenter is conceived as the maker of a couch, and he makes the wooden couch on the model of the Form in itself by means of close and direct contemplation. The painter is then seen as an ‘imitator’ of the wooden couch, and he draws out what the couch appears to be in his eyes.

From the couch analogy in question, we perceive ‘a hierarchical structure of reality’ as W. J. Verdentus claims. Within this structure, there arise three levels of reality, including the ideal Forms, visible objects, and images, each of which is trying to express the values that grow increasingly superior when viewed from a bottom-up angle. As a rule, the degree of reality is determined by its degree of approximation to perfect reality or god-made eidos. The empirical world does not represent true reality, but only an approximation to it, say, it demonstrates ‘something that resembles real being but is not that,’ or ‘yearns’ to be like the ideal Forms but ‘falls short’ of them, thus ‘with difficulty’ it reveals something of the superior world of which it provides certain images or eikonas. Yet, it is through the images that one will be able to behold the nature of what is hidden in the imitation, or ‘see beauty shining in brightness.’ This is possible on the condition that the beholder is bestowed with a powerful vision or god-like capacity for reality in images.

The structure aforementioned can be also perceived in a top-down manner. In so doing, one discerns a gradually fading sheen of eternal radiance that is prevailing through all stages of reality. This is vividly illustrated by the couch allegory in which the ideal Form descends into the visible object, and then the visible object into the image. Since it is

---

5 W. J. Verdentus. Mimesis: Plato’s Doctrine of Artistic Imitation and Its Meaning to Us (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 16-17. As far as this observation is concerned, Verdentus is feeling so indebted to R. Schaerer who emphasizes the hierarchical conception of reality in his works including La question platonicienne (Neuchâtel, 1938), La composition du Phédon, Rev. Et. Gr. 53 (1940), 1-50, Dieu, l’homme et la vie d’après s Platon (Neuchâtel, 1944).


8 Plato, Phaedrus, 250b, in Plato, Complete Works.

9 Ibid., 250b.
always the case that the sharpest vision sees things first for their eye-catching appearance, the images will stand out as a helping guide, setting the vision into the channel and leading the viewer to gain an insight into reality. Accordingly, the image, especially the artistic image, should not be confined to the limits of its visual model. Likewise, art, and especially true art, should not lapse into flat realism, but strive to transcend the material world. By virtue of its images it works to evocate something of that higher realm of being which glimmers through phenomenal reality. For Plato the function of evocation and likeness derived from images in true art does not refer to commonplace reality, but to ideal Beauty.

When this happens, the term ‘image’ turns out to be rather crucial due to its significant role in the up-lifting experience of the cognitive progression and the artistic transcendence of the material world. Image itself indicates a close connection between Plato’s doctrine of *mimesis* and his hierarchical conception of reality. As is noted in a number of Plato’s dialogues, the notion of *mimesis* is at the core of his philosophical speculation, and often applied to other different domains rather than art itself. For instance, linguistically, words are *mimoseis* of things in letters and syllables in order to name and grasp the being or essence of each of what they signify;\(^\text{10}\) harmonically, sounds are the *mimeseis* of divine harmony in mortal movement such that they afford the delight to the wise instead of pleasure to the foolish;\(^\text{11}\) epistemologically, human thoughts and arguments about the nature of the universe as the supreme good are *mimeseis* of reality in terms of the completely unstraying revolutions of the god;\(^\text{12}\) cosmologically, time imitates eternity and circles according to number with the help of the divine Father;\(^\text{13}\) politically, laws are the imitations of the truth of each and every thing issuing from those who really possess the expert knowledge of statesmanship,\(^\text{14}\) and human government or constitution is expected to imitate a correct and appropriate one for the better rather than for the worse;\(^\text{15}\) religiously and spiritually, devout men try to

---

\(^{10}\) Plato, *Cratylus*, 423e-424b, in Plato, *Complete Works*.

\(^{11}\) Plato, *Timaeus*, 80b, in Plato, *Complete Works*.


\(^{13}\) *Ibid.*, 37c-38a.

\(^{14}\) Plato, *Statesman*, 300c-e.

\(^{15}\) *Ibid.*, 293e, 297c.
imitate their gods and emulate them in every way they can; if they happen to draw their inspiration from Zeus, they would pour it into the soul of the one they love and help him take on as much of their own god’s qualities as possible;\(^{16}\) visible figures attempt to imitate eternal ones after their likeness in a marvelous way that is hard to describe;\(^{17}\) and ordinary beings would make every effort to imitate the life of those who are said to have led under god, and they do so in order to secure their happiness.\(^{18}\) So on and so forth.

All this suffices to prove that the Platonic *mime\(\)sis* ‘is bound up with the idea of approximation and does not mean a true copy.’\(^{19}\) The matter of fact is that Plato himself has warned us against any mechanical identification of the image with all the qualities of that which it imitates. For an image is to be an image after all. It may be far from possessing the same qualities as the original concerned. That is to say, imitation or mimesis ‘can never be more than suggestion or evocation.’\(^{20}\)

To sum up, if we accepted the observation on the hierarchical structure of reality, we could logically claim that the ideal Forms stand for the first reality, the visible objects the secondary reality, and the images the third reality. The first reality is the original cause, while the secondary and the third reality are derivatives. At this point we could figure out certain aspects of what Plato’s doctrine of *mime\(\)sis* actually means to us. Here ‘by imitating the visible objects’ is, for example, meant to make images that bear their likeness or resemblance. Such likeness is appealing to our perception and vision because of its beautiful appearance or aesthetic merits. It offers a double-fold service in actuality. On the one hand, it stirs up the curiosity of the beholder and then encourages him to search through appearance for reality itself. This is positive in a sense that its cognitive worth is hidden in its aesthetic value. It can be therefore depicted in terms that the outward image will lead to the discovery of the inward truth via due

\(^{16}\) Plato, *Phaedrus*, 252c-d, 253b, in Plato, *Complete Works*.

\(^{17}\) Plato, *Timaeus*, 50c, in Plato, *Complete Works*.

\(^{18}\) Plato, *The Laws* 713e, in Plato, *Complete Works*.


contemplation. On the other hand, it is ‘vague and deceptive’ to the extent that ‘since we have no precise knowledge of such things, we do not examine these paintings too closely or find fault with them, but we are content to accept an art of suggestion and illusion for such things.’ Obviously this is negative as it keeps us aloof from reality or in sheer deception, but we seem to enjoy being obsessed in such a playful kind of art of suggestion and illusion.

Since artistic *mimesis* produces images that either expose or compose the third reality, it is by nature associated with the secondary and the first reality alike. This association is manifested to varied degrees of approximation to the visible objects first, and to the ideal Forms next. Such an artistic *mimesis* can be regarded as a form of symbolic evocation to lay bare the underlying relationship between the mimetic image, the useful artifact and the original *eidos*. In other words, although it consists in the third reality or common sensuous experience, it is symbolically evocating not only the secondary but also the first reality. As we can come to know the arrival of autumn by looking at a fallen leaf, we are well in the position to realize the first and secondary reality by contemplating the images as the outcome of artistic *mimesis*. For these three levels of reality are leagued with one another even though they are hierarchical in value judgment.

Moreover, artistic *mimesis* at its best does show its metaphysical tincture despite that it has no match for Plato’s expectation of philosophy as ‘the true Muse’ or “*alethines Mouses*”. This tincture is symbolic not merely of the first reality as the original cause of all other types of reality, but also of the divinity in more concrete images, say, in iconographic paintings and sculptures in the Hellenic art. When Plato prescribes what a painter as an imitator does with a mirror carried about everywhere while making images of everything around, it can be logically inferred that the painter is able to imitate as he pleases whatever he encounters and thinks worth imitating. He is by no means confined to the couch only, but remains free to draw and contrive many

other things including the images of gods and goddesses as are exemplified in the Greek vases, not to speak of those depicted in the Homeric epics. He owes what he does to his thinking and imagination. His thinking comes from the power of reason, a divine element in humankind according to Plato. It is acclaimed to enable human as human to become god-like to some extent. Meanwhile, his imagination could be creative and help him produce numerous objects or icons of varied kinds including those of religious worship and spiritual enhancement. In this case, the resulting effect of revelation and morality might be trivial and less proportionate to true philosophers, but tremendous and even indispensible to common folks. This is convincing and self-evident in temple or church art across the world from the past to the present.

**Moxie and the Progressive Process of Cultivation**

When the Platonic notion of *mimesis* was introduced into China in the early 20th century, it was rendered into *mofang* meaning to copy or reproduce a given object only. The Chinese rendering is found not merely misleading because it scratches at the surface meaning of *mimesis* regardless of Plato’s aesthetic consideration of beauty and philosophical preoccupation with reality. It is also mistaken for a universal principle of art making as it appears coincidently overlapping in meaning the Chinese notion of *moxie* in a way.

As is noted in the tradition of Chinese painting, the concept of *moxie* as such would be used earlier for *linmo* proper. With the passage of time its meaning has got enriched and expanded to the extent that it can be employed to denote two stages of interrelated practice: *linmo* and *xiezhao*, both of them can be understood as artistic imitation but with distinct objects and orientations. Quite briefly, *linmo* refers to imitating or copying the works of well-known painters. It is very close to the principle that emphasizes the importance of learning from the old masters. By repeatedly imitating the works of the old masters, the immature painter, just like an apprentice, was to acquire basic skills in the artistic use of brush, ink, strokes, lines, colors, shades, blanks, compositions and the like. Meanwhile, he was to observe and
apprehend the artistic styles and significant forms from which he may
discover some fundamental frames of reference for his future
development in painting. Moreover, he would come to see painting as a
comprehensive art because its representation and expression are an
organic combination of poetry, calligraphy, and seal cutting apart from
drawing itself. All this suggests that a successful painter need to have a
sound command of four types of expertise, say, he is expected to be a
good painter, poet, calligrapher, and seal-cutter altogether. For this
reason, an experienced viewer of a traditional Chinese painting tends
to make his aesthetic judgment according to the maturity and
uniqueness of the four skills as a whole in expression. In order to get
into this level of expertise, a gifted and ambitious painter will practice
constantly to produce linmohua as duplicated paintings that help
develop and demonstrate his artistry in the four inter-connected skills.

As regards the exercise of xiezhao to follow up, it is more or less like
xiesheng and xiezhen, engaging the maturing painter to portray directly
on the model of the natural objects including all types of landscapes
and beings. In a more technical sense, it performs a necessary way of
learning from Nature. Conventionally, a Chinese painter is liable to
treat Nature as his teacher or a mysterious creator who transforms
things and scenes into beautiful forms, grotesque images, and even
‘artistic works’ beyond human capacity. In brief, if the practice of
linmo stands for the elementary stage during which the immature
painter stays indoors and copies the masterpieces in the studio mainly
for skill training, the practice of xiezhao implies a higher stage during
which the maturing painter steps into the open air and produces images
of natural objects. On this latter occasion he is supposed to be
artistically keen and observant, able to find out the delicate features of
the physical objects, feel the living ambiance of natural surroundings,
and express them as freely and adequately as possible. At this stage he
endeavors to produce muhua as eye-perceived paintings that exemplify
his artistic sense of maturity and aesthetic taste of individuality.

However, linmo and xiezhao are not enough, because neither of them is
highly recommended by the first-notch artists and critics in one
sense,\(^{24}\) and in the other sense, neither of them could compose the best

---

\(^{24}\) In his book on Chinese painting, Zhang Yanyuan knocks down the value of
paintings at all. The best paintings could be created only by virtue of *chuanshen*, meaning to express the inner spirit and unique quality (*jingshen tezhi*) of the objects as symbolic parts of the cosmos. In order to nourish the genius of *chuanshen*, the artist ought to learn how to express the vital and rhythmic flow (*qiyun*) of Heaven and Earth. Here the phrase ‘Heaven and Earth’ is metaphorically used for the universe, cosmos or all things under the sky. An artist who wants to fulfill this ultimate goal of artistic creation needs to nurture and enhance such virtues as supreme sensibility, transcendent wisdom, creative imagination, pure taste and spiritual freedom, among others. He will possibly come to roam freely around in the endless space and time while enjoying the great Beauty of silence between Heaven and Earth. Eventually, with the help of his life-long cultivation of the virtues aforementioned, he will move onto the third stage. By then he will be able to produce *xinhua* as mind-inspired paintings that express his spiritual enlightenment and freedom and even his ideal of life. One of the typical samples could be the landscape of *The Solitary Fisherman on the Hanjiang River* (*Huanjiang dudiao tu*) by Ma Yuan in the 13th century. Such paintings are not merely mental schemes stemmed from imagination. They are in fact organic incorporation of idealized visions with unique features embodied in the sensuous appearances of natural scenes. They probably involve such virtues as sharp observation, affinity to Nature, creative imagination, appropriate abstraction and artistic inspiration above all. All this enables one to identify himself with the beautiful in Nature as he manages to go beyond from the state of finite being into the state of infinite being.

Quite notably, what is described above comprises the three stages of traditional Chinese painting. The first stage is devoted to learning from the preceding masters that will concentrate on imitating the masterpieces and then produce the super replicas at its best (*linmohua*). *moxie* as one of the six cardinal principles of painting. He argues that those who cling themselves only to *moxie* as imitation and representation will be confined to their self-satisfaction with formal or image resemblances while ignoring the expression of the vital rhythm, to the use of coloring on surface while losing the sketching expertise. See Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji* (*Commentary on the Famous Paintings in the History*), in Shen Zicheng (ed.), *Lidai lunhua mingzhu huibian* (*Selections from the Famous Historical Writings on Chinese Painting*, Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1982), p.36.
The subsequent stage is dedicated to learning from Nature that will focus on drawing directly the natural landscapes and living beings, and then produce eye-perceived paintings (muhua). The third stage is applied to learning from the spirit of Heaven and Earth that will encourage the free expression of the vital and rhythmic flow of the universe and create mind-inspired paintings (xinhua) as a consequence. Apparently the three stages imply a ladder of artistic development and personal cultivation as well. They are also hierarchical in terms of both skill improvement and value judgment. During this process in question, a painter goes up step by step to upgrade his artistry, and consequently his work gets closer and closer to free creation without any mechanical obstacles or confinement.

This line of thought runs through the history of Chinese painting. It can be traced back to Xie He and Zhang Zao who have discovered the hidden link between the three stages concerned. However, it is explicitly stated by Dong Qichang (1555-1636) in this argument:

A painter firstly learns from the old masters, and then from natural landscapes...he learns from the old masters perfectly to the extent that he goes further to learn from Heaven and Earth. If he gets up every morning to contemplate the changing clouds over and flowing mist amid the mountains, he will find something far better than the painted scenes. When encountering a grotesque tree in the mountains, he must look at it from the four directions...Only when he gets so familiar with it, he can naturally express its spirit rather than its image. He who expresses its spirit is bound to do it in form. As the form and the mind are cooperating so freely as to make the painter forget the distinction between them, the spirit of the

---

25 Xie He who lived in the fifth century sums up the art of painting into six leading principle including qiyun shengdong (vital rhythm and lively vividness) and chuanyi moxie (expressive transforming and imitative drawing), among others Zhang Zao who lived in the eighth century is renowned to advocate the motto of “waishi zaohua, zhongde xinyuan” that emphasizes the apperception of the living rhythm within the artist and the appealing scenes in Nature. On the occasion of this apperception as a living experience, the internal self is harmonious and interactive with the external cosmos.
object painted can be best expressed.\textsuperscript{26}

Subsequently Dong generalizes his view of painting into three basic rules as follows:

A painter learns eventually from Heaven and Earth (\textit{yi tiandi wei shi}), intermediate\textsuperscript{27}ly from natural landscapes (\textit{yi shanchuan wei shi}), and initially from old masters (\textit{yi guren wei shi}).

Dong made this argument at the age of 51 after a long and painful exploration in his artistic experience and creation. His distinction between the three stages is a subtle and delicate one. According to Zhang Yuhu, to learn from Heaven and Earth (\textit{yi tiandi wei shi}) is also termed in Chinese as \textit{shi tiandi}. It is a kind of free and creative activity, aiming to embody “the infinite” (\textit{wu xian}), and corresponding to the demand that the painter “use an ink brush to express the spirit of the cosmos as the Supreme Void”.\textsuperscript{28} Then, to learn from natural landscapes (\textit{yi shanchuan wei shi}) is also known in Chinese as \textit{shi shanchuan} or \textit{shi zaohua}, it is still confined to the appearance of things even though it provides the origin of the painted landscapes on paper. It is physically “specific and finite” (\textit{queding er youxian}) by nature, in spite of the fact that it is a bit more advanced than learning from old masters (\textit{yi shanchuan wei shi}) identified in Chinese with \textit{shi guren}.\textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{27} Dong Qichang, \textit{Hua chan shi sui bi} (Essays on the Painting of Zen), vol. 2, in the \textit{Hua yuan} (The Origin of Painting). Cited from Zhang Yuhu,“\textit{Cong ‘shi shanchuan’ dao ‘shi tiandi’}” (Learning from Natural Landscapes versus Learning from Heaven and Earth), in \textit{Wen yi yan jiu} (The Journal of Literary and Art Studies), No.4, 2008, p.113.

\textsuperscript{28} Wang Wei, \textit{Xu hua} (Of Painting), in Shen Zicheng (ed.), \textit{Lidai lunhua mingzhu huibian} (Selections from the Famous Historical Writings on Chinese Painting), p.16. It says in Chinese pinyin “yi yi guan zhi bi, ni tai xu zhi ti.”

\textsuperscript{29} Zhang Yuhu, “\textit{Cong ‘shi shanchuan’ dao ‘shi tiandi’}” (Learning from Natural Landscapes versus Learning from Heaven and Earth), in \textit{Wen yi yan jiu} (The Journal of Literary and Art Studies), No.4, 2008, p.111.
Incidentally, the similar ideal is embraced by Shi Tao (1642-1718) who proclaims poetically that “My ink brush draws freely without hesitation. The older I grow, the more I get engrossed in learning from Heaven and Earth.”\textsuperscript{30} Later on, it is stressed and justified by Huang Binhong (1865-1955) who asserts that ‘Nature comes into painting, and painting overtakes nature…Nature has its spirit and rhythmic force that contain beauty inside. Common people cannot see it, but the painter can detect and express it to its full extent…A true landscape painting is an expression of both the essence of nature and the state of mind.’\textsuperscript{31} All this is intended to verify the principle of learning from Heaven and Earth, and to give more credit to its outcome of xinhua as mind-inspired paintings owing to their aesthetic, philosophical and spiritual values, even though it is no easy task to create such kind of works. I personally share some of their observations in this regard. Furthermore, as it seems to me, what corresponds to the three stages is not only a progressive process of cultivation, but also a hierarchical scale of perception. The scale can be also categorized into three levels as such: The first level is oriented towards the acquisition of skills and crafts. It helps the artist foster his basic knowledge and understanding of painting as a genre of visual art. As he is exposed to the expertise of poetry, calligraphy, seal cutting and drawing as are manifested in the masterpieces that he repeatedly imitate, he will likely take them as models, and consciously practice and improve his artistic skills, literary talents, and even cultural literacy in all domains. All this is fundamental and necessary for certain. Otherwise, he will become an artisan rather than an artist in the pure sense of this term. The second level is directed to observing natural things and their life-images. Although it still lies in the exercise of artistic skills and the experience of artistic compositions, it serves to develop painter’s aesthetic sensibility, and upgrade his artistic techniques. He himself will then become more independent than dependent upon the old masters. He will be apt to abstain from their beaten track, break through the shadowy impact of the masterpieces, and strive to produce something


according to his own experience, feeling and observation. Finally the third level is concerned with the nourishment of spiritual freedom and the development of independent personality. It features an exalted transformation from ‘the little self’ (xiao wo) to ‘the big self’ (da wo), during the process of which the artist identifies himself with the object, and even undergoes the peak experience of feeling the oneness between Heaven and human. Wen Yuke (1018-1079), for example, is said to feel himself into the bamboo as if he were lost in it when painting it. He therefore created in his works of bamboo natural, unique and formally significant. His experience is recorded and recommended by his contemporary Su Shi (1037-1101).32

It is noteworthy in traditional Chinese painting that the value of likeness is often played down in proportion because of its league with formal beauty. In the value judgment of artworks in general, formal beauty is ranked by Chinese artists and critics to be lower than vital and rhythmic beauty. According to Su Shi again, those who tend to look at a painting in light of its formal likeness are holders with a childish viewpoint. When Zhao Chang painted a flower, he applied a single dot of red instead of many, but his work was sufficiently expressive of all the charm of spring season even though it violated the conventional form of what a flower appeared to be.33 However, the artistic presentation of likeness is not totally denied because it is indispensable so long as it is carried out to an appropriate degree. It is therefore argued that the excess of likeness is conducive to vulgarity, whereas the lack of likeness to deception. A true painting should remain between these two extremes.34

In addition, the painters who can create *xinhua* as mind-inspired paintings are relatively rare. They may come from those who will insist in life-long cultivation and pursuit. They are conjectured to owe such qualities as independent personality, spiritual freedom, contemplative concentration, rich imagination and so forth. Here are two typical examples. One is given by Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), an early Daoist thinker. It reads as such,

When Duke Yuan of Song wanted to have a picture painted, all the court painters gathered in his presence. After they received the instructions and bowed to the duke, some of them stood around, licking their brushes and mixing their ink. Half of them were waiting outside. One of them, who arrived late, came in leisurely steps. After he received the instructions and bowed to the duke, he did not wait but went straight to his quarters. When the duke sent someone to see what he was doing there, the painter was found undressed and seated on the mat. Duke Yuan said, ‘He will do. He is a true artist.’

The other example is provided by Zhang Yanyuan (815-875) in his book on paintings. It is depicted like this:

Gu Junzhi built a high tower for his studio. Each time he climbed up onto it with the help of a ladder. When he was up there, he pulled it up into the tower such that his family members could not interrupt him any more. He did not paint until he found fine weather and beautiful scene. He never touched his brush if it remains cloudy and depressing…Hence, true painters in the history were those men of free spirit and noble sense. They demonstrated their artistic genius for a short period of time, but their great influence extended over hundreds of years.

---

Noticeably the first story tells about a true painter or a pure artist. He ignored all the nagging formalities and social conventions. Thus he went straight to his workshop where he was found naked and seated on the mat as though he was lost in his meditation or sitting in self-forgetfulness (zuo wang). All this symbolically shows that he had detached himself from any bounds and obstacles that could be either conventional or institutional, only to return to his natural state of being. He had therefore become a free self instead of a pretentious self. The ink brush in his hand could be able to move spontaneously and draw out the imagined images that occurred to his mind (de xin ying shou). Then what he produced was but a piece of xinhua as a mind-inspired painting that was a unique creation of originality.

As for the second tale, it is intended to convince us that the painter was keen on contemplative concentration and genuine tranquility, and hence he managed to get rid of any daily disturbance and even family contact. Up there in the high tower that metaphorically implies his affinity to Nature, he was alone interacting with the spirit of Heaven and Earth and eventually feeling himself into it. Accordingly, he found inspiration and got into ecstasy when his state of mind corresponded to the pleasant weather and fascinating scene. Under such ideal conditions in accord with the union between Heaven and himself, he created his best paintings that revealed the great but silent Beauty in the universe.

Some Observations in Contrast

The foregoing discussion of *mimesis* and *moxie* in their respective contexts may shed some light on their so-called similarities as well as their essential differences. In order to further clarify these two culturally specific notions, a comparative treatment needs to be conducted hereby.

As is discerned in his discourse, Plato uses the term *mimesis* to restrict mimetic art to the imitation or representation of commonplace reality. His critique of *mimesis* as the fundamental rule of representational art aims at painting in appearance, but it is intended to attack poetry in
practice. For the self-evident mimetic feature of painting can be easily utilized to convince a person of the similar character of poetry per se. Plato does this deliberately to knock down the role of poetry because it produces no knowledge of truth but only phenomenal phantasms. However, to poetry he holds an ambivalent attitude if not a love-and-hate one: that is, he is aware of its magic spell such that he takes it as an emotional threat to his intellectual preference. Yet, his aesthetic interest in poetry prevents him from abolishing it completely, and he therefore attempts to retain it in a healthy form within a containable or controllable scope. It is under such circumstances that he strives to invent philosophical poetry in the form of his dialogue to supersede mimetic poetry mainly embodied in the epics by Homer and others.

Even though the Platonic idea of mimesis with reference to mimetic art is brought forth a priori in a negative sense, it inspires a wealth of imaginative rethinking due to its varied implications. First and foremost, it suggests a hierarchical structure of reality as is exposed previously. It underlies the Platonic intellectualism, and encourages epistemological probe into the ideal Form in itself. It is intentionally pointed to the recognition of the god as the creator of all, and to the understanding of the one-cum-many cluster of Forms at different levels. All this poses a continuous process that leads one to hanker after a philosophical way of life, a way of life that will lead human as human to untiringly nourish wisdom and excellence, and eventually to become ‘god-like’ as Plato advises.

Secondly, the doctrine of mimesis as such reveals the ontological status of art in general. This is due to the procedure of image-making in which the painter initially paints a couch according to the wooden model shaped by carpenter. This painted couch represents a visual image and formal beauty of an artifact. It is based on mimetic craft and sensuous perception that is metaphorically likened to mirror-like function or representation. All this exemplifies how art—particularly mimetic or representational art—comes into being in principle, and becomes what it looks like in form. It is in this sense that the Platonic

---

38 Ibid., 613a-b.
mimesis is considered to be “in substance an important foundation-stone of aesthetic theory” in the West, notwithstanding that Plato himself remains “profoundly hostile to the value of the poetic world”.

Thirdly, Plato’s metaphysical estimate of mimetic art bears a hidden link with his psychological estimate of artistic symbolism, symbolism that stands for the embodiment of invisible realities or Platonic Ideas in sensuous form. This means that either from a bottom-up or top-down perspective, the first reality, the second reality and the third reality can be conceived as analogously associated with and symbolic of one another within their hierarchical structure. In plain words, if the painted couch is a direct mimetic shadow of the wooden couch, it is difficult not to deny its being an indirect mimetic shadow of the couch eidos as the ideal Form. Moreover, a mature painter could hardly stick to the logical sequence as Plato has set up. He would be ready to venture beyond the boundary of artifacts, and to represent the shapes of his surroundings and many other natural objects in esse on the one hand, and on the other, he may extend his power of imagination to portray the abstract ideas, spiritual entities and invisible deities by turning them into sensuous images. This is in fact evidenced in the survived Greek art works in the forms of vases and sculptures.

Last but not the least, the translation of mimesis into either “imitation” or “representation” seems to be misleading in a way. For the Greek word itself carries a gradation of meanings that ranges from imitation, representation, reproduction, make-belief, image-making, to art creation. In addition, it signifies a kind of symbolic imagination and representation-cum-expression with regard to the representation of the invisible in the sensuous images, and the expression of the abstract and the spiritual in the perceptible forms by virtue of the magic power of imagination and mimetic technique. As for its ultimate telos, it lies not merely in the appreciation of aesthetic and moral values, but also in the consideration of epistemological and cosmological ones, with respect to the constant pursuit of the possible cognition of the highest Idea of Good as the first cause of all things in the universe. All this poses an

---

inexhaustible enterprise as a result of its infinite space for thinking and imagining.

When it comes to the Chinese notion of moxie, it is divided into two interrelated stages of artistic practice: one is linmo meaning to imitate the works of the old masters so as to develop painting skills, and the other is xiezhao meaning to portray natural landscapes so as to improve artistic expertise. Both of them involve no metaphysical estimate but practical estimate. They seem to be largely skill-oriented even though one is elementary and the other is advanced to some degree. However, this value judgment does lead to any negative attitude towards either linmo or xiezhao, because they are recommended as desirable and interrelated steps of improving the painting repertoire and aesthetic sensibility of the artist himself. According to Chinese tradition, linmo is assumed to foster mainly reproductive skill whereas xiezhao to enhance visual sensibility. The former enables one to produce replicas of established works, while the latter to create resemblances of natural objects. The chief discrepancy between them could be that between the rigid duplication of masterpieces and the relative flexibility of transfiguring natural landscapes. Consequently, there arises the distinction between linmohua as reduplicated paintings and muhua as eye-perceived paintings. Correspondingly, reduplicated paintings are the outcome of learning from old masters (shi guren), and eye-perceived paintings are the fruit of learning from natural landscapes (shi shanchuan).

Nevertheless, these two types of painting are not the ultimate pursuit after all. Similarly, these two stages of practice are not the final destination either. Both of them are actually employed as a springboard for the artist to jump higher ahead. In other words, moxie as a synthesis of linmo and xiezhao can be more significant when it is connected with the final stage of chuanshen meaning to express the inner spirit and vital rhythm of all things in the universe. This final stage enables one to create xinhua as mind-inspired paintings by learning from Heaven and Earth. As is described earlier, the three stages come to comprise a progressive process of cultivation along with a hierarchical scale of perception. All this commends a moral cultivation of personality, and expects one to develop a high awareness of the Dao as the most accommodating spirit of Heaven and Earth in one sense, and as the
most subtle symbol of spiritual freedom and independent personality in the other sense. In principle it is directed to the enlightened experience of the Dao in itself, and the sublimated awareness of the entire cosmos. Thus it is conducive to a continuous impetus that encourages one to move towards a Doaist way of life, a way of life that will lead human as human to become harmonious with Heaven and Earth.

Noticeably in the ultimate phase, the artist of an ideal kind is supremely imaginative, sensitive and creative. He is therefore capable of transforming mental pictures into sensuous forms by means of intuiting and experiencing. He does so in order to express the rhythmic flow and vital power of the myriad things. During this process he is feeling freely and interacting harmoniously with the spirit of Heaven and Earth (yu tiandi jingshen xiang wanglai) in Zhuangzi’s terminology. Thus he sketches out what he feels best to himself after searching through all the wonderful landscapes under the sky. His work then can resemble either all of the landscapes or none of them he has ever seen before, simply because it is unique recreation in the pure sense of this term.

Furthermore, the cultivation-oriented hypothesis in the three stages of painting is aesthetic and empirical by nature. It attempts to actualize spiritual freedom and independent personality through constant cultivation in artistic perception and creation alike. In this regard, chuanshen seems to suggest the highest form of achievement of which the first-caliber Chinese painter is capable. All this is underlined by the Chinese thought of heaven-and-human oneness, a thought that integrates both this-worldliness and other-worldliness into living experience.

Incidentally, shi tiandi as learning to express the inner spirit and vital rhythm of Heaven and Earth is characterized with a boundless pursuit due to its ever-expanding realm of intuiting and experiencing in terms of aesthetic autonomy. Even though it appears to be somewhat mystical and unapproachable, it is intelligible to most of the Chinese artists who are more familiar with the monistic view of one world. To their minds, this one world is an organic whole consists in two parts at least: the accessible and the felt. The former refers to all things perceptible and touchable, and the latter to the vital power and
rhythmic flow experiential and participatory.

Enough is said for the time being. Now it is safer to conclude that the Chinese notion of *moxie* and the Platonic notion of *mimesis* are culturally specific rather than universal, disregarding their seemingly shared aspects in imitation or duplication at the elementary levels. They seem to resemble in appearance but remain discrepant in essence. Hence they could be justifiably approached and understood only when they are placed in their respective cultural contexts. Otherwise they might be either far-fetched or over-interpreted, I suppose.
Notes on Contributors


David E. Cooper is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Durham University where he taught until 2009, having earlier taught at the universities of Oxford, Miami, London and Surrey. He has been President of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association, Chairman of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain and of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Royal Institute of Philosophy. He has been a Visiting Professor at universities in the US, Canada, Germany, South Africa, Malta and Sri Lanka. Professor Cooper has written many books including, most recently, The Measure of Things: Humanism, Humility and Mystery (2002), Meaning (2005), and A Philosophy of Gardens (2006). He has also edited several books, including A Companion to Aesthetics and (with P. Fosl) Philosophy: The Classic Readings. He is currently completing a book on Daoism and the relationship of people to the natural environment.

Gao Jianping is Research Fellow and Professor, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Director, Department of Literary Theory, Institute of Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Publications: The Expressive Act in Chinese Art: From Calligraphy to Painting, 1996; Secrets in Painting: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics, 1995; Globalization

Jale Erzen is an exhibiting painter and art historian teaching at the Faculty of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey since 1974, where she has organized the 17th. International Congress of Aesthetics in 2007. She has books and articles on comparative and Islamic Aesthetics, Ottoman architecture and modern Turkish art. Between 1981 and 1984 she published a fine arts journal, BOYUT, and has been presiding over the SANART Association for Aesthetics and Visual Culture since 1991. Awards: French Ministry of Cultures Art and Letters Award in 1991, the best art critic award in Turkey in 2000, and Turkish Chamber of Architects Contribution to Architecture award in 2008. Has lectured in many universities worldwide, and has her paintings in many private and public collections in Turkey and Europe.

Joseph Margolis is currently Laura H. Carnell Professor of Philosophy at Temple University. He has recently completed a trio of books in aesthetics and the philosophy of art: The Arts and the Definition of the Human: Toward a Philosophical Anthropology (2009); On Aesthetics: An Unforgiving Introduction (2009); The Cultural Space of the Arts and the Infelicities of Reductionism (2010). He has also completed a trio of books on pragmatism and American philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century: Reinventing Pragmatism (2002); The Unraveling of Scientism (2003); Pragmatism’s Advantage (Stanford UP, 2010).

Li Zehou is a senior research fellow and a retired professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Since 1992 he started to teach at the Boulder College, Colorado where he makes his home then. He was a visiting professor at a number of universities overseas. As a philosopher of aesthetics and historian of Chinese thought, he is the author of many books. His main publications include the Kant in a New Key, 1979; The Path of Beauty:
Peter Lamarque is Professor of Philosophy at the University of York, UK. He joined the Department of Philosophy there in 2000 and has been Head of Department. Prior to that, he was Ferens Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hull between 1995 and 2000, and lecturer and then senior lecturer at the University of Stirling between 1972 and 1995. From 1995 to 2008 he was Editor of the British Journal of Aesthetics. He has served on the editorial boards of several journals including The Philosophical Quarterly, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, The Journal of Aesthetic Education, The Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics, Cuadernos de música, artes visuales y artes escénicas, and The British Journal of Aesthetics. He has published extensively in aesthetics and the philosophy of literature. His books include: Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective (with Stein Haugom Olsen), Clarendon Press, 1994; Fictional Points of View, Cornell University Press, 1996; The Philosophy of Literature, Blackwell, 2008; and Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art, Oxford University Press, 2010. He has edited or co-edited Philosophy and Fiction: Essays in Literary Aesthetics; Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language; Aesthetics: The Classic Readings; and Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology.

Richard Shusterman is the Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar in the Humanities at Florida Atlantic University, where he also directs The Center for Body, Mind, and Culture. Before he accepted this endowed chair, he was Professor and Chair of Philosophy at Temple University in Philadelphia. His authored books include The Object of Literary Criticism (1984), T. S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism (1988), Sous l’interprétation (1994), Practicing Philosophy (1997), Performing Live (2000), Surface and Depth (2002), Pragmatist
Aesthetics (1992, 2000, and translated into thirteen languages), and most recently Body Consciousness (2008). Among his edited books are Analytic Aesthetics (1989), Bourdieu: A Critical Reader (1999), The Range of Pragmatism and the Limits of Philosophy (2004), and Aesthetic Experience (2008). A graduate of Hebrew University of Jerusalem (B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy) and Oxford University (D. Phil. in Philosophy), he has held academic appointments in France, Germany, Israel, and Japan, and has been awarded research grants from the National Endowment of the Humanities, the Fulbright Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Humboldt Foundation, and UNESCO. Shusterman’s research in somaesthetics is nourished by his professional practice as a somatic educator and therapist. His Pragmatist Aesthetics, Practicing Philosophy, and Performing Live have been translated into Chinese by Professor Peng Feng of Peking University.

Robert Wilkinson is Senior Lecturer in philosophy at the Open University, UK. He is a former Head of Philosophy at the Open University, and Deputy Director of the Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies. His published papers are in the area of comparative aesthetics and on the thought of Nishida Kitarō. His books include Theories of Art and Beauty (1991); Minds and Bodies (2000) and Nishida and Western Philosophy (2009). He is co-author of Fifty Eastern Thinkers (2000). He is the editor of New Essays in Comparative Aesthetics (2007) and co-editor (with Mazar Hussain) of The Pursuit of Comparative Aesthetics (2006). He is co-editor (with Stuart Brown and Diané Collinson) of a number of reference works, notably A Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers (1996). He has also written on Confucius, Laozi, Sunzi and The Book of Lord Shang. He continues to work on the thought of Nishida, and on modern Japanese aesthetics.

Tanehisa Otabe is professor at the University of Tokyo. He has academic interests in Aesthetics and history of art. He has published widely on aesthetics including Aesthetische Subjektivitaet, Romantik und Moderne, Aesthetic Theory of Symbol from Baumgarten to Hegel (with a Summary in German, 1995); Théories et débats esthétiques au dixhuitième siècle. Eléments d'une enquête (Textes édités par Elisabeth Décultot et Mark Ledbury, Paris 2001); Schelling und die querelle des

Tyrus Miller is Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies and a Professor of Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has published widely on aesthetics, the Frankfurt School, and modernist / avant-garde literature. His most recent books are Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde (Northwestern 2009) and Time Images: Alternative Temporalities in Twentieth-Century Theory, Literature, and Art (Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2009). He has also published Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars (University of California 1999) and is the editor of Given World and Time: Temporalities in Context (Central European University Press 2008). His translation of Hungarian-language essays by the Marxist philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács, The Culture of People's Democracy: Hungarian Essays on Art, Literature, and Democratic Transition, 1945-1948, is forthcoming with Brill Publishers.

Wang Keping (Keping Wang) is a research fellow of Institute of Philosophy of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), professor and head of Institute for Transcultural Studies of Beijing International Studies University (BISU). He is currently vice president of International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD) as a member of FISP, vice president of Chinese Society for Foreign Literature and Comparative Poetics, and an honorary member of the Olympic Center for Philosophy and Culture under University of Athens. His was the holder of British Academy K. C. Wong Fellowship, and visiting fellow of St. Anne’s College of Oxford University (2000). He has academic interests in aesthetics and ancient philosophy. His main publications in English include the Chinese Way of Thinking (2009); Spirit of Chinese Poetics (2008); Ethos of Chinese Culture (2007); Chinese Philosophy on Life (2006); and The Classic of the Dao: A New Investigation

Of Human Nature and Aesthetic Metaphysics

Li Zehou

An Ounce of Prophecy

Joseph Margolis

Aesthetics: Retreat, Advance and Fragmentation

Peter Lamarque

Edification and the Experience of Beauty

David E. Cooper

Somaesthetics and the Utopian Body

Richard Shusterman

The World Is My Body: Ecology and Aesthetic Perception

Jale Erzen

Man and His Relations with Society and Art: A Case Study of On Music

Gao Jianping

Nishida on the Beautiful and the Good

Robert Wilkinson

The Corporeity of Self-awakening and the Interculturality of Cultural Self-awakening:

Motonori Kimura’s Philosophy of Expression

Tanehisa Otabe

Toward an Understanding of Sculpture as Public Art

Curtis L. Carter

A Geography of Dispersion:

Central Europe and the Symbolic Spaces of the Avant-Garde

Tyrus Miller

At Point Zero of Creation

Wolfgang Welsch

The Platonic Mimesis and the Chinese Moxie

Wang Keping

ISSN 1402-2842

Beijing 2010