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Editorial

Contemporary aestheticism has achieved a peculiar status. It has been stated many times, that the majority of contemporary artists have turned away from aesthetics, and their art works become, possibly, 'a philosophical inquiry' or just a piece of broader culture rather than a direct cause of aesthetic experience. These days, the aesthetic function of art seems to be controversial and obsolete. However, on the other hand, our life itself is supposed to be an aesthetic creation. So, while the majority of contemporary art refuses to rely on 'retinal gratification' or aesthetic 'highs,' our daily experiences, from wanderings around shopping centers, through existential choices, to political events, are seen as a naturalized aesthetics. We have reevaluated so-called lower, bodily, senses, such as smell, taste, and touch. The olfactory, gustatory and haptic experiences are now recognized, along with visual and auditory, as full participants of our more and more intensive existence.

Some philosophers and publicists claim that because our lives become overly aestheticized, we already enter the stage of anesthetization. Some others lament that aesthetic experience has been reduced to emotional and sensuous intoxication. But there are still some, who, brushing away the forceful anti-aesthetic approach to art, dare to maintain that art has an aesthetic purpose. But even Arthur Danto, who famously outlaws aesthetics from the ontology of art, gladly admits:

There really would be a kind of aesthetic pathology in swooning over *Fountain* as if it were a work like *The Jewish Bride* or even *Bird Flight*, or in saying 'I'll take *Brillo Box*' when offered a choice between it and one of Cézanne's *comptiers* or some irises of Van Gogh.

Thus, some questions beg to be asked – why do we care about aesthetic art? why, although strongly contested, has aesthetic art never wholly disappeared from the world of art? and why does aesthetic art still matter?

Many thanks to all the Contributors to this issue of *Art and Philosophy* (*Sztuka i Filozofia*), who decided to explore and discuss aesthetic art.

Daniel O. Nathan

On Zangwill's Aesthetic Theory of Art

Art and Beauty. The most basic grasp of either keeps them logically separate: beautiful objects certainly can exist independent of art, and artistic creations need not be beautiful. One is likely to note this separation and warn against conflating the two on the first day of an introductory class on aesthetics. But if there is indeed a problem in conflating the two notions, then why do we have to fight it so, and why then do theories of art seem again and again drawn to talk of beauty as proverbial moths to the flame? There is of course a considerable tradition that would suggest there is no deep problem after all, at least if one is careful to broaden the notion of beauty to some reasonably broad conception of the aesthetic, and if one suggests a relation looser than that of identification. In the twentieth century, that tradition includes the dominant philosopher of art of his time, Monroe Beardsley,¹ and, before him, Clive Bell,² whose theory held immediate and perennial appeal to visual artists. And now, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, there have been two major new book-length efforts to revive an aesthetic theory of art, those of Gary Iseminger³ and Nick Zangwill.⁴ This essay will examine some of the central aspects of Zangwill's theory.

¹ Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1958), and in a series of articles over the following two decades.

² Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914).

³ Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁴ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The inclination toward connecting the artistic with the beautiful, or at least with the aesthetically valuable, seems reasonable enough. After all, prior to certain odd and indeed controversial works of the twentieth century, it was the aesthetic nature of certain human artifacts that seemed most plausibly to unite them under a single rubric as works of art. One cannot but note the presence of valuable aesthetic qualities in both the Paleolithic frescoes at Lescaux and in the jamb figures on Chartres cathedral, in a Ming Dynasty porcelain and in a jazz standard by Thelonius Monk. Nor do the aesthetic features presented seem peripheral to their being artistic. Instead, many would say that their aesthetic natures seem to be at the very heart of what makes these and other things art. It seems that one can find and explain the importance and value of the art itself in the aesthetic aspects we find within. Break the bond between art and the aesthetic, some would say, and one may not be able to make sense of art as the vital cultural universal that it clearly is.

It is in this spirit that Zangwill begins his book by eschewing the question “What is art?” because it

invites us to speculate on what works of art have in common and when they differ from other things . . . [and] to conceive of the project of understanding art as being about finding a description that snugly fits all and only those objects and events that are art.⁵

For “What is art?” Zangwill prefers a substitute that might be framed as “Why is art? – Why does it matter to us? What is important about the creative and appreciative activities associated with art? What makes them, in Zangwill’s words, “rational and worthwhile.” How do we explain our attitudes and behaviors regarding art? In essence, Zangwill wishes to get at the nature of art by first seeking an explanation of the role it plays and value it contributes to our lives.

The unhappiness that Zangwill expresses with the existing state of art theory, the frustration that it does not address this explanatory role, is in important respects very well taken, though I think not exactly for the reasons he cites. On Zangwill’s view, art theory went wrong in the second half of the twentieth century when it sought to serve the god of extensional adequacy, when it designed itself to provide definitions of art that could accommodate the most controversial of the Western artworld’s avant garde works. Zangwill takes this to be a problem of taking the extensional adequacy of a theory (the “snug fit” of the theory to all art objects) too seriously and, in particular, of setting extensional adequacy above the goal of explanatory understanding. However, as I will argue later, I do not share Zangwill’s apparent belief that it is necessary to dismiss the goal of extensional adequacy in the pursuit of explanation of art and its activities. In fact, without properly accounting for all works (even the most controversial

⁵ Ibid., 1.

of the avant garde), one's explanation will fail. At best, it will be incomplete; at worst, it will explain some other thing than art.

Nonetheless, it certainly seems true that, as Zangwill argues, the most dominant and influential contemporary theories of art have fallen short in providing any explanation of the nature and commonality of artistic activities. The problem is a deep and almost certainly a fatal one. Institutional theories, starting from George Dickie's,⁶ were designed in the first place as a response to two challenges: (1) Weitz's rejection of definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, and, more importantly, (2) providing a definition that could accommodate the contemporary avant garde in the visual and performing arts. Zangwill is probably also right that, in using the latter as a starting point for constructing a theory, institutional theories were bound to produce a distortion in the grasp of art and artistic activities. And the distortion might indeed explain why the institutional (and related) theories are inherently unsatisfying. For one thing there is a problematic focus on what might be anachronistically labeled "court art", or fine or high art, or art with a capital "A," as against art more broadly (and indeed properly) understood. Consider that institutional theories have fundamental problems relating the works that fit within their theory to the central art works of other cultures. This is not a new complaint of course, having become visible in early concerns about the purported circularity of defining art relationally in terms of the actions of persons engaged in production, interpretation, appreciation, and criticism of works of art (the characteristic activities, that is, of members of the artworld). If one tries to keep the aesthetic out of this story and identifies those activities as just those that the Western artworld just happens to have arrived at today, then "artworld" just becomes a name for a unique and specifically Western institution plus whatever works of other cultures that institution happens to find amenable. But then that will entail that some non-Western cultures do not produce works of art at all, except insofar as and until the West embraces them. Hence the theory no longer appears to be an account of what we thought it was or, indeed, even what some institutional theorists themselves thought it was. As a consequence, such a theory lacks the capacity to explain why it seems reasonable to believe that fundamentally the same concept (art) applies to objects from other cultures.

Institutional (and indexical, narrativist, and historicist) theories at heart rely on the assumption that works of art bear essential relations *to other works of art*, and that the concept's attribution is understandable in terms of such relations. But, as Zangwill properly points out, "there must be some cases where art identity is not relational in this way," since the relations themselves can only carry the burden they must "because there are other

⁶ For several different formulations of Dickie's Institutional Theory, see these books of his: George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971); idem, *Art and the Aesthetic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); and *The Art Circle* (New York: Haven, 1984).

works of art that do not depend on any others.”⁷ Hence, the problem raised by the presence of art in other contemporary cultures is also apparent in the struggle such theories faced with regard to what is sometimes called first art, the work of artists that predate the institution, or that began the narrative or the history that has since the Enlightenment become a distinctively recognizable Western institution. Zangwill holds that an appropriate theory of any *x* should “explain much that we independently believe about *x* things” and, since, he thinks (correctly) that we independently believe that some Paleolithic cave paintings and the aesthetic creations of other cultures are works of art, we ought minimally to require that our theory of art explain such beliefs. His theory reasonably enough takes such a project as primary.

So, Zangwill rejects the focus on “extensional adequacy”⁸ that is characteristic of institutional and related theories, and settles on a theory of art that in the first instance *explains* art, one that makes sense of our more universally conceived artistic activities. The source of that explanation is what Zangwill views as art’s aesthetic purpose, specifically that art is fundamentally aesthetic creation. Broadly speaking, the aesthetic creation theory that develops from this kind of explanation lies in the family of aestheticist theories of art. Like Beardsley’s and Iseminger’s aestheticist theories, Zangwill takes art to have an aesthetic purpose. But Zangwill’s analysis differs from Beardsley’s both in embracing the intrinsic, not instrumental, value of the aesthetic, and in (more importantly) narrowing the field of aesthetic qualities to only those that relate “intimately” to measures of beauty and ugliness. And it differs from Iseminger’s view in several respects as well: On the one hand it analyzes aesthetic qualities in a more traditional (though restricted) Sibleyan fashion, rather than Iseminger’s reduction of the aesthetic to a type of second order appreciation and, on the other, Zangwill takes art’s aesthetic purpose to be reflected in individual acts of artistic production rather in the general practice of art, as Iseminger would have it.

Works of art here are all, and only, those artifacts possessed of aesthetic qualities, and that were created with the intention and understanding that producing those aesthetic qualities occurs by means of the production of certain appropriate non-aesthetic ones. The artist/producer thus must have had, in Zangwill’s words, the “insight” that the aesthetic qualities depend (supervene) on the relevant non-aesthetic qualities, and the artist/producer must have been acting on an understanding of that relationship.⁹ *That* is aesthetic creation, and *that* is the essence of art.

This analysis *explains* our interest in artistic activities and creation because the production of and acquaintance with aesthetic qualities amounts to production and experience of things that are intrinsically

⁷ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 10.

⁸ In particular, what this rejection means is that he rejects the requirement that the extension of the definition must include all works of the avant garde.

⁹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 36–38.

valuable. It is reasonable, of course, to believe that it is worthwhile to stand in such a relation to objects of value. In contrast, an institutional approach (say, in terms of Dickie's initial notion of the "conferring of status") leaves entirely unanswered *why* one would or should care about engaging in the institution either as a producer or consumer. As Richard Wollheim pointed out, it is the reason for conferring status, the "why," that both calls for analysis and holds the key to the nature of art itself.¹⁰

However, there are several things in Zangwill's aesthetic theory that even those with sympathy for aestheticist approaches might find most unfortunate. The most obviously problematic element in his theory is the presumed nature of aesthetic creative thought and the intention that goes with it.

Why would one not want to embrace this understanding of creative intention and its attendant characterization of a work of art? Depending on how it is read, it is apparently both too narrow to account for even mainstream works of art, and at the same time so broad that ordinary acts that would seem to be quite distinct from art now must be considered fully works of art. Art, on this view, will extend to an enormously expanded range of activities and objects that, while they share a certain feature with paradigm works of art, surely fall short of being art.

Zangwill embraces this expansion of art, and comfortably asserts that such mundane creations and creative activities as doodles and doodling, furniture arrangement, cake decoration, dressing oneself, etc., if they are the result of the proper mental activity, are properly considered art. That is, if they are made with "aesthetic concern," as the theory fleshes that out, they can satisfy his aesthetic theory and thus constitute art works. So classifying any of these activities is potentially problematic, but let's consider the example of doodling. Suppose we take seriously that "aesthetic concern" here is to be understood as a matter of acting on what Zangwill characterizes as "aesthetic insight," that is, that the maker knows that an aesthetic quality will emerge from the presence of certain specific nonaesthetic ones. As I will argue below, that requirement is almost certainly too high a standard. But, even given that lofty standard, the following must now constitute a work of art: I sit in a class on an assignment to evaluate a colleague's teaching and, out of boredom, I stop taking notes and begin scribbling along the margins of my legal pad. I notice that I have penciled three vertical lines at the left margin and, an inch to the right of them, drawn a pair of parallel lines of similar length. I then add a third line to the right out of some vague inclination to satisfy my interest in symmetry or balance. That act of adding the final line was done with aesthetic insight as defined, and hence the resultant doodle was art. But that just too deeply violates what I take to be a widely shared intuition (skepticism about the significance of intuition aside) about the nature of art.

On the other hand, the aesthetic analysis Zangwill provides is also too narrow to account for mainstream works. The aesthetic insight, trivial as it

¹⁰ Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1980).

seems in the example I just gave, is simply too much to ask of most artists. Recall that an artist, on Zangwill's view, must intend and understand that her production of aesthetic qualities occurs by means of the production of certain appropriate non-aesthetic ones. Zangwill:

[It] is not enough that aesthetic properties *do* depend on nonaesthetic ones, the producer of art must also believe that they do.

and

[In] artistic activity, there is an intention that by creating an object or event with certain nonaesthetic properties, certain aesthetic properties will be produced. The existence of such an intention or set of intentions ... is essential for something to be a work of art.¹¹

It is obvious why this seems far too strong, even to the author himself, and he then allows that "Things can go wrong" either by the artist getting the relationship between the nonaesthetic and aesthetic wrong, or by bungling the production of the base nonaesthetic properties. Yet he insists that even the most messed up works of art must get something right about this relationship – "*some significant proportion* of aesthetic intentions must be successfully executed."¹²

Of course one can stipulate such a thing, but it is not at all apparent why anyone would believe it. After all, given the laughable nature of some attempts at poetry (for example my own, or ones to be found in the volume of poems in the book *Bad Art*¹³), if any aesthetic quality emerges at all it is as likely to be that of silliness or clumsiness, and would not include even a single aesthetic quality that the poet could reasonably be thought to have been intending. Consider, for comparison, bad arguments: it is not the case that they all must work to some extent to be considered arguments at all, so that poor deductive arguments all turn out to be some sort of reasonable inductive ones. All that is required in logic texts is purported premises and conclusion, and strength of the claimed relation between them be signaled by means of some commonplace linguistic indicators.

But there are deeper puzzles in Zangwill's expectations for artists, namely that all artists must believe (a) that aesthetic properties supervene on nonaesthetic ones, and (b) that certain aesthetic properties (the ones that are to be found, or at least intended to be present in the work) arise out of precisely those nonaesthetic features that the artist places in the work. My own experience teaching creative visual and performing artists is that it is simply false that most or even many possess any self-conscious or other awareness or belief about the relation between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic. Many seem just to be aiming at certain aesthetic qualities directly, if aiming at them at all. Imagine an experienced dancer who moves gracefully across the stage: While one may reasonably judge

¹¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 40.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41 (italicized in the original).

¹³ Quentin Bell, *Bad Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

that this specific gracefulness is a function of various aspects of her limb positioning, the erectness of her posture, and the motions her body makes along the way, it does not seem plausible that she is intending the specific quality of gracefulness to arise because of those particular mechanics, or that she believes that (or even recognizes) the detailed specifics of those mechanics that uniquely produce the gracefulness of her gait. She is far more likely not to have any beliefs about such matters at all; she just moves with grace. Artists, one may assume, often just create, absent cognitive or other understanding of how the aesthetic qualities of their works do ultimately emerge. Further, it is no insult to artists to think of them as less than philosophically informed about such relationships, or as failing to hold cognitive beliefs about them.

Moreover, if such aesthetic insight was after all a precondition of artistic activity, then a related problem arises. Suppose someone copies a scene in nature that she finds interesting, and does so just because of finding it interesting and in total absence of any explicit cognizance of its aesthetic nature, nor any sense of the relation between the aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties to be found there. Suppose at the same time that the natural scene is in fact rich with aesthetic properties. On Zangwill's view, the drawing, though it might capture all the aesthetic richness of the observed scene, could not be a work of art *because* the creator (by hypothesis) fails to have anything close to aesthetic insight. Knowing this, perhaps out of some conception of the role of originality in art, or out of an extended application of an exclusion of forgeries as art, certain art theories might preclude such an imitative drawing from being a work of art and, with it, its creator from being an artist. That creates a problem for such theories as well as for Zangwill's since it looks as though it will be, in principle, impossible to determine (barring detailed information regarding the creator's state of mind) whether any work is to count as a work of art. It will never be clear whether the presence of the aesthetic properties we observe in the work made their way there because of the artist's insight. To make matters even worse, Zangwill ups the ante and insists that artistic insight not consist of a mere understanding and intention that the aesthetic properties arise from the relevant nonaesthetic ones, but that such insight must not come to the artist as a result of perceiving some actual thing that has those nonaesthetic properties. The insight must itself be some sort of *new* perception, "either ... a vision of a non-actual thing with the aesthetic/nonaesthetic property combination or ... an actual thing that lacks those properties."¹⁴ The requisite level of creativity is both extraordinarily high and, in the final analysis, unverifiable. One is left to wonder how, given this criterion, we will ever be justified in believing we are in the presence of a work of art?

There is much else of considerable interest that could be taken up with respect to Zangwill's essential claims. For example, there is the connection

¹⁴ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 43.

he draws between functionalism and evaluation that is taken to entail the impossibility of any adequate descriptive/non-evaluative theory of art. But, do functionalist accounts necessarily rule out the possibility of pure descriptive theory? One can find plausible descriptive analyses of law in some legal positivist accounts that both lack evaluative implications and that manage at the same time to account for law's underlying social function.¹⁵ Thus, to use a simple example, one might identify social order as a function of all legal systems, without implying that every law in any particular system must be just (or even orderly).

Three further questions arise about Zangwill's particular functionalist explanation of art: (1) Why ought one accept his assumption that there need be any single, univocal explanation for the fact that we "desire and value making and experiencing art?" (2) Why limit this explanation to the aesthetic aspect of the arts? And (3) Why understand the aesthetic in a manner that apparently excludes the cognitive and emotionally expressive as potential elements of the aesthetic? However, I leave these questions to focus the last part of my discussion on revisiting the importance of extensional adequacy and Zangwill's handling of avant garde art works.

Zangwill does not completely deny the significance of extensional adequacy. It is more that, given a choice between extensional adequacy and explanatory illumination, he argues that the latter trumps the former. The problem with contemporary theories that arose out of Danto's talk of the artworld is that they rest on intuitions that are confused, intuitions that unreflectively embrace all avant garde works (by this, Zangwill has in mind specifically Dadaist and Conceptual Art) as legitimate art works, intuitions that Zangwill says "have been corrupted by their theories."

But, of course, not all persons who hold the view that such avant garde works are legitimate also embrace those artworld and institutional theories. So it is unreasonable to dismiss their inclusion as merely a result of falling under the spell of Danto's or Dickie's theories.¹⁶ If there be any corruption at work here, it is certainly not just by virtue of including such works, but (as mentioned earlier) by taking them to be *paradigms* of artistic activity, an error more plausibly attributed to the theories themselves. The theories do sometimes appear to use avant garde works as their starting point, as capturing the essence of art.

There is, moreover, an inherent worry when it comes to rejecting any avant garde movement in the wholesale way Zangwill does. After all, many new genres in the arts are initially dismissed as beyond the pale only to eventually become a central part of the standard canon. Laypersons are often stunned to discover that their favorite works, works they even take to be paradigmatic of artistic excellence, had at first been critically derided as

¹⁵ An example might be H. L. A. Hart's analysis, as he presents it his postscript to *The Concept of Law*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Just as one should equally resist the temptation to argue that Zangwill's *exclusion* of avant garde works is merely driven by his own dedication to a particular sort of aesthetic theory.

anything but art. Popular opinion aside, it is worth noting that classic Dada ready-mades (a particular object of Zangwill's scorn) are now considered among the most influential artworks of the twentieth century.

It would seem that an ideal reconciliation in all of this might be to find a way to include such works as art in a way that is compatible with a fundamentally functionalist/aesthetic account, i.e., one that has explanatory power. Obviously, that is too big a task for this short essay, but I would like to make a couple of proposals for understanding the avant garde that Zangwill does not (and would not) consider.

Zangwill does pursue ways of accommodating avant garde works within his theory, but none seem at all satisfactory.¹⁷ Thus, he says that "almost all conceptual art has significant aesthetic aspirations." But even if that were so (and it is doubtful that it could be so in Zangwill's sense of "aesthetic"), he realizes that it would still would leave out such central works as *Fountain*, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, and *L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved*. He toys briefly with just leaving such works out, raising the option of a sort of rejectionism that he associates with Beardsley.¹⁸ In the end, Zangwill seems most comfortable with what he calls the Columbus strategy, whereby works like Duchamp's *Fountain* carry along with them the aesthetic properties of the everyday artifact that they appropriate (the urinal in this case, or the Brillo box in Warhol's famous work), as they recontextualize the artifact and make it into art of a new ("high") sort. But it is important to see this won't do *unless* Warhol's *Brillo Box* is now conceived as being possessed of *different* aesthetic qualities from an ordinary Brillo box, and Duchamp's *Fountain* possesses different aesthetic qualities from the very urinal that physically (with the exception of the signature, *R. Mutt*) fully constitutes it. After all, in neither case is it ever seriously thought by critics that the relevant qualities of the avant garde work, that the point of the work, can simply be identified with the very same qualities that the industrial designer came up with in designing the product. And, in any event, the aesthetic qualities of the industrial products *could not* be the same aesthetic qualities carried by Warhol's or Duchamp's work if we are to be able to attribute *aesthetic insight* to either artist. To meet Zangwill's standard of aesthetic insight, Warhol and Duchamp must, not only aim at the aesthetic/nonaesthetic relation, but the relation itself must not already be present in an existing object. But, of course, the Brillo box, just like the urinal, and any other such appropriated artifact, existed already as an actual object and presented precisely those aesthetic qualities in relation to its nonaesthetic ones.

How then could we construct a theory that is both extensionally adequate to the full range of contemporary arts and capable of serving broader explanatory demands? One would have to begin by broadening the

¹⁷ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 66–73.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that Beardsley was not completely rejectionist about avant garde works like these, as he had and used a broad enough conception of the aesthetic to admit some of them by virtue of their wittiness, for example.

scope of aesthetic properties, not of course by reflecting on the gleaming white porcelain of *Fountain*, but by including the aesthetic values found for example in literature. Perhaps we should reconsider Dadaist and Conceptual art as some sort of hybrid art form, and thus no longer be constrained by consideration of only *visual* aesthetic qualities. One must add, say, discursive and intellectual ones. It is only via stretching the art form in this way that Beardsley, for example, could allow the wit of some of these works to satisfy an aesthetic interest. I am with Beardsley on this. Such works certainly seem productive of aesthetic pleasures but they are ones that are more typically found in the discursive arts than the visual arts.

Alternatively (or additionally), one could simply allow that being a social practice is a central part of the story, *and* that artistic practices, like other human practices, can evolve. Such evolution can be for better or worse, of course. Even if a practice begins (or all artistic practices begin) with the unifying character of the aesthetic, it seems unnecessary and unrealistic to restrict later artistic development to the aesthetic. After all, persons can surely reasonably pursue other qualities of value and integrate those values into their practices. If so, an explanatorily adequate account of art need not rely solely on the aesthetic, narrow or otherwise. And, of course, human practices can also deteriorate in certain ways as well. The comparison to law might again be apt. One can recognize that for a legal system to exist it must serve a general goal of survival of the society (or at least some powerful segment of society), and go on to the conviction that such an aim is part of the essence of law, while still recognizing that some laws within every well-developed system will not have that direct aim. Thus laws that confer powers to make contracts or leave wills, or drive on the left or right side of the road, do not directly address the survival of society, and the choice of particulars in such cases can be perfectly arbitrary. And so long as the system taken as a whole serves the society's ends, the individual laws taken alone need not. Perhaps something like that applies to art as well.

Finally, many if not most societies have legal systems in which particular laws may actually be detrimental to overall survival – there are, after all, bad laws in well-functioning systems. There are also, of course, simply bad (or evil) legal systems. (Perhaps Dada and Conceptual art represent the beginnings of an artistic system gone somehow sour.) But, just as a proper description and explanation of law must be able to account for the full range of legal phenomena as well as for idealized legal systems, so must a proper description and explanation of art account for the complete range of artistic works and practices. The basic concern about Zangwill's theory is that it does not seem capable of accounting in the proper way for the full sweep of art. The theory indeed makes for a fine characterization of human aesthetic creation, broadly construed. But, despite the fact that many of the greatest works of art in every culture do seem to be aesthetic creations in the richest Zangwillian sense, the complete set of art works neither includes all aesthetic creations, nor are all members of that set aesthetic creations themselves.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to Daniel O. Nathan on Art

I very much appreciate Daniel Nathan's thoughtful commentary on *Aesthetic Creation*. He describes my view accurately, with a full understanding of what is moving me, and with some sympathy for my methodological concerns, even if he thinks that I over emphasize some desiderata and even if he cannot endorse the particular aesthetic theory that I argue emerges from the methodological reflections. He makes a number of interesting criticisms.

(A) Nathan worries about doodles being classified as art according the aesthetic creation theory. Nathan says that this violates certain *intuitions* about the nature of art. I query this appeal to intuition. Whose concepts? Which intuitions? Why do such intuitions have evidential weight? We have intuitions about the physical world: that the earth is flat not round. More to the point we have intuitions about kinds. For example, it is intuitive that a whale is a fish. But such intuitions may be mistaken. Similarly with intuitions about what is art and what is not art. With intuitions I say at least that there is, or should be, a question mark standing over them. We are interested in the world, not in our concepts or intuitions. The question is: what are these things? And the question about concepts is: which do we need to understand the things? Which concepts *should* we have? Not: which *do* we have? As Nathan notes, for me, explanation trumps extension if there is a conflict. Or perhaps rather, for me, extension is subsumed under explanation. It is true that there are avant garde works that I exclude that other theories include. And there also are doodles that I include and they exclude. The question is where we go from there.

(B) Nathan worries about the success condition. I required that to some extent artists are right about aesthetic/nonaesthetic dependencies. Actually, I would not kill for the success condition. Perhaps aesthetic intent is enough.¹ A person might form an aesthetic intention but never get round to acting on it, in which case we do not have a work of art. Why did

¹ See Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41.

I endorse the success condition? I was drawing on general principles about artifacts. Artifacts have essential origins in intentions. But one can fail to make an artifact that one intends to make. I might intend to make a space rocket out of a television, but what I make is not a bad space rocket it is no space rocket at all, so far short has it fallen. If I succeed in making a bad space rocket, something has gone right, even if not quite enough. Similarly, I thought, with art. But anyway – I wonder whether the issue is important. I cannot see that much hangs on it. Most art gets a lot right, and a rational explanatory story is good both in cases of success and in cases of failure.

(C) Nathan also worries about the mental state condition whereby I required that artists intend to produce aesthetic properties by producing nonaesthetic properties. My requirement seems an over-intellectual picture of what happens in artist's heads. I agree that we need not consciously believe in aesthetic/nonaesthetic dependencies. However, Nathan thinks that we can aim directly to produce aesthetic properties. I don't think so. I think we must go through the nonaesthetic properties. We aim to produce aesthetic properties that are realized in certain nonaesthetic properties. So, to use Nathan's nice example, a dancer intentionally realizes beauty or grace *in* particular movements. Nathan says "She just moves with grace". But this seems too *under*-intellectual. Of course, some aesthetic properties of the dance are not intended by the dancer and just brought about by her; but others are there because she intended them. Retrospectively we might ask why she did what she did and the answer will invoke aesthetic properties in a specific nonaesthetic realization. Often we act automatically but with quite sophisticated intentions nonetheless. Consider driving. In a sense one 'Just drives...'. But a judge in court might ask why one stopped at a red light. Automatic actions still have intentional reasons and causes, and that also goes for automatic artistic actions. She intends *some* aesthetic properties to be realized in her physical movements. An animal, such as a cat, may "just move" with grace. But a cat is no dancer. The dancer knows what she is doing, unlike a graceful animal. The cat does not intentionally move gracefully; the dancer does. I think that aesthetic/nonaesthetic dependence is a ubiquitous principle of aesthetic thinking, one that we all tacitly grasp in thinking in aesthetic terms. Any time we think that aesthetic properties are instantiated it is always because of the nonaesthetic properties in which they are realized (apart from special cases like testimony). I am requiring something similar of artists' inspired thoughts about non-actual aesthetic properties. Is this over-intellectual? I do not think so, although it is somewhat intellectual. The principle of aesthetic/nonaesthetic dependence is tacit knowledge, which we presuppose in aesthetic thinking and desiring and intending and acting and inspiration. If it is essential to one kind of aesthetic thought it is essential to all.

(D) Nathan considers the case of copying a scene from nature, which turns out to have positive aesthetic properties. Is that a work of art? Nathan

worries that there is an epistemological problem about knowing whether something is art, because it depends on knowing the nature of inaccessible intentions. I couldn't see this. In such cases, we can often just ask the artist what his motives were in making the thing. And even where we have no evidence of artist's intent, there would be a similar problem for almost all theories of art since they almost all impose constraints on the mental states of art makers. I couldn't see why there is a problematic unverifiability here. In the case of Cycladic sculpture, inference to the best explanation suggests that beauty was an important aim of the makers. Beauty was intentionally realized there in those marble forms, even though we cannot ask their makers, and even though there are no records that indicate their intentions. However, with many other artifacts, archeologists we do not and perhaps cannot know. That is a good epistemological problem, not a bad one. Sometimes we cannot know whether something is or is not art, and our theory should preserve that.

(E) Nathan briefly proposes a kind of aesthetic functionalism that includes many avant garde works *and* that also yields the explanations that I desire. He has in mind a 'practice' theory, which models art on the law. On such a view, the law has a certain social function, but may not always discharge it and may even evolve away from that original function. Similarly, Nathan thinks, with the social practice of making and consuming art – which may have had an aesthetic function, although not every artwork has an aesthetic function, and that social function may evolve and the aesthetic function may no longer be central. Nathan suggests that on such a theory, we can have our explanatory cake and also eat the extension. Part of his proposal is to widen the notion of the aesthetic so that literary values turn out to be aesthetic, rather than just visual or aural aesthetic features. For Beardsley, wit counts as an aesthetic feature. So why not broaden the notion of the aesthetic and colonise the avant garde? I don't want to spoil the cake-eating party, but I worry: (1) will there now be a deluge? Even more things outside the high-artworld will be included. Nathan worried about doodles; but now we will have mobile phone text messages. Many are witty, for example. Including text messages seems worse to me than including doodles. (2) Even if we broaden the notion, and let in the avant garde and text messages, will there then be a single kind of act of mind in play in all these cases that will generate and explanatory interesting kind? This seems doubtful. What will unify the new notion of the aesthetic, thus broadened? (3) I worry about the social aspect of the theory. I cannot see how individual acts of participation in the practice are to be rationally explained by the existence of the practice; and I cannot see how the existence of the social practice can be rationally explained by individual acts of participation in the practice without making the social theory unnecessary. So while I see the attraction of an aesthetic social practice theory of art, I do not have much faith in it.

Rafael De Clercq

The Aesthetic Creation Theory of Art

The Aesthetic Creation Theory of Art, developed by Nick Zangwill in a series of articles recently collected in *Aesthetic Creation*, is a theory of the nature of art. Its primary aim is not to define 'art' or to analyze our concept of art, but to explain our interest in what falls under this concept: why do people make, contemplate, exhibit, conserve, buy and study works of art, in short, what is art *for*? Zangwill's short answer is that, works of art have an aesthetic function. Moreover, this function is not something that works of art have acquired through the ages. Rather, they are work of art *in virtue of* having that function. Stated in more precise terms, The Aesthetic Creation Theory amounts to the following thesis:

Something is a work of art because and only because someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain nonaesthetic properties; and because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with some of those aesthetic properties in virtue of the nonaesthetic properties, as envisaged in the insight.¹

In other words, a work of art is an artifact whose function it is to have certain aesthetic properties in virtue of certain other properties (non-aesthetic properties). Because aesthetic properties are values, and moreover, values the apprehension of which yields pleasure, the Aesthetic Creation Theory seems to provide a simple and intuitively plausible explanation of why art itself is valued.

Zangwill defends the Aesthetic Creation Theory in a clear, subtle and marvelously concise way, without losing sight of how issues in the philosophy of art connect to issues in other domains of inquiry. Moreover, the idea at the core of the theory, that art has an aesthetic function, has a strong intuitive appeal. For example, many people are likely to explain their interest in particular artworks by reference to aesthetic properties such as beauty. Of course, the question is how best to develop the idea. Monroe Beardsley (1981), Gary Iseminger (2004) and Nick Zangwill have all answered the question differently.² In what follows, the merits of Zangwill's answer will be investigated.

¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36.

² Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981). Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

I. A theory of what?

As said, the Aesthetic Creation Theory's primary purpose is to explain, not to define or to analyze. This fact is stressed throughout the book, and little effort is required to see why. The Aesthetic Creation Theory operates with a very liberal notion of art, to say the least:

a notion that includes painting, music, architecture and some literature, and which also includes everyday creative activities such as industrial design, advertising, weaving, whistling, cake-decorating, arranging and decorating rooms, religious rituals and firework displays.³

On my understanding, the list could be extended to include not just everyday "creative" activities, but also everyday hygienic activities such as washing and combing one's hair, brushing one's teeth (with whitening tooth paste), shaving, and filling the laundry machine. Of course, from hygienic measures it is a small step to all kinds of work-out programs intended, at least in part, to improve one's looks, and to medical self-treatment methods, for example, applying a cream against warts or herpes blisters. Carefully sealing an envelope is also not to be underestimated. In all these cases, a desired aesthetic effect is known to follow upon certain non-aesthetic changes that one is oneself capable of bringing about. It seems that, on the Aesthetic Creation Theory, this is all it takes to produce art.

Naturally, there are several things that Zangwill could say in reply. First, he could say that shaving and the like are habitual practices, not requiring an insight on each occasion. However, whether they are habitual really depends on the person, and surely some sort of insight may precede the decision to get rid of one's beard or to comb one's hair.⁴ Second, he could say that hygiene and medical treatments such as the aforementioned never result in the creation of an artifact. But is a nicely shaven beard really any less artificial than a nice flower-arrangement? Similarly, is a medically treated skin really any less artificial than a tattooed one? Note, in this connection, that Zangwill seems happy to regard flower-arrangements (Zangwill 2007, 101n1) and tattoos (Zangwill 2007, 60, 161, 163) as works of art, and that he regards "most roses" as artifacts (Zangwill 2007, 101n1).

It is doubtful whether stressing the explanatory purpose of the Aesthetic Creation Theory can neutralize these worries about extensional adequacy, that is, about the range of items to which the theory applies. After all, the explanatory purpose is to explain *art*, not just any human activity. And if the explanation provided is the same for art and a host of non-artistic activities, then it seems that little insight will be gained into the nature of the first. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Zangwill himself is not willing to give up on the requirement of extensional adequacy:

³ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 78.

⁴ It may also be noteworthy that Zangwill does not require the insight to be original. *Ibid.*, 44.

What about a theory that explains the point of art but which is extensionally inadequate? There is no easy answer here. It depends how extensionally inadequate it is. It cannot be *majorly* extensionally inadequate. It must explain the point of many or most of those things that we normally categorize as works of art. But if the theory has minor extensional quirks in an otherwise good explanatory theory, these could be overlooked.⁵

But surely, including a morning shave into the category of artworks cannot be considered a ‘minor extensional quirk’?

So the Aesthetic Creation Theory is very liberal, but maybe it applies to all works of art? If that were true, it would at least provide a necessary condition for being art. However, there is reason to doubt that it does. Recall, from the passage quoted in the beginning of this paper, that the Aesthetic Creation Theory requires that “someone had an *insight* that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain nonaesthetic properties” (italics not in original). For Zangwill, insight is a “moment of acquiring knowledge”.⁶ In the case at hand, the acquired knowledge is supposed to be knowledge of a conditional: if such-and-such non-aesthetic properties were to be realized, then such-and-such aesthetic properties would be realized as well. But the requirement seems to be too strong. What if a team of art historians and epistemologists were to discover that the artists responsible for some of the masterpieces hanging in the National Gallery merely had *true* (justified) *beliefs* regarding the relevant dependency relation? Would that automatically deprive these pieces of their art-status? (Would they have to be removed from the museum and perhaps replaced by fakes created by a more knowledgeable artist?) Furthermore, it is even doubtful whether having a *true* belief regarding the dependency relation is necessary. After all, it seems possible for an artist to be completely mistaken about the aesthetic properties he is about to realize in one of his works. Instead of being great, neat, and unified, as intended, the work turns out to be bad, clumsy and chaotic (even though it has all or most of the envisaged non-aesthetic properties). Surely this must have happened on more than one occasion. Zangwill may respond that if the resulting work is so utterly bad as to be devoid of aesthetic value, then it simply is not a work of art.⁷ But it is easy to consider a different kind of case that does not allow for a similar response. Suppose an artist intends to create a bad, clumsy and chaotic work – perhaps something not deserving to be called ‘art’ at all – and, guided by his mistaken view of the dependency relation, ends up producing a great, neat, and unified work of art. At least on the face of it, this seems to be a possibility. And if it is one, then the artist’s creative activity need be guided by a true belief regarding what aesthetic properties depend on what non-aesthetic properties, contrary to what Zangwill assumes. (It may be asked why someone would care to create a bad work.

⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁷ Ibid., 41.

Being self-destructive, provocative, indifferent, or simply in need of money are certainly possible reasons. But the important thing is that the intention seems to be possible.)

Some of the above points have also been made by Daniel Nathan in a recent review of *Aesthetic Creation*.⁸ However, according to him, Zangwill's book also raises "deeper puzzles" by requiring

that all artists must believe (a) that aesthetic properties supervene on nonaesthetic ones and (b) that certain aesthetic properties (the ones that are to be found or at least intended to be present in the work) arise out of precisely those nonaesthetic features that the artist places in the work. However, artists, I would assume, often just create, absent cognitive or other understanding of how the aesthetic qualities of their works do ultimately emerge.⁹

Here, it seems to me, a word in defense of Zangwill's theory is appropriate. There is of course a sense in which artists "often just create": they often experiment without a detailed plan in mind. But this trivial fact does not contradict Zangwill's idea that artists must have some understanding of the supervenience relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties. Moreover, it has been argued that such an understanding comes automatically with an understanding of what evaluative properties like beauty and ugliness are, that is, with grasp of the corresponding concepts.¹⁰ Therefore, the burden seems to be on Nathan to prove that an artist can be involved in an aesthetic project without understanding how aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties are related.

II. Persistence

Aesthetic Creation also explores a number of interesting metaphysical issues such as the essential properties of works of art and their identity through time. Let me end with a brief note on how Zangwill thinks about the latter:

The cross-time identity of a work of art depends on the persistence of most of the nonaesthetic properties that realize the aesthetic properties that were envisaged in the artist's intentions. However, those aesthetic properties can be realized by different stuff at different times, so long as the different stuff realizes most of the same aesthetic properties as a causal consequence (of the right kind) of earlier phases.¹¹

(For the sake of simplicity, Zangwill disregards failed art.) According to this passage, the persistence of a work of art requires that "most" of

⁸ Daniel O. Nathan, review of *Aesthetic Creation* by Nick Zangwill, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66(2008): 416–418.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁰ Consider, for example, how the supervenience of the ethical on the descriptive is explained in Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defence of Conceptual Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 125.

¹¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 112.

the intended non-aesthetic properties are preserved. But how is one going to count these properties? And does every property count for one? For example, is depicting a Dutch rural landscape as important as containing a small blue patch in the right upper corner when persistence is concerned? Perhaps, though, this is just analytic niggling on my part, and Zangwill has something more commonsensical in mind.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to Rafael De Clercq on Art

Rafael De Clercq offers a challenging and insightful commentary. He airs three difficulties:

(A) My methodological aims were explanatory. I was quite easy-going about the target for explanation. De Clercq worries, however, that I may have been too easy-going. He worries about combing his hair, shaving, and everyday hygienic activities. I am happy to include some of these as art. The aesthetics of the everyday is important.¹ I cannot see that the considerations in play for a person who is wondering whether certain items of clothing 'fit' or 'go together' are radically different from those of someone taking artistic decisions in a standard art form. And if we think about hairstyles and facial grooming, there is a continuum from Dali's famous mustache to everyday trimming. As far as personal hygiene goes and the care of one's appearance, there is a question about what the goal of the activity is. Is it 'aesthetic' in a useful sense? In some cases it is reasonable to suppose that it is. In other cases not. Being 'presentable' or sexy, for example, can contrast with beauty. However, some grooming activities are aesthetically motivated and their upshot may count as little works of art – or I see no harm in saying so. In cases where we groom ourselves to enhance our beauty, I would shift the onus of proof, and ask, giving the extent of the aesthetics of everyday life, why such activities are not at least on a continuum with artworld art activities? Hairdressing, after all, is an art in a broad sense, and in many countries the art even goes under the name "aesthetic".

De Clercq offers me a way out with such cases. One need not have an aesthetic insight, in my sense, every time one combs one's hair. True. One might have an insight at some point, and then cultivate a habit of acting on it. But I also allow that another person has that insight. A fashion icon or style guru may generate this year's hair-style.² Fashion icons or style gurus

¹ See Yuriko Saito, *The Aesthetics of the Everyday* (Oxford University Press, 2007); and Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1983), chapter 15.

² See my discussion of the studio assistant, who I allow makes works of art without insight, but who aims to enact another's aesthetic insight and intention. Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42–46.

may promulgate aesthetic ideas in fashion magazines. And I may follow their advice when I comb my hair or wear a certain kind of clothes.

De Clercq also has a more theoretically motivated concern with extensional adequacy. He writes "...if the explanation provided is the same for art and a host of non-artistic activities, then it seems that little insight will be gained into the nature of the first." I don't quite agree. If artistic activities instantiate some more general activity, which we can understand in a certain way, then that is surely a step forward. Artwork activities fall into a more general class of aesthetic activities. Maybe we think that more needs to be said to explain artistic aesthetic activities. But an aesthetic explanation will nevertheless be part of the explanation of artistic activities.

(B) I define insight as an event of acquiring *knowledge*. That was because I wanted it to be non-accidental that the created thing has the aesthetic properties in virtue of the non-aesthetic properties. De Clercq urges that justified true belief is enough, and even that true belief may not be necessary. It is true that I ignored cases that fall short of knowledge in *Aesthetic Creation*, preferring to characterize a more standard kind of case where, as we might say, artists know what they are doing. I see other kinds of case as falling away from that standard kind of case. Cases where effects produced are quite different from those envisaged are possible, but they do not worry me much, although they are interesting. Suppose someone very inept tries to make an airplane but it turns out just like a shoe? It is not an airplane. But is it a shoe? I don't know! Should I know? Certainly though, I want to prioritize people's actual aims and intentions in explanation, rather than their beliefs about how to achieve those aims or their success in carrying out their intentions. For the rational explanation of action begins with people's aims and intentions.

It is true that if we add knowledge, justified true belief, or true belief to a person's goals and intentions, different actions will be explained. De Clercq might ask: why not take belief to be explanatorily basic? I think this is a fair point, and as far as psychological explanation (and justification) is concerned, belief is more explanatorily basic than knowledge, justified true belief, and true belief. But if worldly states, such as art objects and events, are to be explained, then we will need more than belief.

(C) Since the view is that artworks have essential aesthetic functions, artworks persist only if most of their aesthetic functions persist. I would now augment the passage quoted by De Clercq to say that persistence of aesthetic function *typically* depends on the persistence of intended aesthetic properties, but need not do so if other nonaesthetic properties come to realize the aesthetic function. De Clercq worries about the idea that *most* aesthetic properties must persist. For, how does one count properties?

What was motivating my "most" was a desire not to insist that absolutely *all* aesthetic functions are necessary for persistence, since there could surely

be minor changes through which the work persists. On the other hand, if *all* the aesthetic properties and functions differ, then the work of art has not survived. Something between “all” and “none” seemed to be needed, so I hit on “most” (not “some”, which seemed too little). But what does “most” mean if there are an infinite number of properties or functions. This is a good question.

Firstly, we can allow that some nonaesthetic *properties* are more important than others with respect to the persistence of aesthetic *functions*. So, the small blue patch in the upper right corner of a painting may be less important than being a depiction of a Dutch rural landscape in the overall aesthetic function of the work (and thus restoration should prioritize the latter if a choice has to be made).

Secondly, the same issue arises for the persistence of any artifact. Indeed, can we say that any pair of things has more in common than another pair of things? The whole idea of similarity is problematic if we cannot count properties or talk of a greater or lesser number of shared properties, especially if there are an infinite number of them. However, if anything is a more general problem, this is.

Gary Iseminger

Art and Audience

I

In his book *Aesthetic Creation*¹ Nick Zangwill observes that 'most theories of art make some kind of essential reference to an audience', (128) and cites the theories of many of the most widely-respected Anglophone aestheticians of the last fifty years, philosophers of widely different persuasions, including Monroe Beardsley, Nelson Goodman, Arthur Danto, George Dickie, and Jerrold Levinson (with Tolstoy thrown in for good measure.) Seen against this background, perhaps the most striking claim in the book is that 'art has nothing essential to do with an audience'. (127) 'Reference to an audience in a theory of the nature of art is unnecessary'. (159) In this paper I want to consider Zangwill's attempted refutation of what he calls Audience Theories in the light of his Aesthetic Creation Theory and of my own account in *The Aesthetic Function of Art*,² which I did not there but will here describe as an Aesthetic Institution Theory.

II

Zangwill aims to give an account of the essence of art in the traditional sense – an account of the separately necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for something's being a work of art. He does not take this to be a matter of conceptual or linguistic analysis, especially not of a concept that embodies what Kristeller called 'the Modern System of the Arts', comprising, on Kristeller's telling, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry.³ Zangwill thinks that there is no such concept, or at least that it does not pick out a set of things that can be interestingly grouped together. Accordingly, he engages in some fairly serious gerrymandering, excluding from the class

¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in this book.

² Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

³ Paul Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

of works of art such things as 'purely narrative' films, plays or novels and including such 'everyday creative activities' as 'industrial design, advertising, weaving, and whistling'. (78)

Such inclusions and exclusions are justified as yielding 'a class of things with an interesting unifying principle', (81) as follows:

Something is a work of art because and only because someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain nonaesthetic properties; and, because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with some of those aesthetic properties in virtue of the nonaesthetic properties, as envisaged in the insight. (36)

This claim is further spelled out as the claim that works of art have an 'aesthetic function' in the sense that they were made with the aim, at least in part, that they embody aesthetic properties, (99) where aesthetic properties are characterized by a list of *substantive* aesthetic properties – daintiness, dumpiness, elegance, balance, and the like, and (at least) two *verdictive* or *evaluative* aesthetic properties – beauty and ugliness. Furthermore, not only do the substantive aesthetic properties *supervene* on nonaesthetic properties, as is clear in Zangwill's statement of the theory, but the verdictive aesthetic properties *supervene* on the substantive ones. (38) Just as the gracefulness of a certain picture supervenes on its exhibiting a certain design, so that exhibiting that design is a way of being graceful, so beauty may *supervene* on gracefulness which is then a 'way of being beautiful'. (3)

If one accepts Zangwill's theory of art, then, it seems on its face that 'reference to an audience in a theory of the nature of art is unnecessary'. Where there is a work of art, there must only be somebody making something with certain kinds of properties on the basis of certain insights and with certain intentions – no audience, nor any thoughts of an audience, required. But Zangwill recognizes that matters are not so simple. This quick way with the idea that reference to an audience *is* necessary in a theory of art is blocked by the recognition that someone who makes this move must be assuming that aesthetic properties are what might be called *intrinsic* properties, while there is, as Zangwill is well aware, a long tradition of understanding them as *dispositions*, in particular, dispositions to provide certain kinds of experience *to an audience*. His argument against audience theories, which will be my main subject in this paper, tackles this problem head on.

III

Before turning to this argument, let me make a few remarks about my aesthetic institution theory.

The Modern System of the Arts as described by Kristeller is an historical arrangement that arose in Western Europe in the middle of the 18th century in which some visual works, musical works, verbal works and others were grouped together as works of (Fine) Art and distinguished from such things

as mathematical theorems, scientific theories, and political speeches. There were, of course, controversies about possible additions and exclusions even as the system was forming, and have been even more as new technologies and other practices have made their cases that they are producers of works of art. But I think it is fair to say that 'our' concept of art – including mixed works such as operas, works of photography and phonography, weaving indeed (but perhaps not whistling) – is a recognizable development of this grouping. Thus the practice of art along with the attendant informal institution of the artworld, comprising chiefly people and formal institutions which recognize one another as participants in this practice – artists, critics, audiences, dealers, museums, orchestras, schools, and so on – was born about 250 years ago. (The distinct practices of painting, poetry, music, etc. with their attendant 'worlds' are obviously much older.) And in whatever way historical practices and informal institutions have a life-span the practice of art and the artworld still live (though opinions differ as to whether they thrive or are moribund).

What is the nature of this practice? Reflection on theoretical treatises that attended its birth and on claims for inclusion since made on behalf of additional sub-practices not originally included in it (often because they did not yet exist) support the thought that what all those sub-practices have in common was that they are all in some sense centrally concerned with the aesthetic, however that might ultimately be conceived. In *The Aesthetic Function of Art* I have tried to flesh out the sense in which all these practices, and hence the practice of art and the artworld, are 'aesthetic', as follows:

The function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication',⁴

where an instance of aesthetic communication is paradigmatically somebody making something for someone else to appreciate (aesthetically), and appreciating something (aesthetically) is finding the experiencing of that thing to be valuable in itself.⁵

Aesthetic communication has, of course, existed in many cultures and over many millennia, not only prior to the artworld, but prior as well to any world of poetry or of painting; it becomes artistic communication

⁴ Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, op. cit., 22.

⁵ After using the phrase 'aesthetic appreciation' in an earlier version of this account, I changed it to 'appreciation' simpliciter in *The Aesthetic Function of Art*. My reason for doing this was to avoid the suspicion that I needed to give a prior account of the notion of the aesthetic, when the idea of appreciation as I explain it is the beginning of my account of the aesthetic. Nonetheless this choice has understandably occasioned misunderstanding. Noël Carroll is right to say that I have 'defined appreciation simpliciter in terms which many philosophers reserve for aesthetic appreciation' but wrong to suggest that I did not recognize that I was doing this and intend to do so. See Noël Carroll, 'On the Aesthetic Function of Art,' *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 58 (2008), 736. See also *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, op. cit., 34–35.

– an artist creating a work of art for an artistic audience to appreciate
 – when the artworld exists and this activity is in some appropriate way related to that artworld. This occurs most obviously when the artist and audience (and other members of the artworld) recognize one another as fulfilling appropriate roles in the practice of art. A work of art is thus paradigmatically something created within the artworld to be appreciated by an audience.

The connection between work and world, however, may be considerably weaker. Clearly many paintings and sculptures that we now admire in museums, many pieces of music that we hear in concert halls, many of the poems that we study in literature classes, were made outside of the artworld or on its fringes, or even wholly unaware of its existence, either because they were made before it existed or at some cultural distance from it. But the artworld is a capacious and welcoming institution and has no difficulty accommodating Homer and Dickinson, Bach and Ives, Rembrandt and Adolf Wölfli, Hiroshige and Li Bai. And on my view the artworld does well to assimilate artifacts made by people such as these, whatever other religious, social, etc. purposes they may serve or have served and wherever and whenever they may have been made, just to the extent that they reward appreciation in the sense that I have described it. And to that extent it is wholly appropriate for us to suppose that, unlike natural objects and scenes, they were made, at least in part, *to be* appreciated, so that we as part of an audience can be the recipients of acts of aesthetic communication by their makers, who are thereby artists and whose products are thereby works of art.

One can then say that the *practice* of art has an aesthetic function even more plausibly, though not in quite the same sense, as Zangwill claims that all *works* of art have an aesthetic function. This seems to me to be an historical fact, but it does not seem that such practices as art (and corresponding informal institutions – in this case, the artworld) have an essence in any strong sense; one can imagine the artworld getting out of the aesthetics business. (Some people think it already has, and some of these people even think that that's a good thing.)

This, then, is not a theory of the essential nature of works of art, but rather of the actual historical nature of a practice and informal institution – art and the artworld. It is obvious that any such theory will make copious and essential reference to an audience. The members of the artworld include members of audiences as surely as they include artists (and critics, and dealers, and presenters, and scholars, and etc.)⁶ To the extent that the existence of works of art depends on the existence of the artworld (however tenuous the relation may be in particular cases), then, that existence depends on the existence of an audience.

⁶ If anything like what I've just said is right, then, though it certainly seems true (and it is not at all surprising) that the vast majority of works of art have an aesthetic function in something like Zangwill's sense, having such a function is not *essential* to being a work of art.

Furthermore, if the fostering of aesthetic *communication*⁷ – people making things for *others* to appreciate – is the function of the artworld, part of its function is to provide the ‘others.’ ‘Audience-building’ is as important a part of what the practice of art strives to achieve as the fostering of creativity in artists.

The thesis that the function of the practice of art and the informal institution of the artworld is to promote aesthetic communication is thus in more than one way committed to a theory of what works of art are that makes essential reference to an audience. All the more reason to take seriously Zangwill’s argument against audience theories, to which I now turn.

IV

Zangwill begins his argument, which constitutes Chapter 6 of his book, by considering several possible counter-examples – novels that Kafka intended to have destroyed after his death, sculptures intended to be buried in tombs, private poetry, sketches for paintings. He finds the second two more convincing than the first two, but, not surprisingly, he does not put much faith in intuitive appeal to counter-examples. ‘An argument of principle would be better’. (133) The argument he constructs is summarized at the end of the chapter, thus:

We must attribute to art properties that are intelligibly held to be valuable properties. But once we do so, artists’ thoughts about those valuable properties can rationally explain why they made one work of art rather than another, or none at all. Either the valuable properties are dispositions with respect to an audience, or not. If not, the audience drops out immediately. But if the valuable properties *are* dispositions to affect an audience, we then lose the rationality of making a work of art in cases where artists have no concern for others.... So...a concern with another’s experiences...can[not] explain the creation of many artworks. It follows that purely dispositional audience theories fail the rationality requirement. I conclude that reference to an audience in the theory of the nature of art is unnecessary. (158–159)⁸

The final step is made clearer if the following earlier remark is thought of as being interpolated just before the last sentence quoted above:

If the creation of art can sometimes be rationally explained without any reference to an audience’s experience, then we cannot maintain that a relation to an audience’s experience is part of the essence of art. (140)

⁷ Zangwill at one point observes that an emphasis on communication is a natural background from which Audience Theories often emerge.

⁸ I here omit a part of the argument involving the claim that related considerations also rule out an explanation in terms of the artist’s own experiences.

V

Here is a regimentation of the argument, with just enough exposition of the premises along the way to facilitate understanding.

Suppose, first, where A is an artist who creates work of art W, and S properties are significant properties in the sense that they can intelligibly be 'valued or thought desirable', (135) that:

- (1) A believes that W has S properties.

Beethoven might have believed, for example, that the slow movement, *Adagio molto e cantabile*, of his *Symphony No. 9* was beautiful in a noble and restrained way.

Suppose, next, that:

- (2) There is a sufficient rational explanation of W's existence.

Zangwill here invokes a distinctive view about the aims of philosophical theories, namely, that they should not be primarily concerned to capture the extension of the notion at issue, if only because it is often not clear at the margins what that extension is. (Recall his willingness to gerrymander the class of works of art.) Rather they should aim to account for '*much that we independently believe*' [original italics] concerning what we are theorizing about, in this case, works of art. (19) Now some of these beliefs may be beliefs about extension – about which things are and which are not works of art. But more important, in his view, is our belief in the *value* of our artistic activities, chiefly that producing and consuming works of art are good things to do. A theory of art should aim to explain these activities by showing how they are 'rational and worthwhile, or at least how they seem rational and worthwhile to us'. (2) In this sense, then, a *rational explanation* of a human product or activity is one that shows why it is rational for people to produce it or to engage in it, and a successful theory of that product or activity will underwrite such an explanation.

Thus a candidate for such a rational explanation of the existence of the slow movement is Beethoven's belief that it has the S properties of being beautiful in a noble and restrained way, and, supposing that it, or something like it, is true, the strategy of Zangwill's argument is to show that such an explanation requires no reference to an audience or thoughts of an audience on Beethoven's part.

Now S properties, may or may not be dispositional in the specific sense of being explicable only as dispositions 'to produce experiences in a certain audience'. (142) (Call dispositional properties of this sort D properties).⁹ If they are not, then Beethoven's believing that the movement is beautiful

⁹ Zangwill does not restrict S properties to aesthetic properties, because the argument depends only on their being valued properties, whatever else they might be. But the properties of

seems to be a sufficient rational explanation of his composing it; if one takes it that something one can make will be valuable, it is rational to take steps to bring it into existence. That is to say,

- (3) If S properties are not D properties, then if A believes that W has S properties, then A's believing that W has S properties is a sufficient rational explanation of W's existence.

That is to say, given that the S properties are what might be called *intrinsic* properties of W, plainly no reference to an actual audience or A's thinking of an audience is required to provide a rational explanation of W's existence, just Beethoven's desire and successful effort to create something beautiful. So under this assumption reference to an audience is unnecessary for a sufficient rational explanation of the existence of at least some works of art; hence, an audience is not 'essential' for something to be a work of art.

But, of course, many philosophers have held that S properties *are* D properties.¹⁰ If this could plausibly be maintained, and the S properties themselves could not be explained without reference to an actual or possible audience, then essential reference to an audience might sneak in 'by the back door'. (142) A's belief that W had S properties would be a belief whose very *content* included reference to an audience.

Zangwill's strategy for dealing with this apparent possibility is to consider under what conditions it might still be rational for A to create W even if the S properties *were* dispositions to create an experience in an audience, and to argue that those conditions are not always fulfilled in works of art. Thus the next premise, call it the *altruism condition*, is:

- (4) If S properties are D properties, then if there is a sufficient rational explanation of W's existence, A must have an altruistic interest in an audience's experience.

If we now add the plausible premise that the altruism condition fails:

- (5) A need not have an altruistic interest in an audience's experiences,

it follows from (2), (4), and (5) that:

- (6) S properties are not D properties,¹¹

works of arts that have typically been valued and often analyzed as dispositions to produce experiences in audiences are aesthetic properties of the sort that make up Zangwill's list.

¹⁰ Zangwill cites Beardsley. (142) A famous example is St. Thomas's claim '*Pulchra sunt quae visa placent.*'

¹¹ This step explains Zangwill's remark that he 'may have stumbled inadvertently upon a powerful argument against purely dispositional theories of aesthetic value'. (159n37)

and from (1), (3), and (6) that:

(7) A's believing that W has S properties is a sufficient rational explanation of W's existence.

Finally, a principle underlying what Zangwill characterizes as a move 'from minimal explanation to essence', invoked in the interpolated quotation at the end of the preceding section, may be expressed thus:

(8) If there is a work W such that A's believing that W has S properties is a sufficient rational explanation of W's existence, then a relation to an audience's experience is not part of the essence of art,

and from (7) and (8) it follows that:

(9) A relation to an audience's experience is not part of the essence of art.

VI

I want, first, to challenge premise (4). It is not obvious to me that, if the beauty of the Beethoven slow movement, for example, is a disposition to cause a certain experience in some actual or possible audience, then Beethoven's only motive for creating that work with that property would have to be an altruistic concern for some audience's experience. Even if he had only selfish motives for wanting to produce a work of beauty, if that S property *were* to be a D property, then producing such a work would *be* to produce something with an appropriate disposition to affect an audience in a certain way. Indeed, no matter what the status of S properties might be, if he wanted to test his results, he might seek out a knowledgeable and sympathetic audience and see if the experiences of its members confirmed the success of his creative efforts without necessarily being in any way motivated by the thought that he was enriching their experience.

If I am right in this, then the sub-argument from (2), (4) and (5) to:

(6) S properties are not D properties,

is unsound, and, hence, so is the argument to the ultimate conclusion that reference to an audience in a theory of art is unnecessary.

An observation about premise (8) is also in order. If one accepts the Aesthetic Institution account that I have outlined, according to which being a work of art involves standing in some at least minimal appropriate relation to the artworld such as I have described, and the artworld is conceived of as including, among other people, audience members, then it seems that,

even though the existence of a painting or poem required no audience nor thought of an audience by its maker, its status as a work of art requires the existence of the artworld and hence of an audience. So a defender of this kind of a 'theory' of works of art, if not of their essence in any significant sense, can still claim that reference to an audience is necessary for a theory, no matter whether or not S properties should turn out to be D properties and even in the face of the most convincing counter-examples Zangwill proposes.

VII

Zangwill talks in many places of the role of audiences in art and readily concedes that they are in fact an important part of art as it is practiced and that explaining that role is as important as explaining the role of the artist. We want to know not only why it is rational for artists to produce art but why it is rational for audiences to consume it. But he claims that, once one agrees that the work has or is intended to have valued S properties, there is a *rational convergence* (138) of the artist and the audience on those properties. If the artist's believing that the work has valued S properties is a sufficient rational explanation of the artist's making it, so is the audience member's believing this very same thing a sufficient rational explanation of his or her 'taking an interest' in it. (138).

The question of why artists want to make works of art and the question of why audiences want to experience them can both be answered by a theory which appeals to the fact that works of art have the valued S properties. (137)

But if it then seems that the artist and the audience are explanatorily on a par, a principle of *minimal explanation* kicks in:

What is the *minimum* that we can postulate to attain a rational explanation of artistic creation? The answer is swift. The intention to realize S properties would suffice to explain an artist's activity. (138)

Neither an audience nor any thoughts of an audience is required.

So we can give a rational explanation of the creation of art solely by reference to an artist's desire and intention to realize S properties. (138)

The emphasis once again is on what is required for a rational explanation of why a work of art exists, and the claim is that the only thing needed for a rational explanation of a work's existence is the artist's thoughts and intentions with regard to those properties. The rationality of the audience's activities then directly 'falls out' as a consequence, but clearly those activities are not necessary conditions of the existence of the work in the way the artist's activities are.

Zangwill recognizes that this argument presupposes that S qualities are not D qualities, and proceeds to propose the argument I have been considering that effectively aims to show that they are not. But leaving

aside my objections to this argument, I want to turn finally to a separate issue.

VIII

As I have observed, Zangwill describes the aim of a 'theory' of the nature of art as explaining 'much that we independently believe' (19) about works of art, especially why they 'appear to us to be worth making, preserving, and using' (6) and how these judgments of value are manifested in our artistic activities, in our 'traffic' with art. (6) Of these three broad categories of activities, he is mainly concerned to explain artists' making and audiences' using art, or as he sometimes puts it, the 'production and consumption of art'. Artists' making and producing are typically described as creating, as befits the title of the book. Audiences' using and consuming are sometimes described as contemplating, more often as appreciating, and perhaps most frequently specifically characterized as *experiencing*, as for example, when he proposes that the existence of the artwork with its valued S properties is sufficient to answer both 'the question of why artists want to make works of art and the question of why audiences want to *experience*' [my emphasis] them.

I think that it is indeed one of things 'we independently believe' about works of art that audiences want to experience them, but I do not think that Zangwill's creation theory provides a sufficient rational explanation of this fact. That a thing has (will have, is thought to be likely to have, is intended to have) valued qualities might be sufficient to explain why someone would want to make it, but it does not by itself explain why someone else might want to *experience* it as opposed merely to valuing its existence or wanting to know that it exists. There are many things that have valued qualities (sharp surgical tools, for example) that one might be glad existed and glad to 'use' in the sense of having been operated on by a skilled surgeon wielding them, but would not value *experiencing* (feeling the incision being made.) There are also things with qualities that one values that cannot be experienced, as one might value some of the relations between various natural forces that make human life possible on this planet but cannot in general experience (see, hear, etc.) them.

Equally unexplained is why the particular valued qualities that typically do rationally explain why artists create works of art are in fact experienceable properties. Is the overwhelming preference of artists to produce paintings, prints, and sculptures to be *seen*, pieces of music to be *heard*, poems to be *read*, merely an accident or a prejudice? If that particular aspect of our artistic activities is to receive a rational explanation, the view that the function of the artworld and practice of art is aesthetic specifically in the sense that it is to promote aesthetic communication as I understand it – the making of something with the aim and effect that it be (aesthetically) appreciated, where (aesthetic) appreciation is finding the *experiencing* of something to be valuable in itself – is in a good position to provide it.

IX

The Aesthetic Institution Theory takes works of art to be fundamentally connected with an informal institution, one of whose components is an audience, understands art as a form of communication between artists and audience members, thinks of the most important properties of works of art as properties that are experienceable by members of an audience, and is even inclined to analyze some of those properties as capacities to afford experiences valued in themselves by audience members. It is an audience theory in about as many ways as it can be. If it can evade Zangwill's argument against audience theories in general while meeting his standards of rational explanation more fully than his own Aesthetic Creation Theory, it presents a serious alternative to that theory within the broadly aestheticist tradition, recently revived, to which they both belong.¹²

¹² Zangwill advances several criticisms to the Dickie's Institutional Theory of art. (160–166). Though I will not argue the case here, I think that the facts that my account is not an essentialist theory of the nature of works of art and that it is as much aestheticist as it is institutional renders it immune to these criticisms.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to Gary Iseminger on Aesthetic Properties and Audiences

(A) In his interesting critique, Gary Iseminger concentrates on my general argument against audience theories of art. However, he sketches his “aesthetic institutional theory” of art by way of contrast with my Aesthetic Creation Theory (see further his *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). Iseminger and I are broadly speaking on the same team in that we both defend an aesthetic approach to art, but we diverge over the form that such a theory should take. Before I focus on differences, let me celebrate our joint endeavour! I take the variety of options for an aesthetic view of art to be a testament to vitality of that tradition. And aesthetic theorists of different kinds can share arguments for the general kind of view.

Iseminger’s positive theory is an *indirect* aesthetic theory, which foregrounds certain institutions. (The view is not far from Nathan’s ‘practice’ theory of art.) Iseminger thinks that the practice or institution of art has an aesthetic function. Works of art get to be art because of the role they have in such a practice. He also allows that art practices or institutions *have* aesthetic functions, but *not* essentially. Moreover, the framework allows it is not essential for all works of art to have aesthetic functions. Thus Iseminger (like Nathan) embraces a social account of art practices, which prioritizes the aesthetic in the constitution of the practice. This is an interesting position. I have sympathy with it in so far as it deploys the notion of the aesthetic. However, I think that there is a loss in explanatory power given such a theory, just as there is for Danto and Dickie’s theories.

Either the social practice is explained or not. If not, the existence of the institution is an unexplained explainer. This is unsatisfactory. The existence of the institution needs to be explained. But if some explanation of the institution can be given, either it is a rational explanation or not. If not, it is unsatisfactory. It is true that some phenomena emerge only through cooperative behaviour – they come into existence through joint activity. And the phenomena may not be intended to be brought about by the participants; instead it emerges out of game-theoretic pressures on

joint behaviour. Art is not like this. I would not assume methodological individualism across the board. But we can give rational explanations of individual artist's behaviour. The social practice depends, in part, on such behaviour. Now if individual rational explanations can be given of artistic behaviour, then the existence of the social institution of art can be rationally explained in such terms. If so, we can cut out the institution and directly give rational explanations of art activities. The social explanation would become irrelevant or at least derivative. It would not be fundamental.

So I worry about an indirect theory of art that identifies art via membership to an institution or social practice. I think art institutions are what they are in virtue of works of art, rather than vice versa.

(B) I now turn to Iseminger's critique of my anti-audience argument. He offers a nice reconstruction of that argument. He then challenges my premise that a rational explanation of artistic activity, which appeals to significant properties of works of art that are dispositions to affect audiences, must include an assumption of altruism on the part of the artist. I am not quite sure I followed the counter-argument. I think that Iseminger charges that the anti-audience argument helps itself to an unearned anti-dispositional assumption. He challenges my claim that if the significant properties of art were dispositional properties then it would only be rational to realize them given an (altruistic) concern with an audience. This still seems right to me. If the significant properties *are* dispositions then why would it be rational to generate the disposition? Surely, only because of a desire that the disposition be manifested. Why create something brittle or soluble? Surely with the hope that it will break or dissolve. Similarly, in the case of art: if the significant properties are dispositional properties, we must have an interest in the disposition being manifested. But that manifestation is the audience's experiencing the thing. But artists do not always care about that.

Perhaps an ideal audience is defined either as those who have a godlike ability to recognize aesthetic properties, or just as those who are well 'informed' with refined 'sensibilities'. However, with either notion of an ideal audience, there is a Euthyphro issue. One composes for an ideal audience, let us suppose; but that is *because* it would appreciate the aesthetic properties of the work. 'Because' denotes a fundamental dependency relation, which is explanatory, and which may be stronger than mere metaphysical necessity. Goodness and God-approved might be mutually necessarily linked despite a dependency flowing one way or the other, depending on whether one is a divine commandment or autonomist theorist about ethics. Similarly, beauty might be metaphysically necessary and sufficient for ideal audience appreciation, even though dependency and explanatory relations flow only in one direction. The ideal audience appreciates things because of their aesthetic properties (just as the gods love what is pious because it is pious). If so, we may explain an artist's creation of aesthetic properties without the appeal to an audience's experience. Perhaps those experiences

are a foreseen but unintended consequence in many cases. It is a fact that artist's sometimes have no concern with audiences (composed of other people or even their own future selves). If the dependency flowed from ideal audiences to aesthetic properties then this would be irrational. But if it flows from aesthetic property to audience's experience, then it is rational. Hence the audience drops out of the picture as part of the essence of art, since art production can be explained without it.

Lastly, Iseminger wonders why aesthetic properties would be experientable on my view. The answer falls out of the nature of aesthetic properties. The artist need never actually experience what he has created. But the aesthetic properties themselves are essentially experientable, in a sense. Beauty, for example, is something we take pleasure in; but beauty is realized in nonaesthetic properties, and we do not merely cognize the existence of the nonaesthetic properties that determine beauty, we perceptually represent them. It follows that appreciating the beauty of a thing requires the perception of it. There may, however, be some cases, such as where someone reads a score and gets pleasure from that; but that is because they form an aural perceptual image of sounds, which generate aesthetic properties. Given what aesthetic properties are, artists, on a non-audience view, will generate experientable properties.

Robert Stecker

Aesthetic Creation and Artistic Value

In *Aesthetic Creation*, Nick Zangwill sets out a new approach to theorizing about art that results in a very traditional – one might say old fashioned – way of thinking about it. The approach downgrades, but does not entirely disown, finding an extensionally adequate account in favor of one that emphasizes value and function. What do we value about artworks? What functions do they fulfill? Zangwill does *not* say that we value art for just one of its properties or that it has just one function. But he does say there is one pre-eminent function and one pre-eminent way in which we value art. This is art's aesthetic function; its aesthetic value.

The upshot is an aesthetic theory of art. In particular, it is an aesthetic creation theory. Officially, the theory states that something is an artwork because and only because someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain nonaesthetic properties, and because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with some of those aesthetic properties.

There is an initial, I believe reparable, problem with this theory that should be mentioned at the start. Consider the following situation. An artist is applying paint on canvass not sure what result she is aiming for. After some days of doing this, she looks at her canvass, sees that it has certain aesthetic properties, that they depend on certain nonaesthetic properties and decides that her work is done and an artwork has been completed. According to Zangwill she is mistaken. No artwork has been made because she never had the *insight* (before the work was complete) that certain aesthetic properties depend on certain non-aesthetic ones.

Insight is not derived from perceiving an existing thing with the nonaesthetic properties. The artist either has a vision of a non-actual thing with the aesthetic/nonaesthetic property combination, or of an actual thing that lacks these properties... The artist strives to actualize an object like the possible one envisioned in the insight.¹

¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

Since our artist does not envision a possible object, she lacks insight and has not created an artwork. But this stipulation not only seems arbitrary, but also seems to go against Zangwill's basic intuition that artworks are those things intended, at least in part, to have aesthetic value. Our artist is attempting to do this, just not in the overly rigid way Zangwill prescribes. That speaks in favor of revising his theory rather than revising our belief that the artist has made an artwork. I see no reason why Zangwill couldn't make an appropriate revision. Hence the possibility of repair.

There is another initial objection that cannot be met by revising the theory. This is that it creates a classification of objects as artworks that is greatly at odds with common usage. On this theory, doughnut packages and kitchen appliances are artworks while many paintings, sculptures, conceptual works, and narrative works normally classified as art are not. This is because the doughnut packages and kitchen appliances are made to have aesthetic appeal, perhaps in virtue of the insight officially required by the theory, but the paintings, sculptures, conceptual works and narrative works are not made with such an intention.

The excluded narrative works require some attention in their own right. Zangwill believes that aesthetic properties depend, in part, on sensory ones. Narratives present thoughts to the understanding or imagination. So narratives per se have no aesthetic properties. A narrative may have a sensory mode of presentation – a series of paintings, a moving picture, an arrangement of lines in a poem or the sound of the words – which have aesthetic properties. But what is presented to the imagination rather than the senses does not. Hence literary works that lack aesthetically valuable visual or aural properties are not artworks on the aesthetic creation theory. I suspect this would encompass many novels and stories, including very great ones.

Unlike the first objection, Zangwill is well aware of this one. How does he try to meet it? His basic strategy is to argue that we should shift the aim of a theory of what art is. Rough extensional adequacy is usually considered a condition of adequacy on a theory that tells us what art is. Zangwill suggests that we adjust that idea and hold that such a theory should also explain what we value in making and appreciating art. We need now to look at Zangwill's arguments for the aesthetic creation theory. This turns out to be not entirely straightforward as they involve an appeal to a variety of substrategies that need their own sorting out.

I find three substrategies. One argues that there is no clear concept to explicate, and that our focus should be on objects rather than concepts or meanings. A second argues that we should attempt to identify a domain of objects based on what we chiefly value about art. The third, the most modest strategy, qualifies aesthetic creation theory by admitting there are counter-examples to it but arguing that they are exceptions to the rule.

Is there a concept of art?

There are two lines of argument against the existence of relevant, standing concept that we should strive to capture in a theory of art. One is that the "folk" concept of art (or least one such concept in use) is built on an error. It combines two kinds that lack a common nature: things that have an aesthetic function and things that have a narrative function. When Zangwill is making this argument, he tends to identify this folk concept of art with the concept of fine art since he thinks they are based on the same error.

There are two problems with this line of argument. First, since most people disagree with Zangwill that narrative per se cannot have aesthetic properties, the claim that the concept is based on an error is highly tendentious. Second, even if the concept is disjunctive in the way Zangwill suggests, that does not mean the concept is based on an error. Perhaps the concept of art is a functional concept but there is no common function that all artworks share (as may be the case even if we reject Zangwill view about narrative). This would be an error only if the concept involves the idea that all artworks have a single, common function (which would make it self-contradictory). But Zangwill provides no argument that the concept must be understood in terms of a single common function. So he fails to show that the disjunctive nature of the concept indicates that we are in error about it. For both these reasons I find the first line of argument unpersuasive.

The second line of argument, somewhat surprisingly given the first line, denies that the folk concept is identical to the concept of fine art or any other sufficiently constrained concept. In other words, there is no ordinary concept of art. This is a surprising, bold claim for which one would expect considerable argument. As far as I can see Zangwill's entire argument consists of making the denial just mentioned and of asserting that there are some dictionaries that record no such meaning for the word art (without however identifying any of these). I find the claim that there is no usable ordinary concept of art implausible. Since the question seems to be an empirical one, let me offer some, though clearly not decisive, evidence. I have been teaching aesthetics for a few decades and each year on the first day of class I give my students a list of items and ask them which name art forms or a class of artwork and which do not. The results are remarkably uniform. Everyone recognizes the forms that congealed under the 18th century concept of fine art as art forms. They also regard some forms that have achieved such recognition more recently as art forms, items like photography and cinema. They are divided when considering the products of crafts that are capable of producing very fine specimens, such as furniture, carpets, and jewelery . They are nearly unanimous in rejecting more humdrum artifacts, and consumables as artworks. They tend to be divided over specimens of avant garde art. I do not need to impart to them an ideology of the fine arts. They already have some such

concept. I would characterize it more as a successor to the concept of fine art than the precise 18th century concept itself.

Suppose, however, Zangwill turns out to be right about non-existence of a relevant folk concept of art. What would follow? Zangwill's view seems to be that he would then be free to define a concept that captures what we find valuable in art, but that ends up excluding some items normally classified as art and including others normally not so classified. But, notice, we can't get this result unless we can appeal to a classificatory practice that rounds up a set of target objects. That, however, presupposes what Zangwill denies viz. a concept of art. Without that, the classificatory practice would not be possible. Hence if he is right about the non-existence of a folk concept, his own project does not get off the ground.

A Value-Determined Concept?

Zangwill's basic idea is that a good theory of art should do two things. It should be roughly extensionally adequate and it should explain much of what we believe about art, especially why we believe that making and enjoying artworks are worthwhile activities. Many other theorists would agree that a theory of art should do both these things but believe that they involve two disjoint tasks: one that sets out our classificatory practice through which we define the kind *artwork* and another that tackles the nature of artistic value, i.e., the value of members of that independently defined kind. I think it is a good question which of these two views is right and, while Zangwill touches on this issue, I wish he had said more to show that his view is the right one.

The main problem for the approach that Zangwill favors is that in attempting to identify an appropriate class of phenomena about which to theorize, it employs two criteria, which pull us in different directions, at least if we accept the way Zangwill cashes out the evaluative criterion. That is, the criterion of rough extensional adequacy delivers up one set of objects that includes narrative works, avant garde works, and what might be called post-avant garde non-aesthetic works (such as the sculptures of Duane Hanson) while the criterion of objects made with aesthetic insight excludes many of these (according to Zangwill) but also includes many items that the first criterion would exclude such as many artifacts not normally classified as art. In other words, when we employ both criteria in attempting to define a concept of art, far from solving the second problem with the aesthetic creation theory mentioned above (viz. its lack of fit with our ordinary classificatory practice), we are in fact simply confronted with it once again.

At this point, Zangwill might simply jettison the criterion of rough extensional adequacy and claim that we are better off working with the somewhat novel concept defined by the aesthetic creation theory (possibly modified in light of the first initial objection mentioned earlier). This novel concept would have the virtue of being defined in terms of a simple, easy to understand functional criterion. However, it would not do one thing

that Zangwill thinks absolutely crucial, viz. explain our beliefs and attitudes toward art as it standardly classified, especially our evaluative beliefs and attitudes. It cannot do that because the new concept simply does not explain what we value about many of the items normally so classified that the new concept excludes while giving no way to distinguish what we value in paintings and doughnut boxes that both fall under the new concept. In the end, the strategy of offering a new classification of art objects is doomed to fail because an approach that excludes so much of what we normally classify as art while scooping up so much of what we normally do not so classify, is unlikely to achieve the goal Zangwill assigns to it. You are not going to explain why we value something unless you have that something in your sights.

It is worth considering what might be the underlying reason why aesthetic creation theory fails despite containing important insights. The insights are that artworks very commonly possess aesthetic value, and many artifacts that are not artworks according to our usual classificatory practice also have aesthetic value. If we are going to attempt to be sensitive to practice, the natural question to ask is whether there is some important difference between the two classes of artifacts that both possess aesthetic value. In fact, there are at least two important differences. First, in both classes, aesthetic value is just one of the values possessed by members of each class (a point well understood, and sometimes even emphasized by Zangwill), but each class differs in what these other values are. The non-art artifacts tend to be valuable in fulfilling quite specific useful functions. Thus a chair that we aesthetically value also fulfills the usual function of chairs, or chairs of the type to which this chair belongs. It would be wrong to think of artworks as useless or functionless, but the useful functions they do fulfill tend to have a different character. Artworks often (though certainly not always) have cognitive and ethical dimensions that contribute significantly to their artistic value. They often embody and communicate important aspects of the culture or society in which they were created. They often tell stories or exhibits scenes from those stories that are central to the culture. Second, the aesthetic properties of artifacts in each of these classes, in addition to being valuable in their own right, also enable these artifacts to fulfill other functions well. They enable those who use non-art artifacts to take greater pleasure in their use by making those artifacts more attractive, possibly more expressive of their function, and potentially more harmonious with the artificial environment in which they are placed. With respect to artworks, cognitive, ethical and other culturally significant functions are often enabled by the work's aesthetic properties and piggy back on the aesthetic experiences provided by such works. It was one of Monroe Beardsley's best insights that to fully explain the value of an artwork's aesthetic properties and the experience derived from them, one has to refer the instrumental value of the properties and the experiences. It is because aesthetic creation theory focuses exclusively on art's purely aesthetic function, and ignores other crucial functions often,

if not always, enabled by a work's aesthetic properties, that the theory is bedeviled by counterintuitive inclusions of non-art artifacts and exclusions of paradigmatic artworks.

For this reason, even before we get to the third strategy for defending aesthetic creation theory, we can conclude that it cannot be salvaged as a theory of art. However, perhaps it can still play a role in a theory of artistic value. The previous paragraph asserted that not only do many valuable artworks have aesthetic value, but the very same properties responsible for a work's aesthetic value are also necessary for its having other non-aesthetically valuable features. Perhaps we can make a stronger claim: that all valuable artworks have aesthetic value. Or if there are exceptions, can these be treated as exception to the rule just stated? Let us explore this possibility.

Do all Valuable Artworks have Aesthetic Value?

This idea, that aesthetic value pervades artworks that are valuable at all, has been put into doubt by a number of artistic movements that arose in the twentieth century such Dada and its descendants including conceptual art. Recently, a number of philosophers, Zangwill included, have tried to resurrect aesthetic essentialism, as I will call the idea that aesthetic value is at the core of artistic value. The purpose of the remainder of this paper is to argue that this project hasn't and won't succeed.

Transmitted Aesthetic Properties

There is a fairly large class of avant-garde artworks that are created by appropriation of one kind or another. Sometimes "ordinary" artifacts are redeployed as artworks with little or no reworking (readymades). Sometimes a design or a format is appropriated with little or no reworking to create new objects that are artworks (Warhol's brillo boxes and Lichtenstein's cartoons). Sometimes artworks are appropriated to make new artworks. Art that results from appropriation is among the most common examples on purportedly non-aesthetic art.

However, the fact remains that many of the appropriated objects had some aesthetic value. Danto has effusive praise for the Brillo box design. Some see an attractive luster and graceful curves in the urinal that is the basis of Duchamp's *Fountain* (though Duchamp himself claims to have chosen it for a lack of aesthetic interest). It might be argued – Zangwill, in fact, does argue – that artworks that appropriate aesthetically valuable objects or designs inherit this aesthetic value. (Zangwill also claims that such objects are already art. I find such claims dubious for reasons discussed above.) If such an argument is successful, it would not eliminate all possible counter-examples to the claim that all valuable artworks are aesthetically valuable, but it would at least eliminate or neutralized a good sized chunk of such counter-examples.

However, it is by no means clear that the argument is successful. The appropriated object possessing some aesthetic value is either a different one than the art object created by appropriation (even in the case of readymades) or if it is the same object, it is to be evaluated in an entirely new context. (Which of these alternatives is correct is a metaphysical question that we won't try to settle here for the case of readymades. For the other cases of appropriation, it is clear we have different objects).

A good test case is Sherrie Levine's photographs of photographs, because the appropriated objects are both uncontroversially artworks and ones of high aesthetic value. The originals that have been rephotographed (including those of important American photographers Edward Weston and Walker Evans) had aesthetic qualities intrinsic to their value as art, which Levine's works inherit, at least in the sense that one can look at these works and see the same qualities appreciated in the original. (This is a corollary of the fact that one can look at most photographs and see some of its subject's aesthetic properties.) But those aesthetic properties belong primarily to the subject of the work rather than the work itself. In evaluating Levine's work, where does *its* value lie? Is it in the aesthetic properties of the objects photographed, in a new set of aesthetic properties it possesses that is not possessed by its subject, or in something else? I doubt it is to be found in the aesthetic properties of the original since that would make Levine's work redundant, or pointless. That leaves the latter two possibilities. Since there seem to be no new aesthetic properties in the offing, the value must be found elsewhere. It seems to me to be based on the fact that the works have an unexpected subject matter (other photographs). The realization of this refocuses our attention to properties, including aesthetic properties, but also social and art historical ones, that the subjects have as photographs. This seems to me primarily a kind of cognitive, rather than aesthetic value, though ironically one, which, if successful, gives us a new way to experience the original photographs aesthetically. If this is correct, it doesn't follow from the fact that the appropriated object had aesthetic value that the new art object also does even where the original object was an artwork.

The Modest Strategy

The modest strategy² qualifies the claim that *all* valuable artworks possess aesthetic properties. Recognizing that there are exceptions to this assertion, it claims that most valuable artworks possess aesthetic value as such, and the remaining valuable artworks possess value that is parasitic on the aesthetic properties of the majority of artworks. The Levine photographs, as I have interpreted them, would be a good example of a work the value of which is not aesthetic, but is parasitic on the aesthetic value of other

² James Anderson, "Aesthetic Concepts of Art," in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. by Noël Carroll (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit.

works. A different type of example would be anti-aesthetic art (sometimes simply called “anti-art”). This includes some of the much discussed Dadaist works of Duchamp, such as his readymades and *L.H.O.O.Q.* The former are ordinary objects (a urinal, a bottle-rack, a snow-shovel, a bicycle wheel) the artist simply selected and displayed as art with little or no adjustment by the artist. They were purportedly selected for their lack of aesthetic interest. *L.H.O.O.Q.* is a postcard reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* on which the artist drew a graffiti-like mustache and goatee. The modest strategy does not claim that these works have aesthetic value, but simply claims that whatever value they do have can only be understood in relation to, and in contrast with the aesthetic value possessed by most works.

The modest strategy contains an insight. It is correct in claiming that much artistic value that is of a non-aesthetic variety, often if not always, in some way depends on aesthetic value. The works discussed so far are good examples of this. I’m not sure, however, that the thesis universally holds. Perhaps there are conceptual artworks that simply try to present a thought or idea. Perhaps there are political works that simply have a political message. Zangwill³ with admirable honesty mentions the hyper-realist sculptures of Duane Hanson as an artwork that lacks aesthetic aspirations even of second order kind that I have ascribed to non-aesthetic but parasitic works. (He also mentions narrative works, which he believes are wholly lacking in aesthetic value in so far as they address the imagination but not the senses. I pass over these examples here as too controversial since most writers would reject such a restricted conception of aesthetic value.)

The chief problem with the modest strategy is that it is too modest. It does not sustain the claim that all valuable artworks possess a single value in common viz. aesthetic value. In fact, it is premised on the belief that all do *not*. Hence, for the purposes of this paper, we do not have to decide whether the modest strategy is based on a truth or not. It is enough to point out that it doesn’t save the common value thesis.

A proponent of the modest strategy might reply that, if it can be established that artworks *necessarily* typically possess aesthetic value, the spirit, if not the letter, of essentialism has been maintained. The correct response to this reply is to point out that this is not what has been established. Non-aesthetic art, far from being atypical, is now common. What is at best true, is that it is typical of non-aesthetic art that there is an implicit reference to one of the following: other artworks that are aesthetically valuable (Levine case) or the absence of the aesthetic (anti-art case). This is what gives some credence to the claim that non-aesthetic art is parasitic on aesthetic art. However, it is now quite plausible that not all non-aesthetic art has this character, and even if the claim is true, it falls well short of the stronger one made in the reply. It would only show that *some* artworks necessarily possess aesthetic value.

³ Ibid., 71–72.

The Ambitious Strategy

The ambitious strategy⁴ (Lind 1992, Shelley 2003) claims that all valuable artworks including those mentioned above, do have aesthetic value that is intrinsic to their value as art. This needs to be distinguished from extrinsic aesthetic value that some of these objects possess. If my interpretation of Levine is correct, her photographs have lots of extrinsic aesthetic value inherited from her subjects. *Bottle-rack* has a complex form while the mounted *Bicycle Wheel* has a simple, graceful appearance. However, these aesthetic attributes are equally possessed by any similar bottle-rack or bicycle wheel (mounted for the purpose of repair).

The interesting claim of the ambitious strategy is that these works possess aesthetic properties intrinsic to them as artworks. For example, *Fountain* (Duchamp's urinal readymade) possesses daring, wit, cleverness, impudence, and irreverence.⁵ These are aesthetic properties, it is claimed, and appreciating the work for possessing them is intrinsic to appreciating them as art. Is this claim true? Let us grant that *Fountain* has these properties and that they are relevant to its appreciation. The important question is whether they are aesthetic properties. My view is that (with the exception of wit, which requires a different treatment) there is no clear answer to this question. "Daring", "cleverness", "impudence", and "irreverence", let us assume, can sometimes be names of aesthetic properties (though this isn't completely obvious. Zangwill, for example, denies it⁶). Whether or not they sometimes name aesthetic properties, these terms certainly can and sometimes do name non-aesthetic properties. Impudent behavior, a daring strategy, irreverent remarks about religion, and clever philosophical arguments are cases of items having non-aesthetic attributes denoted by the above expressions. They most plausibly name aesthetic properties when the application of the term is grounded in aesthetic experience. The trouble is that it is admitted by all that *Fountain* sustains little aesthetic experience. Hence, it is not clear that the ambitious strategy can make good its claim to find aesthetic properties in what is commonly thought of as non-aesthetic art.

If one is to argue that works such as the readymades have aesthetic value, one needs to argue that they are capable of providing a significant aesthetic experience when understood as the artworks they are. (This is a criterion I would impose. Zangwill would use a different strategy to reject these purported aesthetic properties.) In the case of *Fountain*, this may just be a viable option. Selecting a urinal and mounting it upside down, gives this readymade a shock value not equaled by all the others. For this reason,

⁴ Richard Lind, "The Aesthetic Essence of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 117–29. Shelley James, "The Problem of Non-perceptual Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (2002): 363–378.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit.

one is not simply intellectually aware of the irreverent questions Duchamp is asking about the contribution of the artist, the creative process, and the role of craft in making art. One experiences the force of the questions through seeing this work. This is surely why *Fountain* is the most famous of the readymades, the one that always shows up in art-historical surveys, and the one that has by now been discussed ad nauseum. Still, this experience is a very limited one, pretty well exhausted in a single viewing and probably provided as well by a photograph of the work as by the work itself. (So the claim that *Fountain* sustains *little* aesthetic experience is not inaccurate.) The chief value of the work lies elsewhere, in the cognitive value of the reconceptualization it proposes and symbolizes. That other such works have aesthetic value as the works they are is even less plausible.

One might question a premise of the preceding argument. Is it really true that, for a work to have aesthetic value or possess an aesthetic property, it must be capable of providing an aesthetically valuable experience? Some have suggested that it is not. Noël Carroll⁷ (2004) offers the ‘argument from form’, which can be construed as supporting such a result, though its official conclusion is somewhat different. The argument from form goes like this. In the case of some conceptual artworks, one can experience their formal properties on the basis of reports about them. Formal properties are a species of aesthetic properties. Therefore, one can experience aesthetics properties of some artworks on the basis of reports about them. And if experiencing form is aesthetically valuable, then this aesthetically valuable experience can be had on the basis of reports about such works.

So far, this argument does not challenge the idea that, for a work to have aesthetic value or possess an aesthetic property, it must be capable of providing an aesthetically valuable experience. It just says that a report about a work can be the provider of the experience. However, if we look just a bit below the surface of this argument, we can see how such a challenge emerges. First, we need to recognize that Carroll has a rather special conception of the form of an artwork. It is the ensemble of choices that are intended to realize or, as Carroll suggests later, succeeds in realizing, the point of the work. Second, we have to ask what a report about a work’s form, in the sense just specified, will provide its recipient. The answer is information about the point of the work, and choices the artist makes that are intended to or succeed in realizing this point. Such information can be expressed in a proposition, and while Carroll sometimes speaks of experiencing formal properties this way, he also speaks of “grasping” a work’s form through such a reporting and “cogitating about” a work’s form. These alternative modes of expression suggest that talk of experiencing formal properties by means of such reports needn’t be taken literally. There is no specific experience that goes with grasping, or cogitating about a proposition. If not, works can possess aesthetic properties or have aesthetic value, without

⁷ Noël Carroll, “Non-perceptual Aesthetic Properties: Comments for James Shelley,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 44 (2004): 413–423.

being capable of providing aesthetically valuable experiences. Thus, when we work through the implications of this argument, we see that it does challenge the idea that such experience is required.

Does this mean that the ambitious strategy was right after all in arguing that the standard counterexamples to aesthetic essentialism such as the Dadaist and conceptual works we have been discussing are really rife with aesthetic properties that are intrinsic to their artistic value? No. The argument turns on a rather special notion of formal property and the claim that formal properties, *so defined*, are aesthetic properties. I see no reason to grant the second claim. After all, given Carroll's definition of form, you can grasp the form of this essay while having no aesthetic experience, and seeing no aesthetic value in it. You just have to see how my choices in writing it are intended to argue or succeed in arguing that not all valuable artworks are aesthetically valuable. There is no aesthetic property to be experienced, grasped, or cogitated over in this. For all we know, the same could be true when we grasp the form of a work of conceptual art. Hence, something can have form in Carroll's sense, without it possessing an aesthetic property.

So we should conclude that neither the modest nor the ambitious strategy succeeds in showing that all valuable artworks are aesthetically valuable or even that this is necessarily typically true.

The Unique Value Strategy

I now turn to a very different way of arguing that aesthetic value is at least necessarily typically present in valuable artworks. The idea is that if it weren't, artworks couldn't be valuable in the way we believe they are. They would turn out to be replaceable and dispensable, whereas no one thinks that is the case.

When one thinks of many of the ways we find artworks valuable, we may start to fear that the valuable properties artworks offer could be offered by other things.

Consider... the kind of view according to which works of art communicate some truth or enable us to experience some emotion... Two worrying possibilities seem to be allowed. First we could gain the same truth or emotion by making or perceiving a quite different work of art... and so we ought to be indifferent between making or perceiving one or the other... Second, we could gain the same truth or emotion by doing something that is nothing to do with art at all, and so we ought to be indifferent between making or perceiving a work of art and that other thing.⁸

Take any *function* art fulfills, and we can see that others things are capable of fulfilling it too. Certainly art hardly has a monopoly on the ability to provide moral insight or a refined awareness of human psychology, to increase intelligence or induce admirable habits of feeling. (Further, there

⁸ Ibid., 24.

are many artworks and perhaps some art forms that are incapable of doing these things). Artworks are not the only things that represent the world in fascinating or unusual ways or with verisimilitude. They are not the only things we find expressive or evocative of human emotions, or of religious or political sentiments. They are obviously not the only sources of escape from everyday life and not the only providers of “worlds” in which we can lose ourselves. They are not even the only things that are beautiful or give us aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic value can be found in nature and almost every domain of human endeavor. If this is so, it is conceivable that these other things might do a better job at offering these valuable properties, and thus art could be replaced, superseded by these other things. At best, art would have to compete with these other things.⁹

There is another related worry. Suppose we value a work for containing a moral or psychological insight. The work is not only replaceable by something else that provides the same insight, but even if the source of the insight is the work, once we have it, we don't have to return to that source. Once we have absorbed the insight, it seems that we can now dispense with the work. A theory of artistic value that implies this dispensability is thought to be just as unacceptable as a theory that implies replaceability. The value of artworks is sometimes said to be inexhaustible, but even if this is exaggeration, they can be revisited on many occasions and yield up new value each time. So it may be thought that a condition on a good theory of artistic value is that it implies that artworks have a kind of value that makes them neither replaceable nor dispensable.

Irreplaceability would seem to be guaranteed if at least part of the value of an artwork is unique to that work. If there is one aspect of the value of an artwork that is unique to it, it would seem to be the valuable experience it offers to those who understand it or the valuable aesthetic properties it possesses.

Perhaps one can cleverly think of cases where a pair of artworks, or a pair of consisting of an artwork and a non-work, offer identical experiences or possess the same aesthetic properties. Since such cases would trade on the exceptional, the coincidental or the bizarre, let us not pursue them and grant that usually an artwork uniquely offers the valuable experiences to be had from it and a unique set of aesthetic properties. How significant is this fact in understanding the value of art? It is significant but not as significant as one might think.

To see why it is not as significant as one might think, consider first a parallel case from a realm of outside of the artworld. (There are countless examples along these lines). I enjoy fishing not just because it sometimes results in catching fish, but also because, among other things, of the enjoyable experiences I have casting lures, retrieving them, and playing fish with my fishing rod. These pleasurable experiences are unique to the

⁹ Malcom Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry Music* (London: The Penguin Press, 1995). Alan Goldman, *Aesthetic Value* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

particular rod I use; had I used a different rod I would have somewhat different experiences. (This same point could be expressed in terms of properties of my fishing rod. Henceforth, I will speak of experiences rather than properties because that is where I think the locus of aesthetic value is to be found.) This does not keep my fishing rod from being replaceable. It is not just that I could buy another rod of the same type (model) – that would just involve getting another token of the same rod. No, I could buy a different model that offered similar (perhaps better) experiences. The fact that something offers a unique experience is no bar to its replaceability, if there are other things that offer equally desirable experiences, and there is no real loss in exchanging one experience for the other. Notice one more thing: if you want to know what makes a fishing rod a good one, it won't be very illuminating to be told that people have valuable experiences with it. You need to know what functions fishing rods serve. Only then will you understand how some might be better, and provide better experiences, than others.

Fishing rods are instruments; works of art are not. However, one can run similar examples with non-instruments such as fine cigars or wines. A particular fine cigar, such as the Julieta no. 3, offers a unique experience. It would nevertheless not be unreasonable to substitute for this experience an equally good one offered by another cigar. The moral of such examples is twofold: first, if you are worried about the replaceability of one artwork by another, or of artworks by non-artworks, then merely discovering that artworks provide a uniquely valuable experience shouldn't allay your fears. Second, if you want to understand the value of art, it certainly won't suffice to know that artworks offer uniquely valuable experiences. You will need to understand the sort of value such experiences provide, and to do that you will have to make reference to items like the functions or purposes (not unique to art) listed at the beginning of this section, and the instrumental value of those functions. If this is so, then discovering that artworks provide uniquely valuable experiences is no reason to accept aesthetic essentialism. The experiences may be unique to the works that offer them and this may make the experiences uniquely valuable, but the type of value involved in these experiences is not unique to art.

I said above that the fact that artworks offer unique experiences does have some significance in an argument for the irreplaceability of the value we receive from individual works. What we have seen so far is that just citing this fact does not cinch the argument. What needs to be added is that there is a real loss in exchanging one valuable experience for another. The experiences uniquely provided by a great, or perhaps even a good artwork are irreplaceable because, even though there are other equally good experiences out there, the world would clearly be poorer for the loss of this one. The same is much less likely to be true for a certain fishing rod model, but it is also not true for many lesser artworks. In both cases, these sorts of things are constantly going out of existence or becoming unavailable without a great loss of value in the world.

The idea of dispensability is distinct from replaceability. The latter idea involves the thought that something else can substitute for the original item by providing an equivalent value. The former idea involves the thought that the original item is no longer needed once its service in a valuable role is over. Toothpaste tubes are no longer valuable when they no longer hold toothpaste. They are then dispensable and are dispensed into the wastebasket. If one focuses on one specific instrumental value of artworks, these works can also seem dispensable. This can lead someone to deny that the artistic value of a work is any such instrumental value.

The value of a poem as a poem does not consist in the significance of the thoughts it expresses; for if it did, the poem could be put aside once the thoughts it expresses are grasped.¹⁰

I believe this passage is correct if we interpret it as saying that the significance of the thoughts does not account for the whole value of a poem (though it would be incorrect if it meant to exclude this significance as even a part of a poem's artistic value). We can grant, for example that the imaginative experience derived from reading the poem also forms part of its value, both with respect to the experience in its own right and for benefits it delivers. However, since it is dispensability we are worried about, let us ask whether locating the value of a poem in the significance of its thoughts really make the work dispensable, while locating it in experiences intimately tied to the poem avoids dispensability. Neither claim is as obvious as it might seem as first sight. If a poem's job is to deliver an experience, why shouldn't we say that we could dispense with it once the delivery is made? There could be two reasons for denying this. One would be that we want to repeat the experience. Whether we do or not seems be contingent on individual preferences. The other reason for not dispensing with the poem would be based on the belief that we have not exhausted the poem of experiences it could make available. Then we could return to it with the expectation of new experience. I think this is the more common reason for rereading a poem. Now what about the poem's significant thoughts? There are three reasons why we might reread a poem out of interest in its significant thoughts. First, we may want to remind ourselves of what these thoughts are, or re-encounter them (just as we may want to re-encounter an experience of a poem). Second, we may be unsure whether we interpreted the poem correctly with respect to its thoughts. So we may read it again to see if we really got it right the first time. Third, we may read it with the expectation that it will yield up new thoughts. We may believe it will be open to new interpretations that will deliver new thoughts. Hence, valuing a poem primarily for its significant thoughts (and I am not saying that we do) would not make it more dispensable than finding its value in experiences it delivers.

¹⁰ Malcom Budd, *op. cit.*, 83.

There are many reasons why we want to return to works of art. We just mentioned two such reasons: to re-encounter some aspect of the work, and to encounter something new in or through it based on a new interpretation of the work. A third reason is supplied by pluralism about artistic value. If artworks are valuable as art in multiple ways, we may return to a work to derive from it a different kind of value than we found in an earlier encounter. A first reading of a poem might concentrate on what it says. Next we may want to analyze how it says this through its formal structure and imagery, for example. On another occasion, we may simply enjoy the story it tells, and so on. Since a work offers multiple pleasures and benefits, there is good reason to believe that we haven't exhausted them all in a first encounter.

We began this section with the fear of the replaceability and dispensability of art as a motivation for locating artistic value in an experience uniquely provided by a work. We have found that the mere fact that a work offers such an experience fails by itself to dispel these fears. Artworks are not "emptied" like toothpaste tubes primarily for three reasons: the importance of the functions they can fulfill by providing their unique experiences, their multiple interpretability, and the plurality of valuable properties that they possess.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to Robert Stecker on Art

I shall be somewhat selective in my comments on Stecker, just picking up on a few representative issues.

(A) Stecker's initial 'problem' with the Aesthetic Creation Theory is no problem at all. His example is of a person, who is said to be an 'artist', who applies paint to canvas, and then later 'sees that it has certain aesthetic properties'. But the example is under-described. Describing the person as an 'artist' hints at his intentions, but otherwise all we know is that a person applied paint to canvas and we are not told anything about his intentions or motives. Perhaps the canvas has an insect infestation or has gone moldy, and the point of the paint was to cure the problem. (This could be true even if he is an 'artist'.) If the result is aesthetically interesting, it is no more art than the results of any activity that happens to have aesthetically interesting consequences that were not aimed at. Some pollution produces aesthetically interesting results. Similarly if someone steps on an insect or shoots someone, that may have aesthetically interesting results. Stecker may, however, have in mind an artist who has indeterminate aesthetic intentions, and who is experimenting with applying paint to canvas. But indeterminate aesthetic properties are still aesthetic properties, and those indeterminate properties can figure in the content of intentions and insights. The consequences may well be art. It is difficult to tell what Stecker means, since the example is underdescribed. Clearly, though, there is no need for any modification.

(B) Stecker worries about extensional adequacy. He suggests that most narratives are not art on the Aesthetic Creation Theory. But many are, for they have a significant aesthetic point as well as appealing to the imagination. Nevertheless, I do think that there are *some* pure narratives that should be excluded from art status. Stecker also suggests either that the ordinary concept of art is disjunctive or that I think that it is. But it is surely unlikely that it is. We do have some disjunctive functional concepts, such as the concept of a sofa-bed, camera-phone, radio-cassette, coffeemaker-alarm clock. But these are special cases.

(C) On the project of defining art, my view is that all definitions of art are bad. Nothing could count as success at that project. Imagine a debate about what colour prime numbers are. Some say that prime numbers are all red. Others reply, No, there are counterexamples, some are blue! Others put forward the yellow theory of prime numbers. The whole intellectual endeavor needs critiquing. Similarly with defining art.

(D) As an antidote to my skepticism about whether non-philosophers have the notion of art that figures in recent aesthetics Stecker describes teaching his students (which is an odd source of neutral data!). Apparently he asks his students to categorize objects as art or not; and he starts by giving them 18th century fine art (presumably paintings), followed by photographs and cinema, and then some avant garde visual artworks, and furniture, carpets and jewelry, which the students are said to be divided over. But the very scenario that Stecker describes confirms my diagnosis. For the examples that Stecker gives his students are all from the visual arts. He did not play them some music or read a poem and ask the students if that was art. If he had, the students would probably have replied, "No, that's not art, it's music" or "No, that's not art, it's poetry". It is this wider more embracing notion that the students are unlikely to have. It is an illusion to think that many folk have this wider notion as their folk notion, which is the one pursued in various philosophical analyses of the concept. That concept is typically one that the students only acquire in aesthetics **classes after** indoctrination, I would say. (Incidentally, English dictionaries that do not record the philosophical notion as a meaning of "art" include the Penguin, Longman and Collins English dictionaries, while the Oxford English dictionary does record it.)

(E) Stecker wants me to say more about why I think we should have one theory of both the nature of art and also of its value (he talks of 'classification' and 'evaluation'). Actually, I said quite a lot about this in the book. But the short answer is that the fact that two theoretically projects are linked falls out of the functionality of art (see chapter 1). Any artifact has essential normative properties; natures and norms go together. The same goes for artistic artifacts.

(F) As a consideration in favour of separating these tasks, Stecker argues that we can only explain our valuing art if art is what falls under the philosophical concept of art. I could not follow this. There are a variety of human activities that we may try to understand. How we type those activities is not given in advance of theory. We have to see how best to impose explanatory order. I cannot see why we need to be bound by some arcane philosophical conception of art or by the folk concept of art any more than we need be bound to deploy the concepts of astrology in explaining human action. Stecker's argument would provide a novel defense for the devotees of astrology, who could deny that human behavior can be

explained if it does not respect folk astrological categorizations of behavior, such as that someone is a Scorpio or a Libra. They might protest like Stecker “an explanatory theory must have a target!”

(G) Stecker discusses the view that all artistic value is aesthetic value. He also discusses some avant garde works. Here he seemed to be playing the game of definition and counterexample, an activity I critique. I did not see the role of this discussion. My account foregrounds aesthetic functions, not aesthetic values as such, which makes a considerable difference. To give one example, it makes a difference to second-order accounts of artistic appropriation. For where one function of a thing depends on another, the other function persists. So an aesthetic function is part of the identity of a work that appropriates an aesthetic work. Stecker also discusses aesthetic experience accounts of art. But mine is not such an account, so I pass over that material.

(H) Stecker discusses a replaceability argument that I run at one point (along with others) against theories of art according to which artworks convey truths or emotions. Stecker objects that the same objection threatens aesthetic accounts of art, since nature also possess aesthetic values. The reply is that nature may possess aesthetic values but not the very same ones that most artworks possess.

(J) I end my comments on Stecker by voicing a suspicion, which is that, despite my repeating protestations, Stecker thinks that really, deep-down, I am trying to ‘define art’, and that really, deep-down, I think that that all artistic values or purposes are aesthetic. I have been pleased to find that many readers understand my attempt to reflect on art in a different way from the standard paradigm of the last forty years. But perhaps if one is very comfortable in a paradigm, then one will not recognize the existence of the point from which it is criticized, and there will be a tendency to assimilate views to ones that neatly map on to those that are familiar in the paradigm, and for which there is a standardly accepted dialectical scenario.

John Barker

Mathematical Beauty

1. Introduction

Is there genuine beauty in mathematics? Or when we speak of beautiful results and elegant proofs, are we merely speaking metaphorically? Among mathematicians, it is a received truth that abstract objects, especially proofs, theorems, and even whole areas of mathematical discourse, can possess aesthetic qualities such as beauty and elegance. Is it possible that they are simply wrong?

Nick Zangwill has offered an answer of “yes” in a number of publications.¹ For Zangwill, genuine aesthetic properties are simply too closely tied to sense perception to properly apply in a completely non-sensory domain such as mathematics. For Zangwill, the properties we ascribe to mathematical objects by calling them beautiful or elegant are simply different in kind from the properties we ascribe to physical objects under the same or similar terms.

It is a philosopher’s job to question platitudes; and the platitude that “Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare” is no exception. That said, I am going to argue that Zangwill has got this one wrong. The beauty we see in mathematics is part of the same overall phenomenon that includes beautiful art, music, literature, and natural formations. For the sake of focus, I will concentrate primarily on one instance of purported mathematical beauty: namely elegance in proofs. I will start by considering Zangwill’s case against beauty in mathematics, which is found primarily in his book, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. I will then sketch some positive reasons for regarding mathematical elegance as an aesthetic property.

¹ The main argument occurs in Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2001), especially Chapter 8, “Aesthetic/Sensory Dependence.” Parts of the argument also occur in his “Beauty,” Chapter 18 of Jerold Levinson, *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 325–343, especially section 3, “Relevance.”

2. Aesthetic/Sensory Dependence

In *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, Zangwill offers two reasons to doubt that proofs and other mathematical objects can have genuine aesthetic properties. First, he argues that when we call a proof “elegant,” we are not ascribing an aesthetic property to it at all; instead, we are commenting on its effectiveness as a proof. I will consider this argument in the next section. Second, attributing aesthetic properties to mathematical objects conflicts with his thesis of “partial aesthetic/sensory dependence.” In short, he holds that aesthetic properties depend, in part, on sensory properties. Since mathematical objects have no sensory properties, and since the senses do not seem to be involved in any way in the alleged aesthetic properties of mathematical objects, it follows that mathematical objects lack aesthetic properties.²

Zangwill states the aesthetic/sensory dependence thesis as follows:

Aesthetic properties depend in part on sensory properties, such as colors and sounds.³

And this may appear to rule out aesthetic properties for objects that lack sensory properties, such as mathematical objects. However, it is not immediately clear what the dependence thesis rules in or out. If the qualifier “in part” had been omitted, then the dependence thesis would have been a straightforward supervenience thesis:

Strong Sensory Dependence. Any two objects that are identical with respect to their sensory properties are also identical with respect to their aesthetic properties; equivalently, no two objects can differ with respect to an aesthetic property without also differing with respect to some sensory property.

This strong dependence thesis would just about rule out aesthetic properties for objects that lack sensory properties.⁴ But Zangwill denies this

² There are some who argue that abstract objects are indeed perceptible – see, for example, Jesse J. Prinz, “Beyond Appearances: The Content of Sensation and Perception,” in Tamar Gendler and John P. Hawthorne, *Perceptual Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 434–460. If this view is correct, then it would only strengthen my case, I would think; but it is certainly a minority opinion. In any case, it is not clear that such a view, even if correct, would block Zangwill’s argument at this point, since for Zangwill, sensory properties evidently form a more restricted class than perceptual properties. In his discussion of architecture, for example, Zangwill clearly regards spatial properties as non-sensory, even though it seems pretty clear that they are perceptual.

³ Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit. 127.

⁴ The qualifier “just about” is needed here, because strictly speaking, strong sensory dependence does not entail that objects without sensory properties lack aesthetic properties; it simply

strong thesis, preferring instead to say that aesthetic properties depend “in part” on sensory properties. Unfortunately, it is not clear what this “in part” amounts to. The strong dependence thesis was naturally construed as a supervenience thesis; however, there is no such thing as partial supervenience. Properties of one type either supervene on properties of a second type, or they do not. Now in motivating the partial dependence thesis, Zangwill points out that other properties besides sensory properties can play a role in determining an object’s aesthetic properties, as long as sensory properties play a role as well. We might try to capture this thought as follows:

Weak Sensory Dependence. There is some class *P* of properties such that aesthetic properties supervene on the combination of sensory properties and *P*-properties.

Or in other words: two objects cannot differ with respect to their aesthetic properties without differing with respect to their sensory properties, or their *P*-properties, or both. Unfortunately, the weak sensory dependence thesis is now *too weak*. One way for objects to differ with respect to the combination of sensory properties and *P*-properties is to differ with respect to *P*-properties alone, not differing at all with respect to sensory properties. And one way for this to come about is for the objects in question to be mathematical objects that lack sensory properties, and for *P* to include the sorts of properties that mathematical objects have. Thus, aesthetic properties for mathematical objects are not ruled out. We may be tempted at this point to strengthen the thesis and require objects with different aesthetic properties to differ with respect to their sensory properties *and* their *P*-properties. However, the resulting dependence condition would now be too strong again: in fact, it would entail the strong sensory dependence thesis, since objects that differ with respect to both sensory and *P*-properties differ, *a fortiori*, with respect to sensory properties.

Zangwill does offer some hints about what he means here. He writes:

The [aesthetic/sensory dependence] thesis is that sensory properties are *necessary* for aesthetic properties, not that they are *sufficient*. Accepting a weak dependence thesis is compatible with admitting that other factors are also necessary.⁵

A supervenience thesis is a sufficiency thesis: if a domain *A* supervenes on a domain *B*, then for any *A*-fact, there is some *B*-fact (or some conjunction

implies that all such objects have the *same* aesthetic properties. Realistically, however, anyone who ascribes aesthetic properties to mathematical objects will also hold that different mathematical objects can have different aesthetic properties.

⁵ Ibid.

of *B*-facts) that entails, i.e., is sufficient for, that *A*-fact. Zangwill's remark therefore suggests that aesthetic/sensory dependence should be construed as follows:

Sensory Necessity. For every aesthetic property, there is some sensory property that is necessary for, i.e., is entailed by, that aesthetic property.

For example, let the aesthetic property in question be the property of being beautiful. According to sensory necessity, this aesthetic property entails some sensory property: i.e., there is some sensory property *P* such that necessarily, all beautiful objects have property *P*. However, this is quite obviously too strong: there is no one sensory property that all beautiful objects have in common.

Thus, it is not clear that the dependence thesis should be construed in terms of entailment relations between aesthetic and sensory properties. Given the work that Zangwill wants the dependence thesis to do, the following seems closer to the mark:

Sensory/Aesthetic Explanation. For any object *X* with an aesthetic property *A*, there are sensory properties that play a role in explaining why *X* has property *A*, although non-sensory properties may also play such a role.

And this probably rules out the sorts of aesthetic properties that are sometimes ascribed to mathematical objects, though it is hard to say for certain without knowing more about what constitutes an explanatory role.

In any case, let us assume that we have before us some version of the aesthetic/sensory dependence thesis that does effectively rule out aesthetic properties for mathematical objects. Why should we believe such a thesis? What argument could be given in its support? Zangwill argues for the thesis by defending it against a series of purported counterexamples. In so doing, he apparently regards it as the default view, the view we should accept unless a good reason can be found for rejecting it. However, he never actually gives an argument for regarding it as the default view, and it is not at all clear why we should so regard it. Could we not, with equal justice, take it as our default position that proofs can be elegant, that theorems can be beautiful, etc., and then challenge Zangwill to refute that position?

If we suppose, for the sake of argument, that the dependence thesis holds for the various traditional art forms, then this in itself might be taken as evidence that the thesis holds more broadly. I am not sure that Zangwill himself makes this argument, however; and this is just as well, because the argument is a questionable one. Just because a generalization holds for one domain, it by no means follows that it holds for other domains. Consider, for example, the following thesis, which Zangwill does *not* hold:

Artifacts. Only an artifact can have aesthetic properties.

Arguably, this thesis has no counterexamples in the art world, because works of art are also artifacts. Yet as most people acknowledge (including Zangwill), other objects besides artifacts can have aesthetic properties. In particular, natural objects can be beautiful. Thus, the fact that the artifact thesis holds for works of art is at best weak evidence that it holds in general, and likewise for the aesthetic/sensory dependence thesis. In the case of the artifact thesis, the inference fails because the evidence base is too narrow: it is too narrow precisely because it only includes artifacts. And in the case of aesthetic/sensory dependence, the evidence base may also be too narrow precisely because it excludes proofs, theorems, and other mathematical objects.

Thus, I am arguing, Zangwill's *general* case for aesthetic/sensory dependence does not provide a compelling reason to accept that thesis in the *specific* instance of mathematical objects. To make that case compellingly, one would have to make a specific argument that mathematical objects lack aesthetic properties. Fortunately, Zangwill provides such an argument, to which we will now turn.

3. Elegance or Effectiveness?

In arguing that proofs lack genuine aesthetic properties such as elegance, Zangwill makes two closely related points. First, our basis for attributing such properties to proofs is too closely tied to the *function* of proofs to count as aesthetic judgments, or for the properties thus attributed to count as aesthetic properties. And second, when we do attribute elegance to proofs, we are commenting not on the proof's aesthetic properties, but on its *effectiveness* as a proof. I think both points make a mistake about what we are commenting on when we describe a proof as elegant.

What is the function, purpose or end of a proof? The answer is simple: a proof purports to establish a given result, and it succeeds if and only if it really does establish that result with mathematical rigor. For Zangwill, the so-called elegance of a proof is too closely tied to its purpose to count as beauty. He writes: "Our admiration of a good proof, theory, or chess move turns solely on its effectiveness in attaining these ends, or else on its having properties which make attaining these ends likely."⁶ It may seem that a proof could nonetheless have *dependent* aesthetic properties, which are the aesthetic properties an object has as an object with a given purpose. Zangwill disagrees: "[W]hat we are appreciating in these cases is not dependent beauty or elegance but the mere technical achievement of finding a very effective means to an end."⁷

⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁷ Ibid., 142.

However, I think it is simply wrong to say that attributing elegance to a proof is a comment on the proof's effectiveness. First of all, effectiveness is an all-or-nothing affair when it comes to proofs. Either a proof establishes its result, or it does not. One proof simply cannot establish a result more effectively than another proof, assuming both proofs are successful: a successful proof is *entirely* effective. There therefore seems to be no room for comparative judgments about the effectiveness of successful proofs. However, if Zangwill is right then that is exactly what judgments of elegance would have to be. It is commonplace among mathematicians that one (successful) proof of a given theorem can be considerably more elegant than another; yet both, being successful proofs, are equally effective.

We may be tempted to say that an elegant⁸ proof does its job *better* than an inelegant proof. But an elegant proof of a theorem does not make that theorem more true, or more likely to be true, than an inelegant proof would. Thus, in saying that an elegant proof does its job better, we are not saying it does its job more effectively. Instead, the fact that we have preferences among equally effective proofs shows that in addition to judging proofs for their effectiveness, we also judge them by some standard other than effectiveness.

Could it be, as Zangwill suggests, that elegant proofs have more features that are *conducive* to success than do inelegant proofs, or perhaps features that are more *strongly* conducive to success? There are several problems with this move. First of all, it is not entirely clear what it means to say that one proof has features that are more conducive to its success than another proof of the same theorem. After all, a proof is, by definition, *fully* successful. Now perhaps the success-conducive features Zangwill has in mind are methods or patterns of reasoning that are fruitful, in that they lead to, or can be found in, many other successful proofs. Mathematicians take methods and strategies of proof very seriously, and for good reason: they can be re-used in other proofs. However, it is not at all clear that the fruitfulness of a strategy or method makes any contribution to the *elegance* of the proofs in which they occur, and it is especially unclear that they make the *only* such contribution.

Consider elementary proofs. An elementary proof is one that can be grasped without much advanced or specialized mathematical knowledge. An elementary proof might, for example, use nothing more than high school algebra. Thus, elementary proofs are relatively lacking in fruitful methods and strategies: the methods and strategies they employ will tend to be fairly basic and not particularly interesting. Yet such proofs can be very elegant, and indeed, they can be elegant *because* they are elementary, not despite that fact.

⁸ Here and throughout, I use the term "elegance" to denote whatever it is that we ascribe to proofs by calling them elegant. In so doing, I am remaining neutral on whether the property so ascribed is an aesthetic property.

Being elementary is one way of being simple, and simplicity is widely acknowledged as conducive to elegance. All else being equal, a simpler proof of a given theorem is likely to be more elegant than a complicated one. Yet simplicity does not seem to be in any way success-conducive. Here a distinction must be made. There is a debate about whether the simplicity of a *theory* makes that theory more likely to be true. On the one hand, when we decide what theory to believe, we will tend to pick a theory that is simpler than its competitors, provided the theories are otherwise equally well supported. On the other hand, it is hard to justify this preference, since there is no a priori reason why the truth should be simple. That is an interesting question, but it is a separate question. Scientists may judge a theory to be likely true partly on the basis of the theory's simplicity; but mathematicians *never* judge a proof to be successful on the basis of its simplicity. Nor is there any reason I know of to believe that simplicity makes a proof more likely to work.

Zangwill might argue that even if the features of proofs that form the basis of our judgments of elegance are not conducive to the success of individual proofs, they are still best explained in terms of the overall truth-seeking goals of the discourse in which those proofs occur. Some proofs, for example, are more explanatory than others, in that they leave the reader with a better understanding of why the theorem in question is true. A proof can be perfectly adequate even if it is not explanatory; nonetheless, it seems fair to say that mathematicians' preference for explanatory proofs is a direct result of their concern for mathematical truth in general. Thus, a case can be made that explanatoriness is in some broad sense success-conducive, and at any rate that it is not an aesthetic property.

Unfortunately, an explanatory proof can fail to be elegant, and vice versa. In fact, there is often a tradeoff between these two properties. The most elegant proofs tend to be short, taut and clever: they get their work accomplished as efficiently and directly as possible. However, while these features may contribute to elegance, they often come at the expense of explanation: such a proof can leave the reader rather mystified about *why* the theorem in question is true, even though the reader does not doubt *that* it is true. To redress this deficiency, a longer and more discursive proof may be required, achieving explanatoriness at the expense of elegance. The Second Recursion Theorem from mathematical logic provides a well known example.⁹ This theorem has a short, elementary proof that invariably leaves people completely mystified: everyone who can read a proof in the first place acknowledges that the proof successfully establishes the result,

⁹ The Second Recursion Theorem, usually known simply as the "Recursion Theorem," makes essentially the following assertion. Suppose we have an effective enumeration of all Turing machines, say M_1, M_2, \dots . Now let F be any recursive function, i.e., a function that can be computed by a Turing machine. The Recursion Theorem states that there is some integer i such that M_i and $M_{F(i)}$ compute exactly the same function, i.e., have the same output for any given input.

but most people are left with a very strong feeling that they still do not understand why the result holds. Indeed, there is a small but serious body of literature that seeks to explain why this theorem is true. Most people would consider the proof to be elegant, but hardly anyone considers it to be explanatory.

Thus, it seems that elegance in proofs cannot simply be identified either with the success of the proof itself, or with any feature that is conducive to the success of the overall enterprise in which the proof is situated, since inelegant proofs can possess the very same success-conducive features. That said, elegance in proofs is not wholly separate from the success of the proof, as Zangwill rightly notes. It seems strange to call a proof elegant if it is unsuccessful, and all the more so if it is completely unsuccessful. Zangwill argues that for this reason, elegance in proofs is too closely tied to the success of the proof to count as an aesthetic property.

Now the elegance of a proof is no doubt tied to the manner in which the proof achieves its purpose, even if it cannot simply be identified with the proof's success in achieving its purpose. But in this respect, elegance resembles dependent beauty. A beautiful object is dependently beautiful if it is beautiful in a way that is tied to its function: specifically, an object is dependently beautiful, for Zangwill, because of the manner in which it expresses and articulates its function. Thus, we might be tempted to regard elegance in proofs as an instance of dependent beauty. Zangwill anticipates this move, and counters it by pointing out that a dependently beautiful object can be dependently beautiful even if it wholly fails to fulfill its purpose. For example, imagine a building whose purpose essentially involves sturdiness, and which appears to be quite sturdy, but is not: its apparent sturdiness is due entirely to a façade. We may imagine that the building wholly fails to achieve its purpose for this reason. Yet the façade, while not contributing to the fulfillment of the building's purpose, nonetheless contributes to its dependent beauty, because it expresses and articulates sturdiness. By contrast, we cannot imagine a proof that wholly fails in its purpose but which is nonetheless elegant.

Thus, Zangwill is making the following argument:

1. A proof cannot be elegant if it is unsuccessful, or at least if it lacks any features that are conducive to success.
2. Therefore, what we call elegance in proofs is not a dependent aesthetic property.

To justify the inference from (1) to (2), he needs something like the following principle:

Non-Instrumentality. When a dependent aesthetic property P is connected to a function F , objects must be capable of having property P while completely failing to fulfill the function F .

This is a rather strong claim, and while it is not without some plausibility, Zangwill provides no real argument for it: he simply provides a few examples that conform to the principle, such as the example of false sturdiness cited above. Thus, I suppose one could simply deny the principle, citing elegant proofs as a counterexample. After all, the set of special cases offered in support of the principle may be too narrow *precisely because* it fails to include elegant proofs.

However, I think we can make a more satisfying reply to Zangwill here. Consider the case of a building with a misleading façade. The building manages to express and articulate sturdiness because it *looks* sturdy. When it comes to sturdiness, there is a difference between appearance and reality. The two can come apart; and if the building's aesthetic properties are tied specifically to its appearance, and not (or not just) to its function, then its aesthetic properties can come apart from its function, or from the fulfillment of its function, as well. In proofs, however, there is little or no distinction between appearance and reality. The correctness of a proof is a *manifest* property of the proof. An incorrect proof simply cannot appear correct in the way that a flimsy building can appear sturdy. And a failed proof certainly cannot appear to be correct while at the same time being *completely* devoid of success-conducive properties. At most, a failed proof might fail because of a few subtle flaws in an otherwise sound argument, and might therefore appear correct to many readers. And in that case, the proof may well have a good deal of elegance in it, notwithstanding that it is not entirely correct.

Thus, what is special about proofs here is that being successful is a manifest property of proofs, while being sturdy is not a manifest property of buildings. We might even maintain that an object's aesthetic properties depend on its manifest properties, or at least partly depend on them, thus generalizing Zangwill's aesthetic/sensory dependence thesis. In doing so, we could easily explain why an object can be dependently beautiful while failing to fulfill its purpose: it is dependently beautiful because its beauty derives primarily from its manifest properties, which in turn can come apart from how well or badly it fulfills its function. And at the same time we can accommodate elegant proofs, whose function cannot come apart from their manifest properties in the same way. I am not arguing that we should adopt this manifest property thesis; I am simply arguing that since it explains all the cases Zangwill presents, it is the most he is entitled to assert.

I suspect that Zangwill is right to insist on some separation between an object's aesthetic properties and its ability to fulfill a function. In short, the ability to fulfill a function is typically not an aesthetic property, or so I would think. Being a good hammer is not an aesthetic property of hammers, for example. One might also argue, though this is more controversial, that sturdiness is not an aesthetic property of buildings, even if the *appearance* of sturdiness is. (If you disagree with either example, no worries: you probably already disagree with Non-Instrumentality, which is needed for Zangwill's argument.) Likewise, being a correct proof is not an

aesthetic property, and a proof cannot have an aesthetic property simply because it is correct. But as I have argued at length, proofs are not elegant simply because they are correct. It may be impossible to remove a proof's correctness while leaving its elegance intact, but the reverse is not true: it is possible to remove a proof's elegance while leaving its correctness intact.

4. Elegance as an Aesthetic Property

In this final section, I want to present some positive reasons for regarding beauty and elegance, as applied to mathematical proofs, theorems and objects, as aesthetic properties, and not just as misleadingly named non-aesthetic properties. In so doing, I am not making an argument about the boundaries of a set of ordinary concepts. I am not terribly interested in whether the term "elegant," for example, as used by ordinary language users, includes some proofs in its extension. I am more interested in how we *should* use terms like "beautiful" or "elegant" if we are to carve up the world at its joints. Unfortunately, this is a difficult question to answer, and nothing I have to say will be conclusive.

In what follows, I will focus on aesthetic judgments, and the felt responses that underlie those judgments, and deal only indirectly with aesthetic properties. I will argue that judgments of mathematical elegance ought to be counted among aesthetic judgments, and that these judgments are formed on the basis of felt responses that ought to be counted among aesthetic responses. Admittedly, as we move from aesthetic judgments to the aesthetic properties referenced in those judgments, we get into a number of difficult issues about the objectivity (or lack thereof) of aesthetic statements and properties; but these issues are everybody's problem, not just mine. All I will assume in this regard is that when we make a judgment to the effect that a given proof is elegant, we are often thereby saying something true. If we further suppose that the judgments in question are aesthetic judgments, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that mathematical elegance is a genuine aesthetic property, and that some proofs have it.

In the remainder of this section, I will consider several respects in which judgments of mathematical beauty and elegance are similar to ordinary aesthetic judgments. Hopefully, this will lend some credence to the idea that both types of judgment should be classified together as aesthetic.

4.1. Subjective Universality

Zangwill adopts the following Kantian framework for aesthetic judgments. On the one hand, aesthetic judgments purport to describe objective features of objects, and not simply report a subject's mental state. On the other hand, these judgments are made on the basis of felt responses to the objects they purport to describe; we judge objects to be beautiful or ugly, for example, on the basis of the pleasure or displeasure we take in them. How well do judgments of mathematical elegance fit this framework?

Judgments of elegance clearly satisfy the “universal” side of subjective universality. In judging a proof to be elegant, we purport to describe the proof itself, not just our own feelings in contemplating the proof. We expect sufficiently discerning people to come to similar judgments; and if there is disagreement about how elegant a given proof is, we are very willing to count some people’s judgments as better than others’. What may be less clear is that such judgments are subjective, i.e., based on felt responses.

First of all, judgments of elegance are surely *associated* with felt responses. Not everyone knows enough about mathematics to appreciate the difference between elegant and inelegant proofs, just as not everyone knows enough about art to see the beauty in a given artwork. But those who do have the relevant sensitivity take great pleasure in elegant proofs, beautiful theorems, etc. Moreover, this pleasure seems, subjectively, to be similar in character to the pleasure one takes in appreciating beautiful objects, at least to me – and presumably to many other people, as well, considering the widespread use of terms like “beautiful” and “elegant” in mathematical contexts. Thus, our next question is: do these felt responses form the basis of judgments of elegance, or do they merely accompany such judgments?

There are at least two reasons to believe that judgments of mathematical elegance are based on subjective, felt responses. First, the connection between judgments of mathematical elegance and the corresponding felt responses seems to be a fairly tight one. Just as it is hard to imagine judging a painting beautiful without having any inclination to take pleasure in the painting, it is hard to imagine judging a proof elegant without having any inclination to find the proof pleasing. In other words, judgments of elegance seem closely tied to, and not fully separable from, the *appreciation* of elegance in much the way that judgments of beauty are tied to the appreciation of beauty.

Second, it is hard to see what judgments of mathematical elegance could be based on if they are not based on felt responses. The reason for this is that such judgments are, or tend to be, non-inferential. When we judge a proof to be correct, we are explicitly inferring one fact about the proof (its correctness) from another (the proof’s contents), and we have a fairly clear idea of what standards we are employing when we make such inferences. By contrast, when it comes to elegance in proofs, we simply know it when we see it. And much the same thing can be said about aesthetic judgments about artworks. Granted, we may have various insights into what makes a given proof elegant, or a given painting (say) beautiful. We may feel that something is beautiful or elegant in part because it has features *X*, *Y* and *Z*. But we do not simply *infer* that it is beautiful or elegant from the fact that it has features *X*, *Y* and *Z*. In any case, the non-inferentiality of elegance judgments seems to me to be an important feature of aesthetic judgment and response generally, and I will now say a few words about it.

4.2. *Non-Inferential Responses*

Aesthetic judgments and responses seem to me to involve non-inferential and non-conceptual knowledge in an important way. Consider a fairly typical case of aesthetic response. A subject looks at a painting. She notices several features of the painting: both low-level features like the placement of individual colors on the canvas, and high-level features such as the painting's overall balance and composition. Her perception of these features prompts an aesthetic response: she likes them, and more specifically, she likes them in a way that supports, for her, a judgment that the painting is beautiful. Non-inferential knowledge enters this picture in a number of important ways.

First, the features of the painting that she is responding to – in other words, the features she appreciates aesthetically – are directly present in the representational content of her visual experience. They are not features that she consciously infers from her visual experience. This is obvious in the case of low-level features such as color placement, but it is true of high-level features also. When we recognize a balanced composition, we do not count up individual low-level features of the scene and make a conscious inference that the scene is balanced. We simply see the scene *as* balanced. The balance that the subject appreciates in the scene is part of the non-conceptual content of her visual experience, not part of the conceptual knowledge that she arrives at on the basis of this experience.

This feature of our subject's aesthetic response – its sensitivity to non-conceptual knowledge arrived at non-inferentially – seems to me to be the norm in aesthetic response generally. Of course, purely intellectual knowledge can strongly influence our aesthetic responses as well; but this is at least partly due to the fact that intellectual knowledge can affect the contents of our perceptual experience. It is fairly well established that observation is theory-laden. Someone who knows the difference between an elm and an oak will see an elm as an elm; others will simply see it as a tree. In this case, one's knowledge of trees actually has an effect on the content of one's visual experience, and not merely on one's judgment. Likewise, intellectual knowledge can help one more readily detect aesthetically relevant features of a scene. Nonetheless, the perceived feature of the scene is genuinely *perceived*. To aesthetically appreciate a balanced scene, one must see it as balanced, and not just become convinced intellectually that it is balanced.

In short, for a property of an object to have an effect on one's aesthetic appreciation of that object, the property in question must normally be perceived, and not merely known about. Moreover, the subject's response to this property – her aesthetic appreciation of the property, and the judgment that this appreciation supports – also tends to be largely non-inferential. A subject appreciates the beauty in a scene by seeing the scene *as* beautiful, not by inferring that it is beautiful, and this appreciation directly supports her judgment that the scene is beautiful. Again, explicit knowledge and rational inference can play a role, but as in the case of perception, it tends to play a role by influencing how things are perceived and how we feel about them,

not by lending direct inferential support to aesthetic judgments themselves. It is rare, for example, to decide that a given painting is beautiful *simply* because one has a prior belief that all of that artist's paintings are beautiful, though such a background belief could certainly influence such a judgment indirectly, by influencing how the painting is seen.

Now all of this may seem to argue against my claim that judgments of mathematical elegance are aesthetic judgments. After all, we do not literally see proofs, nor do we perceive mathematical objects and results through the senses.¹⁰ However, non-inferential and even non-conceptual knowledge play a strikingly similar role in the understanding and appreciation of mathematical proofs. First, simply *understanding* a proof requires more non-conceptual knowledge than many people realize. As any aspiring mathematician soon realizes, there is a difference between understanding a proof as a whole, and understanding each individual inference in the proof. Grasping a proof, understanding its gist, seeing why it works, is an important further step, and an essential step if one is to become a competent mathematician. However, by simply following each move in a proof, one has learned everything that is explicitly stated in the proof. Therefore, in really understanding a proof, one must be learning something that is not explicitly stated in it.

Moreover, I think it is pretty clear that this extra something constitutes non-conceptual knowledge. That is, it constitutes something that cannot be stated in language, or at least, that can be grasped independently of one's ability to state it in language. If this were not the case, then the extra knowledge could simply be written down as a further line of the proof, or as a remark following the proof, saving the reader much trouble and effort.

Likewise, in judging a proof to be elegant, we rely on insight, not inference. We simply see the proof as elegant. I actually suspect that the parallel to perception here is strong, though how strong is a psychological question outside the scope of this paper. In either case, we detect higher-order features, either of a scene or of a proof, in a non-inferential and largely unconscious process of analysis and integration.

4.3. Features of Elegant Proofs

No one can explain exactly what features a proof must have in order to be elegant, just as no one can explain what features an object must have in order to be beautiful. Nonetheless, there are certain properties of proofs that tend to contribute to their elegance, and I would argue that the same properties can also make a contribution to aesthetic properties in other domains.

The most obvious feature of elegant proofs is *simplicity*. All else being equal, simple proofs are usually considered more elegant than complicated ones. Simplicity itself is hard to define, but we tend to know it when we

¹⁰ Here I am ignoring the arguments in Prinz, *op. cit.* If mathematical elegance can be genuinely perceived, then the analogy between mathematical elegance and sensory beauty is simply that much more direct, and my argument is, if anything, strengthened.

see it. A proof that proceeds by enumerating seventeen special cases is probably less simple, and almost certainly less elegant, than a proof without cases. Relatedly, elegant proofs tend to be *economical*. That is, they represent a large payoff for a small investment: e.g., a simple but well-placed move creates a large effect in terms of advancing the proof. A third relevant feature is *directness*. A direct proof avoids detours, in the form of unproductive moves and extraneous constructions. Here it should be noted that extraneousness is not the same thing as logical irrelevance. A proof is a chain of inferences, and usually no one inference can be omitted without invalidating the proof. But sometimes this chain of inferences will carry the proof into territory that seems off-topic, and when it does, this usually detracts from the perceived elegance of the proof.

Now this list is obviously rough and incomplete; yet the three features just mentioned seem capable of contributing to (other) aesthetic properties as well. A simple, clean and uncluttered scene can be aesthetically superior to a complicated, busy and cluttered scene at least in part because of its simplicity. A well-placed brush stroke, turn of phrase, or chord sequence – a simple element that creates a significant effect – is an example of economy. And very often, a cluttered scene is so judged because it contains elements that are largely extraneous to the intended overall effect; lack of clutter is therefore an instance of, or at least closely related to, directness. In all of these cases, I am not arguing that simplicity, economy, etc., are necessary conditions for beauty. Far from it: a work of Baroque art, for example, may be beautiful at least in part because of its complexity. I am merely suggesting that *in some instances*, something can be beautiful at least in part because of its simplicity.

Of course, one may argue here that the relevant properties of paintings, musical compositions, etc., are not literally the same properties that one finds in an elegant proof, but merely analogous properties. I disagree, but to explain why it is necessary to distinguish higher-order structural properties from the lower-order properties that they depend on. All of the visual properties of a painting, for example, supervene on the arrangement of colors on a canvas. That is, no two paintings can differ visually without differing in terms of color arrangement. However, the visual properties of a painting – that is, the properties that we can perceive visually – surely include some structural properties that are not identical to color-arrangement properties. Take symmetry, for example. The symmetry displayed in a painting depends, like everything else about the painting, on its specific arrangement of colors. Yet symmetry is a structural property, not a visual one; many different kinds of objects can be symmetrical, even abstract objects. Structural properties are not tied to any one sensory modality or even to sense perception in general, even though they can often be perceived through the senses. I would suggest that the simplicity, economy and directness that we find in proofs are actually highly general structural properties, and that these same properties can also be instantiated in other sorts of objects, including physical objects, and make aesthetic contributions there as well.

4.4. Conclusion

We have now found several points of similarity between aesthetic judgments and judgments of elegance, as well as between the felt responses that underlie these judgments. And I would add one more: there is a strong felt similarity between the two cases. As evidence for this, we need look no further than the near universal tendency to use terms like “elegant” and “beautiful” to describe mathematical proofs and results. Of course, Zangwill regards all such talk as metaphorical. But that simply proves my point, because apt metaphors are based on felt similarities.

Of course, none of these points of similarity, taken either individually or collectively, actually *proves* that mathematical elegance is an aesthetic property. But the more similarities we find between the two cases, the more it seems arbitrary to classify them separately. The best way I know to defeat this line of argument is to find important dissimilarities between the two cases. Can we?

One possible dissimilarity concerns the connection between elegance and correctness. However, we have already seen that this connection is weaker than Zangwill supposes. When we respond aesthetically to a physical object, we are responding mostly to its appearance; so features of the object that are external to its appearance (e.g., sturdiness) should have little or no impact on our aesthetic responses. Proofs do not, strictly speaking have appearances: being abstract objects, they do not affect our sense organs. Thus, when we appreciate the elegance in a proof, we must be responding to something else, and I would argue that we are responding to higher-order structural properties realized in the chain of inferences that constitutes the proof. An argument that does not even come close to being a proof is simply incapable of exhibiting the relevant structural features, and I would suggest that this explains why correctness is relevant to elegance. Moreover, as we have seen already, the appreciation of a proof’s elegance goes significantly beyond the appreciation of its correctness, as evidenced by correct but inelegant proofs.

Beyond this, the only important dissimilarity I can see between the two forms of aesthetic response is that one is based in sense perception and the other is not. But if this is the only basis for excluding mathematical elegance from the aesthetic, then it is surely an arbitrary basis. One could, of course, simply *stipulate* that aesthetic properties and responses are in some sense sensory. Nothing prevents us from using the terms “elegance,” “beauty,” etc., in that way if we so choose. But it is hard for me to see any real benefit in making such a stipulation. Quite the opposite: it will simply blind us to the real and important similarities that exist between mathematical and sensory beauty.¹¹

¹¹ I would like to thank Ewa Bogusz-Boltuc for extremely valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and Roxanne Kurtz, Hei-Chi Chan, and Julia Zhang for much helpful discussion.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to John Barker on Mathematics

John Barker's beautiful paper was full of elegant arguments against my view that mathematical proofs cannot really be beautiful or elegant, except in a metaphorical sense. The same is true of Barker's impressive paper if I am right! On first and second readings, I was almost ready to wave a white flag of surrender; his arguments, positive and negative, seemed unassailable. I contemplated a brief, if unsporting, "I agree" response. Nevertheless, I think I can offer something in reply.

In the last part of his paper (section 4), Barker gives a positive argument to the effect that ascriptions of "beauty" and "elegance" to mathematical proofs are similar to ordinary aesthetic judgements. They share the features of subjectivity and universality, for example. And there are no positive conditions for ascriptions of "elegance". Thus the cases of mathematical and ordinary "beauty" are parallel. I concede that these phenomena encourage the thesis that ascriptions of "beauty" and "elegance" to mathematical proofs are the same as ascriptions of "beauty" and "elegance" elsewhere.

My argument in the *Metaphysics of Beauty* (pp. 140–43) was that talk of beauty or elegance of proofs, like the beauty or elegance of theories or chess moves, machines and football goals is too closely tied to actually discharging a function to count as a genuine case of dependent beauty. In a case of dependent beauty, a thing, expresses, realizes or articulates, some function; but it need not actually discharge it. But the appropriateness of the attribution of "elegance" to a proof depends on its effectiveness in demonstrating some result. Hence ascriptions of "elegance" to proofs are a mere metaphor. So I argued.

The issue turns on the actual and possible separation of expressing a function from discharging it. This is where Barker makes his most impressive move against me, which is to point out that although the function of a proof is to derive a result, this can be done more or less elegantly. Inelegant proofs still demonstrate a result. So the elegance of a proof is not correlated with effectiveness, and therefore, may yet be an aesthetic property, since it is taken to be symptomatic of a dependent aesthetic property that it need not correlate with actual effectiveness (or effectiveness-conducive features).

Barker also raises explanatoriness as a feature of proofs. Explanatoriness is a virtue of proofs alongside soundness. But explanatoriness and elegance are also not correlated. So talking in terms of “elegance” cannot be a roundabout way of talking about explanatoriness.

I assumed a notion of dependent beauty according to which a thing that has dependent beauty can express a function while completely failing to fulfill it; and I argued that “elegance” applied to proofs is unlike this. Barker considers simply denying this, seeing the proof case as an exception to the general principle. But he is not content to rest with this argument. The general principle, incidentally, is not supposed to rest only on a few examples, but is supposed to derive from a quite general theoretical need for such a notion of dependent beauty. The only problem, I admit, is the lack of a proper detailed articulation of that central notion. This is something I am aware of, and hope others will take up as an intellectual project.

I appeared to be making an appearance/reality distinction when I argued that if elegance is a dependent aesthetic property, it can come apart from actually fulfilling a function. Barker’s move against my argument is to deny that an appearance/reality distinction is applicable in the case of proofs. In the case of mathematical proofs, there is no appearance of fulfilling the function (demonstrating a result) that can contrast with really doing so. In the mathematical case, Barker thinks that there is beauty in the fulfilling of function without the possibility of merely appearing to fulfill that function.

Barker is right that the correctness (soundness) and elegance of proofs can come apart; so a correct proof need not be elegant. But to what extent can an elegant proof not be correct? I do not think that my reasons for thinking that there are limits to this have to do with an appearance/reality distinction, but rather with what it is to be dependent beauty. That involves the admittedly under-specified but nonetheless important idea of the aesthetic expression (realization, articulation...) of a function, which is distinct from discharging it. The possibility of a beautiful or elegant functional thing, when it is not a well-function functional thing, is not in general an appearance/reality distinction.

It is true that the architectural case invites an appearance/reality analysis. A building may look aesthetically sturdy when it is not at all sturdy. But, firstly, consider an abstract sculpture that looks aesthetically delicate but which is sturdy. This delicacy is not a dependent aesthetic property. Secondly, consider the following case, which I think pulls apart three notions that we need to distinguish. (1) Many suspension bridges are elegant. This elegance is dependent elegance, let us assume (ignoring additional purely formal elegance). The bridge is elegant as a bridge, that is, as an expression of the bridge function of supporting people and transportation over a gulf. (2) The bridge may also appear flimsy and unable to perform that function. And lastly, (3) it is incredibly physically strong. Here the dependent elegance of the bridge has nothing to do with nonaesthetic perceptual appearances. Hence I do not think that Barker can counter that my argument is question-

begging against the mathematical case, where appearance and reality do not come apart.

Barker makes a lot of the possibility of inelegant but correct proofs, which I concede. But it is the other combination of elegant but incorrect proofs, that is important and that is doing the work in my argument. (Barker appears to recognize this before taking it to be a point about appearance and reality.) Can we remove the correctness of a proof leaving its elegance intact? It seems not. But this is puzzling and difficult to explain for the believer in aesthetic mathematical elegance. If the elegance of mathematical proofs is an aesthetic property of them, then why cannot there be elegant but ineffective proofs? The best explanation, surely, is that "elegance" does not denote an aesthetic property as it does normally, and it is being used metaphorically when applied to mathematical proofs.

So I persist in believing. But I must admit that my confidence in this thesis has been shaken by Barker's powerful and penetrating critique. But I am still inclined to think that my descriptions of his paper as "powerful", "penetrating", "beautiful" and "elegant" are all metaphors!

Larry Shiner

Functional Beauty: The Metaphysics of Beauty and Specific Functions in Architecture

In this paper I want to develop a position in the philosophy of architecture that might be called “moderate functionalism,” and owes something to both Nick Zangwill’s “moderate formalism” and Noël Carroll’s “moderate moralism.” I began to develop some of these ideas on function as a way of understanding attempts in the studio crafts to gain “art status” by abandoning functionality, then more recently as a way of understanding controversies over spectacular art museum designs that seem to subordinate the function of showing art to the aesthetics of the architecture.¹ Many of the iconic art museums created between the opening of Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao in 1997 and the opening of Daniel Libeskind’s 2006 Denver Art Museum addition, have given rise to critical complaints such as: “flash and bravura win out over contemplation ... and architecture triumphs over art.”²

¹ I have dealt with the “crafts-as-art” issue in *The Invention of Art* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) 274–278 and in “The Fate of Craft,” in *NeoCraft: Modernity and the Crafts*, ed. Sandra Alfoldy (Halifax, N.S.: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2007), 33–46. On function in architecture see “Architecture vs. Art: The Aesthetics of Art Museum Design,” published in the on-line journal *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 5, 2007 at www.contempaesthetics.org. There I try to sort out the way the issue affects six different types of art museum and address the theoretical issues through some informal analogies. An earlier version of this paper with a different focus was presented to the 2008 meeting of the Nordic Society for Aesthetics in Uppsala, Sweden under the title “Temptation to Self-Indulgence: Aesthetics and Function in Recent Art Museum Design.” I am grateful to Ewa Bogusz-Boltuc for the invitation to prepare this version which pays tribute to the work of Nick Zangwill.

² Nicolai Ouroussoff, *New York Times*, October 13, 2005. Complaints of this kind actually combine two objections that ought to be distinguished. One is the lesser worry that spectacular architecture will outshine the art, the other, the more serious worry that strange curves, odd angles, and enormous heights may actually interfere with our attention to the art. I am grateful to David Goldblatt for first pointing out the importance of this distinction. On the architecture vs. art controversy in general see Hal Foster, *Design and Crime: and Other Diatribes* (London: Verso, 2002), 37; Hans Belting, “Place of Reflection or Place of Sensation?,” in *The Discursive Museum*, ed. Peter Noever (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001), 72–82; and Vittorio Magnango Lampugnani, “Insight versus Entertainment: Untimely Meditations on the

Confronted with such a clash between architecture *as* art and architecture *for* art many people would say: "Why not have both?" Indeed, our natural inclination seems to be that aesthetics and function should be united in any work of architecture. Yet, there are also many who would be prepared to praise an outstanding work of architecture whether or not it effectively served the art within.³ Can either of these two intuitions be philosophically justified? Can they be reconciled? To answer these questions we need to deal with the more general underlying issue of whether aesthetics and function in architecture are simply independent of each other or stand in a relation of mutual implication. I have found no contemporary discussion of this issue in philosophy and theory of architecture that is completely satisfactory. I will survey some of those accounts, especially recent proposals for a theory of "functional beauty," and then offer my own attempt to show the way in which aesthetics and function are mutually implicated in architecture, illustrating my position with the case of iconic art museums. Drawing in part on a framework proposed by Zangwill, I will first argue that function plays a necessary role in the artistic creation of all architectural works; then I will offer a description of the way in which function should also play a necessary role in the aesthetic appreciation of architectural works.

Before canvassing some of the current views on aesthetics and function in architecture, I need to address the multiplicity of meanings "function" has taken on in architectural theory and philosophy.⁴ Although "function" has been a central motif in architectural writing since the early twentieth century, writers from Vitruvius to Batteux, used the term "utility."⁵ Today, "utility," seems to imply a narrower, means-end relationship, whereas "function" suggests the role something plays within a larger system, as implied by some of its uses in biology or anthropology. But within architectural theory itself the meanings of "function" have become legion. For example, early modernists sometimes interpreted Louis Sullivan's phrase "form follows function" to refer to the "structural" function (a building's form should reflect its technical means of construction) and at other times to mean "practical" function (a building's form should reflect its specific purposes or utility). In addition to the ideas of structural function and practical function, however, philosophers and architectural theorists have also written of architecture's social function, its ethical function, its

Architecture of Twentieth-century Art Museums," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 245–262.

³ Martin Filler, *Makers of Modern Architecture* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2007), 278.

⁴ For a good overview see Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 174–195.

⁵ Paul Guyer has traced the important discussion on beauty and utility among the founders of modern aesthetics in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110–128.

symbolic function, even its aesthetic function.⁶ Thus, aesthetic theories of art such as Nick Zangwill's or Gary Iseminger's suggest the possibility of rephrasing the issue of the place of function in art museum architecture, as about the relation between two *kinds* of function, aesthetic function and practical function. To borrow Zangwill's terms, a museum design may intend to serve the building's aesthetic function as a work of art by making aesthetic properties depend not only on nonaesthetic properties such as shape, space, light, texture, color, but also on such nonaesthetic properties as practical, environmental, and symbolic functions. Rather than speaking of "aesthetic function" and "practical function," of course, architectural theorists and critics have usually talked of "form vs. function," and I will sometimes follow that shorthand, although usually meaning by function "practical function." There are, of course, also important relationship between aesthetic properties and the social, environmental, ethical, or symbolic functions of art museums, but this paper focuses on the practical functions of art museums, in particular the function of displaying art.

I will begin my review of theoretical positions on the relation of aesthetic function and practical functions by considering some expressions of the intuition that outstanding architectural form may justify overlooking functional faults. Those who have defended this perspective have usually treated aesthetic functions and practical functions as simply parallel to each other. Schopenhauer forcefully expressed the separatist position: "the great merit of the architect is achieving purely aesthetic ends ... in spite of other ends foreign to them."⁷ Another way of explicating the separation of aesthetics and function employs the widely used conceptual polarity: architecture vs. building.⁸ One of its most cited formulations is by the

⁶ As Larry L. Ligo has shown, most architecture critics in the period between World War I and 1950 conceived of function as "structural articulation, meaning either the articulation of materials and techniques or the revelation of the floor plan. After mid-century, there was a shift among critics to thinking of function in broader terms as practical, expressive, social, symbolic and aesthetic. *The Concept of Function in Twentieth-Century Architectural Criticism* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984). The social, symbolic, ethical and aesthetic functions dominate the three main book length philosophical treatments of architecture published over the last few decades: Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), Edward Winters, *Aesthetics and Architecture* (London: Continuum Books, 2007). Naturally, the literature on the aesthetic function of art is relevant to the present topic. In addition to the works of Nick Zangwill discussed in the main body of the article, I should mention Gary Iseminger's *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) which contains an interesting chapter on the distinction between what he calls "artifactual function" and "systematic function" which parallels that between the differing uses of "utility" and "function" mentioned above.

⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I (New York: Dover, 1969), 217.

⁸ Ruskin opens *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* with the assertion that it is "very necessary, in the outset . . . to distinguish carefully between Architecture and Building," arguing that what makes something architecture and one of the fine arts is precisely those parts of it that are unnecessary or useless. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1989),

historian, Nicholas Pevsner: "A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is architecture ... the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal."⁹ If one defines architecture in such a way that "aesthetic appeal" is sufficient, there would obviously be no basis, in principle, to criticize functionally inadequate designs as *architecturally* deficient. A functionally inadequate design could still be considered an aesthetically excellent work of architecture since its function would be seen as belonging to it only qua building. The architecture vs. building polarity is clearly an evaluative continuum pretending to be a categorical disjunction. Lincoln Cathedral may be considered architecture primarily because of its artistic properties, but as a church it remains a functional building. Conversely, the lowliest bicycle shed possess some aesthetic properties. If the architecture vs. building contrast is used merely as a way of delimiting the subject matter of architectural history and criticism, it may be a convenient distinction, but in order for it to become a dichotomy justifying a purely aesthetic approach to architecture, one would have to prop it up with a set of formalist assumptions.¹⁰ Hence, the belief that form and function in architecture are sufficiently independent to be judged separately usually goes hand in hand with strong formalist approaches.

The other ordinary intuition with which we began – the idea that form and function ought to be somehow united in works of architecture – is sometimes formulated as an ideal of perfect integration (Frank Lloyd Wright's "form and function are one"), but more often as the desirability of some kind of concord for which metaphors like form "following," "fitting," "expressing," or "complimenting" function have been used.¹¹ There is also the position of extreme "functionalism," which unites form and function by way of the total subordination of aesthetic considerations to functional ones.¹² Unfortunately, that decidedly minority view has cast a shadow

8–9. Le Corbusier uses a different version of it in *Vers Une Architecture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995 [1923]), 9.

⁹ Nicolas Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963) 15. No doubt, there are other criteria that could be invoked in making the comparison of building and architecture, such as monumentality or symbolism. Pevsner admits utility only grudgingly, insisting that "functional soundness" has not always been considered "indispensable for aesthetic enjoyment." Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, op. cit. 17.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the way distinctions are often turned into dichotomies see Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 9–14.

¹¹ Frank Lloyd Wright's dictum can be found in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings*, ed. Edgar Kaufmann and Ben Raeburn (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1960), 33. A good statement of the concord view is Gordon Graham's "Ideally form and function in architecture must complement each other..." Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 150.

¹² I do not bother in this essay to beat the dead horse of "functionalism" as often ascribed to various Modernist architects, partly because several of them were more concerned with "structural functionalism" than with the issue of practical function that is my main concern, and

over the discussion of function in architecture so that even the position that form should be consonant with function is often rejected, claiming that the relationship of function to aesthetic form is impossible to clarify. Gordon Graham, Roger Scruton, and Edward Winter, for example, have all declared that utility or function is a necessary condition of something being architecture, yet each of them in differing degrees has also rejected the idea that a building's *specific* functions are crucial to its aesthetic appreciation.¹³ For Graham the idea of form expressing specific functions is likely to result in such absurdities as trying to figure out how a gothic pile like St. Pancras Station in London "expresses" train travel.¹⁴ Scruton and Winter not only say that there is no way to clarify the notion of form following or fitting practical functions, but that it wouldn't make any difference if there were, since functions change over time.¹⁵ For Scruton what remains most important in the appreciation of architecture is "to find meaning in appearance itself," so that "aesthetic considerations ... must take precedence over all other factors."¹⁶ Each of these three authors ends up with some version of a separatist position in which function in the most general sense is admitted to be essential to architecture, but the possibility of particular functions entering into aesthetic judgment is either denied or left in limbo. But their failure to find a place for practical functions in the aesthetic evaluation of architecture at least sharpens the issue by identifying a crucial desideratum for any adequate theory of the relation between aesthetic and practical function: such a theory must be able to show how the aesthetic properties of a work of architecture must in part necessarily emerge from or depend upon its practical functions.

Two recent attempts to meet this desideratum have both named their approach "Functional Beauty." Stephen Davies describes his idea of

partly because few of them denied the important place of aesthetic properties in design. Many of the things people justly find at fault in the urban work of International Style modernism stem from its combining a commitment to structuralist functionalism with a particular kind of "machine aesthetic" and with a patronizing disregard for the actual experience of those who had to live and work in those buildings.

¹³ Many other philosophers and theorists who have accepted architecture as one of the fine arts have named function as its differentiating feature. See *Architecture and Civilization*, ed. Michael Mitias (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1999). Among those who view architecture as one of the fine arts, the second most frequently cited distinguishing feature after function is architecture's attachment to a specific site.

¹⁴ Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, op. cit., 150.

¹⁵ The most Scruton will say is that "buildings have uses, and should not be understood as though they did not." Scruton, *Aesthetics of Architecture*, op. cit., 40. For Winter's view see *ibidem*, 148. None of these objections, by the way, keep Graham, Winter, or Scruton from discussing the way architecture expresses various *symbolic* functions such as the metaphorical "character" we imaginatively project onto buildings, qualities like grandeur, elegance, or sobriety (obviously these could also be considered aesthetic properties). Graham, at least, sees such characteristics as linked to the general purposes of building. Graham, op. cit., 151.

¹⁶ Roger Scruton, *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xvii.

“judgments of functional beauty” as nothing less than a “new model of aesthetic judgment.”¹⁷ Claiming that the vast majority of the world’s art has been made to serve some function, Davies proposes taking utilitarian objects rather than works of Western high art the paradigm for aesthetic judgment. After vigorously rejecting Kant’s dependent beauty approach, Davies defines a functionally beautiful object as one that possesses “aesthetic properties that contribute positively to its performing its intended principal functions.”¹⁸ Thus, a beautiful chair “is one having features that make it graceful ... and at the same time ... supportive of the back,” so that if the chair should fail to support us “we then should revise the judgment that the chair is beautiful as a chair.”¹⁹ When it comes to works in the Western high art tradition, however, Davies shifts from the idea of practical function to the idea of aesthetic function. In this way, he accommodates things like abstract paintings since, on his account, they do have a function, namely, “the function of being pleasing when contemplated for their own sake.”²⁰

At first glance Davies’ “functional beauty” model of aesthetic judgment might seem to offer a useful articulation how the satisfaction of specific practical functions might affect our aesthetic evaluation of works such as iconic art museum architecture.²¹ Unfortunately, this is not the case. Given Davies’ view of the function of high art, insofar as an art museum is a work of architectural *art*, its aesthetic properties should be judged as an objects of contemplation; but insofar as it is a *museum*, its aesthetic properties should be judged by whether they enhance its function of serving the art. Thus, as currently formulated, Davies’ “functional beauty” approach simply leaves aesthetic functions and practical functions side by side.²²

Glenn Parsons and Allan Carlson have offered a similar but more comprehensive program in their book, *Functional Beauty*.²³ And, unlike

¹⁷ Stephen Davies, “Aesthetic Judgments, Artworks and Functional Beauty,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 56, No. 223 (April, 2006), 224–241.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁹ Davies’ essay actually contains a secondary account of functional beauty that he does not seem to notice differs from the main account I have just summarized. In his main account, which we could call the “functional dependence” account, aesthetic properties are judged by how well they serve practical functions. But there is a passage in Davies essay where he describes the relation of aesthetic properties and function as “one of mutual influence and dependence” rather than a relation in which the aesthetic properties must always enhance primary functions. *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 239.

²¹ I should note that Davies never specifically discusses architecture, and that he does not think architecture is one of the fine arts. In fact in an earlier essay he specifically used functionality as an argument against considering architecture to be an artform. See his “Is Architecture Art?” in *Philosophy and Architecture*, ed. Michael Mitias (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1994), pp. 31–47.

²² Although Davies “mutual dependence” version of his proposal might do better at integrating the aesthetic function and practical function, it could not help us in explicating our other intuition, namely, that some works of architecture are so satisfying aesthetically that we may forgive their functional faults.

²³ Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008).

Davies, they not only take architecture as a central case, but set out to answer the objections of Scruton and others by reformulating them as: the Problem of Indeterminacy (how can we identify the “proper” function of a building or artifact?) and the Problem of Translation (how can our perceptual response to a building or artifact be affected by knowledge of its function?). Their answer to the indeterminacy question rejects intentionalist solutions for a definition of proper function taken from “selected effects” theories in evolutionary biology (the existence of a trait due to natural selection). Drawing an analogy between the natural history of reproduction and the reproduction of artifacts, they define proper function as the function of an artifact in the past that led it to satisfy a need in the marketplace so that it continues to be manufactured.²⁴ Although they admit that there is still some vagueness to this definition (how many artifacts need to be manufactured and for how long?), their “key point” is that their specific effects/marketplace definition rescues proper function from “the messy realm of human intentions.”²⁵

Their solution to the Problem of Translation draws on Kendall Walton’s “categories of art” (standard, variable, contra-standard) to argue that differences in the knowledge of how objects function lead us to see them in a different way and to perceive different aesthetic qualities in them. In the case of the traditional idea of an object “looking fit” for its function, for example, there must be no contra-standard features and many variable ones that reference its proper function, e.g., the aesthetically pleasing formal features of a passenger car would be displeasing in a hearse. Aesthetic qualities like simplicity or grace are explained by the fact that such objects show only standard features associated with function such as the streamlined look of modernism, perhaps the “most familiar kind of Functional Beauty.”²⁶

Does Parsons’ and Carlson’s selected effects idea of “proper function” combined with Walton’s categories in fact give an adequate philosophical account of the mutual dependence of aesthetic function and practical function in architecture? Although the selected effects/marketplace approach works fairly well for simple artifacts like screwdrivers or shovels, it is too blunt an instrument for adjudicating the importance of multifunctional artifacts like major works of architecture. “Proper function” is hard enough to pin down in the case of sofa beds, washer/dryer combinations, and Ipods, let alone in the case of architectural building types like civic centers and art museums. Art museums often involve not only a variety of practical functions (conservation, exhibition, education, research), but also social, environmental, and symbolic functions, all of which must be integrated

²⁴ Ibid., 75.

²⁵ Ibid., 77. At the same time they believe their idea of proper function also establishes the “core idea” that proper function belongs “to the object itself” rather than being “imposed” by use or context (83).

²⁶ Ibid., 98.

with the design's aesthetic concerns. Similar problems beset Parson's and Carlson's solution to the Problem of Translation. Although their adaptation of Walton's categories of art is helpful for understanding simple artifacts, it is probably impossible to determine "standard" forms with respect to complex multifunctional objects like buildings. Certainly, given the astonishingly diverse technical and formal innovations in architecture over the past sixty years, it is no longer clear what the "standard" form of an apartment building, office, bank, or library is as a building type, let alone the "standard" form of an art museum, concert hall, or civic center. My point is not that relativism is inescapable, but that multifunctional architectural works require a suppler analysis than the concepts of "proper" and "standard" can provide. Finally, there is the problem that, like Davies, Parsons and Carlson do not discuss the fact that many works of architecture and design are intended to be works of art, something that adds yet another layer of complexity.

Having found that none of the contemporary accounts that we have examined seem able to provide an adequate alternative to the separatist and formalist positions, I propose the following account consisting of two main arguments. First, I will argue that through the architect's intentions in the design process functions become embodied in architectural forms and I support this claim in part by calling on Nick Zangwill's way of reframing of Kant's idea of dependent beauty. But even if that argument were accepted, one would still face the question of *how* actual aesthetic judgments can include practical function and remain genuinely aesthetic. To answer that question I return to Kant's idea of "dependent beauty" as recently reconceived in the work of Rachel Zuckert.

My first argument against the separatist position is that by blocking out the *specific ways* an art museum's architecture serves the art within the separatist and formalist approaches overlook the necessary role of function within the architect's intention to give a building a particular *form* as a work of art. Although not every building is intended to be a work of art meant for aesthetic appreciation – that is the kernel of truth in the architecture vs. building topos – most art museums are certainly so intended and in any case those are the architectural works in question here.²⁷ In *Aesthetic Creation*, Zangwill has recently put forward a thesis about the nature of art that can provide a useful framework for the argument from intention that I want to make. In keeping with his well known dependence view of aesthetic properties, Zangwill argues that something is a work of art "because someone had an insight that certain aesthetic properties would depend on certain nonaesthetic properties; and because of this, the thing was intentionally endowed with some of those aesthetic properties

²⁷ Robert Stecker comes closest to resolving the conceptual issue of how to conceive of architecture as an artform by a useful distinction between architecture as *artform* and architecture as *medium*. "Reflections on Architecture: Buildings as Environments, as Aesthetic Objects and as Artworks," in *Architecture and Civilization*, op. cit., 81–93.

in virtues of the nonaesthetic properties."²⁸ It is crucial for Zangwill that this dependence is an exceptionally tight one in which the aesthetic properties and nonaesthetic properties are mutually implicated, e.g. the artist does not just want "to produce *elegance* but *elegance that depends on or is realized in certain nonaesthetic properties*."²⁹ If this were all there were to Zangwill's position, it could support either the separatist position or a mutual implication position, depending of which nonaesthetic properties are considered relevant to artistic creation. The strength of Zangwill's approach, for dealing with the issue of aesthetic and function in architecture is that while his version of "moderate formalism" recognizes the existence of *formal* aesthetic properties, it also recognizes the existence of *nonformal* aesthetic properties. In *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, he argues that formal aesthetic properties are "narrowly" dependent on directly perceivable sensory and physical properties (abstract painting or absolute music), whereas nonformal aesthetic properties are "broadly" dependent on such things as practical or social functions, e.g. the way a work of art "embodies (realizes, expresses, articulates) some historically given nonaesthetic functions" (architecture, representational painting, or functional music).³⁰ In arts like architecture or representational painting nonformal aesthetic properties and nonaesthetic functions are "interwoven" or "intermingled." In those cases, he continues, a kind of "double functionality" results and "the aesthetic function emerges from the nonaesthetic function so that a new overall aesthetic function of the work is realized."³¹ As Zangwill notes, this is the sort of contrast Kant had in mind when he spoke of free and dependent beauty, only Zangwill transfers the contrast from a point about two types of judgment into a point about two types of aesthetic properties.³²

Zangwill's reformulation of Kant's idea of dependent beauty in terms of aesthetic properties is helpful in articulating where separatist and formalist approaches go wrong when they treat works of architectural art as if their being "designed with a view to aesthetic appeal" means they possess only formal aesthetic properties. The separatist treats the act of designing a building as if the architect only takes into consideration such nonaesthetic physical and sensory properties as shape, space, light, materials, etc. But such an assumption about artistic creation fails to give sufficient weight to the fact that architects' formal artistic choices also take functions into consideration in the process of design so that functional concerns become *embodied* in the very architectural forms on which formalist critics focus their attention. No doubt, we can post facto distinguish formal and nonformal aesthetic properties, but in the process of design the two are

²⁸ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁰ Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 61.

³¹ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 118.

³² Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit., 61.

intermingled, resulting in the overall aesthetic properties of the completed work, something close to certain ideas of “organic form.”³³

This interpenetration of form and function in design is true even for those architects such as Frank Gehry, who happen to consider architecture a species of large scale sculpture, and certainly seek to create architectural works of art designed for their aesthetic appeal. Consider Gehry’s justly celebrated Disney concert hall in Los Angeles, whose curving titanium exterior is similar to that of his Guggenheim museum in Bilbao. When he designed the interior of the Disney concert hall, Gehry did not just carve out a visually satisfying form, dramatic as it is, but hired acoustical engineers to guide him in shaping it to provide the best possible sound environment.³⁴ Similarly, at the Guggenheim Bilbao museum, Gehry designed more conventional looking galleries for modernist paintings and more sculptural looking galleries to accommodate installation and performance works. Thus, although practical functions may begin as *external* to a work, once architects have taken them into account in designing a building, their choices, as influenced by their regard for function, become *internal* to the building as a work of art, analogous to the way the external subject matter of a representational painting becomes part of the internal content of the completed painting.³⁵

Obviously, such an account of artistic intentions does not “explain” the spontaneity of the creative work that brings together the many different types of physical, sensuous, and functional nonaesthetic properties into the satisfying unity of an artistic intention to create a particular overall aesthetic effect. It is also obvious that architects vary in the degree to which they seriously consider the functional needs or desires of their art museum clients, just as art museum boards on their part vary in the extent to which their desire for an aesthetically spectacular building by a “star” architect may conflict with their desire to have various museum functions satisfied. Even so, a formalist critic who ignores functions in judging a work of architectural art will be in danger of misjudging it by treating it solely in terms of its purely formal aesthetic properties. For example, if a critic were to judge Gehry’s Bilbao museum from a formalist perspective, for example, the critic might have to fault the more traditional looking galleries as out of keeping with the sculptural forms of the rest of the museum, and blame Gehry for failing to unify his design’s sculptural form. But the work

³³ Zangwill suggests that this is the sort of thing that G. E. Moore had in mind in speaking of “organic form.” *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit., 62. Although Frank Lloyd Wright’s idea of “organic architecture” was rather amorphous, he certainly saw the architect as an artist who integrated practical, environmental, and symbolic functions with more specifically formal ones of space, light and materials.

³⁴ *Frank Gehry, Architect*, ed. J. Fiona Ragheb (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 192–193. I am grateful to Gary Iseminger for first calling my attention to the general analogy between museums and concert halls with respect to function.

³⁵ This is an old distinction similar to A. C. Bradley’s contrast of “subject matter” and “content.” See H. Gene Blocker’s use of Bradley’s point in his discussion of “organic form.” H. Gene Blocker, *Philosophy of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1979), 187–190.

of architecture so conceived would not be the actual work as created by the architect, but an abstraction from the architect's larger achievement of interweaving many physical and sensuous properties not only with each other and with technical structural requirements but also with a variety of functional aims. A more appropriate judgment of the form of a work of architecture, therefore, would not focus on its formal properties in the abstract, but on the way in which formal design qualities should be shaped by and integrated with the intention to serve various functions.³⁶

Formalist critics as well as "functional beauty" advocates might object at this point that I am burdening our aesthetic response with the necessity of trying to find out the psychological intentions of individual architects. But artistic choices and intentions can often be inferred from the properties of the work itself without the need for biographical information; the knowledge of the building type and of the kinds of art it was designed to contain is often a reasonable basis for inference. Another problem for inferred intentions, of course, is the possibility that certain aesthetic embodiments of function were intended but the design itself or the way it was carried out in construction did not in fact achieve the desired aesthetic effects.³⁷ Obviously, inferences concerning intentions to integrate formal aesthetic properties and nonformal aesthetic properties will be debatable since they are interpretations, but they are not groundless interpretations leading to the relativism feared by Parsons and Carlson.

But formalist critics and "functional beauty" advocates could still make two other objections to the argument from artistic choice. First, they could point out that many important art museums have been installed in former warehouses, factories, railway stations, and power plants, in which cases it would be absurd to claim that we infer architectural choices from the way the buildings are designed. Second, whether gallery spaces are in an older building turned into a museum or in a newly designed building, the apparent fit between any given architectural space and the art it contains may not be attributable to the architect, but to the museum's curators who choose which art works to install in a given space, what color to paint the walls, where to focus artificial lighting, etc. In reply to the first objection I would point out that nearly all the warehouses, power plants and other buildings adapted for use as art museums, have been significantly modified by architects commissioned precisely to make them suited to showing art.

³⁶ I have injected the "should" here to mark the normative dimension of architectural design. See Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., pp. 102–104 on the normative dimension of aesthetic functionalism. I also owe my way of describing the appropriate critical perspective in part to Yuriko Saito's discussion of design in *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27. Of course, a "paper" or "digital" architect does have the luxury of considering only formal matters, but even such an architect would still face various formal choices and problems to solve and our aesthetic judgment of the completed drawings would be based in part on the design's success in solving them.

³⁷ For Zangwill's useful discussion of the problem of artistic failure see his *Artistic Creation*, op. cit., 40–42 and 104–107.

And, although the redesign often attempts to preserve as much as possible of a cherished monument, it often leads to extensive modifications, especially of the interior. As a result, the case of adaptive reuse actually supports my point about inferred considerations of function, since most of the architects who are commissioned for this work are asked to focus on making interior spaces function effectively for showing art, rather than on simply creating new architectural forms to be appreciated for their own sake. The exigency of respecting the existing building becomes yet another factor affecting the nonformal aesthetic properties embodied in the new design. As for the second objection, concerning the important role of curators, it is certainly true that a curator may make poor use of an architectural space excellently designed for art, or may rescue a space poorly designed for art. In most cases, however, it is not difficult to sort out the architectural choices from the curatorial ones.³⁸ One reviewer of Libeskind's Denver addition, for example, entitled his review "It Works Despite Libeskind's Best Efforts," explaining that the curators had done a heroic job of making several of the odd shaped galleries function adequately, despite Libeskind's apparently minimal attention to exhibition functions in his design.³⁹

But the most important objection that strong formalist critics would have to my claim that we should pay attention to the way functions become embodied in artistic forms is the argument that what I have described as the inference of artistic intentions is merely an empirical fact about some observers, not a necessary condition of aesthetic perception itself. Genuine aesthetic judgments, they would say, simply *are* judgments about formal, sensory and expressive properties and the ability to make such judgments is precisely the ability to separate immediate responses to aesthetic properties from responses to artistic properties like choice and intention or to non-artistic properties like morality and function. It would seem, therefore, that if we are to justify the inclusion of embodied function in aesthetic judgments concerning architecture we must either make aesthetic judgments only one part of a more general artistic judgment or re-define the nature of aesthetic experience and judgment in a way that overcomes the limitations of traditional autonomist views. But the strategy of making aesthetic response only one part of an overall artistic judgment would still leave aesthetics and function judged separately before they were combined. What we really want to know is whether functional achievements or defects in a work of architectural art can enter into the process of aesthetic judging itself. Can a functional defect become an aesthetic defect? For that we need a different

³⁸ For an excellent discussion of the way curatorial choices affect our experience of art in a museum setting see Victoria Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005) and Suzanne Macleod, *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 2005).

³⁹ David Littlejohn, "It Works Despite Libeskind's Best Efforts," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2007. Although Littlejohn praises the heroic efforts of the curators, he laments "the apparently brutal indifference of Daniel Libeskind to the work of any artist but himself."

concept of the aesthetic than one that automatically excludes morality and purpose. That leads me back to Kant's idea of dependent beauty, this time not as a point about aesthetic properties, but as a point about aesthetic judgments.⁴⁰

There are many well known problems with the Kant's idea of dependent beauty judgments, beginning with the fact that Kant speaks of both judgments and objects as free or dependent.⁴¹ His examples of freely beautiful objects include flowers, arabesques, and absolute music whereas dependent beauties include such things as representational paintings, music set to words, and architecture. As for the kinds of judgments appropriate to each kind of beauty, a judgment of free beauty is a spontaneous attending to the form of the object as it is entertained in a harmonious free play of the imagination and understanding. A judgment of dependent beauty, on the other hand, "presupposes ... the concept of the purpose that determines what the thing is to be."⁴² One of Kant's examples of a judgment of dependent beauty actually concerns architecture, specifically our response to a church. "Much that could be liked directly in intuition could be added to a building," says Kant, "if only the building were not to be a church."⁴³ When Kant concludes that such judgments of dependent beauty are not "pure" aesthetic judgments, some have asked how they could be aesthetic judgments at all, given

⁴⁰ Of course there are by now innumerable alternatives to formalist autonomy, not only from pragmatist and phenomenological accounts, but a variety of analytic based ones such as Noël Carroll's deflationary and disjunctive account of aesthetic experience that eliminates the "for itself" clause. "Aesthetic Experience: A Question of Content," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 69–97.

⁴¹ There is a large literature on this topic. In addition to the works cited in the course of my discussion below, I have also profited from older works such as Donald Crawford's *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974) or Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), as well as more recent studies such as Kirk Pillow, *Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), James Kirwan, *The Aesthetic in Kant: A Critique* (London: Continuum, 2004), Robert Stecker, "Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21:1 Spring (1987): 89–99, Philip Mallaband, "Understanding Kant's Distinction Between Free and Dependent Beauty," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 52:226 (2002): 66–81, and Denis Dutton, "Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994): 226–141.

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 77. Since I am less interested in the details of Kant exegesis than in deriving a workable notion of aesthetic judgment that is open to more than formal properties, I have not included Kant's phrase "and hence a concept of its perfection" which would involve lengthy explanations of the role of the concept of "perfection" in Kant's critique of Leibnizian inspired aesthetics. Although, the Guyer/Matthews translation is preferable to Pluhar at many points, and its use of "adherent" rather than "dependent" has sound reasons behind it, I have stayed with the more traditional terminology of free vs. dependent beauty. See *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114.

⁴³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, op. cit., 77.

the strictures he earlier places on the role of concepts and purpose.⁴⁴ But Kant seems in this passage to loosen his notion of subsumption under a concept, which is his criterion for a “determinative” judgment as opposed to an aesthetic one. He says that in a judgment of dependent beauty the concept of a purpose does not determine, but merely restricts the freedom of the imagination.⁴⁵ Thus, to use Kant’s example of a church, the purpose of a church as a place of worship limits what architectural forms can please us aesthetically, but does not determine in advance any particular form that would satisfy or impede the needs of worship.

Some scholars have interpreted Kant’s notion of a restriction or constraint here as external and purely negative, that is, we first take note of an object’s purpose as an example of its kind and, having found it suitable to its purpose, we then judge it formally as free beauty.⁴⁶ Others have interpreted judgments of dependent beauty as an additive combination of a judgment based on intellectual pleasure in the satisfaction of purpose joined to a judgment based on a felt pleasure in form.⁴⁷ On either of these accounts, knowing that a building is of a certain type leads us to expect that it will minimally fulfill the functions of that type, and if it does so, we may go on to enjoy its formal features. But when a building serves its functions too poorly we may find our imagination impeded in its attempt to freely enjoy the building’s forms.⁴⁸ Both the constraint and the combination views of judgments of dependent beauty do make function relevant to aesthetic judgment, but, by suggesting a two stage approach, both remain relatively close to the separatist position we are trying to overcome. This is one of the main reasons Davies, Parsons and Carlson explicitly reject Kant’s dependent beauty approach to understanding functional beauty.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Among the many observations on this conflict see especially Ruth Lorand, “Free and Dependent Beauty,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 29:1 (1989), 32–40.

⁴⁵ Kant speaks of the imagination’s freedom as “restricted” (eingeschränkt) not as “determined” by purpose, thus allowing room for a genuinely aesthetic response to a building’s dependent beauty. See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219.

⁴⁶ Paul Guyer has offered cogent interpretations of the “constraint” emphasis, first in *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, op. cit., p. 219 and later in *Values of Beauty*, op. cit., 120–128, 131–132..

⁴⁷ Representative examples are Henry Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140–142 and Christopher Janaway, “Kant’s Aesthetics and the Empty Cognitive Stock,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (1997), 459–76.

⁴⁸ Paul Guyer, *Values of Beauty*, op. cit., 126.

⁴⁹ Davies presents his “functional beauty” proposal as a replacement for Kant’s “dependent beauty” which he believes results in a “schizoid” separation of practical and aesthetic properties and is too internally flawed to be satisfactorily reconstructed. “Functional Beauty,” 234–236. Parsons and Carlson actually make Kant guilty of ending the earlier eighteenth century tradition of valuing functional beauty by making dependent beauty simply a matter of an “external” constraint on certain types of aesthetic judgment. In short, Kant is portrayed as a separatist for whom beauty is merely “compatible” with function. *Functional Beauty*, 22–24.

What we need is an account of judgments of dependent beauty that can show how function can be a more integral part of the process of aesthetic judging. Of the several reconstruction's of Kant's idea of dependent beauty that argue for a more intimate involvement, I find most convincing that of Rachel Zuckert in *Kant on Beauty and Biology*.⁵⁰ For Zuckert, aesthetic judgment in general "comprises attention to *all* the empirical, sensibly apprehended properties of an object" as these are "*reciprocally, internally unified*" in the play of imagination and understanding.⁵¹ In a judgment of free beauty this unification of our experience is based on the object's form, but in a judgment of dependent beauty, concepts such as those of aesthetic ideas or of the object's purpose are "'incorporated' into an (overarching) representation ... of the object's purposive form."⁵² Thus, on Zuckert's interpretation, "when we appreciate an object as a church, the properties that make it a member of its kind are taken to be aesthetically relevant ... *within* aesthetic judging."⁵³ In Zuckert's account of dependent beauty, then, an object's conceptual contents or its practical purposes do not merely constrain free judgment from the outside, or get combined with free judgments in an additive way, but are positively integrated into a distinctive process of aesthetic judging.

Of course, by incorporating ideas of content or purpose into the play of imagination and understanding, such judgments are rendered "impure," as compared to a play of the imagination based only upon formal properties. Moreover, unlike judgments of free beauty judgments of dependent beauty lay no claim to universality.⁵⁴ But the point of having a concept such as dependent beauty is precisely to make room for a distinctive kind of aesthetic judgment that permits the inclusion of features like artistic intention or practical function. Such judgments are still genuinely aesthetic in the sense that they are neither judgments of mere agreeableness nor are they determinative judgments that subsume instances under a concept. Functionality, therefore, can be incorporated into a genuine aesthetic judgment of architecture, so long as function is experienced, in Zuckert's words, "as itself to be in play with the object's [many] other sensible properties."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Another valuable treatment from which I have profited, is Robert Wicks, "Dependent Beauty as the Appreciation of Teleological Style," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1997), 387–400. There is an interesting exchange on Wicks's article between Wicks and Paul Guyer in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57:3 (1999), 357–363.

⁵¹ Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty*, op. cit., 205. Italics mine.

⁵² Ibid., 203.

⁵³ Ibid., 207.

⁵⁴ As Zuckert puts it, "judgments of dependent beauty may make only a hypothetical claim on others: if one shares my concept of this object's kind, then one ought to find this object (dependently) beautiful." Ibid., 208.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 206.

Whether or not Zuckert's particular reconstruction of the concept of dependent beauty is accepted as the most convincing interpretation of Kant, it offers us a useful way of philosophically articulating our ordinary intuition that form and function should be joined in aesthetic judgments of architecture. Paul Guyer has persuasively argued that all three of the major interpretations of dependent beauty – the constraint view, the combination view, and the internal view – can find some textual support in Kant and that, moreover, all three reflect various ways form and function are actually related in our ordinary experience.⁵⁶ In the case of architecture, however, the advantage of the "internal" view of dependent beauty judgments over the other two is that it shows how function can positively enter into the process of aesthetic judging itself.

It seems to me that this "internal" interpretation of Kant's idea of judgments of dependent beauty is particularly appropriate to appreciating the overall aesthetic impression that results from the integration of formal and nonformal aesthetic properties as Zangwill describes them. As he says of representational painting, "people ... make judgments of beauty, elegance and delicacy about both abstract patterns and representations," so I would also say of architecture that people make judgments of beauty, elegance and power about both abstract patterns of space and of functions.⁵⁷ But they do more than that; the judgments they make in the case of both representational paintings and architecture are not simply about both formal and nonformal aesthetic properties as if they were simply lying side by side, but about the "new overall aesthetic function" that is realized though the way formal and nonformal aesthetic functions and nonaesthetic functions "are interwoven or intermingled in the work."⁵⁸

In *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, however, Zangwill raises the worry that in the case of architecture attempts to incorporate the *specific* functions of building types into aesthetic judgments may find no logical stopping point.⁵⁹ How, he asks, do we determine *which* functions are relevant in each case without getting into an endless process of ever narrower specification, for example, from judging a building as a church, to judging it as a catholic or protestant church, to judging it as a certain type of protestant church, and so on? One possible solution Zangwill suggests is that we avoid ascribing beauty or aesthetic excellence to a building as a specific type, but "only

⁵⁶ Paul Guyer, *Values of Beauty*, op. cit., 129–140. As Guyer has points out, a similar phenomenon related to our expectations regarding the functions of different building types. Thus, we normally expect a work of architecture to meet at least minimally the functions of its building type and if it does so are not likely to have our aesthetic estimate of its other properties affected, but when it is exceptionally dysfunctional, our overall aesthetic response is negatively affected. Guyer's observation shows how either the "constraint or the "combination" interpretation of dependent beauty could also be used to justify the incorporation of function into judgments of architecture. *Ibid.*, 126.

⁵⁷ Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, 63.

⁵⁸ Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation*, op. cit., 118.

⁵⁹ Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit., 61.

see it as having the broad function of being some building or other.”⁶⁰ But that solution would land us back with Scruton and Winter in the denial that the *specific* functions of a building matter to our aesthetic judgments. Consequently, there would be no basis for saying that an art museum design that failed its function of showing the art to best advantage was aesthetically defective as a work of architecture.

I believe Zangwill’s worry is excessive. The disadvantage of a regress to the individual case is more than made up for by the advantage of a more integrative account of dependent beauty judgments which allows us, as Zuckert remarks, to take “many more properties into account” than those that render an object simply “a good member of its kind.”⁶¹ Thus, I would argue that we should not judge the integration of form and function in architectural works like art museums in a way that treats them merely as exemplars of a general building type, but always move to the appropriate level of specificity. The kinds of architectural forms that would satisfy the function of a great historical museum like the Prado in Madrid would obviously be different from the forms appropriate to the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki.⁶² It may be that relevance in aesthetic judgments of dependent beauty may finally have to be decided at the level of the individual work of architectural art and that even there the critic will have to adjudicate an exceedingly complex interaction of many factors.⁶³ Obviously, most of us who visit the Prado or the Kiasma museums are not professional critics with the advantage and burden of extensive knowledge, yet most of us, if we are going there to see the art works will be aware of how the museum design fits its function of showing its particular kind of art. But even if we are architecture tourists and decide to visit the Kiasma Museum because we have heard of the unusual architectural forms Steven Holl has created, we cannot easily avert our attention from the way Holl has addressed the purposes of the museum through his design.

The approach I am recommending treats aesthetic judgment as including attention to the way in which formal, sensuous, and expressive properties have been integrated with practical function and other features in the work itself and the ease with which they can also be integrated in the operation of the imagination. Whether this takes the exact form of Kant’s problematic account of the harmonious play of the faculties, is not a necessary part of

⁶⁰ Ibid., 68.

⁶¹ Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty*, op. cit., 207.

⁶² I have explored a typology of art museum according to function in my on-line article “Architecture vs. Art: The Aesthetics of Art Museum Design,” mentioned in note 3. Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art,” *Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334–67.

⁶³ This will no doubt inject a strong element of relativity into such judgments, but that is not the complete relativism that Parsons and Carlson fear since, as Hume said of the “standard of taste,” we are only required to show that not all judgments are equal. This position, by the way, is also the one finally taken by Parsons and Carlson at the end of their chapter on the Problem of Indeterminacy. *Functional Beauty*, op. cit., 88.

my commitments.⁶⁴ I would interpret the dependent beauty framework as minimally requiring that critical judgments be qualified by the principle: “when all relevant aspects are given due weight.” Given the multiple functions of many of today’s art museums, enabling the thoughtful display of art works is only one of several practical and other functions (social, environmental, symbolic) that architects and critics must address. Yet, if we are to call something an *art* museum, surely whatever proportion of a museum building is given over to the display of art, that part should be designed in a way that supports viewers’ attention to the kinds of works that particular museum contains. My conclusion, therefore, is a very limited one: *even though there may be blameless differences in the way people weigh relevant aspects in the process of the aesthetic judgment of a work of architecture, one thing they cannot justifiably do: they cannot give the specific practical functions of a building zero weight in an overall aesthetic judgment.*⁶⁵

Notoriously, Kant himself, at the very end of his discussion of dependent beauty seems to pull the rug out from under not only such an “internal’ view of the effect of practical function on aesthetic judgment, but even from under the “constraint” and “combination” views. Kant says that a person may, either through ignorance of an object’s purpose or, by deliberately abstracting from purpose, judge such a work of dependent beauty as if it were a “free beauty.”⁶⁶ Certainly, Kant is right to point out that when we are ignorant of a building’s purpose – as we often are when we visit a strange

⁶⁴ Zangwill, Guyer and others have noted that there are problems with the exact operation of the free play of imagination and understanding in achieving the harmony of these faculties, but I do not think my point about the necessity of taking specific functions into account in the process of judgment requires Kant’s particular formulation. Nick Zangwill, *Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit., 204–205. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, op. cit., 222–225. But see Zuckert’s exposition of the harmony of the faculties in *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, op. cit., 279–320.

⁶⁵ There are perhaps some qualifications to even this limited conclusion. One might argue that my claim does not extend to follies or to paper and digital architecture. The case of follies might be seen as a borderline case for the definition of architecture since their practical function is so close to their aesthetic function, namely to provide delectation and diversion for the eye and mind, but that also puts them close to the functions of other recreational and entertainment arts and, in any case, makes them part of the set of issues surrounding landscape architecture and gardens. With “paper” or “digital” architecture – designs which are not even intended to be built – we have another kind of limit case which I am not sure does real damage to my conclusion. One of the attractions of engaging in such drawing is that one is excused from worry about clients and their needs or desires to have various functions satisfied. Of course, such drawings may lead to exceptionally creative designs for actual buildings although their makers are often content to enjoy the creation of pure fantasy worlds, impossible to build without costs exceeding what any but a mad genius out of science fiction might propose.

⁶⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, op. cit., 78. Of course, some other person, Kant goes on, “looking only to the object’s purpose” and regarding its beauty “as only an accessory” would “censure the first person for having wrong taste.” Yet each of them, Kant continues, “is judging correctly in his own way, one by what he has before his senses, the other by what he has in his thought.”

city or country – we are likely to respond to a striking work of architecture purely as form. But Kant’s other claim, that even when we know what the function is, we may deliberately abstract from it, while also empirically true, has disturbing implications. That claim could be seen as endorsing the separation of form and function, allowing a critic to totally disregard the function of a work of architecture without blame, whereas I have argued that the idea of dependent beauty implies, at the least, that a critic cannot blamelessly exclude function altogether.

Although there are ways to construe Kant’s statement as not undermining the idea of dependent beauty, his statement does articulate a version of the *other* ordinary intuition we have about works of architecture that I mentioned at the beginning of my paper and to which we must now turn our attention.⁶⁷ I said there, that alongside our intuition that aesthetics and function should be united in architecture, we seem to have an equally natural intuition that some buildings are so aesthetically powerful we may enjoy their appearance without regard to their functions.

For the philosophy of architecture, I can think of no more interesting witness to this kind of intuition than Ludwig Wittgenstein. In Vienna in 1926, Wittgenstein designed a very modern looking house for his sister but later expressed disappointed with it because he felt it lacked what he called “*primordial* life, wild life.”⁶⁸ On another occasion he wrote that just as “every purposive movement of the human body” is not “a *gesture*,” so “every functional building” is not “architecture.”⁶⁹ In these two comments Wittgenstein seems to raise the separatist architecture vs. building topos to a higher level than even Pevsner’s “aesthetic appeal,” suggesting that true works of architecture may evoke an almost ecstatic response.⁷⁰ Similarly, the critic, Andrew Ballantyne, has tried to get at this phenomenon by translating the building vs. architecture continuum into one between “ordinary” and “visionary” architecture, for which he uses the metaphors of the “nest” and the “pillar of fire.”

At one end of the scale we have the nest, a modest and comforting place to ... feel at home; at the other we have the extravagant pyre which consumes vast resources, and fills us with awe.⁷¹

⁶⁷ For ways of reconciling Kant’s comment at the end of his discussion of dependent beauty with what precedes it, see Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty*, op. cit., pp.207–208. See also Guyer’s discussion of the problem of the extent of the power of abstraction in Kant. Guyer’s *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, op. cit., 220–225.

⁶⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 38e. For a comprehensive and insightful discussion of Wittgenstein’s house and his views on architecture in relation to his philosophy as a whole see Roger Paden, *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meanings of the Palais Stonborough* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

⁶⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, op. cit., 42e.

⁷⁰ See Roger Paden, *Mysticism and Architecture*, op. cit., chapters 6 and 7.

⁷¹ Andrew Ballantyne, “Commentary: The Nest and the Pillar of Fire,” in *What is Architecture?*, ed. Andrew Ballantyne (London: Routledge, 2002), 5–49; ref. on 15.

Ordinary buildings or “nests” – including, I would say, most art museums – are designed, Ballantyne suggests, by architects who see themselves as problem solving professionals working with their clients to achieve a common goal of integrating functional and aesthetic values. Visionary buildings, on the other hand, are designed by architects who see themselves primarily as free artists, the kind of architects who are giving us the most spectacular displays of “avant-garde extravagance.”⁷²

Yet, despite all this talk of “wild,” “primordial,” “visionary,” or “extravagant” architecture, with few exceptions even the most spectacular works of contemporary architectural art are still buildings that have purposes or functions. Certainly, the Guggenheim Bilbao or the Denver Museum of Art may so overwhelm us by their formal, sensory, and expressive properties, that we may be prepared to forgive their functional faults. But that is very different from declaring their specific functions to be irrelevant. Even in the case of most visionary architecture we need to apply the principle “when all relevant aspects are given due weight,” as we consider the integration of functional and formal achievements in judging overall aesthetic merit. This also applies to the special case of historical works like the Pantheon in Rome, the Taj Mahal, or Chartres Cathedral, which we often treat as monuments of architectural art than can simply be enjoyed as objects of free beauty, even though they may still be used for some purpose, even their original one.

It might help us see how a functional defect in a work of architecture can lead to an overall negative aesthetic judgment and how a similar functional defect in a different work may not result in an overall negative judgment, by briefly considering the analogous problem of the relation between moral defects and aesthetic judgment. For many formalists, moral judgments, like functional ones, have often been considered either irrelevant, or at least to operate separately from to aesthetic judgments. At the other pole, are those theorists who hold the position sometimes called “ethicism,” claiming that a moral defect in a work of art is always an aesthetic defect and should lead to a negative aesthetic evaluation.⁷³ What Noël Carroll calls “moderate moralism,” rejects both extremes, saying that an ethical defect *may* in certain circumstances become an aesthetic defect. In reading a novel, for example, a literary critic may try to follow the author’s artistic promptings which encourage a sympathetic identification with a deeply evil character, but the critic cannot. The critic cannot, Carroll says, because “there is something wrong with the structure of the artwork. It has not been designed properly on its own terms.”⁷⁴ As Carroll points out, this kind of negative aesthetic response to a work of art is the result of an assessment of *many* aspects of the work, not simply the handling of

⁷² Andrew Ballantyne, “Commentary: Nest and the Pillar of Fire,” op. cit., 41.

⁷³ Noël Carroll, “Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research,” *Ethics* 110:2 (January 2000): 357–360, 374–377.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 379.

a single feature or character. But just as it is possible to arrive at an overall negative aesthetic result in some cases, it is also possible to arrive a positive result in other cases in which a work “may, when all things are considered, contain ethical defects that are vastly outweighed by its other merits, such as formal ones.”⁷⁵

I believe the reconstruction of Kant’s concept of judgments of dependent beauty that I have adopted leads to a similar weighing of functional and formal merits in reaching an overall aesthetic judgment concerning works of architecture. If I wanted a special name for this adaptation of the dependent beauty idea, I might call it “moderate functionalism” after Carroll’s “moderate moralism,” but also after Zangwill’s “moderate functionalism” which supports the incorporation of nonaesthetic functions into “overall aesthetic functions.” Obviously, the moderate functionalist does not follow the architectural “autonomist” in treating aesthetics and function separately, but does the moderate functionalist follow some “functional beauty” advocates in suggesting that the aesthetic properties of an artifact must be judged solely in terms of how well they serve its practical function. If a moderate functionalist critic reaches a negative judgment about a work of architecture that is aesthetically exciting but functionally defective, it will be because the failures of the work’s artistic choices to embody the work’s functional aims outweigh the work’s formal aesthetic qualities. Conversely, the moderate functionalist is also ready to realize that, in other instances, a work of architecture may, to borrow Carroll’s language, “when all things are considered, contain [functional] defects that are vastly outweighed by its other merits, such as formal ones.” Most architecture, of course, will fall into the category of what Ballantyne called the ordinary, but ordinary buildings are no less important or worthy of praise for their aesthetic achievement in uniting aesthetic functions and practical functions than are the occasional spectacular buildings that so fill us with astonishment that we may momentarily forget what purpose they were meant to serve.

In closing, I want to briefly consider two examples of iconic art museum architecture that have drawn rather different critical responses, although as with most particular cases opinions are not unanimous. The Guggenheim Bilbao’s wonderfully sculptural exterior and the soaring curves of its atrium are not only aesthetically compelling, but also serve both the symbolic function of proclaiming Bilbao’s resurgence and the practical function of helping that resurgence by drawing thousands of tourists. But, most important of all, its aesthetically striking galleries for art are largely appropriate to the differing kinds of art each is meant to

⁷⁵ Ibid., 360. As Zangwill points out with respect to substantive aesthetic properties, a property that in itself is positive or at least neutral retains this character even if it has a negative effect on the overall aesthetic evaluation. Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, op. cit., 17–18. Similarly, a moral defect remains a moral defect and a functional defect remains a functional defect even when compensated for by some more powerful virtues.

contain.⁷⁶ In short, the Bilbao museum's aesthetic and symbolic virtues could be seen as more than compensating for the practical short comings of a few of its more dramatic galleries. In the case of Libeskind's Denver addition, on the other hand, despite a wonderfully "wild" exterior, whose iconic presence is also aesthetically engaging as well symbolically and practically good for its city, the lack of integration of form and function on the interior has negatively affected many critics' overall judgment of it. Unlike the powerful spiritual and symbolic resonances of Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin which give meaning to its daring formal properties and compensate for its functional shortcomings as an exhibition venue, the Denver Museum's functional failures are such that its symbolic, spiritual and aesthetic expressiveness does not seem strong enough to compensate for its functional flaws.⁷⁷

As these cases suggest, although aesthetic judgments of the "moderate functionalism" type must incorporate function along with form and other factors into the process of aesthetic judging, there is great variability in the relative weight that may be appropriately given each factor. But in no case can an appropriate aesthetic judgment justifiably ignore specific practical functions as irrelevant in assessing the museum's total aesthetic effect. In this way, I believe, one can philosophically explain how we can affirm both our intuition of a desirable concord between form and function in architecture, and our corresponding intuition that some works are aesthetically so exceptional that we may forgive their functional faults.

⁷⁶ The enormous "boat gallery" as it was sometimes called (over 450 feet long) dwarfed everything put into for many years and was subject to considerable criticism, but it finally met a reasonable use when it was filled with a group of Richard Serra's oversize steel sculptures.

⁷⁷ If we look at the critical and public response to the Jewish Museum, where the jagged plan and angled windows are expressive of relationships and ideas connected to the Holocaust, the difficulties curators have had in installing exhibitions have not led to a generally negative reaction. In Berlin, Libeskind had a set of profound historical and spiritual concerns to embody whereas in Denver the museum board wanted a show piece by a "name" architect. Libeskind's claim that the sharply pointed angles of the exterior (which are repeated inside and make for such difficulty in showing and attending to the art works) are meant to reflect the jagged Rocky Mountains seems a bit disingenuous since similar motifs have characterized buildings he designed for Berlin and London.

Nick Zangwill

Reply to Larry Shiner on Architecture

(A) Larry Shiner address some central issues about architecture in particular, he is interested in the extent to which architectural beauty is dependent on, or independent of, various functions of buildings. What role does or should our knowledge of the functions of a building play in our aesthetic appreciation of it?

I would say that a building may have various functions in addition to its aesthetic functions. One crucial question is over the way that the aesthetic and nonaesthetic functions may be interwoven, so that there may be the "aesthetic expression" of nonaesthetic functions, which is also an aesthetic function of the building.

I think that there are important unsolved and unresolved issues here, of great importance in aesthetics. What exactly is it to be beautiful as something with a function. What, exactly, is the aesthetic realization of a nonaesthetic function?

I hoped to make a start on these matters by invoking the notion of "dependent beauty", roughly as Kant described it, but perhaps with some recasting. I am pleased that Shiner appreciates the utility of the Kantian dependent beauty framework for thinking about certain substantive debates about architecture. A theoretical framework should have fruitful and illuminating application in particular cases. Recasting the form/function debates in architecture as debates about different kinds of function, I think, is helpful, especially because the framework allows for more or less aesthetically significant interaction between pure aesthetic and nonaesthetic functions. Shiner pursues some architectural debates in this framework; he is especially insightful on issues about the reuse of buildings.

(B) In *Metaphysics of Beauty*, I raised a worry about how to specify exactly *which* functions are relevant to the aesthetic assessment of architecture. *Architectural* assessment is broader than *aesthetic* assessment; leaking roofs are an architectural defect but not (usually) an aesthetic defect of a building. But then which nonaesthetic functions *do* impact on aesthetic virtue? Shiner thinks that I worry too much about this. But there are surely

limits to the nonaesthetic functions that admit of aesthetic expression. And we need to police those limits, or at least have some idea where they are.

Shiner allows more specificity than merely being a building, and this seems right. Some buildings are beautiful as specific types of buildings. For example, I might allow that a building is beautiful as a religious building. But then I might not allow further specification of the type of religious building (mosque, church or Buddhist shrine, for example). We must carefully distinguish this issue from the issue of whether a building might be a good work of *architecture* as a mosque, church, Buddhist shrine. This is consistent with the idea that it cannot be *beautiful* as a mosque but not as a church or Buddhist shrine.

(C) Shiner asks whether a functional defect can be an aesthetic defect. I answer: "No" (in that sense of function). It could indeed be a defect in a work of *architecture* or in the *building*. For a work of architecture or building may have many values and functions apart from aesthetic ones. It may be an aesthetic defect if a building fails in the *aesthetic expression* of nonaesthetic functions. But expressing or not expressing the nonaesthetic function is independent of whether the building in fact discharges the nonaesthetic function.

So I would query Shiner's formulation of his thesis that "the specific practical functions of a building [cannot have] zero weight in an overall aesthetic judgement". Shiner thinks that ordinary functional faults are *aesthetic* flaws of the building (by analogy with what is known as "moderate moralism"). But the point of the notion of dependent beauty is to allow for the aesthetic expression of a certain function even though the building fails to discharge that function. (Hence I think that my "moderate formalism" is not helpfully associated with "moderate moralism".) An aesthetic judgement about a work of art may not ignore how nonaesthetic functions are *expressed*. But it may ignore whether they are effectively *served*. This is not the case in an assessment or evaluation of a building as a work of *architecture*, since there is more to a work of architecture than its aesthetic functions. Buildings are multifunctional objects; an assessment of such an object must take all its functions into account. Aesthetic functions are a subclass of a building's functions. But they may stand in complex and varying relations to its nonaesthetic functions. Shiner's essay certainly helps us with the exploration of some of these relations.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Ewa Bogusz-Boltuc for the honour of arranging this symposium on my work and for eliciting six stimulating essays.

Zofia Rosińska

Intellectual Passivity and the Aesthetic Attitude

Abstract

The intention of this essay is to show the consequences different ways of understanding, the aesthetic experience, have on the philosophy of man. The understanding of the aesthetic experience as "aisthesis" – i.e., as intrinsically receptive, passive, and based on sensation – leads to a one-dimensional vision of the human mind, and to a vision of the human being with a flattened personality. The post-Kantian analysis of the aesthetic experience developed in the twenties and thirties by, among others, Polish philosophers, is based on three characteristics of this experience: "selflessness", "contemplation", and "enclaveness". Within this framework, the aesthetic experience cannot be characterized by passivity. Rather, it appears as complex mental activity, which, besides providing pleasure, maintains the tension throughout all the mental functions and all distinct psychological divisions. The source of this activity is the focus of the aesthetic experience on values. The idea of the aesthetization of life – akin to aisthesis – means the transformation of an axiological stance into a psychological one. It means the change of the stance focused on values, norms, principles, criteria, and the justification of one's beliefs, to the stance focused on impressions, feelings, emotions, and expression.

The author's ideal is the merging of both stances. Because the stance based solely on impressions and expression without the axiological dimension is blind; while the purely axiological one without the emotional engagement – is dead.

The aim of this essay is to find the answer to the question whether there are any relationships between intellectual passivity and the aesthetic attitude.

This question arises because of reflection over the ways we experience the times we live in. Describing and qualifying contemporary everyday life as receptive and aesthetic ignores the concept of the aesthetic experience developed in philosophy and becomes a source of terminological chaos that impedes the understanding of the changes that take place in everyday life, as well as our relation to it.

Although the changes taking place in our social reality are variously assessed, their description is fairly unanimous. Different words and styles are employed to emphasize passivity or even apathy as the fundamental feature. The existential sentiments in the Poland of the 1990s were analogous to those phenomena described by sociologists and historians which had been observed in the form of feelings and impressions in the USA of the 1960s and 70s, as well as in the FRG of the 1970s and 1980s. Apathy has its etymological roots in the Greek word *apatheia*, which is translated in dictionaries as the inability to experience emotions, lack of interest, insensitivity and a sense of numbness. Sometimes, such descriptions are supplemented with the notions of “depression” and “melancholy.” However, in order to avoid slipping into the medical meaning of these terms, I shall stick to the notion of “intellectual passivity.” By this term I understand a sense of lack of a cognitive passion, deprivation of broader interests, stereotyping of thinking, as well as the inability to discern, qualify and judge.

In today's Poland – claims Ryszard Przybylski – which has sunk into a spiritual collapse, our “bookshops” are fortunately not threatened by Omar. However, Vain Time has had it in for the essential books from the past and present. He is just as cruel and ruthless as the broken society which was led, by a terrible mistake, to believe that it can form a community without the knowledge of its ancestors [...]. Therefore, I flee to the oasis of beautiful texts, as is usually the case with people who have been oppressed by the vulgarity of contemporary social life.¹

This approach is fostered by the general atmosphere of the culture in which we have come to live. It has ceased to be a demanding culture and has become – if I may say so – a formation that lulls any autonomous creative effort. The most peculiar forms of postmodernism that are now surfacing (let us pass over the multitude of this term's meanings), combined with subjectivism and a moral arbitrariness weaken the intellectual condition of contemporaneity.²

These two and many more opinions draw our attention to and underline the following characteristic features of our times: lack of respect for tradition, spiritual collapse, dulling of individual creative effort, weakening of intellectual condition, moral arbitrariness and a lack of ethical energy. “Passivity” is thus distinguished as the primary feature and is accompanied by the severance with the past.

Intellectual passivity is sometimes associated with the so-called mass-man and his culture. Ortega y Gasset noticed the changing social role of the “mass-man” in the 1950s. He contrasted him with the “select man” and thus characterized the two: “select man is not the petulant person who thinks himself superior to the rest, but the man who demands more of himself than the rest, even though he may not fulfil in his person those

¹ Ryszard Przybylski, *Pustelnicy i demony* (Kraków: Znak, 1994), 5.

² Jan Sochoń, “Komentujemy dzieła filozoficzne,” *Nowe Książki* 1 (1995): 21.

higher exigencies. For there is no doubt that the most radical division that it is possible to make of humanity is that which splits it into two classes of creatures: those who make great demands on themselves, piling up difficulties and duties; and those who demand nothing special of themselves, but for whom to live is to be at every moment what they already are, without imposing on themselves any effort towards perfection; mere buoys that float on the waves."³

According to Ortega y Gasset, the change in the participation of the mass-man and his role in culture manifests itself in a twofold manner:

1. "Mass-man" has now at his disposal a whole spectrum of possibilities which once were at the disposal of the elite minority only.
2. "[...] these masses have at the same time shown themselves indocile to the minorities – they do not obey them, follow them, or respect them; on the contrary, they push them aside and supplant them."⁴

This description can be complemented with a third point that we can draw from cultural studies, i.e. the claim that elite culture, the so-called "high culture", tries to win the favour of the masses and enters a dialogue with them, drawing from their motifs for its creativity, so as to satisfy the tastes of the masses. The elites aspire to the masses. It is no longer the mass art that popularizes the elite art, but the other way round – the mass-man sets all the standards, which is emphasized by Stefan Morawski in his works on postmodernism. "Postmodernism is destructive, because it tries to put high art within the frames of popular culture; it gravitates towards a symbiosis with mass culture."⁵

Postmodernism resigns from the gravity of the mission – from the search for meaning. It plays with everything. It is, in the understanding of Ortega y Gasset, a "cocksure dandy", a favourite who is allowed to do everything. The postmodernist transformation of the social structure can be treated as the next step, the stage that follows the "revolt of the masses."⁶

Gerhard Schulze, who has been describing the changes in everyday life that took place in Germany from the end of the Second World War to the 1990s, distinguishes two types of activity: "exerting influence" and "choosing."⁷ "Exerting influence" is the production of possibilities, while "choosing" is their utilization. These two terms do not correspond to the concepts of "production" and "consumption", because they are not limited to the economic aspect. They rather try to encompass the

³ Juan Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*. Online. <http://morfoze.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/ortega-y-gasset-the-revolt-of-the-masses.pdf>, p. 3. (Accessed on 10 June, 2009)

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁵ Stefan Morawski, "W mrokach postmodernizmu. Rozmyślenia rekolekcyjne," in *Dokąd zmierza współczesna humanistyka*, ed. Teresa Kostyrko (IK, 1994), 16 ff.

⁶ I refer here to the title of the book by Ortega y Gasset.

⁷ Cf. Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt/New York, 1992).

psycho-social area of attitudes and patterns of thinking which dominate in everyday life. According to him, the most general characteristic of the changes in the social reality is the passage from the active to the passive position. Paradoxically, this change is related to the "expansion of possibilities", i.e. the increase of the production of goods on the one hand and the enhancement of assimilative possibilities on the other. The expansion of possibilities also includes the ego itself. "Aided by the hordes of advisors and therapists who have been multiplying in the 1970s, people are more and more intensively preoccupied with being someone else," writes Schulze.⁸ Subjectivity and orientation towards sensations mark the boundaries of interest and engagement. In the 1970s and 1980s, the chief task of culture professionals was to draw people out of passivity, activate them and stimulate their cooperation. "Passive TV consumer," "lethargic holiday-maker" and the lack of "cultural independence" were all a part of the phenomenon that had to be changed. However, in the second part of the 1980s and in the 1990s the missionary tendencies disappeared, along with any interest in them. Comparing oneself to the others, ambition, envy and competition are perceived as stressful, which leads to the weakening of emotional bonds (both negative and positive) between various social groups. The Don Juan type of a personality pattern is becoming more and more common – people are focusing on individual emotions and their intensification. Change becomes a rule and in turn, paradoxically, something repeatable and continuous. Finally it becomes monotonous or boring as well and we no longer notice it or react to in any way. Uncertainty, disillusionment and the diminution of the capability to feel are the results of the orientation towards sensation (*Erlebnis*).

Christopher Lasch noticed analogous characteristics in the American society of the late 1970s, although he refers to different materials than Schulze. He is less concerned with economic and sociological sources. Instead, he focuses on psychiatric and literature-related ones. Still, the image of the social personality of the Americans in the 1970s contains very many colours similar to the ones from the portrait of the German social personality of the 1980s. Although it appears for different reasons, narcissism and its effects – emptiness, anxiety and apathy – would be one of the common traits.

After the political turmoil of the sixties, Americans have retreated to purely personal preoccupations. Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating healthy food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to "relate" [...]. Harmless in themselves, these pursuits, elevated to a program and wrapped in the rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics

⁸ Gerhard Schulze, *Metamorfozy rzeczywistości społecznej od lat 50-tych* (Warszawa: Goethe Institut, 1994), 17.

and repudiation of the recent past.⁹ The ideology of personal growth, superficially optimistic, radiates a profound despair and resignation. It is the faith of those without faith.¹⁰

Authors who describe the transformations of the social personality under the term “postmodernism” do not limit themselves to a particular country, but give their descriptions a universal character. Their statements also contain an image of passivity and apathy, which would be a paradoxical consequence of the excess of stimuli and possibilities, as well as of the lack of internal certainty. “I dream of a simpler world,” writes Bauman, “a more explicit one that could be grasped with a single glance and measured with a single measure. The longing for a «great simplification» is a typically postmodern version of melancholy which we are familiar with since ages [...] this common ailment of the postmodern reality.”¹¹

It is constantly underlined that the element which influences the shape of human personality is the increasing role of the media in the production, circulation and consumption of cultural goods. The “postmodern man” is a product of the mass-media – he is a mass-man.

However, the identification of the postmodern personality with a mass personality obscures the bigger picture, because it eliminates the “select man” from the field of observation, or suggests that he has transformed into a mass-man, which after all seems unlikely. The description of changes which take place in the more or less autonomous fields of culture, e.g. religion, art, science and literature would imply something contrary, namely the fact that the “select man” has become more refined, self-conscious and, it might be claimed, heroic, as he has to make his decisions alone. Thus, his problem would not lay in the intellectual passivity, but rather in the fact that he is intellectually overactive, which is the source of the longing for the above-mentioned “great simplification” – passivity. This longing is different from being passive. Bauman’s description would therefore relate to the problems of Gasset’s “select man” rather than to the mass-man. Although they share some characteristic features in the postmodern era, it is not fair to identify them and fail to see the things that differ them from each other.

How does it happen then that the mass-media actively shape human personality? Is it possible to resist this influence?

It is a commonly held opinion that the mass-media adapt to the tastes of an average person. Still, the taste of an average person is not fully shaped and cannot be perfectly diagnosed. Although some of its features are widely known, like the fondness for emotional and sensual scenes which are clear and straightforward, the broadcasting of programmes based on these qualities not only satisfies the tastes of most viewers, but also reinforces and shapes them. It happens so, because, among other things,

⁹ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, 1991), 4–5.

¹⁰ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (London, 1980), 103.

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej* (IK, 1994), 38.

the mass viewer has not developed the “resistance to art”¹² and the publicly transmitted content functions for him as a pattern that is to be followed.

It remains a mystery why it happens so¹³, although the phenomenon itself and its role in social life have been discovered already in biblical times. One only needs to recall the Gospel according to Saint Mark: “[a]nd whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”¹⁴ “Offend” means in this context no less than to gain influence through imitation which is possible when the resistance mechanism is absent. The attitude of resistance cannot be understood as the lack of sensitivity. On the contrary, the necessity of resistance is meaningful only when there is a possibility of seduction. The tension between sensibility and resistance was aptly expressed by Baudelaire: “But if, without being entranced, / Your eye can plunge in the abyss, / Read me, to learn to love me.”¹⁵ Mass-man is not capable of such strains of mind. The most general rule that governs his behaviour is the rule of comfort¹⁶ – both material and psychic. This is also the rule that the mass-media refer to and at the same time reinforce.

Martin Esselin¹⁷ who has analyzed the structure of the television transmission claims that the television does not only present the real world, but also transforms it. According to Esselin, reality changes in such a way as to fit the demands of television, i.e. to draw the viewers’ attention. At the root of this behaviour lies an axiological thesis that being in television is more important than being in reality. What is more, being in television is true being, while being in reality is not being at all. From here there is just one step to the claim that television is reality.

The blurred sense of reality which is generated by a television broadcast facilitates the formation of other psychic features which are listed among the characteristics of people living during the postmodern transformations. Jean Baudrillard groups them all under such terms as “disappearance” or “lack.” The disappearance of the boundary between reality and its image also facilitates other disappearances, e.g. of memory (amputation of the past and tradition which shakes the sense of identity), of the sense of necessity (which results in the lack of gravity, as well as the responsibility for one’s deeds and the functioning of closer and distant society) and of standards (which implies the inability to improve). Finally, there is the

¹² Cf. Mieczysław Porębski, *Granica współczesności. Ze studiów nad kształtowaniem się poglądów artystycznych XX w.* (Wrocław, 1965).

¹³ Cf. Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (SAGE, 1991). Chapter 5: “The Aestheticization of Everyday Life”.

¹⁴ Mark, 9:42, *King James Version of the Holy Bible*. Online: <http://ebible.org/bible/kjv/>. (Accessed on 10 June, 2009).

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, “Epigraph for a Condemned Book.” trans. William Aggeler, in: *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Online: http://justcheckingonall.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/baudelaire-fleurs_du_mal.pdf, 442. (Accessed on 10 June, 2009).

¹⁶ Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writing* (Cambridge, 1988).

¹⁷ Cf. Martin Esselin, *The Age of Television* (San Francisco, 1982).

inability to concentrate which runs parallel to all of the above-mentioned problems.

What features of the television broadcast are “responsible” for the changes in human personality, as described above?

According to Esselin, one of the features of the television broadcast which can be said to bear some responsibility for the changes in the psyche is the “dramatic means of communication.” The phenomena shown in television look real. Still, as long as they are irreversible in reality, they can be rewound in television. Every situation can be repeated many times; evil deeds or simple frustration can be wiped out or rearranged. Perhaps it satisfies the childish desire for omnipotence. Such an attitude is generalized and transferred back onto the reality that is outside television, the consequence of which might manifest in the above-mentioned ways of experiencing.

Another feature which fosters the emergence of such ways of reacting is the “sandwiching” of the news items which are served to the viewer in neat slices of fictional stories. Their common feature is repeatability – one can watch them over and over, more than ten times, because they exist only as images and appearances. An unqualified viewer sometimes does not need more than a couple of common features in order to identify two phenomena – in this case the real news with fictional stories. Let us add an observation of our own – the mass nature of the images of disaster and harm shown in television makes us grow accustomed to them, neutralizes moral sensitivity and dulls the attitude of engagement.

These personality changes are often called the aestheticization of life or aestheticism. These notions do not refer to the idea of beauty and aesthetic values, but rather to the psychological aesthetics – the area of aesthetic research which is primarily preoccupied with the aesthetic experience in its creative and receptive form. Still, as reflection on the reception or creativity in aesthetics is always combined with a consideration of aesthetic values – since it is always the creation or reception of beauty, charm or ugliness – the postmodern aestheticism is focused on reception alone. Creativity and value both disappear.

The notion of aesthetics is employed in this essay in its pre-aesthetic meaning, along the lines of Baumgarten’s understanding of it as the knowledge of sensual sensations. The aestheticization of life would equal the exchange of attitudes oriented towards values, norms, rules, criteria and justification of assessments, for those which emphasize sensations, feelings, experiences, emotions and expression. It signals a move from the axiological domain to psychology, from the rational and logical approach to a sensual and emotional one.

Is aestheticization, understood in this way, the same thing as aesthetic experience? Do they share any features?

Psychological research in the area of aesthetics tries to determine the psychological conditions and mechanisms that lie at root of the aesthetic experience. Another aim is to grasp those which are specific and make it possible to discern the aesthetic experience from others. The very fact

that such research is taking place contradicts the postmodernist attitude, because it is a search for the boundary between that which is aesthetic and that which is not, which entails the reinforcing of that boundary. It is a postmodernist tendency to overcome boundaries, or at least encroach on them. It should not come as a surprise, since aesthetics as a separate discipline is the creation of enlightenment and modernism. The effects of these pursuits may seem analogous to postmodern experiences. Still, it is an illusory track.

Let us consider four crucial terms:

1. Disinterestedness – this term was introduced by Kant. He described it as the lack of interest in the real existence of the object that we consider aesthetically. “Now when the question is if a thing is beautiful, we do not want to know whether anything depends or can depend on the existence of the thing either for myself or for any one else, but how we judge it by mere observation (intuition or reflection).” Further on, he states that “[w]e must not be in the least prejudiced in favour of the existence of the things, but be quite indifferent in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste.”¹⁸
2. Contemplation – a feature also noticed by Kant and analyzed by Polish aestheticians in the inter-war period. Contemplation is disinterested (in the above sense) fondness for the appearance, without the wish of altering it. Władysław Tatarkiewicz claims that experiences are aesthetic, because “[...] we have in front of us the object, when we look at it, when we perceive it, when we contemplate it. Looking alone brings us joy and instils a fondness for the perceived object.”¹⁹ Henryk Elzenberg claims that “by contemplation I understand a certain prolonged perception, an act during which we no longer penetrate the object cognitively, but retain in our field of consciousness those elements and features that we have previously recognized.” He adds that contemplation is also “the experiencing of all those emotional states which have awoken within us and develop as we contemplate the object, owing to the fact that we do so.” Finally, he remarks that “contemplation is one of the natural and intentional attitudes that people assume when confronted with a valuable object.”²⁰ To complete this picture, let us also quote the views of Jakub Segał and Wallis. The former places contemplation at the heart of aesthetic experience and identifies it with “a passive, complete surrendering to the sensations and sensations only.”²¹ Wallis speaks of an aesthetic use in which contemplation has great importance, but is not the only element:

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*. trans. J.H. Bernard, online: http://files.libertyfund.org/files/1217/Kant_0318_EBk_v4.pdf, 56. (Accessed on 10 June, 2009).

¹⁹ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Druga przez estetykę* (Warszawa: PWN, 1972), 80.

²⁰ Henryk Elzenberg, *Wartość i człowiek. Rozprawy z humanistyki i filozofii* (Toruń, 1966), 20.

²¹ Jakub Segał, “O charakterze psychologicznym zasadniczych zagadnień estetyki,” *Przegląd Filozoficzny* (1991), 374.

[...] when looking at a landscape or picture, when listening to music, reading a novel, or watching a play in theatre we focus all our attention, concentrating entirely on the object of our perception. We plunge into it, sink in it and are lost in it. This object completely fills our field of consciousness [...] [so that] we are a purely experiencing subject.²²

3. **Insularity** – “Every sensation is separate and insular in a twofold way [...] a) it does not refer to other aesthetic experiences and b) it breaks the flow of our daily life.”²³ Insularity is closely connected with a feature that Ossowski called “living the moment.” Both features underline the isolating character of the aesthetic experience. Insularity is isolation in space, while living the moment is an isolation in time.

Aesthetic experiences can be treated in many respects in the same way as the so-called ludic experiences [...] [since] in all kinds of play and in all aesthetic contemplation there is a certain profound common denominator which may be the source of disinterestedness that is connected with those states: in all of these cases we live the moment [...] we cherish the present regardless of what is going to happen in the future. These are actions and experiences which draw us by themselves and form something like holes in the continuity of our serious life, because serious life is about looking into the future.²⁴

A very interesting thought was also expressed by Stefan Baley:

[a] truly aesthetic attitude definitely demands that the one who adopts it shall split in two. It is necessary that one part of his psyche should enter into the given object and stick to it somehow, while the other part remains free and is not actively engaged in this process, contemplating only its form and content. In order to experience something aesthetically, one should allow himself a certain freedom for a disinterested perception, as if stepping aside and outside.²⁵

The four above-mentioned features of the aesthetic experience: disinterestedness, contemplation, insularity and living the moment can serve as the basis for defining the passivity and aestheticism of postmodern mass-man.

Would it be justified and to what extent? Does passivity imply the aestheticization of life? It might seem so: contemplation, disinterestedness and isolation can be associated with passivity, for they define inner sensations and behaviour – not a political, economic or even social type of activity. Still, inner sensations and behaviour cannot be considered passive. Treating inner life as *ex definitione* passive can be partially responsible for the shape of the mass-man, especially for his passivity, that is the lack of developed psychological mechanisms which enable to react aesthetically and build resistance to the luring charm of images and words.

²² Mieczysław Wallis, “O doznaniu estetycznym,” in: *Przeżycie i wartość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968), 238.

²³ *Ibid.*, 239.

²⁴ Stanisław Ossowski, *U podstaw estetyki* (Warszawa: PWN, 1958), 271–272.

²⁵ Stefan Baley, *Psychologia wieku dojrzewania* (Warszawa, 1931), 227–228.

Is passivity an essential element of the aesthetic experience? Apart from Segal, who emphasizes the passive process of giving in to sensations, no one treats passivity as an important element of the aesthetic experience. On the contrary – it is underlined that the psychic process of the aesthetic experience is complicated, multi-layered and dynamic. Roman Ingarden puts it in this way: “aesthetic experience is a very active phase of life. Only in some moments there is place in it for a purely receptive attitude.”²⁶

Leopold Blaustein expresses a similar idea to that of Ingarden. He does not doubt that the aesthetic experience demands from us intense spiritual effort. He writes that

[...] the one who experiences aesthetically is active and actively influences the constitution of the object. What he sees and hears does not only depend on the properties of the perceived object, but also on the way in which the process of perception develops.²⁷

Thus, already in the phase of perception we have to be active. Sometimes we change something within the object: we oversee its shortcomings or supplement some element with our fantasy, or focus our attention on one part so that the others become merely secondary. Finally, we can isolate the object from its more general background. When perceiving moving objects, e.g. in music or ballet, we have to use memory and refine our perception even more, because we have to notice not only the particular elements, but also the transitions between them.

The differentiation between the reproduced, the imaginative and the reproducing object reveals other fields of activity in the aesthetic experience, e.g.:

- 1) a change of psychic attitudes within the aesthetic frame from the reproduced to the imaginative and reproducing objects [...],
- 2) an unconscious projection of one's own body onto the imaginative objects.

Thanks to the mechanism of projection, we notice the spatial relations that exist between the elements of an imaginative object. For example, I see that in a picture, as Blaustein observes,

[...] the building in the background is higher than the one to the right. It is lower in the picture, but I take into consideration the fact that the building with turrets is more distant from me than the house to the right²⁸

– not from the “I” which is sitting and looking at the picture, but the “I” projected into the world depicted on the painting, that is the world of imaginative objects. Similar is the case with the perception of time of imaginative objects. Blaustein, however, does not define the psychological mechanism that would be responsible for the perception of imaginative time. The ability to notice the spatial and temporal autonomy of objects

²⁶ Roman Ingarden, *Przeżycie, dzieło, wartość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1966), 12.

²⁷ Leopold Blaustein, *O ujmowaniu przedmiotów estetycznych* (Lvov, 1938), 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

in the imaginative world from the objects in the real world becomes a necessary condition for the change of attitude from the one inherent to the natural world to the one operating in the imaginative one. This defends us from illusion, as well as confusion of the natural and artistic realities. As Blaustein has it, “[...] a sense of the autonomy of the imaginative artistic reality”²⁹ does not leave us for even a slightest moment.

The identification of the imaginative world with the natural one is characteristic for childlike perception in which the mechanisms of changing attitudes do not function or have not yet been developed.

Apart from the recording and imaginative perception, Blaustein discerns a “signifying perception” which is characteristic for the processing of literary works or, as we may add, any kind of a verbal message. The basic element of the signifying perception is the “conceptual understanding of signs, expressions of speech” – the ability to understand symbols, to notice the symbolic or schematic character of representation and its beauty (simplicity, clarity and purposefulness). It is also the ability to interpret.

The direct psychological basis of the discussed aesthetic pleasure that springs from the accuracy of the schema in relation to the symbol is the schematic representation with reference to the symbolic, although it requires as its indirect psychological basis the image in which there is given the schema with reference to the symbol.³⁰

It is also interesting from our point of view to investigate the half-aesthetic feelings, such as horror or sublimity, which are evoked by the symbolized objects alone. Since these feelings occur

[...] as elements of the aesthetic experience, they are different from the feelings evoked in reality, outside their aesthetic representations.³¹

What guarantees this differentiation is – I claim – their “quasi” character, analogous to the perception of time and space. Just like other aesthetic experiences, these are not “true” feelings. The “quasi” character of aesthetic experiences – their insularity – is possible to obtain as a result of the workings of the psychological mechanism that changes the attitude from that of the natural world to that of an aesthetic one. This operation reveals the boundary between these two worlds. It can be passed, but its crossing is accompanied by a consciousness of that fact, as well as the awareness of the difference in the rules that govern these two domains.

Blaustein’s analyses clearly reveal that the aesthetic experience activates those psychic mechanisms that participate in everyday life, e.g. perception, memory, imagination and empathy. The aesthetic experience refines and specifies these faculties, bringing about new mechanisms and functions. They keep the mind active and agile, just like gymnastics keeps the body fit.

²⁹ Leopold Blaustein, *Przedstawienia schematyczne i symboliczne* (Lvov, 1931), 131.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

³¹ Mieczysław Wallis, *op. cit.*, 239.

Mieczysław Wallis does not doubt in the active character of aesthetic experiences as well:

in every aesthetic experience there are active elements; decisions, choices, [...] we want to prolong that state [...] we stand on one side or the other, [...] erotic arousal [...] sharpening of the appetite. However, when the appetite or desire grows stronger, the aesthetic experience disappears. It [...] evokes a certain surge of energy within us, some kind of a general need to act, a desire for activity and expansion.³²

All the above quoted examples of aesthetic thought had as its aim the pointing out of the fact that the aesthetic experience does not have a passive character. On the contrary, it is perceived as a complicated activity of the mind, which is a source of pleasure, but whose side effect is also the sustaining of the tension of all psychic powers, as well as the upholding of psychic divisions and distinctions whose lack flattens the perception of the world and interpersonal relations, facilitating at the same time manipulation of people.

Of course, passive elements of the aesthetic experience do exist, but they do not constitute its core. It is misleading to suggest that the mentality shaped by television is passive and that it is an indicator of aestheticism in life. I do not question the intellectual passivity of the mass-man, but I do query its relationship with aestheticism. My opinion is that a person who has had an aesthetic training is not transformed into a mass-man in the postmodern era, but rather into a refined human being.

Contemplation is understood superficially. Only one of its aspects is exploited – passivity. What is being forgotten is that it is connected with values, that it is as if a natural reaction of the human mind to value, be it an aesthetic or religious one – something that we react to with admiration, and wish that it would last in an unchanged, perfect form.

As aestheticization is becoming a more and more popular term for describing a receptive personality that is oriented towards sensations, it is commonly underestimated that in traditional aesthetics all aesthetic reception, not only contemplation, is connected with values.

The insularity of the human experience at the end of the 20th century – in the sense of our isolation from other experiences, their fragmentation and the break with the past and the future – seems to go along the line of the insularity of aesthetic experience as described by aestheticians. There also appears an important distinction whose roots lie in the separation of the psychological mechanisms that are active in both situations. In aesthetic experience, the insularity is achieved by the change of attitude from the natural to the aesthetic one. Insularity in the natural attitude might lead to the psycho-social behaviour becoming schizoid.

Finally, we can come to the question of those emotions Blaustein called half-aesthetic. I think that he would include among them also erotic

³² Ibid.

arousal, disgust and fear – all the feelings caused by the import of brutality and eroticism into film and theatre scenes. Within the aesthetic attitude, all of these feelings – as he claims – are as if “untrue.” We distance ourselves from them and are constantly aware of the imaginative separateness of the artistic reality, in other words achieving a sense of insularity. It guards us against contamination with these feelings, from being infected by them. Moreover, it facilitates the above-mentioned aesthetic resistance. If there is a lack of aesthetic insularity and the aesthetic attitude is underdeveloped, these feelings lose their half-aesthetic character. They become natural feelings, because they cannot be anything else within the frame of a natural attitude.

The natural insularity differs from the aesthetic one in the fact that it is homeless, that it does not have a place to return to – the aesthetic attitude can always return to the natural one. Perhaps in this sense Baudrillard is right in claiming that the postmodern culture (in its mass version, if we may add) is a culture of lack and the postmodern man in his mass variant is, perhaps unfortunately irreversibly, a man of a flattened personality. What remains to be addressed is the influence of postmodern transformations on the “select man” – one who has developed various mechanisms and levels of psycho-social functioning through a commune with art.

Trans. Grzegorz Czemieli

Tony Benn

“Bad Painting”: An Examination of the Phenomena of “Bad Painting” through the Work of Pragmatists

Abstract

This essay is an investigation into artist’s strategies for rule testing and critical investigation within recent painting practices, primarily within ‘bad painting’ art practices where conscious decisions are made to paint badly. The research concerns the devaluation of the body within aesthetic discourses that tend to prioritise category definition. This is both a historical problematic going back to Edmund Burke’s definitions of beauty, and an ongoing source of debate about the valorisation of visual space over haptic space within contemporary painting practices.

What are the implications for painting practice if an artist deliberately and consciously sets out to paint badly? The essay builds upon Richard Shusterman’s book *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and questions rationalist approaches to aesthetics developed from Immanuel Kant to Theodor Adorno. It points towards a somatic understanding of painting practice that leads away from category bound definitions of the good in art practice. Incompetence and gaucheness within the making of a bad painting are necessary correctives to the old normalising habits of aesthetic evaluation that have become acceptable disembodied orthodoxies within institutions.

This essay sets out to explore a range of issues that arise from the notion of “bad painting”, which was a term that came to have some currency within art practice and art criticism from the late seventies onwards. Does a reliance on category definition of what is good or bad painting offer a meaningful discussion of our experience of painting?

What has become one of the usual normative starting points in discussions around aesthetics has been the preponderance of the use of category definition as a means to explore what is meant by good and bad. This discussion in part arises from enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and Burke who sought a global definition of Beauty that could be applied across all phenomena, as the a priori method of enquiry.¹ To some

¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, transl. James Creed Meredith (Oxford University Press 1957).

extent this continuing drive for an absolute definition still exists within later writers such as the work of Adorno perhaps the most influential 20th Century philosopher of aesthetics and culture. Adorno's rejection of pleasure as bourgeois hedonism was tempered by a redefinition of real aesthetic experience that required self-abnegation and a submission to the objective conditions of art.² Though Adorno was sympathetic to art as a mode of behaviour, he nevertheless valued arts reification into objects because it allowed art to be a separate domain from life and therefore gave more space for a critique of bourgeois capitalism. He was of some influence within Clement Greenberg's writing; aside from Greenberg's own Trotskyist reasoning for an operative avant-garde culture as a critical bulwark against an increasingly supine bourgeois culture of consumption.³ Greenberg's conceptualisation of the immediacy of art experience as being separate from life has to some extent pushed other critiques of his work towards a more analytical approach to aesthetic experience.⁴ The problem that category defining philosophy exposes is that of searching for a category definition of Beauty or the Good, that can transpose across media and yet be subject specific. The attacks on experience by analytical aesthetics were founded upon the prioritisation of art objects over and above aesthetic experience. Continental philosophy has more in common with the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey and Shusterman, where poststructuralism deconstructs the object as a source of interpretations to be discovered. Its great claim, which is emancipatory, is that it opens up the texts to interpretation rather than as a closed self-sufficient system of knowledge. The text is an ongoing work within the practice of writing and reading. For analytical philosophy the fixation on a closed meaning made it possible for the object of criticism to be circumscribed and value judgements could be made that offered transparency and clarity of purpose.

Perhaps, the above schematic description of the terrain should lead us back to Burke's definitions of Beauty in his treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into our definitions of Beauty and the Sublime*, which in their overview are nearly comprehensive as might be fitting for a philosophy from an Enlightenment consciousness. Burke does however, make an intriguing omission around experience avoiding any admittance of the sensual body as being central to experience, However the definitions do come close to admitting sensuous experience as being a part its defining field. The

² T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1984)

³ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Pollock and After*, ed. Francis Francina (Harper & Row, 1985), 32. In his footnotes on "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", Greenberg quite plainly states that although some folk art can be of the highest quality, it is "Athene whom we want; formal culture with its infinity of aspects, its luxuriance, its large comprehension."

⁴ T.J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art" in *Pollock and after* ed. Francis Francina (Harper & Row, 1985), 54. "Greenberg is aware of the paradox involved in his avant-garde preserving bourgeoisie..."

enlightened subject of Burke's enquiry is similar in make-up to Kant's "disinterested subject".⁵

There have been some attempts to use logical analysis to determine what might be a "bad painting". The most notable one put forward, was by Terry Atkinson, who wanted to enquire into whether it was possible to "consciously make a bad painting". Here the issue of being fully cognisant arises from the apprehension of the experience giving only the looseness of phenomenological immediacy. This stems from Atkinson who as a member of Art & Language relied upon British empiricism to insist upon proving the value of "truth statements". The defining of terms is in part due to rationalist philosophy's need to define what its area of expertise was, leaving other areas to science or sub sets of knowledge, such as neurology or psychology to be defined in their own terms. This is the foundationalist logic that runs through rationalist philosophy. One could argue, nevertheless, that the continental literary philosophy has guided philosophy away from absolute claims for truth and foundationalist lines of reasoning, towards what is contingent and discursive within changing social practices. It is this identification of the contingency within art practice that leads analytical philosophy to use more rationalist frameworks such as "testing out" to make the practice articulate its philosophy more overtly. This does however leave aside some of the fundamental aspects of aesthetic experience which is, that it is a heightened experience that demarcates itself away from ordinary lived reality. It is important to note Adorno's emphasis upon real meaningful aesthetic experiences as opposed to the immediate facticity of the object, which cannot be understood in, and of itself. This would be where immediate experience in art leads to a secondary reflection that explores the ideological meanings and social conditions that shape its experience.

The extent to which linguistic analysis has infiltrated aesthetic discourses to the almost complete denial of the somatic apprehension of the art object has left a lacunae around the body as the source of real ameliorative effect that art can have in the world through experience rather than object definition. Here, I want to do no more than indicate the importance of writers such as Shusterman and Merleau-Ponty, who affirm the somatic within philosophical discourse.⁶ It is this lacunae around the sensuous apprehension of the world by the subject that points to a tension and possibly to a problem within aesthetics that requires resolving through an approach to the world as lived experience, where the search for absolute definitions has to cease at the point of "good enoughness" or simply at its contingency to lived material reality. In other words leaving aside the search for a global definition in order to ground

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, transl. James Creed Meredith (Oxford University Press 1957), 49. Disinterestedness carries with it a freedom from "want".

⁶ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 1992) as well R. Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the care of the self", *The Monist*, vol. 83, no. 4 (2000): 530–551.

experience in social discourse. The pragmatic philosophies of John Dewey and Richard Shusterman here have great pertinence.⁷ Especially, the latter, through his work in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, by being able to bring together two distinct camps of philosophy, the writings of, Merleau-Ponty and Foucault, and some of the work of the Anglo-Saxon philosophies of logical and linguistic analysis underpinned by Dewey's pragmatist philosophy. It is Shusterman's ability and dexterity in developing an argument that is not just a summation of argument between two seemingly opposite camps of thought but a genuine desire to propose a philosophy that describes and more importantly, changes our experience of the world for the betterment of all those who would normally be considered outside the remit of philosophy's usual audience, see for instance, Shusterman's engagement with rap music in his writing.⁸

To return to the question of goodness and badness; it would seem at first to be of paramount importance for the artist to have some form of absolute clarity about what is good or bad in art, and more importantly what is good and bad in their practices. It is, not always necessary to have total understanding of these, so long as the artist is aware that they exist and that these evaluations exist within a complex social network of discourses extending from the site of production through to the site of consumption. Otherwise we would not have the shocks and surprises that break the category of the object or how it might normally be understood. In other words, if an artist has been sufficiently well trained to locate their practice, historically and contemporaneously, then the work of positioning the object in the social space is carried between both sites by the social network and its discourses.⁹ Yet, this still doesn't fully account for the tacit knowledge that takes place at the very moment of making and doing in the work itself. It is here, that the artist, as suggested by T.J. Clark is able to take account of the serious process of making art and making cultural statements simultaneously.¹⁰ If the social sciences such as art history are more likely to be involved in interpretative arguments about the relative status of truth within the field of historical enquiry then it would seem that absolute arguments for a practice by artists restricted within category definition is no longer useful. There are some who would argue a division of labour approach, in that the artist "does", and the critic "decides" upon

⁷ John Dewey, *The Late Works of John Dewey* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). Cited by Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit., 25–33.

⁸ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit., 215–235. "For rap's artistic innovation, particularly its technique of sampling, is closely connected with elements of fragmentation, dislocation, and breaking forms."

⁹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Paris: Le presses du réel, 2002), 43. "They (artists) all root their artistic praxis within a *proximity* which relativises the place of visibility in the exhibition protocol, without belittling it. The artwork of the 1990's turns the beholder into a neighbour, a direct interlocutor... They prefer *immediacy* in their visual writing." (Author's italics)

¹⁰ T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea* (Yale University Press, 1999).

its value and merit to culture. This approach has been mostly discredited by the experience of artists taking responsibility for the reception of their own work from the Sixties onwards, although not without continuous rear guard actions by those who seek to maintain an ossified status quo or the actions of the market place to reinforce utilitarian notions of expertise and attribution of value.

What can be discovered in Bad Painting is that it is both an act of testing out of the orthodoxy of "good" painting and furthermore is a significant understanding of the tacit knowledge that painting offers to its audience. The neglect of tacit knowledge by philosophy has distorted the field of aesthetics to such an extent that the discussions upon art practices in the critical fields of aesthetics and philosophy have tended to overlook physical somatic acts, what Dewey might have called the "situation" of art. This will be referred to further on, as the aesthetic experience of art. Experience has become one of the key terms in the debate amongst pragmatist philosophers and philosophers of aesthetics, where philosophy is there not so much to describe the world as to transform it, and for it have an ameliorative force in the world. If Bad Painting, by logical definition invites the discussion of the terms good and bad and therefore, what would be a debate concerning evaluative judgements. The term also affirms and questions, that the orthodoxy is a rule or regime of power in the world and not just by implication a discrete series of judgements made by the gatekeepers to the discourses of art, which would come from a more Kantian influenced approach. Aesthetic experiences can affirm that "bad" art can also exist because to have a good aesthetic experience one must also have bad aesthetic experiences. The apprehension of the aesthetic experience is one of a heightened experience that demarcates itself out of the normal flow of the world, so a good aesthetic experience is one that is interesting and propels the subject to experience the world anew, a bad aesthetic experience is one that is uninteresting, boring and doesn't cause the subject to dwell upon the world. To have experience as the word in its origins suggests it is also to traverse the terrain of risk and danger too. It isn't necessary to rehearse all the arguments for or against Greenberg's Kantian use of disinterested evaluation in aesthetics but to note that the discourse of art is a shared discourse, a discursive act conducted amongst its group, in this case we can say, the "artworld", this is its field of expertise. As the delineation of aesthetic experience progresses it offers a widening of the discourses that can count as aesthetic; a process of ever expanding discourses that has been an ongoing process within the arts in the post 1945 period. The accounts of this widening discourse and expanding into areas typically not seen as art have to some extent been distorted by the philosophical demands that have promoted medium specificity or in later versions, category definition.

This leads us to considering and taking account of an art practice made in painting that is an embodied and cognisant practice. Bad Painting affirms the body as a site of experience and knowledge. It is the negation

of the Christian-Cartesian mind and body dualism that allows Bad Painting to affirm the body in the act of painting and in the viewer's experience of the painting. A good painting can also affirm the body and here one could speculate about what kinds of somatic experience are embodied by paintings as diverse as those by Lucien Freud or Ellsworth Kelly. The body that is affirmed by Bad Painting is not one that is centred, unified and conforming to 19th century ideals of Beauty such as Burke's enlightened eye, but is a body that is in a state of becoming and immanence and therefore capable of mistakes, failures, incompetence's and wilful acts of unlearning previous practices in order to renew its own knowledge of its own process in the world. This points us towards a body-centred tacit forms of knowledge embodied within painting, and a renewal of painting's own internal understanding of its process whilst understanding and affirming the discursivity of the practice of art as a public one.

In Burke's enquiry upon Beauty there follows a series of category definitions such as smoothness, delicacy, colour, taste and smell, whereas procreative acts are described merely as lusts. I am indebted to Shusterman's comments in a symposium that highlighted the value of using Burke to gain a historical purchase upon aesthetic experience.¹¹ Through Burke's definition of beauty and the sublime, ideas of pain, danger and terror are the strongest emotions that are aroused within the mind. States of mind that are closest to the apprehension of our corporeal existence in the world, pain is always uppermost rather than pleasure, as this is a more powerful state for the mind to recall.¹² It is also pain in the form of violence or sexual extremes that defines Georges Bataille's heightened state of mind.¹³ Would it be possible to bring together these two definitions of aesthetic and physical experience to re-define the category of the beautiful to include experience that would normally be considered outside of the categories of the good, the beautiful and the useful; taking experience as an embodied form of knowledge that has risk and uncertainty at its core and therefore as likely to be either bad or good?

Richard Shusterman in his book, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, takes us through some useful definitions of what aesthetic experience might be.¹⁴

¹¹ A symposium held at Univeristy of London 2003.

¹² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985), 40. "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day *experience*." My italics.

¹³ Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: John Calder, 1962), 39. "Man achieves his inner experience at the instant when bursting out of the chrysalis he feels he is tearing himself, not tearing something outside that resists him. He goes beyond the objective awareness bounded by the walls of the chrysalis and this process, too, is linked with the turning topsy-turvy of his original mode of being."

¹⁴ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit., see especially his introductory chapter on "Placing Pragmatism", 3–33.

Shusterman begins with, John Dewey's somatic naturalism in his book *Art as Experience*, where aesthetic experience is embedded within the human organism, as a basic need and activity. Aesthetic experience for Dewey is one that is indivisible with the normal processes of living and is a basic vital function of the human organism. It is to give a holistic integrated expression of a bodily and intellectual dimension.¹⁵ Secondly, noting Kantian aesthetics' notion of disinterestedness and attraction to analytical philosophy, it places the worth of art apart from and above instrumentality in order to protect art from utilitarian evaluation. This carries over into art for arts sake defence against the functionality of an industrialised world. Thirdly, where art has a global functionality within the organism as Dewey states, "in which the whole creature is alive, to aesthetic experience", it is then the philosopher who must understand what experience is. Here Dewey insists upon the deeper and richer experience that art offers as being more meaningful and satisfying to the human organism.

If we take these two cases of Burke and Shusterman and consider them together we might begin to also map out what might be the usefulness of the term "bad painting". If Burke has excluded sexual experience from his definitions of aesthetic experience, "the simple enjoyment of them is not attended with any real pleasure, lest satisfied with that, we should give ourselves over to indolence and inaction".¹⁶ We might be able to learn from this telling omission. What was once omitted allows, for its utterance later in wider discussions upon the history of aesthetics, in such writings by Dewey, Merleau-Ponty and Shusterman.¹⁷ It is a revealing lacunae, of the body being present in its absence. Michael Fried's claims for Merleau-Ponty's attitudes to the body for his own understanding of Antony Caro's sculpture in counter distinction to Minimalist work that was "surefire" and theatrical are a case in point.

Returning to Burke's categories briefly. The word experience is deployed in conflicting ways being both objective and subjective, both noun and verb. Experience seems to be both in the flow of life and out of the flow of life. It is important to review these categories because we can appreciate the unusual effort on Burke's part to establish experience at the heart of aesthetics whilst at the same time subtly shifting the terms away from Platonic idealism. It might be why there is, a curious distortion to the definitions advanced by Burke, a distortion about the nature and category of experience. This does let us consider what might be useful when thinking about experience and beauty in present day artefacts. One can

¹⁵ Ibid, 7.

¹⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, op. cit., 41. "It is therefore attended with a very high pleasure: but as it is by no means designed to be our constant business...it is not fit that the absence of this pleasure should be attended with any considerable pain."

¹⁷ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (Southern Illinois University Press, 1943), Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit.; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

now propose that experience in aesthetics be widened further to include sexual experience and why not drug induced experience, as in Foucault's expanded experience of "aesthetic of life".¹⁸ It also beckons us to reconsider what might be an aesthetic experience one that is not merely experienced by the few or the noble or the disinterested. The positing of experience at the beginnings of Burke's discourse that allows us to acknowledge the site of the body as the primary site of knowledge, aesthetic knowledge and experiential knowledge. From this insight into widening the discursive field of aesthetics, we can return back to some Burkeian definitions with the knowledge that the body is a site of knowledge and pleasure. It has until recently been a common position for philosophical discourse to render physical experience as uncertain and to always cast doubt on it, where the subjective is seen as an uncertain truth. Consider a category such as unity, one of completeness and consummation, and then reconsider its opposite definitions such as badness, incompleteness and how these opposite definitions help us define the field. If the body in its Platonic ideal is symmetrical and unified, what might happen to this ideal when we re-introduce the category of sexual experience into this term of unity? There is completeness and possible consummation. There is also beauty and ugliness, there is difficulty and magnificence, and there is tragedy and uniformity. To name just a few attributes to this sensuous experience.

Perhaps, as Shusterman has noted, Burke is within a long line of Platonic-Cartesian philosophical thought; one in which we can now begin to address by re-asserting the body at the centre of cognition.¹⁹ If, philosophy is 'a way of life', and not merely the product of the mind, then the health of the body becomes paramount to thinking.²⁰ Aesthetic experience becomes an experience, which is both phenomenological as well as categorical. That is, it is a sensation of the work as well as a critical appreciation of the work. Furthermore, it is the work of the viewer as well as of the object. As in the knowledge that the game plays the player as well as the player playing the game. Taking Kant's explicit identification of the subject as being at the heart of the experience where "pleasure and displeasure" will be experienced we might begin to see a connection to painting as a possibility that allows for goodness and badness in a philosophical questioning process that is both evaluative, and phenomenological rather than being propelled only by

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1986), 89.

¹⁹ Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the care of the self," *The Monist*, vol. 83, no. 4, (2000): 530–551. Shusterman's essay is mainly concerned with Foucault and the 'basic nature of bodily perceptions and practices and of their function in our knowledge and construction of reality'. The point is if the body becomes a part of the discussion of aesthetic experience which seems obvious to most practitioners of what we loosely term the 'plastic arts' then we have to begin to place the body at the heart of discussions upon aesthetics and therefore not eradicate its presence through claiming just the one part of the thinking process which is only the evaluative dimension present in most discussions on aesthetic judgement.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

category demarcation questions.²¹ Pleasure and displeasure both provide strong definitions of cognitive experience.

This is not to deny the evaluative, where aesthetics gains pleasure from the experience, it being both a process of learning and a training of thought. Aesthetic experience is one that steps outside of ordinary experience and is a heightened experience that is absorbing and focuses all of our attention on the experience. It demarcates itself out from everyday experience and so re-arranges the field of experience. It is a unique experience that identifies it as one that belongs wholly to art and becomes one of its category defining dimensions. If the aesthetic experience is widened thereby dispensing with category definition and valorising experience it would offer a valuable insight and affirmation of life thereby, as Dewey proposed, becoming an extension of the aesthetic into life as well as an enhancement and affirmation of life.²² It is here that rationalist analytical philosophy has problems with experience, where experience is in danger of becoming an empty term to be filled by predicates.

The body as the centre of art practice, principally painting, with the kinetic connection between hand, arm and eye can therefore, be taken as the neglected site that has been missing from discussions within aesthetics and principally aesthetic experience, which is sensory, and bodily centred. This is an embodied form of philosophical enquiry, which will map out how we as artists and writers can engage with transgressive acts of behaviour that question categories. As artists that are in a process of enquiry, rather than simply in a process of rebellion, the rebel will inevitably be recuperated back within the normative body or what Foucault would term the "docile body", of a regime of description and inscription of what is the norm and what is the possible.

There is a genealogy of processes of transformation where the issue of what is good and what is bad is scratched out upon the social nexus of what is merely possible. "Modernity's sad irony, Shusterman said, "is that art has inherited religion's spiritual authority, while being compartmentalised from the serious business of life." It is not certain if Shusterman meant or implied that art is ever nearer or further away from the serious business of life, as art and commerce are never far apart.²³ The compartmentalisation into categories of style, acts as a foreclosure on the serious business of signification. The following commodification of the art product takes

²¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, transl. James Creed Meredith (Oxford University Press 1957), 41–42.

²² John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (Southern Illinois University Press), cited by Richard Shusterman in, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 55 (1997): 29–41.

²³ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit., 20. "By thus compartmentalizing art and the aesthetic as something to be enjoyed when we take a break from reality, the most hideous and oppressive institutions and practices of our civilisation get legitimated and more deeply entrenched as inevitably real; Art becomes, in Dewey's mordant phrase, "the beauty parlour of civilisation," covering with an opulent aesthetic surface its ugly horrors and brutalities."

precedence over the serious business of the work of art, our experience of the art object in this utilitarian manner is lamentable becoming nothing more than the beauty parlour for the ugliness of life. For others, such as Bourriaud, it is this very “conviviality” with transactions that makes it such a discursive activity, and leads on constantly to a conversation with others and with the work, and is that not what the work of aesthetic experience is, in some part?²⁴ How can an art product be experienced unless it has visibility? However the regimes of visibility are controlled by the same regimes of commodification that exist in cruder fashion elsewhere in our society.

The regimes of visibility is a discussion which is lacking in the Shusterman delineation of aesthetic experience, where the field of discursivity and visibility, is to some extent left to its own devices while foregrounding the beautiful and the somatic. If an artist is to become visible, it is under the not so benign eye of the market as the arbiter of value – the most reified value is that of visibility. The task of philosophy is to rescue the good and the bad from the determinism of the market place. To address them further then is the task of the artist in providing an account of the culture we inhabit, good or bad, in the face of a grinding informational technological universe that is encroaching further and deeper into our selves. Art might begin to start making a public claim for what is good and what is bad. In order to do such a task purposefully making it badly would be a means to disrupt the “normative field” of art consumption and production. Accepting that we are working in a transformational field of ethics as well as aesthetics. Here I am not arguing for a narrow mechanistic approach to morals or politics, it is implicit within the development of Dewey’s argument for an art to impact upon ordinary living giving it an ethical dimension. If art can take on board the real issues following the debates of postmodernism such as its lack of history, what some have called “posthistory”, and its groping for shared public discourses then art would have a ground in a democratic dialogue with a public. Postmodernism as it stands today is a wholly managerialised discussion with neither public nor artist in any real meaningful dialogue with each other.²⁵ This is what Atkinson has called its “monolithic pluralism” whereby anything goes so long as the artist upholds the sterile conventions of an avant-gardist model of practice. Those such as Bourriaud and Shusterman are involved in the hard work of making the experience of art one in which everyone has a stake and a part to play.

²⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Paris: Le presses du réel, 2002), 43. “They (artists) all root their artistic praxis within a *proximity* which relativises the place of visibility in the exhibition protocol, without belittling it. The artwork of the 1990’s turns the beholder into a neighbour, a direct interlocutor.”

²⁵ Terry Atkinson, *Fragments of a Career* (Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 2000), 83. “(...) under the monolithic pluralism of Postmodernism all the changes on the well-tried resources were likely to be rung, much in the manner of a quack doctor trying remedies from the familiar ingredients...”

There is a training of the mind and the body in painting that goes largely unrecognised and seems to be a unique area of investigation, though this is not to make too large a claim for an ontological truth. This training is not perhaps one that always leads to healthy fit Olympian bodies. The dwelling upon phenomena and the attention to the inconsequential, demands a unique attitude of stillness and corresponding alertness to processing of material or thought. Does the pursuit of a critically aware painting provoke thought and recognition in the viewer? Does that mean that to paint badly necessarily leads to bad behaviour or ingesting large amounts of intoxicants, such as Guston or Kippenberger, for example.

In defence of Bad Painting²⁶

A painter stands in front of a flat sheet of board and starts to paint the surface quickly with his finger. From time to time taking his finger off the surface and dipping it into a tub of dark green acrylic paint, working from left to right and quickly covering the surface up to the outlines of what looks like a figure. Occasionally, the paint drips down in thin vertical slicks across the already covered surface adding a random cross hatch to the overall gesture to the paint that is moving across the board in a more or less horizontal movement. The start of one gesture never completely obscures the previous gesture and so covering the ground in a dappled manner. The figure is filled in with a pale pastel colour and some pinkish yellowish white for a flesh colour. The title of this painting by Jenney is *Girl and Vase*. There is no loss between what you see and the title, except the emotional loss of the little girl who is crying. When looking at this seemingly banal painting what is gained by looking closely is an awareness and experience of the paint slipping across the smooth surface of the wood. The materiality of the paint is of paramount importance, the facts of the painting, a painting of a girl and a doll are made absolutely abundant and clear. That what is left for the viewer is the paint, as all poetics has been removed from the figuration, the painting has arrived at a state of denotation. This seems to undercut the need for definitive statements of what is the evaluative category for this painting. If the argument previously rested upon category and boundary definitions, then the line of enquiry would turn towards what Terry Atkinson outlined in his thought, as to whether one could consciously make a bad painting.²⁷ This would provide us with a critique of normative practices of painting that define what is art. This is where the Atkinson and Art & Language critique is at its most acute and pertinent. But those definitions cannot help us formulate further truth definitions as to what is the good and the beautiful because the rationalist arguments for category definition

²⁶ A reference to T.J. Clark's, "In defence of Abstract Expressionism," *October*, no. 69 (1994).

²⁷ In a letter sent to the author, he posits the paradox of becoming skilful at 'bad drawing' "It was the business of *intending* to make a bad drawing which interested me – its logical status and possible historical absurdity."

disallows for experience of the art object, because experience is seen as subjective by most analytical philosophy and therefore not admissible.

The pragmatic philosophical positions of Shusterman and Dewey proposes experience as a foundation to knowledge and philosophy where the body and subjective states of being are taken as an embodied form of knowledge, much like Foucault's "aesthetics of life". This is not perhaps as extreme as it appears given the training accorded to the body and the mind by Greek philosophers going as far back as the Stoics and further. Following on from Shusterman's call to a somatic aesthetic, "we put aside philosophical prejudice against the body and instead simply recall philosophy's central aim of knowledge, self-knowledge, right action and the quest for the good life".²⁸ Then it becomes possible to re-think aesthetic experience as a bodily organised experience – somaesthetics. The implications of a somatic aesthetics for a discrete area of art practice such as painting are wide ranging. Painting being an art process that requires significant amounts of kinetic and intellectual processing of thought into an object of both visual and intellectual pleasure. (This can be argued for other medias as well, but for the purpose of this essay, I will keep it to painting.) One of the wider aims of Shusterman is to open out the field of aesthetics through the philosophy of pragmatism, which allows for the foundation of aesthetics based upon experience and a recovery "of the continuity of aesthetic experience with the normal processes of living."²⁹ This continuity has certain problems such as how do we identify an art experience as a heightened experience, stepping outside of or separating itself off from the flux of life? It also has tremendous possibilities regarding the institutionalised and increasingly redundant separation of knowledge between the arts and the crafts, which for the large part are separated through institutionalised behaviours in academia. This is wide ranging and democratising possibilities of the pragmatist aesthetics claim.

However, sometimes experience is an uneven affair, it doesn't all run smoothly, mistakes are made and learnt from, habits are formed that need to be unformed and becomes less habitual. The body is no less a site of learning and training than is the mind. Shusterman himself uses Feldenkress exercises to correct bad habits of the body indicating a process of de-habitation and re-learning. If somatic aesthetics is the critical use of experience and its engagement with the body, then the dysfunctional must be admissible to this field, in order for pragmatism to have a critical function upon the objects it chooses to discuss. Day in day out we are continually being burdened with yet more instrumentalist and brutalising

²⁸ Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the care of the Self," *Monist*, vol. 83, no. 4 (2000), 531.

"If we look beyond Platonic sources, we will be reminded that Socrates 'took care to exercise his body and kept it in good condition' by regular dance training."

²⁹ John Dewey, *Aesthetic Experience*, cited by Richard Shusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 55 (1997): 29–41.

strictures about our imperfect, obese, anorexic, bulimic, neuroticised bodies. In short, we are just not perfect enough, not symmetrical enough, and not beautiful enough. An "aesthetics of negativity" comes to mind where the corrective to negatively learnt habits about the perfect body are to play them out in order to correct them through the body. Clark's list that spells out modernism's processes of progress, illuminates this "aesthetics of negativity", giving us a series of resistances and retractions in the history of art to what would appear to be the normative and prevailing orthodoxies of art.³⁰ It is here at this limit of painting, at the liminal edges of practice, that practices become unlearnt in order for new discoveries to be made or old habits to become unlearnt. Art like philosophy performs a reflective and ameliorative function upon its culture. In much the same way, that we need to have representations of the body given back to ourselves in order for us to correct bad habits formed deep in our somatic selves.

In the immediacy of the production of a painting there are histories of art implied and problems of differentiation between subject and object performed that affirm the centrality of the body as a source of knowledge. This is where tacit knowledge is formed and performed on each and every painting, much as skill is a learnt craft performed as a received knowledge that is then tested out each time in the act of painting as either a transparent act or one that is restrictive procedure. One could expand this discussion further than just painting, if pragmatist aesthetics of experience really is an inclusive object then let's acknowledge other cultural activity such as punk music. The general effect that punk culture had on a generation who were told that music culture was about big business and the spectacular event, and not about culture being grounded in lived experience from the street or group it arises from. What punk culture gave back to culture in general was the knowledge that doing something for yourself no matter how low your skill base or how perverse the taboo lines being crossed; doing it and expressing it physically and viscerally, held more potency than staying at home and being invisible in your culture.

Bad painting has some of this vitality at its heart. It is a tacit knowledge working at its most fundamental in painting, where it is neither representation that is the art product, nor faithful mimesis, but the experience of working paint, Clark's serious business of picture making. A cultural process that stretches from the studio as the site of production to the public site of display and consumption. Even if, like Kippenberger you dream it all up in the bar with your mates, or like Jenney you smear it on the board with your finger, or like Guston you drink and paint, or like Golub you keep witness to the continuing ongoing cruelties of late capitalism, what is not being

³⁰ *Pollock and After. The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Francina (Harper and Row, 1985), 55.

"I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference...are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done."

performed by bad painting is a faithful and reverent reflection of culture to itself. What is important to bad painting is the physical act of making the painting as a somatic act of thinking upon the picture making process an ongoing reflecting upon the culture we inhabit, this is undeniably a formation of knowledge. There is a body making a painting, not merely a disembodied and disinterested mind, a mind only in possession of the logic of distance and formal symmetrical beauty. There is a body that is at the centre of the working process. Neil Jenney in a 1981 interview said rather appositely. "Baseball has the same principle – learn to stand right, breath right and sure it's life-enhancing."³¹ If, the work of art, as being the totality of, the artist's thought, the object and the viewer is in some asymmetrical space of communication, it is the body that secures the "work of art" in painting as an immediate cognitive experience. As Dewey noted by making a distinction between the "art product" the hardware if you like, and the "work of art", the software, "which is what the product does with and in experience."³²

It was never my intention to give a global definition of the field but to use the issue to explore themes that have been pertinent in my practice and several other practices that seemed to carry the most possibilities for discussing my central argument that Bad Painting is not a category definition problematic, it is more importantly about affirming a new outlook upon aesthetics that are body centred. By opening out a discussion on Bad Painting that prioritises the somatic rather than the compartmental definitions of Fine Art, it is possible to use this as a general tool for thinking about aesthetics and importantly ethics in painting.

Shusterman like Dewey prioritised the experiential as being central to the object and in so doing has avoided the pitfall of relying only on history as the arbiter and evaluative force in art practice. The experience of art, the working of art, body centred but not an inward looking one avoiding engagement with the social space, nor one disinterested and only cogito located, has to negotiate the world of experience through the body. It is reasonable to enquire as to whether this body, now a subject and a gendered one, experiences the world with complete uniformity. European philosophy has told us much about difference, interpretation, and resistance to fixed ideals of theory or criticism and boundary definition. My argument in this essay for a holistic and experiential approach to art that recognises the dynamic taking place both within the producer of the art object and also in the ongoing dynamic between the work of art and the audience. If, we are to fully recognise these dynamics it would seem perfectly clear and logical to say that the experiential approach to art and aesthetics would embody the distortions of the brutal, reifying forces of

³¹ ZG, no.3 (1981): 23. Interview with Neil Jenney.

³² John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 9 as cited by Richard Shusterman in "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55 (1999), 29–41

capital that are inflicted upon the human organism and that would have to be a part of its potential critique as well as its own organic unity. Whereas, Shusterman makes a large claim for pragmatism to offer a third way between European philosophy and analytical aesthetics, with the body spoken of as neutral, non gendered, and a body in harmony with itself or one that seeks harmony. This follows from his acceptance of Dewey's rather homely "upbeat aesthetic of natural energies...more likely to inspire hopeful 'New Age' explorers than disenchanting European intellectuals..."³³

A negative act of affirmation also helps us understand who we are as viewers to painting and participants in our culture. It is important to retain a residue of Adorno's aesthetics of negative critique, otherwise we risk continually being ridden roughshod over by the distortions of the market forces that control most acts of the visible, such as painting.

But what then becomes of our experience of art through a body that is distorted by the impulsive utilitarian forces at work in our culture, a somatic experience that is not conducted within a perfect self-balancing mechanism in that instrumentalist sense. Art as a separate function in a utilitarian division of labour between those who have access and those who don't has become the sacral replacement of religious experience. One major part of the experience of art is its separateness from a lived experience, that it is a heightened experience that demarcates itself out of lived experience; here we must reinforce the difference between experience as one that is heightened and the definition of the art object as being one that comes to be possessed only by those who understand how culture works. The nullity that is given back to culture is art as a separate function in the compartmentalisation of culture we inhabit, and the sterility of art for art's sake. The work of art as bad painting, is the constant corrective and ameliorative processing of knowledge using all means necessary in the business of picturing the culture we exist within. What aesthetic experience offers is a new formulation of the good in art that widens out the field of possibilities in an inclusive manner. Bad Painting as an extension of the field outside of demarcational skirmishing and offers a corrective to institutional orthodoxy as well as opening the field out – away from the museum experience of art as society's sacral experience. Here good and bad operate in co-existence with each other as polarities along the same line by which they exert themselves as a force for rethinking contemporary patterns of artistic behaviour all the while having to accept the contingency of producing art in a social nexus. Incompetence's and gaucheness within the making of a bad painting are necessary correctives to the old normalising habits of aesthetic evaluation that have become acceptable disembodied orthodoxies within institutions.

³³ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, op. cit., 10.

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notes for contributors

We inform all prospective contributors to *Sztuka i Filozofia* about the rules which we intend to follow in accepting texts for publication:

1. Articles submitted should not exceed 22 pages of normal typescript e.g. 1800 characters per page. Reviews should be no more than 8 pages long.
2. All notes in the article should be footnotes in accordance with the style used in the last volumes of *Sztuka i Filozofia*. Additional texts such as mottoes should also be accompanied by footnote with all bibliographical data.
3. Authors are advised to submit two printed copies of the text and a computer disc when sending by post or an electronic version formatted most preferably in MS Word 6 or Open Office when using email. Please email all data to sztuka.wfis@uw.edu.pl.
4. We remind authors to enclose information about their current academic affiliation and position, including postal address, email address and telephone number.
5. A short summary (up to 200 words) in Polish and English language and keywords should also be provided.
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