The Polish Journal
of Aesthetics

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AESTHETICS *and* AFFECTIVITY

Edited by

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CONTENTS

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Preface:
Aesthetics and Affectivity

The role of affectivity in aesthetic experience, and its importance in the study of aesthetics, is highlighted in this special issue. As the editors indicate in their introduction, it has been a theme since ancient times. And yet there remains some ambiguity about this since affectivity is so closely associated with the body, and, at least on many conceptions, aesthetics is supposed to involve experiences on a higher plane. Recent science and philosophy have focused on more cognitive contributions to our understanding of mind and experience, and in some cases this focus leads theorists to ignore affectivity. I think this is sometimes reinforced by a particular framing of issues in the field of aesthetics when it is oriented to the experience of the observer or appreciator of the artwork. One way to redirect our considerations is to think of the aesthetic experience of the artist, and specifically the performer, in the context of performing arts.

In studies of performance, however, one still finds models that overemphasize the role of cognition and cognitive control. One example of this can be found in recent debates about skilled performance where bodily processes clearly have a role to play, and the question is whether and to what extent higher-order cognitive processes are necessary for instructing and controlling the motoric elements involved in performance (for example, in dance, musical performance, theatrical acting, etc.). One side of this debate is well represented by Hubert Dreyfus (2002) who argued that expert

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performance should in some sense be mindless and that thinking about what one is doing most likely interrupts and diminishes performance. On the other side we find theorists like Barbara Montero (2016, 38) who argue that "self-reflective thinking, planning, predicting, deliberation, attention to or monitoring of […] actions, conceptualizing […] actions, control, trying, effort, having a sense of the self, and acting for a reason" are important factors that can improve performance. Christensen, Sutton, and McIlwain's (2016) proposal, which they refer to as a 'meshed architecture' model, nicely captures the idea that cognition and motoric processes need to be integrated. The model involves a vertical ordering divided into two poles: cognition at the top, descending to do its job of instructing and controlling what they portray as motoric automaticity at the bottom.

On either side of this debate there is little or no mention of affectivity, and for that reason the models proposed remain very narrow. One can introduce affect into the meshed architecture model, however, to get a fuller and more complex account of skilled performance, and the aesthetic experience that goes along with it. Affect shapes our ability to cope with and to couple with the surrounding world. In the broadest sense it includes emotion processes, but also more general and basic bodily states such as hunger, fatigue, pain, pleasure and more positive hedonic aspects. Affect may work differently in different types of skilled actions and performing arts (e.g., dance *versus* acting). The important differences may have to do with the way that affective factors are integrated or meshed with motoric/agentive factors, including the kinetic and kinaesthetic feelings associated with body-schematic processes. Affect may involve emotion-rich expressive movement, as in dance—movement that is like gesture and language in that it goes beyond simple motor control or instrumental action. Affect can mediate or modulate the different mixes or integrations of expressive and instrumental movements in athletics, dance, or musical performance.

In this regard, motor processes do not carry on autonomously, delivering technically proficient movement, to which we then add an affective or expressive style that may be occasion relative. Specific affective states may slow down or speed up such processes, for example, or lead to the adoption of a specific initial posture that has continued influence on the performance or on how the agent is functionally integrated with the world. Affect may in fact elicit and modulate appropriate cognitive processes, e.g., levels of attention and action monitoring. It can clearly facilitate an integration of cognitive and motoric processes—enriching the vertical mesh in expert performance. Importantly, however, affect allows for an integration attuned to targets and

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environmental features, taking us into what we can call the horizontal fea-tures of the performance situation. In this regard, affective processes take shape in our interactions with environmental and intersubjective factors. Simon Høffding's (2019) phenomenological analysis of musical perfor-mance, for example, shows that the specifics of the built environment (play-ing in a concert hall *versus* playing in a pub), as well as the musical instru-ments, the score, the music itself, the people with whom we are playing, the audience, and so forth, can all have an effect on the performer's affective condition, which, in turn, can loop around and affect the way that we cope with all of these factors (Gallagher 2021).

It's not difficult to see that such affective mediations, modulations, and meshings will have an effect not only on performance, but on the per-former's aesthetic experience. In this regard, in the aesthetic experience of the performer, the performance (the music or the dance, for example) is not an object that is merely observed. From the performer's perspective, it is performed and is experienced in a way that is the result of the integration of all of the above-mentioned factors. To be clear, at this point I'm talking about aesthetic experience *in* performance (i.e., the experience of the per-former)—not about the aesthetic experience *of* the performance or of the art (i.e., the experience of the observer). Of course, the latter (for example in listening to music or observing a ballet) is not unconnected with the former. Indeed, one might think that the aesthetic experience of the observer may in some way replicate, or derive from, or contribute to the aesthetic experience of the performer, as we find in empathic conceptions of the aesthetic.

As I mentioned, questions about aesthetic experience are typically framed in terms of the observer/audience perspective, and in a way that downplays the significance of the performer perspective. But, if the meshed architecture, which includes not just cognitive and motoric processes, but also affective, ecological and intersubjective factors, helps us to under-stand aesthetic experience in the performer, might it not also help us under-stand aesthetic experience in the observer? John Carvalho (2019), for exam-ple, has argued that viewing art is a kind of skill. He emphasizes the idea that the aesthetic appreciation of observed art—specifically painting—involves skill acquired in the practiced experience of observing art and thinking about it. So one proposal, that fits well with an embodied-enactive approach to experience, is that we can think of the observer/audience perspective as involving a skilled performance, and therefore think that there is also some kind of meshed architecture involved even in observation.

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Merleau-Ponty (2012, 315-316) offers a well-known example in this regard.

> For each object, just as for each painting in an art gallery, there is an optimal distance from which it asks to be seen—an orientation through which it presents more of itself —beneath or beyond which we merely have a confused perception due to excess or lack. Hence, we tend toward the maximum of visibility and we seek, just as when using a microscope, a better focus point, which is obtained through a certain equilibrium between the interior and the exterior horizons.

Indeed, one can think that in the observational stance there is a mesh of elements that include the painting itself, the museum, cultural practices, other people, as well as cognitive, affective, and motoric processes, such that the agent-as-observer is moved to take the proper stance in attunement with the artwork.

But here I'm just scratching the surface. This special issue dives deeper into the relevant issues, allowing new insights into the phenomenological analysis of embodied affectivity and its relation to perception and aesthetic experience, situated in a material and intersubjective world that includes institutions, cultural practices and normative structures.

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Introduction

For our "comrades"
of the Permanent Seminar of Philosophy and Beer,
for simply being there and simply being who they are,
both aesthetically and affectively.

The more you know, the less you feel.

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I don't want to think, I want to feel.

PEARL JAM

Feelings, emotions, phenomena of empathy and sympathy, appetites, desires, moods, and generally the whole sphere of affectivity make up one of the most fundamental dimensions of human life which, also with the advent of the so-called "Affective Turn" in various fields of the human and social sciences, has been the object of recent rediscovery and revaluation. Sometimes this renewed appreciation of the affective and emotional dimension of experience in contemporary thought has also been put in contrast with a certain primacy of the purely representational and cognitive dimension that has been quite characteristic of modern thinking and culture. As has been noted about the notion of atmosphere (Griffero 2018), "the humanities […], bypassing positivist conventions and endorsing more […] affective paradigms rather than […] cognitive ones," in the last decades have been focused "more on the vague and expressive *qualia* of reality (the how) than on its defined and quantified materiality (the what)": *mutatis mutandis*, a consideration of this kind can probably be applied also to the revaluation and rehabilitation of the sphere of affectivity in general.

With regard to what we have just defined as the overall significance of feelings, moods, emotions, and the entire sphere of affectivity, let us consider this: on the one hand, it is certainly possible to think and talk of something like a "common world" in terms of sensations or perceptions shared by all

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human beings. On the other hand, if we focus on each individual's emotions and feelings, and on how the latter often condition our perception and consciousness of the real, the notion itself of a "common world"—which is precisely one and the same for everyone with no essential differentiations between what is perceived by each individual and how it is perceived, experienced or felt—becomes somewhat ambiguous. As has been noted, "[a]ffective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience; rather, they are given *in* […] phenomena" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 182). That is, these components of human life act at such a fundamental level that they objectively condition our access to the real and permeate our whole experience of the world, well beyond the limits of a merely subjectively determined "as-if" dimension or level.

     If what has been said above is true with regard to our experience of the world in general, it is probably even more accurate and more evident in the specific case of our experience with art and the aesthetic. In fact, the above-mentioned fundamental elements or components of the human experience of the world as such, i.e., of the human experience understood at the most general level, also seem to play an essential role (although in different and sometimes problematic ways) in art and aesthetic experience. Of course, this has been widely (although variously and hence not always systematically and coherently) recognized since the beginning of Western philosophy and culture and in non-Western forms of thinking and worldviews. Focusing our attention again on the present age, we may notice that this has led in our time, among other things, to significant developments in several fields and subfields of contemporary aesthetics variously interested in the role played by the dimension of affectivity in human experience; including—for example, and without any presumption or claim for completeness—recent aesthetic conceptions connected to theories of embodiment and the extended mind (Noë 2015; Matteucci 2019), phenomenological aesthetics of atmospheres and emotional spaces (Griffero 2016), and also somaesthetics with a significant revaluation of the bodily dimension in its entirety (Shusterman 1999, 2019). As noted by Richard Shusterman about his original disciplinary proposal (namely somaesthetics), its roots in the original project of aesthetics as not only a theory of fine art and natural beauty but also (if not mainly) as a theory of sensory perception and its status of a discipline of both theory and practice: "the senses surely belong to the body and are deeply influenced by its condition. Our sensory perception thus depends on how the body feels and functions; what it desires, does, and suffers. […] Concerned not simply with the body's external form or *representation* but also with its

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lived *experience*, somaesthetics works at improving awareness of our bodily states and feelings, thus providing greater insight into both our passing moods and lasting attitudes" (Shusterman 1999, 301-302).

So, returning to "Aesthetics and Affectivity" as the topic of the present issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, we can say that reflections on the fundamental role played by passions, emotions, feelings, and moods in the human experience lead us to recognize, for example, that every experienced object, apart from its purely factual properties, presents some "splits" into which the subject fits, so to speak—specifically, to recognize that our description of reality, even as it appears in perceptual experience, is always full of "anthropological predicates" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 320 *et passim*). This recognition becomes fully apparent if we consider such experiences as fantasizing and dreaming (or in a more radical and even dramatic way, specific psychological pathologies in which the subject's "private world," primarily influenced by their emotions and feelings, sometimes almost wholly eclipses evidence of what we conventionally consider "real"), and also applies to a great extent to art and aesthetic experiences of different kinds.

From Plato and Aristotle to modern and contemporary times, philosophers have always assumed a close connection between art and what we may call the realm of affectivity, sometimes also developing forms of skepticism and suspiciousness towards them as supposedly irrational components of human life. However, throughout philosophy's history, there have always been other voices that have conceived of passions, feelings, and emotions differently. Such proposals lead to identification with emotional and even instinctual aspects, such as that of the feeling of horror, no less than with the obscure origin of the brightness of ancient Greek culture and art (Nietzsche 1999), or acknowledgment of the undeniably powerful and indeed constitutive role of "attunement" and moods in the *Da-sein*, i.e., in human existence (Heidegger 1996, §29, 126-131), or to the proposal for the rediscovery and rehabilitation of the specific "intelligence of emotions" (Nussbaum 2003).

Of course, philosophical reflections on affectivity with a specific focus on its role in the aesthetic dimension can also lead to questioning the validity and appropriateness of the customary use of categories such as "rational" and "irrational" that people sometimes tend to use in easy, unproblematic and somehow dualistic ways, both in everyday language and in scientific discourses. Indeed, it still appears as a widely shared and quite common belief that our feelings and emotions are unambiguously non-rational or merely irrational (and thus, as it were, potentially distracting, risky, or even dangerous). However, it is also true that many philosophers, psychologists,

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scientists, and especially artists (including poets, novelists, musicians, painters, performers, *et cetera*) have shown that it is very difficult—or perhaps even impossible—to lucidly draw a line to sharply differentiate the purely rational from the non-rational (and, say, merely emotional) components of our self-knowledge and also knowledge of the world. Human experience is made of mediations, constant interrelations between different aspects and moments, and strictly but simultaneously fluid interwoven components; so, the affective dimension, understood in all its breadth, richness, and variety, appears to be fundamental also in the general economy of our convictions and construction of our beliefs.[1]

Based on all this and still more and in intending to adopt a broad and open philosophical approach—the only one which can do justice to the multiform and complex character of a question such as that of emotions, desires, moods, and feelings—in planning and then realizing this issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, we invited authors to submit articles concerning the role of affectivity in human experience with a particular focus on aesthetics broadly understood, i.e., including both the philosophy of art and the philosophical understanding of sensory perception and experiences of the aesthetic. For this reason, in our Call for Papers for the present issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* we welcomed and indeed solicited the submission of proposals addressing (but not limited to) aspects such as: the phenomenological analysis of emotions and their intentionality; the relationship between emotion and perception in normal, pathological or dream-like/fantastic experience; the phenomenon of affectivity as part of the grounds of philosophical thinking and aesthetic experience; the revealing power of affective dispositions and emotional states understood as primary expression of the embedded character of the human experience in the world; the investigation of the various roles played by moods in the history of aesthetics, with particular attention to the contemporary age and current debates in aesthetics; the question concerning the corporeality of emotional states, including somaesthetic investigations; the relation between moods, aesthetic enjoyment and moral sentiments; the interaction between intellectual and emotional components within the aesthetic experience, including (but not limited to) artistic creation and fruition.

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   As guest editors of "Aesthetics and Affectivity," vol. 60/1 (2021) of
The Polish Journal of Aesthetics, we are now happy to present to our readers
a volume that, as the Table of Contents clearly shows, includes seven contri-
butions offered by several scholars of aesthetics. As readers will immediately
see by simply reading the titles of the essays collected here, and then under-
stand better by carefully reading the full papers, these contributions are
all strictly focused on the question concerning the affective dimension(s)
of human experience as explained before. Nevertheless, at the same time,
they are all different from each other as far as the cultural backgrounds,
the theoretical interests, the chosen methodologies, the particular topics
studied, and the specific aims of the various authors are concerned. In short,
we might describe the articulation of "Aesthetics and Affectivity" as a devel-
opment or progression that starts from art (literature, visual arts), pro-
gresses to aesthetic experience(s) (also connecting the latter to ethical ques-
tions and political implications), and finally arrives at the education of senses
as a way to profitably intersect the dimension of affectivity and the disci-
plinary field of aesthetics. In concluding our short introduction to the pre-
sent volume, we would like therefore to sincerely thank: all our authors
(Jandra Boettger, Carsten Friberg, Amy Keating, Patrick Martin, Marcello
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the long months of the year 2020 in which we worked all together, in our
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review process of evaluation of all the papers that we had received, some of
which were accepted for publication and some of which were rejected.

Laura La Bella, Stefano Marino, Vittoria Sisca

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Lorraine K.C. Yeung*

Why Literary Devices Matter

Abstract

This paper investigates the emotional import of literary devices deployed in fiction. Reflecting on the often-favored approach in the analytic tradition that locates fictional characters, events, and narratives as sources of readers' emotions, I attempt to broaden the scope of analysis by accounting for how literary devices trigger non-cognitive emotions. I argue that giving more expansive consideration to literary devices by which authors present content facilitates a better understanding of how fiction engages emotion. In doing so, I also explore the somatic dimension of reading fiction.

Keywords

Affects, Non-cognitive Emotions, Literary Devices, Fiction, *Psycho*

Introduction

"Norman stirred, turned, and then fell into a darkness deeper and more engulfing than the swamp." Thus ends Chapter 5 of Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, in which Norman has a bad dream about Mother after he buries Mary. Upon reading the chapter, I felt a strange sense of fatigue: my body felt weighed down, and my breathing became heavier. The experience of bodily feelings such as these when engaging with literary fiction is not uncommon. Verily, people often notice that literary fiction can evoke bodily responses in them. For example, Susan Feagin (2010) remarks that the line "So it goes" in Kurt Vonnegut's work of science fiction *Slaughterhouse-five* caused her to shiver. Contemporary critics of horror often comment that a work of literary horror "makes your flesh creep" or "sends chills down your spine."

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However, how does reading fiction in silence, a "rather bodiless activity," stir readers somatically? An intuitive explanatory answer is through emotion. As for how a work engages readers' emotions, an approach often favored by analytical philosophy turns to the plot and narrative, and fictional characters and events, for an explanation while leaving literary devices and stylistic elements underinvestigated. In other words, this approach tends to foreground content independent of how the content is presented, i.e., the style of a work.[1] I call this the "content-based approach." The approach makes sense to the extent that fiction, as Nick Zangwill sees it, "involves content first and foremost" (cited in Kivy 2011, 37). Zangwill's claim is true, especially for philosophers who take literary fiction as a vehicle for philosophical themes or ethical inquiry.[2] What merits more philosophical interest is, therefore, the propositional content. A related view motivating this approach is that our emotional responses to a work are products of propositional, cognitive states—be they "fictional truths," "thought-content," or "perceptual beliefs"—that the reader can garner from the work's content. This paper intends to make a case for the inclusion of literary devices as a proper object of study in the analytic framework of fiction and emotion. I first take a brief critical look at a content-based approach, namely, Noël Carroll's criterial prefocusing model, which accounts for how fiction engages emotions. After showing its limitations, I turn to an alternative model proposed by Jenefer Robinson (2005). Based on Robinson's model, I account for how literary devices deployed in fiction trigger non-cognitive emotion and contribute to our emotional engagement. I flesh out my account using passages taken from *The Reef* and *Psycho*.

1. A Content-Based Approach

Carroll's criterial prefocusing model leans toward cognitive emotions. The cognitive theory of emotion—in which a propositional, cognitive state is necessary for emotion—informed his choice of focus. Despite his recent concession that emotions are more often non-cognitive, affective responses,

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[1] Some examples of philosophers who lean towards this approach are Kendall Walton (1990) in his *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Martha Nussbaum (1995), and Noël Carroll, whose works will be discussed shortly.

[2] For example Nussbaum (1992, 23-29) approaches literary texts as indispensable components in ethical inquiry. Carroll's (2001) clarification view also purports that narrative fiction can clarify our moral understanding and emotions.

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he insists that our emotional responses to literature are cognitive because "they must be engaged imaginatively and understood" and "they are not reducible to perceptual responses" (2020, 9).

Carroll (2001) explains that cognitive emotions occur when cognition subsumes an event or object under a specific criterion or category. For example, anger occurs when one's cognition subsumes an event in the category of a "wrong done to me or mine," which is a criterion appropriate to the emotion anger. Similarly, in reading fiction, cognitive emotion occurs when readers subsume fictional events under a specific category. One of his favorite illustrative examples is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the author confronts readers with scenes of black families being separated and emphasizes the innocence and decency of the slaves "whose family ties are being sundered, and the cruelty and callousness with which it is being done" (2001, 226). So, the author prompts readers to "perceive the scenes under the category of injustice," which elicits in the readers "the affect of indignation" (2001, 226).

Carroll (2020) suggests that emotion directs our attention like a searchlight, scanning the environment for features that are subsumable under our reigning emotional state and that are vital to our interests; it "sound[s] bodily alarms that rivet our attention" (10). Meanwhile, unlike everyday situations in which emotionally pertinent features are selected from a massive array of largely unstructured stimuli, the details have usually been structured and made salient by fiction writers. As we have seen, he relies on a salient description of cruelty to explain how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* provokes readers' emotions.[3] We could draw another example from a novel about a zombie apocalypse, in which the writer may "describe in gory adjectival excess the suppurating bodies of the zombies, their decay and fragmentation" to engender the affect of disgust (2020, 11).

One may doubt that salient depiction alone guarantees emotional engagement; salient depictions of battles in a treatise on military tactics, for instance, have little emotion-inducing capacity. Carroll seems to notice this problem when he adds another necessary condition; the narratives should enlist readers' specific concerns, preferences, or pro-attitudes—any attitudes in favor of something. They prompt readers to find out if the protagonists in the previous imagined zombie apocalypse novel survive, or to hope for the rectification of the wrongs done to the black families in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

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[3] Nussbaum (1995, 93-97) likewise focuses on how Richard Wright's *Native Son* recruits white readers' sympathy for the black character Bigger Thomas by "drawing attention to misery", focusing their attention on the individual, and guiding readers to see the world—and the disadvantaged situation he is in—through his eyes .

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Still, a problem with this model is that while it may explain how literary fiction engenders standard, garden-variety emotions, it does not accommodate the more complicated, ineffable ones. Carroll's model quite readily sorts emotions into nameable categories. Conversely, critics often say that, for example, Kafka's works can induce a "sensory reaction" and emotions "of some sort" in readers, which can be described only through approximations such as "pain," "awe," or "horror." Robinson (2005) also notes that by reading a significant literary work like Edith Wharton's *The Reef,* some evoked emotions do not involve subsuming a fictional event under a criterion appropriate to a particular nameable emotion. Admittedly, critics and readers often do communicate emotions with others in terms of existing nameable emotions. However, the shades of emotions experienced during reading can be more subtle, complex, and ambivalent, eluding Carrollian categorization.

This limitation, I think, results from applying the "criterion of appropriateness" of real-life emotions to fictional emotions. Undeniably, many fictional emotions do follow similar criteria of appropriateness as these everyday emotions. Nevertheless, writers may also create emotions in a far less formulaic way than those governed by appropriateness criteria. Carroll is rather insistent that the criteria for horror are harmfulness and impurity. However, in literary horror, readers can be horrified by harmless and ordinary objects like the fire hose (Stephen King's *The Shining*) or a withering apple tree (Daphne Du Maurier's *The Apple Tree*). At the same time, Carroll tends to link pro-attitudes and concerns with positive human characters. However, in Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, readers are made to sympathize with Norman Bates, an unlikeable and charmless serial killer who fails to be an appropriate object of pro-attitudes and concerns.

Carroll has submitted different defenses to this line of objection. A recent one is that his criterial prefocusing model is still "the more perspicuous way" to handle these more complicated emotions (2020, 18). He explains that one can adopt "reverse engineering": we may observe that the features of the situation made salient by the author point in different directions (say, "joy" and "sadness"), then work backward to a more appropriate and complicated emotion (say, "bittersweet"). Regarding concerns for unlikeable or evil characters, he opines that "sympathy for the devil" in fiction results from readers' shifting moral assessments of the situation (1990, 142-143). He elsewhere (2013) attributes viewers' tendency to ally with the fictional mobster-boss Tony Soprano to the moral structure of the fictional world,

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in which Tony is the lesser evil and thus the best candidate for the alliance. As such, his approach to more complicated emotions still leans towards cognitive emotions that have their source in the content.

Even so, his model receives other criticisms. Robinson (2005) casts doubt on the mechanism by which Carroll says authors evoke emotions. She notes that authors evoke readers' emotions only after their cognition subsumes fictional characters or events under specific criteria appropriate to emotion in this model. Robinson retorts that readers can also feel emotionally engaged *before* categorizing the fictional characters or events under any criteria appropriate to an emotion—although the emotions involved could be "coarse" or "rough" in their initial stages. To form judgments about the fictional characters or events, readers often reflect on their emotions afterward.

To this objection, Carroll might reply that such categorization does not have to be a conscious operation, "no more than my recognition that an oncoming car is potentially harmful need be accompanied by my saying it" (2001, 27). That is why readers might feel as if they were emotionally engaged *before* they engaged in any categorization. However, even if we accept that categorization may operate below the level of consciousness, the relationship between attention and categorization is still not clear. In this model, an emotion occurs after the appropriate categorization, yet the categorization occurs *after* the reader's attention is drawn to certain emotion-relevant aspects of the fictional character or event. Although Carroll suggests that those emotion-relevant aspects stand out by salient depiction, I cannot help wonder: on what grounds does the salient depiction draw the readers' attention, with the result that the depiction *emotionally* prompts the readers to subsume what they read in the first place? As Robinson also notes, "Although what our attention is drawn to may be 'subsumable' under some emotion category, we do not actually subsume it under a category until after our attention has been fixed upon it" (2005, 183).

The move of supplementing his model with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes invested by the narrative does not help for a similar reason. We can still ask, what makes the narrative so successfully engaging that the readers are invested with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes? The same narrative with the same characters can fail to invest readers with pro-attitudes, *et cetera,* if an unskillful writer handles it. Perhaps the readers' attention has to be drawn to relevant details in the first place and fixed or sustained to become invested with pro-attitudes and preferred outcomes that guarantee emotional responses. In other words, while

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Carroll is right that emotion is attention-guiding, his model does not explain what fixes our initial attention on emotion-relevant details and what drives the readers' cognition to subsume what they read emotionally.

2. Robinson's Model

Robinson (2005) constructs an alternative model to Carroll's based on the embodied appraisal theory of emotion. On this theory, an emotional response is, paradigmatically, an "(1) automatic bodily response that (2) makes something salient to the organism (focuses the organism on something), and (3) what it makes salient or focuses on is something registered as significant to its well-being" (2003, 241). This conception of emotion coincides with what psychologists call "quick and dirty feelings" or "affects," whose function is to heighten attention and get ready for action. Since emotions are primarily affective, embodied appraisals, a bodily perturbation without cognitive states and below the subject's conscious awareness can trigger emotions. In other words, as Carroll has also conceded, cognitive states are not necessary for emotion.

Accordingly, Robinson deems that literary fiction can activate readers' affective appraisals before any meaningful content for cognitive categorization is available to them. A narrative can induce what she calls "coarse or rough" emotions. They appraise "in a coarse-grained way: this is good/bad, friend/enemy, strange and threatening/safe and familiar" (2005, 183). Robinson's characterization of "coarse or rough" emotions is reminiscent of the Nietzschean idea of basic affect, which is an inclination or aversion to what is going on.[4] The coarse-grained affective appraisal can seize readers' initial attention, making the emotion-related details of the narrative salient. Focusing on those details in turns prompts readers to appraise in a "more fine-grained way" (Robinson 2005, 183), which typically recruits cognitive assessment of subsequent fictional characters/events, whereby cognitive emotions towards those fictional characters/events occur. When readers become emotionally involved in a narrative, both coarse-grained affective appraisals and the more fine-grained cognitive evaluations provide feedback to readers, which may configure, sustain, intensify or dissipate an emotion towards the characters/events as the narrative progresses. So Robinson remarks that in being emotionally engaged with a sophisticated narrative, "there is a succession of affective and cognitive appraisals going on all the

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[4] See for example Nietzsche (2019), section 34.

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time" (2005, 183). Although readers may not be conscious of every affective and cognitive appraisal in the process, if the experience taken as a whole is rich and intense, it will prompt readers to engage in after-the-fact reflection. Furthermore, usually, it is when readers reflect on the experience that the emotions are cataloged.

The merit of Robinson's model is that it fills in the missing piece in Carroll's model. Recall that Carroll's model does not explain what makes readers' attention "emotionally charged" in the first place. Robinson's model suggests that the quick and dirty, coarse or rough emotions can do the trick. To word it another way, if a piece of literary fiction engages emotion by, for example, investing readers with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes, the emotion is better guaranteed if the text is emotion-laden in the first place so that the engagement directs the readers' attention to relevant details that aim to develop those pro-attitudes, concerns and preferred outcomes. Readers are then prompted to follow the plot and evaluate the fictional characters/events in a more fine-grained way.

As for how literary fiction can be emotion-laden in a way that grabs readers' initial attention, rendering it emotionally-charged, one answer may turn to descriptions of a character's inner states.[5] The psychologists Kneepkens and Zwaan (1994) find that personally-involving details about a character are one type of emotional, "interesting information," which takes less effort and conscious control to attend to and memorize than unemotional (though important) information. Robinson likewise regards "careful description of the emotional states of the characters" as a way to engage readers' emotions, whereby they are "made to focus attention on certain situations and to see them in a certain way" (2005, 158). She instances a passage taken from Edith Wharton's *The Reef*:

> 'Unexpected obstacle. Please don't come till thirtieth. Anna.' All the way from Charing Cross to Dover the train had hammered the words of the telegram into George Darrow's ears, ringing every change of irony on its commonplace syllables: rattling them out like a discharge of musketry, letting them, one by one, drip slowly and coldly into his brain, or shaking, tossing, transposing them like the dice in some game of the gods of malice; and now, as he emerged from his compartment at the pier, and stood facing the wind-swept platform and the angry sea beyond, they leapt out at him as if from the crest of the waves, stung and blinded him with a fresh fury of derision. 'Unexpected obstacle. Please don't come till thirtieth. Anna.' (Cited in Robinson 2005, 161).

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[5] I opt for a pluralistic approach to fictional emotions, so I am only suggesting that description of a character's inner states is just one of a number of effective ways to do this.

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Robinson comments that Wharton realistically describes Darrow's inner states induced by the telegram. The passage dramatizes Darrow's emotional states regarding his interaction with the environment and relation to the world but not in terms of his beliefs or cognitive judgments about Anna or the telegram. The passage features "the sound of the train, the cold unwelcoming sea, the wet gloomy weather" and the crowd on the pier: "they too seem to reject him and to be either hostile or indifferent" (2005, 161). These are the unpleasant qualities in the environment that are made salient in Darrow's perception of it. Also, the passage both begins and ends with the words in Anna's telegram. The repetition expresses Darrow's obsessive focus on the telegram. To Robinson, this passage is an acceptable illustration of how Darrow's emotional responses unfold in ways that approximate her embodied appraisal theory of emotion but not the cognitive theory of emotion.

To me, this passage can also serve as an apt illustration of how literary fiction can secure readers' emotional involvement with a character before any meaningful content for cognitive categorization is available. Clearly, the passage describes a somewhat unpleasant situation: Darrow is upset by Anna's telegram. However, as this is the novel's opening passage, readers do not know anything about Darrow and what happened between him and Anna. It is not likely that readers have any attitudes towards or concerns about him or have subsumed the situation emotionally in the way described by Carroll's model.

Still, one may notice that on my current reading, the emotion aroused in readers may be explained by the propositional state "Darrow is upset." The analysis remains somewhat content-based. So, questions arise: can the passage enlist an even coarser-grained emotion than this, one which the content alone cannot adequately explain? Is Carroll right that our emotions in response to literary fiction are cognitive after all?

3. Why Literary Devices Matter

My answer to the questions raised is that the passage's style by which propositional content is presented plays a role in its emotional impact. *The Reef*'s opening passage enlists non-cognitive emotion of negative valence through its literary devices. The term "literary devices" refers to what Robinson calls "verbal form," i.e., syntactic and rhetorical devices including but not limited to parallelism, asyndeton, rhyme, rhythm, and imagery (2005, 212-213), or what Feagin dubs "verbal features," which encompass "diction, narrative voice, style, sentence structure—in short, anything about the way lan-

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guage is used in the work" (1996, 132). Robinson contends that literary de-vices function to guide readers' emotional responses, focusing attention and influencing readers' initial affective appraisals and subsequent cognitive evaluation of the content. Feagin likewise maintains that verbal features of language often elicit affective responses. Verbal features can encourage or heighten feelings such as uneasiness, curiosity, eagerness, *et cetera*, all of which facilitate readers' engagement with a fictional scenario.[6]

Although Robinson illustrates her contention using poems and does not discuss how literary devices function in *The Reef's* opening passage, I do not see much difficulty extending her claim to the passage. Let us explore the passage more in-depth in light of her contention by examining its verbal features. It starts with a contrast: a single, lengthy sentence that expresses Darrow's unsettling flux of feelings and perceptions provoked by the words in Anna's telegram follows the short and bluntly formal sentences of Anna's telegram. The use of a lengthy sentence filled with kinesthetic imagery in-scribes the processual, on-going shades of feelings and perceptions into this emotional episode, rendering it a fluctuating motion. By calling the words in the telegram "commonplace syllables," it seems that Wharton wants to direct readers' attention to the sonic contrast of the subsequent lines, which indeed feature, for example, a series of adverbial participles ("ringing," "rattling," "shaking," "tossing," "transposing") with trills or fricative sounds. Together with the choppy phrases and clauses, the lengthy line develops a distinct, quavering rhythm.

In this way, the passage is apt to enact a rhythmic but mildly strenuous and bumpy moving experience, and consequently, a mild sense of strain in readers. The line may also get readers to form in their mind a sequence of fleeting, visual images of a variety of movements accompanied by jagged sound imagery, such as a shaking train compartment, discharging musketry, blowing wind and a roaring sea with waves in motion, however faint and transient they are. Indeed, words mediate the imagined perceptual states, but the end-product is more like a collage of images that do not necessarily form propositional content. I venture that the verbal features breed negative, non-cognitive emotion that agitates readers, activating their affective under-standing of Darrow's inner emotional state. The negative emotion's sources go beyond the propositional state "Darrow is upset." It secures the readers' initial attention and interest, prompting them to read more about what had

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[6] However, Feagin (1996, 78) holds a cognitive theory of emotion and deems that mere affective responses are not emotions. Following Robinson, my position is that the affective responses under consideration in this section are emotions. This is not to say, however, that all responses elicited by verbal features are emotions.

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happened between Darrow and Anna. It may invest them with the attitude towards Darrow, even though they know very little about him. Recall Carroll's remark that emotional responses to literature are cognitive, provided that they must involve imagination and understanding. Conversely, I am trying to characterize here the kind of understanding and imagination as not necessarily propositional. It involves embodied understanding of movement on the one hand and sensory (or imagistic) imagination—which is typically characterized as a non-propositional use of images—on the other.[7]

To experience the passage in this way involves what Mark Johnson calls "embodied meaning-making." The "embodied meaning" of a passage is to be contrasted with its propositional, linguistic meaning; it "goes beyond words" (2008, 219). Johnson notes that in poetry, various senses, including sight, hearing, smell, and taste, typically develop the non-propositional embodied meanings and richly felt qualities; they are dependent on "the precise rhythm of images, sounds, pauses, and intensifications" (2008, 220) that constitute the style of a work. These sensory qualities resonate with readers in different ways, animating parts of readers' corporeal understanding of the subject matter and the sensations, feelings, or emotions that the content expresses.

Johnson states that the non-propositional embodied meanings and richly felt qualities of poems could often be seen, though admittedly to a lesser degree, in prose language. In *The Stranger*, Johnson instances that Camus's "almost Hemingway-like conciseness and sparseness," or what is called Camus's impersonal, expository, lucid, flat "white style,"[8] expresses Meursault's indifferent attitude to the world. However, the images, sensations, rhythms, and pulsations of some passages in the funeral scenes "carry the reader along by evoking a vast sea of unconscious, or barely conscious, connections and feelings" (2008, 223), activating readers' corporeal understanding of Meursault's subjective, private experiences of his mother's funeral. It occurs to me that in some cases, the impact of the literary devices in prose language is so perceptible that (sensitive) readers are aware of how their sensory qualities resonate with their body. The aesthetician Zhu Guangqian observes that on reading Chinese prose written in a "clanging tone" and "smooth rhythm," the muscles all over his soma undergo similarly rhythmic movements of alternating tension and alleviation, rendering in him the feeling of pleasure; conversely, his muscles feel "constrained and uneasy" when reading prose with inharmonious tones or "flawed" rhythm (1994, 124).

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[7] See Landland-Hassen 2016, 64.
[8] See Susan Sontag 2001, 16.

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Perhaps it can be said that some prose language can appeal to readers' bodies in ways analogical to visual images and music. My surmises do not sound too fanciful if we consider that literary scholars characterize literary devices (e.g., imagery, repetitions, rhythm) as means of engaging readers' bodily sensations (e.g., Steidele 2007; Solander 2013), or how philosophers in the continental tradition write about prose language's musicality (e.g., Deleuze 1997; Wiskus 2014). Specifically, Deleuze remarks that "there is also a painting and a music characteristic of writing, like the effects of colors and sonorities that rise up above words" (Deleuze 1997, lv).

That being said, I am aware that my account is not without challenges. In my analysis of Wharton's passage, one possible source of emotion is the visual and/or aural images excited by the passage filled with imageries, yet Peter Kivy would be dismissive of this view. Kivy rejects that silent reading of fiction excites visual and aural images in readers' minds that are "no less distinct" than the images experienced as if they were initially eye-witnesses (2011, 131). These views are, he argues, based on a faulty Lockean model of language according to which words, "by constant use," readily excite "Ideas" that affect the "Senses" (Locke 1975/1964, 261). The "Ideas" are tokens of the same type as the ideas that would be caused to arise if one saw the object signified by the words (Kivy 2011, 131). Kivy adduces Edmund Burke's remarks that words rarely produce any visual or aural images in readers' minds and that a particular effort of the imagination is required for their occurrence, further suggesting that "our speed of language comprehension far outstrips our ability to form mental images" (2011, 23). Kivy adds that even if readers sometimes entertain vivid mental images, they are far from "talking pictures" that, I take him to mean, carry propositional content. As a proponent of the cognitive theory of emotion, Kivy expectedly disregards mental images as a legitimate source of emotions.

Before submitting responses to this possible challenge, it should be noted that Kivy and I subscribe to different theories of emotion. Following Robinson's embodied appraisal theory of emotion on which cognitive states that carry propositional content are not necessary for an emotion to occur, my account does not require Kivy's "talking pictures" for emotion to occur.

What interests me is Burke's empirical claims, adduced by Kivy, about the frequency and likelihood of forming mental images in silent reading. I suspect that forming mental images varies with the prose language's quality and the readers. It is probably easier to excite visual and aural images in readers, for example, who grow up in a multi-media environment than those who do not, for the former are used to learning stories through (and thus have more

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mental resources connected to) aural and moving visual images. Other lived experiences (e.g., traveling experiences) are likely additional sources of such mental resources. It is not to say that the imagistic imagination is a mere matter of retrieving images from memory. Because our memory is prone to confabulation and that concurrent emotion can color our state of mind, I am inclined to say that the imagination is closer to fabrication.[9]

Next, empirical studies seem to show that the phenomenon of forming mental images while reading is not as unusual as Burke and Kivy think. Recent findings in psychology (e.g., Speer et al. 2009, Foroni et al. 2009) reveal that reading narrative texts often activate brain regions that process experiences of sights, sounds, tastes, and movements and that verbal, emotional stimuli drive muscle activation. Another pertinent phenomenon is hearing inner voices during reading, which the activation of the auditory cortex's voice-selective areas explains (Yao et al., 2011). In this context, it is also worth mentioning that recent neuroscientific studies show that imagining sound has a "measurable effect on areas of the brain directly related to the perception of sound" (Grimshaw & Garner 2014, 1) and that imaginary stimuli can generate emotion via the same causal pathway as real stimuli (1).

As already noted, Kivy admits the occasional occurrence of mental images, though he refuses to see them as a legitimate source of (cognitive) emotion. He also fully acknowledges the phenomenon of hearing inner voices during silent reading. He nevertheless is reluctant to count these perceptual experiences as the aesthetic experience of prose fiction. One reason for this is that readers seldom take the perpetual properties of prose language as the direct object of artistic attention. Another reason is that the perceptual experiences are far less significant when compared to those arising from poetry. The second point, I concede, is true. As a less content-based form of writing, poetry, in general, relies more heavily on verbal features and sound quality than on content for their impact. As Schopenhauer once remarked: "I remember from early childhood that I was delighted for a long time by the pleasant sounds of verse before I discovered that it made sense and contained thoughts as well" and that "even trivial thoughts gain a measure of significance through rhythm and rhyme" (2014, 446).

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[9] As such, the images are not necessarily "token[s] of the same type" as ideas evoked by real objects either. In fact, I opine that different readers probably have different versions of the images. For example, in the image of the discharging musketry that came to my mind when reading Wharton's passage, the musket is pointing right; other readers may imagine it differently.

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With limited space, I do not wish to enter into the debate with Kivy over whether the perceptual experiences arising from prose fiction are sufficiently significant to be qualified under his conception of "aesthetic experience." Instead, my suggestion is that there seems to be no reason to rule out that skillful deployment of verbal features in fiction can have a causal power similar to that identified in poetry by Schopenhauer, albeit to a lesser degree. I hope my discussion thus far is convincing enough to make a case for it. It remains probable that even if readers are occupied mainly by the content and seldom take prose language as the direct object of artistic attention, as Kivy asserts, their affective appraisals can be simultaneously triggered, often subliminally, by the verbal features of the passages. Taken together, even if our emotional responses to fiction are not reducible to non-cognitive, perceptual responses, as Carroll holds, this does not rule out their occurrence. The non-cognitive, affective responses can still be contributory to the emotional experience. Indeed, in my analysis, Wharton's passage can enlist both our cognitive and non-cognitive responses, and both the verbal features and the content combine to create the passage's full-blown emotional effect.[10]

Thus I agree with Feagin (1992) that affective responses to fiction are not merely mediated by thoughts generated from the content but are often manifestations of sensitivities to the style of the work and its verbal features.[11] This view, Feagin insightfully adds, "provides impetus for the view that there are special sorts of "aesthetic experiences" offered by literary fiction whose qualitatively distinctive character is unlike ordinary, everyday experience" (1996, 135). It also sheds light on how a work configures the more complicated emotions mentioned in section II, say, "sympathy for the devil." In what follows, I illustrate my view with the case of *Psycho*, the novel with which my paper begins.

As already noted, Bloch's *Psycho* manages to get readers to sympathize with the unlikeable Norman. In the film adaptation, Hitchcock gets viewers to side with him by detailing Norman's silent concealment of Mary's murder, making the viewers feel "an uncanny profound satisfaction of a job properly done" (Žižek 2004). In the novel, Bloch did this by spending the whole of

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[10] Derek Matravers (1998) similarly argues that the non-propositional properties of literature matter for a full explanation of our emotional reactions to it. He brings up literary devices such as tone of voice, imagery, repetition, sibilance, *et cetera* (91, 97). In this paper, I go one step further to explore their somatic effects.

[11] That probably explains why the impact of a literary fiction can be weakened by reading an (unskillful) translated version.

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Chapter 5 (51-63) using alternating verbal features when describing Norman's actions and his inner states about concealing Mary's murder.[12] For example, on the third page of Chapter 5, Norman ponders,

> The girl had driven in alone, said she'd been on the road all day. That meant she wasn't visiting *en route*. And she didn't seem to know where Fairvale was, didn't mention any other towns nearby, so the chances were she had no intention of seeing anyone around here. Whoever expected her—if anyone *was* expecting her—must live some distance further North.
>
> Of course this was all supposition, but it seemed logical enough. And he'd have to take a chance on being right.
>
> She had signed the register, of course, but that meant nothing. If anybody ever asked, he'd say that she had spent the night and driven on.
>
> All he had to do was get rid of the body and the car and make sure that everything was cleaned up afterward.
>
> That part would be easy. He knew just how to do it. It wouldn't be pleasant, but it wouldn't be difficult either.
>
> And it would save him from going to the police. It would save Mother.
>
> Oh, he still intended to have things out with her—he wasn't backing down on that part of it, not this time—but this could wait until afterward.
>
> The big thing now was to dispose of the evidence. The *corpus delicti* (53).

From the second paragraph on, this passage stands out for its noticeably short, consecutive paragraphs, within which the sentences are syntactically simple, and wordings are straightforward. It can be read with the pleasure of lucidity. They run as if Norman was thinking aloud to himself (e.g., 'Oh'). The passage orders Norman's flow of thoughts in a distinct "step-by-step" rhythm, which registers the logical reckoning of Norman's plan. If the verbal features are a bit too conspicuous, they mark Norman's conscious, controlled effort to structure his thoughts and focus of attention. They qualitatively mimic Norman's thought process and encourage readers to follow the rhythm of Norman's thoughts, working to "synchronize" the readers' thoughts with Norman's. The passage aims to get readers to "think along" with Norman, despite being guised in the third person mode.

> Shortly afterwards Norman resolved in carrying out his plan. He first had to look for a container for the *corpus delicti*.
>
> Norman went down to the basement and opened the door of the old fruit cellar. He found what he was looking for – a discarded clothes hamper with a sprung cover. It was large enough and it would do nicely.

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[12] I am aware that other content-related factors, such as Mary's death and Norman's voyeuristic behavior, can also prompt or hinder a reader's alliance with Norman.

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Nicely—God, how can you think like that about what you're proposing to do?
He winced at the realization, and took a deep breath. This was no time to be self-conscious or self-critical. One had to be practical. Very practical, very careful, very calm.

Calmly, he tossed his clothes into the hamper. Calmly, he took an old oilcloth from the table near the cellar stairs. Calmly, he went back upstairs, snapped off the kitchen light, snapped off the hall light, and let himself out of the house in darkness, carrying the hamper with the oilcloth on top (54).

This passage contains a brief moment of tension when Norman cognitively monitors his positive reaction to the hamper. It triggers the cognitive emotions of guilt and shame in him. For readers who still refuse to side with Norman, this self-reproach works to gain their sympathy.[13] For readers who already do so, or who even are slightly delighted by the hamper as Norman was, Norman's sudden thought (expressed by the sentence in italics) may function like a vague alarm that distances them from Norman. Nevertheless, immediately the tension dissipates as Bloch gets Norman to pull himself together by the reassuring line ending in diminishing syllables, "Very practical, very careful, very calm." The line descends towards the succeeding paragraph featuring the repetitive use of "Calmly," in which the use of a similar form of the sentences' grammatical construction, parallelism, strikes a sense of regularity and steadiness in readers. A sense of rhythm recurs, and this time it registers Norman's actions. As the sentences become lengthier, a vague sense of gradual restoration of stability is felt. It ends in a moment of "ease." The passage continues,

It was harder to be calm here in the dark. Harder not to think about a hundred and one things that might go wrong.

Mother had wandered off—where? Was she out on the highway, ready to be picked up by anyone who might come driving by? Was she still suffering a hysterical reaction, would the shock of what she had done caused her to blurt out the truth to whoever came along and found her? Had she run away, or was she merely in a daze? Maybe she'd gone down past the woods back of the house, along the narrow ten-acre strip of their land which stretched off into the swamp. Wouldn't it be better to search for her first?

Norman sighed and shook his head. He couldn't afford the risk. […] (54-55).

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[13] Self-reproach is a rhetoric strategy for inducing sympathy for problematic characters. See Wayne Booth's (1983) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Relieving anxiety is another, which is also used in this passage.

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Here the instability of Norman's emotions and wondering thoughts are inscribed in a lengthier paragraph containing a mixture of structurally different sentences of irregular lengths. Unlike the previous passages, this paragraph does not course forward in a noticeable rhythm but progresses in an untethered rush. Moreover, note how the third-person mode gradually fades away. It fades so smoothly that readers are now, with or without their awareness of it, made to read the lines as if Norman were addressing them directly, hammering his floods of worries and doubts into their head. Readers are tugged out from Norman's thoughts as the third person mode resumes, just before Bloch confronts them again with Norman's recurring self-doubts, torrents of emotions, and bodily sensations accompanying his actions as the chapter proceeds.

Perhaps it can be said that the author designs verbal features to gradually break down the readers' psychological resistance to Norman (if there is any), gently sliding them into Norman's frame of mind. They work to facilitate readers' affective understanding of, and spontaneous engagement with, Norman's labor and inner turmoil, paving the way for their eventual sympathy for Norman. Regardless of the extent to which readers are transported to Norman's frame of mind, the ebb and flow of changes in the passages sustain readers' interest in, and attention to, what Norman is going through. As a qualitative whole, the changes are sometimes felt like a particular coursing forward or inward, other times a pulling away; sometimes there is a sense of strain, other times one of ease. Consequently, reading the passages as a whole induces the experience of effort. When it comes to the end of the chapter, readers may even have a mild sense of fatigue, aligning with Norman's exhaustion.

Concluding remarks

I hope I have presented a compelling case for taking literary devices as proper objects in a philosophical investigation of fiction and emotion. I offer a framework that synthesizes philosophical inquiry with other academic disciplines in understanding the somatic dimension of reading fiction in silence. I hope that the synthesis can enrich and advance debates on fiction and emotion. Specifically, I have shown how a passage's verbal features can induce moving experiences and sensory images, identified as two possible triggers of non-cognitive embodied appraisals. The two related mechanisms involved in the reading experience are the embodied understanding of movement and non-propositional, sensory imagination. However, given

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the variety of styles and content that fiction offers, I do not wish to claim that either of these two mechanisms is necessary in all cases, though I believe that they are the more dominant ones. As said, my framework is not exhaustive. There seems to be no formulaic rule for the two mechanisms to operate in different cases either. As shown in my reading of *Psycho*, the passages activate readers' corporeal understanding of Norman's movements of thoughts and his body, so the embodied understanding of movement is probably the dominating mechanism, though not necessarily to the exclusion of sensory imagination. The somatic experience may draw more on readers' embodied understanding of movement, and less on imagistic imagination, than Wharton's imagery-packed passage depicting how the environment appears to Darrow.

Despite this, by broadening the spotlight to illuminate the content and literary devices by which the content is presented, we are armed with more conceptual tools to appreciate literary passages' expressive value. Doing so offers a fuller picture than the content-based approach of how a passage (such as the example in Wharton's *The Reef*) can focus readers' initial attention in a way that prompts their emotional engagement even before any meaningful content for cognitive judgments is available to them. It also sheds light on how a work configures the more complicated emotion of sympathy for the devil, one in which readers' cognitive judgments and emotions probably come apart. Recall Carroll's view that sympathy for the devil can result from readers shifting their moral assessment of the situation. If this is plausible, then my reading of *Psycho* explains such a shift. It shows how literary devices can be deployed to shape our moral assessments through influencing our initial affective appraisals and subsequent cognitive evaluation. They are typically not our object of attention, yet they enlist various non-cognitive, emotional, perceptual, or embodied states. We may not be aware of how such devices resonate with our body, nor are we conscious of the occurrence of the "lower" bodily states—but they nevertheless imperceptibly shape our "higher" cognitive evaluation. This understanding also prompts us to ponder the extent to which Nietzsche was right in claiming that "our moral judgments and evaluations are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us" and that "moralities are a Sign-language of affects."[14]

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[14] Nietzsche 2019, Section 119; 2012, Section 187.

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The Aesthetics of Facts

Abstract

This article proposes a 'reconfiguration of aesthetics' through an interpretation of Duchamp's readymades. The reconfigured aesthetics results in the emergence of the readymades as the common objects that they are; it is an aesthetics driven by objectivity and which encounters facts, rather than things. Facts are non-neutral and value-laden arrangements of things. Hence, the article proposes what it calls 'the aesthetics of facts'.

Keywords

Aesthetics, Duchamp, Readymades, Objectivity, Ayn Rand

Introduction

Through an engagement with Marcel Duchamp's readymades and his writings on art, I propose a reconfiguration of aesthetics that redefines and disrupts the roles and relationships amongst taste, emotions, and enjoyment. I shall argue that the reconfiguration would present us with the "aesthetics of facts."

The essay will proceed by arguing for the following:

1. a conceptual reconfiguration of (the meaning) aesthetics;
2. an investigation of the mood (or the attunement) that responds and corresponds to the reconfigured aesthetics;
3. the kind of "thing" that the reconfigured aesthetics encounters.

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I shall accomplish (1) by analyzing Marcel Duchamp's statements on the "retinal" nature of traditional art and adopting his urge to determine art differently. In (2), I shall outline the mood that accompanies and attunes one to "what" it is that a reconfigured aesthetic would be open and sensitive. I argue that (3) a reconfigured aesthetics along these lines is driven by a commitment to objectivity, and it encounters facts rather than things.

1. Reconfiguring Aesthetics

Immanuel Kant rehabilitated the term "aesthetics" (Kant 1965, 66) by returning to the Greek meaning of the term, which refers to "perception" and "the senses." Kant attempted to distance this term from the meaning it had acquired in the circles of the "criticisms of taste," for instance, by Alexander Baumgarten (ibidem, 66-67). However, the term's primary association with matters of taste is still constitutive of both the common and the specialized usages of it, especially in the English-speaking world. "The aesthetic" is virtually synonymous with the attractive and the appealing, the sensational, the pleasant, and the enjoyable. The widespread meaning of "aesthetic" therefore refers to the senses, and it does so because it signals that which pleases them relatively effortlessly.

I shall propose and proceed to a reconfiguration of the "aesthetic" that heeds the term's full and complex meaning. In the history of the term's meaning, somewhat surprisingly, one finds reference to "perception by the mind."[1] This reference's meaning is not clear to us at this stage, and this is itself evidence that the mind has been ousted out entirely from the meaning of aesthetics. For the most part, this also means that the mind or the intellect has been left out of modern and contemporary reflections on art's nature because aesthetics is still very often considered synonymous with the "philosophy of art."

My initial and naïve suspicions that there may be more to aesthetics than meets the eye, as it were, have been triggered by Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). So, I revert to Duchamp's readymades and writings on art to explore

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[1] 1798, from German *Ästhetisch* (mid-18c.) or French *esthétique* (which is from the German), ultimately from the Greek *aisthetikos* "of or for perception by the senses, perceptive," of things, "perceptible," from *aisthanesthai* "to perceive (by the senses or by the mind), to feel," from PIE *awis-dh-yo-*, from root *au- "to perceive." Online Etymological Dictionary, entry for 'aesthetic', https://www.etymonline.com/word/aesthetic [accessed: 25.10.2020].

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and explain the meaning of an "intellectual" understanding of aesthetics, and therefore of art.[2] My choice to stick with readymades—not the "aided readymades" or the "reciprocal readymades" (Duchamp 1966, 142), but the simple readymades, and to focus on the *Fountain*—is twofold, namely: that the readymades are artworks whose essential double characteristic is an indifference *to* taste and the indifference *of* taste; and that, consequently, as artworks they challenge the "retinal" conception (or tendency) in art. I aim to show how the readymade artworks reject the aesthetic paradigm of art as driven by judgments of taste and enjoyment and accomplish a "reconfiguration of aesthetics" by urging a perception by the mind (Lippard 1971).

I shall proceed to articulate how readymades manage this task.

Duchamp states that readymades are practically deprived of any aesthetic appeal. They are not objects of taste (Duchamp 1966, 141). Readymades are things or stuff that do not arouse aesthetic reactions (of enjoyment or otherwise) in the person encountering them. They are neither beautiful nor ugly, neither attractive nor repulsive. They are not interesting. Their most essential characteristic is, in fact, "indifference" or a "complete anaesthesia" (Duchamp 1966, 141), and Duchamp claims that only very few things manage to emanate such indifference.[3] Oddly, then, these things are exceptional. Hence the necessity to produce them (i.e., to present them) as artworks, exhibits in an *artworld*[4] because of their originality.

Duchamp knew well, however, that in the artworld environment, there is hardly any space for readymades to be adequately seen and acknowledged as the exceptional—though mundane—objects that they are. It is easy, and the default practice, for a spectator to inscribe even these taste-indifferent things into the usual interplay of aesthetic considerations. Remember, for instance, that the *Fountain* was—after being basically rejected by the Société des Artistes Indépendants in 1917—very much appreciated for its aesthetic qualities. Many had seen it as a beautiful Madonna—calling it the Madonna

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[2] I discuss the artistic nature of readymades in M. Vella Rago (2015, 91-106), where I also indicate a possible continuation between these works and "the Large Glass."

[3] I inform the reader that I shall not be going into political, or otherwise, interpretations of the meaning of "indifference" as one finds, for instance, in Moira Roth's "The Aesthetic of Indifference." Interesting and illuminating as Roth's analyses are, I disagree with her interpretation of the relation between the "political setting" she gives and the reaction to it of artists like Duchamp, Cage, Cunningham, etc. (see M. Roth 1998, 33-48).

[4] I use this term in the manner of Arthur Danto. See, for instance, A. Danto 1964, 571-584.

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of the toilet—or a seated Buddha; many could see in it the beauty and purity of its whiteness and appreciate its perfectly smooth, curved surfaces.[5]

Furthermore, Duchamp himself teases the spectators and makes them forget about what is in front of them by naming the exhibit, such as the urinal, with interesting or interest-arousing titles like the "Fountain." The titles nudge the spectator towards speculative indulgence about the exhibit's nature. So, they look away from the object (Duchamp 1966, 141). Duchamp's decision to do so is, I believe, to signal the readymades' challenge to the spectator, the artworld, and to make it more challenging at the same time. The "challenge" consists of seeing the thing for what it is—without falling prey to the temptations and the habits of the artworld, especially those enshrined in the games of taste.

My conviction that this is what Duchamp wants his readymades to accomplish finds its roots in Duchamp's writings. Specifically, the confirmation happens when Duchamp discusses the work-spectator osmosis through which, according to him, the spectator contributes to the event of art by "refining" the artist's primary intention. There Duchamp introduces the personal art co-efficient which "is an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed" (Duchamp 1957, 139); hence, a numeric measure of the presence of the original intentions of the artist in the "refined" work of art (Duchamp 1957, 139). Duchamp's postulation of this strange numeric measure fully justifies the interpretation of the readymades presented here because Duchamp's writings are arguably the best and most specific indication of his artistic intention.[6]

It then becomes vital to ask afresh: What is the spectator supposed to do when confronted with a readymade object in a traditional, artworld context such as a museum, an exhibition hall, or a prestigious curatorship? How are they to "refine" the work of art? What is Duchamp requesting from the spectator if they are not to confront the readymade with a judgment of taste and adequately fulfill their role in the work-spectator osmosis?

The spectator is urged not to dismiss the object. They are urged to see it for what it is.

And what exactly would it be, what would the *Fountain* be?

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[5] For instance, remember the famous photograph of the *Fountain* by Alfred Stieglitz (1917), and the cropped versions of it, where the photographer uses chiaroscuro and other means and techniques to present the urinal in figurative idioms.

[6] With Alain Badiou, I believe that Duchamp's writings on art "accompany the object… like a users' manual." See Badiou 2020.

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We know very well what it is: it is a urinal. Furthermore, the *Fountain* is a readymade because it exists in the world before the artist selects it and (produces, i.e., puts it forward and) exhibits it as a work of art. So, familiarity is undoubtedly an essential feature in the artist's choice of the object and an essential part of the object (and the exhibit).

These objects have a history and a life. These objects are co-inhabitants in our praxis of living. Indeed, these objects' identity is bestowed onto them by their place in our everyday life. Without this "place or role" in human life, they are (perhaps little more than) nothing at all. Paradoxically it is, in fact, the familiarity that robs them of the possibility to manifest themselves. They are lost in our use of them. These are things that we have stopped seeing because we have consistently overlooked them.

Therefore, the challenge is fully formulated as follows. The spectator knows that they have nothing else to say or add when seeing them as the objects they are. Ideally, therefore, the spectator does precisely that; they stop.

If this process takes place successfully, the result would be a cleansing of the eye and a cleansing of the mind (Sweeney 1946, 141). It would result in the emergence of an intellectually open spectator because the spectator would have looked and seen, stopped, and moved on. The spectator would have managed to resist the temptations of the artworld. In Duchamp's terms, this means that the spectator would have resisted the "retinal" tendencies that have defined the nature of the artwork and the spectator's role for a long time.

Duchamp's term "retinal" indicates the sense of sight, but it reduces it to vision's physical occurrence. "Retinal" addresses the brute fact of the sense of sight as devoid of intellectual engagement. As an adjective used for art, "retinal" describes an attitude driven by brutally sensuous or realistic aesthetics (Cabanne 1971).

To clarify and substantiate my understanding of Duchamp's claim on the "retinal" nature of art, I revert to a 1921 text by Roger Fry titled "the Baroque." In this text, Fry does not mention "retinal," and he is reviewing an essential book by Heinrich Wöllflin in which the latter provides compelling insight into what has happened to art since the Baroque era. The author states that the Baroque signals a significant reconfiguration of what art presents and represents. In a nutshell, he argues that while the masters of the High Renaissance aimed at portraying onto a canvas, for example, a reality which they knew and understood (holistically and scientifically, as it were), in the Baroque, we detect the progressive visual (reduction and) interpreta-

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tion of the arts and the reality that they represent. Baroque artists inter-preted reality through their visual access to it rather than through their intellectual knowledge of it; they refined their efficiency to portray reality on a canvas in the case of painting or onto marble in the case of sculpture. The author describes Bernini's "Ecstasy of St. Teresa" as a clear example of this and argues that the drapery lacks tactile presence, and as in a painting, it is defined by the interplay of light and shade of *chiaroscuro* that structures its dramatic and dynamic unfolding (Fry 1921, 147).

I am not arguing that Duchamp's term, the "retinal," is influenced by Wöllflin or Fry, that Duchamp's conscious characterization of art as "retinal" reaches back historically to (and specifically) the Baroque rather than the realism of Courbet (Cabanne 1971). I suggest instead that through Fry's essay, we can understand "the retinal" better because we see that in the movement that signals and defines the emergence of modern art proper, namely Impressionism, we encounter the complete crystallization of the visual reduction and interpretation of art (and of reality). With Impression-ism, vision is both the necessary and sufficient condition to make sense of the work of art.

Fry's reference enables us to see that Impressionism's path is potentially older than Duchamp himself suspected. We can trace it back to the Baroque. This history is critical because, since Impressionism is an (or perhaps "the") art movement which Duchamp's readymades oppose directly (Sweeney 1946), we can then propose new boundaries to the art which Duchamp describes as "retinal," and consequently gain more in-depth insight into the potential extent of the revolution that his art has provoked.

Duchamp's readymades do not stimulate the spectator's appetite. They are the antidote to the "retinal" predicament. Duchamp urges the spectator to endure the presence of dis-tasteful objects. The experience is cathartic. It generates a new space for the re-emergence of f u l l - b o d i e d   o b-j e c t s because an object proper is not a thing that gives way; it is not a sight or a ghost that one can easily overlook or see-through. A proper object ob-jects (as in rebels), as it were, and challenges us.[7] An object is hard. It offers resistance and demands attention. On such an object (henceforth written "ob-ject"), we stumble because it is a fact.

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[7] "Object: [...] to present, oppose, cast in the way of," from *ob* "in front of, towards, against" (see ob-) + *iacere* "to throw." Online Etymological Dictionary, entry for "object," https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=object [accessed: 25.10.2020].

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2. Courageously Attuned

There are two statements in the preceding section which we need to discuss and develop. The first consideration is that an object's presentation is a challenge. We need to understand what kind of challenge it is and how to prepare for it. The second statement is the claim that the object's presence is a fact. We shall deal with the former in this section and the latter in the next one.

The readymades, interpreted through Duchamp's writings on art, necessitate an active spectator because the spectator is an integral part of the work of art. However, I seem to be asking for a relatively toned-down activity on the spectator's part. In fact, I have been mainly urging spectators not to overwhelm the readymade with their judgments of taste. I seem to demand a certain amount of passivity from the spectator. However, this cannot be the case because one does not advise anyone to face a challenge passively and expect that person to withstand the challenge successfully. What this reading is requesting of the spectator is therefore surely not passivity, but it is also not noisy and frantic activity.

The readymades require the spectators to attune themselves to the readymades as artworks suitably. For the encounter with the readymades to occur correctly, we could say the spectator must "be in the mood" for their encounter.

"To be in the mood" is "to be attuned." I borrow this term, i.e., a t t u n e d, and consequently a t t u n e m e n t, from John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's English translation of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time.* They identify a t t u n e m e n t as a better translation of the German *Gestimmtheit* than "mood" because the latter is too heavily associated with emotions, internal agitations, and affectations (Heidegger 2003, H134; 2003, 172, translators' footnote 3). "Mood" tends to make us look inwardly, whereas Heidegger intends to make us look at our outside-ness. Indeed, Heidegger claims that different "attitudes" to the world lead to different categorizations and/or understandings of the world. Specific "moods" highlight different aspects of human experience. Different moods a t t u n e and open us to aspects of the phenomenal world that would otherwise be inaccessible to us without that mood.

Therefore, the readymades ask the spectator to attune themselves to be open-minded and withstand the challenge—which the readymade's presentation itself poses—properly.

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Why, however, would a readymade present the spectator with a "challenge"? As already stated, the spectator would most of the time not see the object presented as the object which it is (i.e., the ordinary object) but instead uses it as an excuse to revert to something else, which ultimately results in ignoring the object per se.[8] The challenge that we signal as essential to a reconfiguration of aesthetics is refraining from dismissing the object. The proper attunement for the presentation of the readymades is, therefore, that which allows them to shine forth as the objects which they are.

My claim is that the spectator is asked to be "courageous." Thus, the proper attunement for the readymades' spectator is "courage."

The reason for the choice of "courage" as the required attunement is admittedly not self-evident because it is not as if these objects are dangerous and the spectator needs to protect themselves from them or fight them off. Indeed, they are not, and they should not. The meaning of the term "courage," which is most familiar to us, i.e., that "valor, quality of mind which enables one to meet danger and trouble without fear," comes from the late 14th century.[9] It certainly seems like we have since become accustomed to opposing courage to cowardice, associating it with fear, and understanding courage as the mark of the tenacious who can confront and defeat an external and threatening danger.

However, the courage demanded by the readymades is summoned by someone who recognizes a danger within, namely the tendency to overlook the things that one encounters, rather than seeing and minding them. I am referring to a deeper resonance of the word "courage," which also comes from the history of its meaning, but dates back to the 13th century, namely: "'heart (as the seat of emotions),' hence 'spirit, temperament, state or f r a m e   o f   m i n d.'"[10] The mind, that which wills and thinks, the intellect, is also that which feels; but it is not only that which feels. So, to apply the colloquial meaning of "state of mind" here, which is synonymous with "emotion" or "mood," would miss the necessary and most important point that the faculty of "minding," i.e., caring, pertains to the mind. Caring is what drives attentiveness and focus. It is what directs our sight and our attention. Therefore, the heart is not merely the seat of emotions but also the core of our faculty of minding and caring. To care is, first and foremost, to see.

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[8] To get a glimpse of what I mean, see Figgis 2020.

[9] Online Etymology Dictionary, entry for "courage", https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=courage [accessed: 25..10.2020.]. My emphasis.

[10] Ibidem.

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Thus, "courage" claims us in our most profound nature, i.e., our ability to see, which is not exhausted by our sense of vision, the retina's work. The corresponding danger would be losing sight of our human nature's full dignity, which happens when the "heart" is understood solely as the seat of emotions. We bear the high cost of forgetting that at the heart of our nature is the mind, the ground of our faculties of i n s i g h t and understanding.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that in the original meaning of "courage," we find the same diad that we found in "aesthetics," namely "emotions" and "the mind," engaged in yet another original embrace. *Aesthesis*, or perception, is mindful, in the same way, or to the same extent that the mind (the core) is emotional, and vice versa.

"Courage" signifies the human being's heart—our spirit's center or core, and our state of mind. Courage is the attunement proper of those who face reality with the temperament appropriate for understanding. Therefore, it is courage that describes the attitude of those who can encounter the ready-mades and see them.

3. The Ob-ject is a Fact

What is a fact?

In common and everyday language, a "fact" is something real, as opposed to something that results from (subjective) interpretation or imagination. The word's history goes back to Latin and refers to "things done," i.e., past and accomplished.

Additionally, I highlight a Wittgensteinian meaning of the term "fact" as the existence of an arrangement of things. This meaning comes from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, more specifically, from points 1.1, 2, and 2.01:

> 1.1. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
> 2. What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs.
> 2.01. A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of [...] (things).
>
> (Wittgenstein 2006)

Wittgenstein's use of the term corroborates the ordinary meaning according to which a fact is real and not the outcome of some (subjective) interpretation, but it also provides us with the added insight that a fact involves an arrangement (of things).

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So, how is an ob-ject a fact? Is an object not a thing? The second question's answer is "no." An object is a (set of) "state of affairs," hence an arrangement of things (rather than a thing). To understand why this is significant here, let me first recapitulate these reflections' outcomes so far. We know that the object, i.e., the readymade, is produced and presented to us as a work of art. We, the spectators, are asked to attune ourselves properly to this production, which means summoning the courage to face it in a way that claims our full human capacity to see. We are asked to re-learn to see by being invited to participate in an event where a new aesthetics holds sway, which addresses and stimulates the mind. The source of the stimulus is the artistic production of an ordinary and readymade object. The imperative is to refrain from dismissing the object in terms of matters of taste. If we manage and succeed, what we see would be the object itself. Only at that stage would the thing, or the "object," be transformed into an "ob-ject" proper, i.e., something tangible and real, something with which to reckon. Only when that is the case does it proudly manifest itself and confront us, then we do get to the r e a l ob-ject itself. Then, it is a fact.

But contemporary postmodern trends in philosophy have cautioned us against speaking of or referring to the "object itself." Because: who determines what the object is in itself? Is anyone's definition of the object better than anyone else's or for different people at different historical times? Moreover, what about the object's self-awareness? What would it say that it is itself?

These questions arise because one senses danger associated with ascribing a (definite) value and, therefore, with the process of evaluation. These are problematic because who is to measure and evaluate "what" something is, especially what it is "in itself" once and for all, as it were? What counts as a "good" definition of something, what method, and whose practice?

I believe that Duchamp's readymades offer a clear and neutralizing reply to these questions. In fact, rather than a reply, Duchamp offers a philosophically sound dismissal of these concerns.

The dismissal is rooted in the artistic process, driven by a quest for objectivity, i.e., the quest for the proper discovery of the object. The resulting insight is that one properly discovers the object in its full "objectivity," as it were, only when the object becomes an ob-ject proper, i.e., when it is seen to have the capacity to rebel and confront us. The ob-ject has us in view, as it were. And this can only happen through or as the outcome of a genuine artwork-spectator osmosis (Tomkins 1965; Duchamp 1987).

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The quest or the path is therefore primary and original. The artistic process does not start with the object because that would necessarily imply reckoning with a vicarious abstraction of the object, i.e., one that exists as abstracted away from its relation with the spectator and one, therefore, which the latter can easily dismiss or disregard. Instead, the process ends with the ob-ject, or arrives at it. The ob-ject is what we strive for, the struggle is for objectivity, and the latter is the outcome of osmosis. There is no ob-ject proper before or without osmosis.

Thus, if or when we reverse the order of the relation between object and objectivity, we endanger the subsistence of the ob-ject because we assume that there is an object without osmosis, that we need to get to it first if we are to be "objective." This relationship is indeed what we assume that "objectivity" means, namely, access to the thing without the interference of the subject. Hence, objectivity would be the opposite of subjectivity, and you get it when you get less of us, i.e., the subjects.[11] The main problem with this understanding of objectivity is that it rests on the belief that there exists an idealized object, an object seen through an access to it that is devoid of subjectivity. Such an idealized object is easily overlooked. Duchamp's readymades remind us that "objects" are ob-jects precisely because or when they are properly encountered by a subject, i.e., the spectator.

If someone were to regard this notion of "objectivity" as counterintuitive—since it places the thing too much at the mercy of the spectator or the subject—then I suspect that what would satisfy their urge for "objectivity" would be some special access to the "intrinsic" properties of the thing, access to its most profound nature. I am here adopting Ayn Rand's meaning of the "intrinsic." In fact, to explain my position, I now turn to Ayn Ran's writings because I believe she offers a beautiful and summative exposition of the nature of traditional theories of value.

In her essay "What is Capitalism?" Rand outlines three kinds of evaluation or theories of value: the subjective, the objective, and the intrinsic.

Of a thing, one can say that it has intrinsic value; that its value does not depend on the agent of evaluation, the specific context, or historical situatedness. Although attractive, the problem with this concept of value, Rand says, is that at one point, someone will have to claim that they have access to the deepest intricacies of a thing and that they can understand, elicit, reveal, speak and share the "intrinsic" value of the thing. Usually, Rand claims, those who proclaim to access this value would do that to their advantage and only

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[11] For a description and a history of these notions of objectivity, see Daston & Galison (1992), pp. 81-128.

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because of illegitimate leverage that the rest of society would grant them, the leverage of extraordinary insight and exclusive access to truth. Charismatic people and leaders are usually those who claim such powers, and we all know very well what the dangers are when this is the case.

The subjectivist theory of value claims that value is always the result of a specific perspective on something. There is no real value in the thing itself. Value (its worth) is a specific agent's certification in a specific context and specific historical situatedness. This claim means that all value is related to a viewpoint and is therefore perspectival; no gods-eye-view exists, which would determine the "definite" and "absolute" value of anything.

Whereas "[t]he objective theory holds that *the good is an aspect of reality in relation to man*—that it must be discovered, not invented, by man" (Rand 1967, 14).

Rand's objectivism claims that the "objective" value results from an engagement between a person and reality. Value is real, and thus, a fact; it is indicative of a process of negotiation (involving humanity and reality), the record of an agreement. Value is thus a state-of-affairs, an agreed and satisfactory arrangement. It is in the very essence of an objective value that it is rooted in the encounter with reality, which is defined as that which persists and resists our beliefs about it or, in Philip K. Dick's famous words, "[...] that which continues to exist even when you don't believe in it" (Dick 1985). Objective value, therefore, does not shy away from seeing and speaking things as they are and "[it] does not permit context dropping, [...] it does not permit the separation of 'value' from 'purpose,' of the good from beneficiaries, and of man's actions from reason'" (Rand 1967, 14-15).

Without necessarily fully subscribing to Rand's objectivism, I suggest that the readymades are emblematic calls to avoid conflating "objectivity" with the absolute determination of the intrinsic value of things and, therefore, to remember that objectivity includes the process of evaluation. Objectivity is not subjective because it involves the work/input of the subject/spectator.

In the readymades, we see that their presence is real, i.e., something to reckon with, and the context of their discovery is that of the artworld. They exhibit a synthesis of value and purpose, goods and beneficiaries. Because, lest we forget, these things are objects of everyday life, common and useful things that we know and value since we use them and need them. What the readymades show is our ability (or inability) to acknowledge that the nature of objectivity is an activity. This transaction involves us in the acts of reckoning with the real, discovering it, and engaging in the process of evaluation. The result is a fact, namely an arrangement of things—a state-of-affairs— and it manifests the emergence of the "ob-ject with value."

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> The objective theory of value is the only moral theory incompatible with rule by force. [...] If one knows that the good is *objective*—*i.e.*, determined by the nature of reality, but to be discovered by man's mind—one knows that an attempt to achieve the good by physical force is a monstrous contradiction which negates morality at its root by destroying man's capacity to recognize the good, *i.e.*, his capacity to value (Rand 1967, 15).

Without the capacity to value, we lose the capacity to recognize the good. To recognize and value the good is an essential capacity of our human nature, of our mind. Hence the need to summon the necessary courage to be able to live up to our human nature.

The readymades demand of us that we judge them because they have long been the victims of oversight. Not seeing them, i.e., not judging them, evidently does not amount to granting them their freedom and their identity. Instead, oversight results in the opposite: rejecting their right to declare their presence, demand our attention, and gain it. We should be able to recognize them as the things that they are and name them accordingly. The readymades seize us and our prejudices and put them to "good" use. In the case of these objects, we are right (i.e., it is proper) not to be neutral and to name these things by their name, to admit that "that is what they are" and nothing else. The latter is not (automatically) dismissive and/or derogatory. It is neither of these terms if judgment follows from seeing and recognizing properly. It would be dismissive and derogatory only if judgment falls short of mindful seeing and caring.

The spectator is invited to a truthful reckoning with the ob-ject. Here "truthful" is to be read in a Heideggerian manner, i.e., as disclosive and revelatory. The work-spectator relation or osmosis that Duchamp's readymades demand and deserve is revelatory and judgemental, driven by a truthful exposition of "the good" description of the object as a fact, an arrangement, and a state of affairs. In the case of the readymades, it is also easy and accessible; they thus serve as excellent occasions for a newfound (intellectual and artistic) honesty.

Conclusion

I have pointed out that Duchamp's readymades challenge the "retinal" description of the artwork. I have then argued that this challenge's outcome is a reconfiguration of aesthetics whereby the latter, whose meaning had long been confined to the senses and their satisfaction, is determined by a unique "perception by the mind." I have then shown that the reconfigured aesthetics

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necessitates an active spectator who needs to be appropriately attuned to the artwork so that work-spectator osmosis can occur. Such osmosis would result in the spectator's seeing these objects afresh. I have finally identified courage as a necessary attunement. The spectator summons courage to see that these objects come with a value and that the latter is a fact.

I aimed to outline, albeit sketchily, the primary and necessary conceptual configuration for what I am advancing as "the aesthetics of facts."

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Marcello Sessa*

The Modernist Iconography of Sleep.
Leo Steinberg, Picasso and The Representation
of States of Consciousness

Abstract

In the present study, I will consider Leo Steinberg's interpretation of Picasso's work in its theoretical framework, and I will focus on a particular topic: Steinberg's account of "Picasso's Sleepwatchers." I will suggest that the Steinbergian argument on Picasso's depictorial modalities of sleep and the state of being awake advances the hypothesis of a new way of representing affectivity in images, by subsuming emotions into a "peinture conceptuelle." This operation corresponds to a shift from modernism to further characterizing the postmodernist image as a "flatbed picture plane." For such a passage, I will also provide an overall view of Cubism's main phenomenological lectures.

1. Leo Steinberg and Picasso: The Iconography of Sleep

The American art historian and critic Leo Steinberg devoted relevant stages of his career to the interpretation of Picasso's work. Steinberg wrote several Picassian essays, that appear not so much as *disjecta membra* but as an actual *corpus*. In the present study, I will consider them in their theoretical framework, and I will focus on a particular topic: Steinberg's account of "Picasso's Sleepwatchers" (Steinberg 2007a). I will suggest that the Steinbergian argument on Picasso's depictorial modalities of sleep and the state of

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being awake advances the hypothesis of a new way of representing affectivity in images, by subsuming emotions in what has been called, since
the first art theorizing on Cubism at the beginning of the Twentieth century,
"peinture conceptuelle."

According to Steinberg, Picasso brings in emotional states (well exemplified, in our case study, by the emotional hues involved in sleeping and waking) on canvas not much for their "dramatic interest" (Fry 1927, 10), but as if
they were "states of consciousness", in a sort of conceptualization of emotions through painting. This operation corresponds to a shift from modernism to the further Steinbergian characterization of the postmodernist image
as a "flatbed picture plane" (Steinberg 2002, 27-36; 2007b, 82-91), and allows us to draw a explicit analogy between Picasso's conceptual painting
and Robert Rauschenberg's conception of the work of art as a set of information. To clarify this passage, an overall view of the main phenomenological lectures of Cubism may be helpful.

Steinberg undertakes his efforts to shed light on the "so wide a variety
of human experience" and the "psychological and physiological realities"[1]
disclosed by Picasso. For him, the critical point is how Picasso managed such
a diversity of subject matter (i.e., emotional-pathemic and ideal-conceptual,
both involved in depicting couples of figures sleeping, waking, or watching)
within the modernist iconic regime. Steinberg gets a crucial issue in the interpretation of Picasso: the contrast between kinds of subject matter that,
nevertheless, get through figuration and the modernist handling of the picture plane, which even for Picasso (either in its pre- or post- cubist phases),
stem from any form of illusionism, symbolism or mimesis.

Steinberg deals with the specific theme of sleep because it is paradigmatic of the tension between Picasso's figurative impulse and the antifigurative drive inherent in most modernist paintings. In its review of
Picasso's personal iconography of sleep, Steinberg is driven towards a peculiar declination of the abovementioned dialectics; on the first impression,
Picasso may display simple variations on content *vs.* form issues, but deep
down, it reveals to be a far more complex interplay. Since the Blue Period
(1901–1904) to *Les Femmes d'Alger*[2] (1954–1955), quite a few of Picasso's
paintings, etchings, and drawings are often inhabited by sleeping figures

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[1] I am appropriating—given the closeness of his scholarship to that of Steinberg—
Robert Rosenblum's lines (see Rosenblum 1970, 337-338).

[2] For a deep explanation of Picasso's variations on Delacroix's *Les Femmes d'Alger*,
which underscores the operational nature of their seriality, see Steinberg 2007c.

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(mostly female) and awake watchers (mostly male), that "introduce the subject of the watched sleeper" (Steinberg 2007a, 95).[3]

Firstly, Steinberg acknowledges the theme as an archetype, as a historically-rooted *Motif* that has experienced its articulated grammar: "The subject was old. Scenes of sleeping nymphs observed by alerted males—scenes concerned with looking and longing—are part of the grand tradition of art" (Steinberg 2007a, 95). We can draw a parallel between Picasso's intimate concern with a variation of the sleeping figure as a modern nymph and Aby Warburg's obsession with the moving nymph as "a proclamation of love to this very same *Pathosformel*" (Paskaleva 2016, 52): to this peculiar iconographic formula that represented for the German scholar the very essence of aesthetic research itself, in all its contradictions.[4]

Thus, in Picasso's artworks the representation of sleep acquires the Warburgian status of "scientific object" by "the mere inventing of [...] an analytical level"[5] (Paskaleva 2016, 47), because it "enters his work almost like a confession" (Steinberg 2007a, 95). For Picasso, sleep is an obsessive subject with a status comparable to that of the Warburgian nymph since it summarizes the most significant issues of artistic and creative research.

The theme becomes the battleground in which all the contentions on the image's very nature take place; from both the creator's and spectator's side, thanks to its power of prominently staging, displaying all the problems associated with representation, and to its power of enacting an actual "logic of the gaze" (Bryson 1988): a metapictorial *mise an abyme* of image reception. The male watcher incarnates the figure of the artist himself, linked to "his cold shadow" and "gloom of the mind," whereas the female sleeper embodies "brightness," "radiance," "light," and "the pure bliss of the body"

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[3] "These early pictures [of the Blue Period] are curtain raisers. They introduce the subject of the watched sleeper which was to become one of the haunted themes that recur continually in Picasso's work and give it constancy" (Steinberg 2007a, 95).

[4] In a famous letter to André Jolles (written in 1900), Warburg associated the figure of the moving nymph to a flying butterfly that you can never catch: "The most beautiful butterfly I have ever pinned down suddenly bursts through the glass and dances mockingly upwards into the blue air [...] Now I should catch it again, but I am not equipped for this kind of locomotion [*Gangart*]" (Gombrich 1970, 110). This analogy also stands for the continuous efforts of the resercher to interpret the power of images. For this reason, the nymph becomes the emblem of research work.

[5] Paskaleva's essay provides a comprehensive survey of the role of the nymph—constantly oscillating between its elusive essence and its embodiment as "the paradigm of pure image" (Paskaleva 2016, 20)—in history of culture from Renaissance up to the present.

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(Steinberg 2007a, 93); these contrasts condense the striving between the corporality of experience—of aesthetic experience in particular: that of a perceiving body that equally feels and thinks—and the flat surface of modernist painting.

For Steinberg, the relevance of Picasso's *œuvre* largely depends on this discrepancy. The critic identifies a "modernist shift" in the representation of sleep. In Antiquity, sleep was depicted according to the order of symbol and allegory, which entailed a merely analogical interpretation system, proceeding from recognizing of the pictured characters as sleepers or watchers and their mythological or theological characterization. Classical depicted sleep corresponded with "unplanned or delicious encounters" and appeared as quiet and peaceful, when during Renaissance it started getting agitated and distracted by the power of imagination, by imaginary forces which "complicated" its fortunes (Steinberg 2007a, 98-99). Imagination progressively expanded the symbology of sleep, increasing its interpretative layers further and further, to the point of obscuring the starting theme and its native untroubled quietness.

This complication increased with modernism and the season of the Avant-gardes[6] until sleep became completely desublimated. Released from its symbolic nature, the representation of sleep assumed the form of "the study of marginal states of consciousness" (Steinberg 2007a, 103); at this stage, depicting sleeping bodies meant setting aside all their literary features, so that those figures could work as analytical tools to investigate perception through the image. In modernism, sleep plays both an ambiguous and crucial role. This role is well exemplified—as a literay counterpart evoked by Steinberg himself—by Marcel Proust's metaphor of sleep as a threshold, as the condition that marks the transitions from "l'intelligence" (pure reasoning) and "la sensation" (pure feeling), occurring when a sensation is first "reconnue" by involuntary memory and then incarnated ("s'incarne") in its "résurrection poétique" (Proust 2019, 43-50). For Proust, literary creation operates in the same way with the passage from sleep to waking, and writing coincides with the elusive instant when, just woke up, we realize that we were sleeping: it is a permanent "chercher le sommeil"[7] (Proust 2019, 51).

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[6] "Almost everything in their [of depicted sleepers and watchers] seems so long familiar, yet in their mutual relationship all is new" (Steinberg 2007a, 98).

[7] "Mais alors était encore très près de moi un temps, que j'espérais voir revenir, et qui aujourd'hui me semble avoir été vécu par une autre personne, où j'entrais dans mon lit, à dix heures du soir et, avec quelques court réveils, dormais jusqu'au lendemain matin.

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Picasso performs his search on the states of consciousness linked to sleep by overturning the human body's traditional representation. He no longer represents the human body as seen from a single point of view: his typical poliperspectivism can be read to present it from many different angles, re-flecting all the shades of perception. Therefore, the human figure is depicted to bring forward—using representation—new orientations of its phenome-nological axes; in such a perspective, the sleeping figure coincides with a total reversal of the upright posture (Fig. 1).
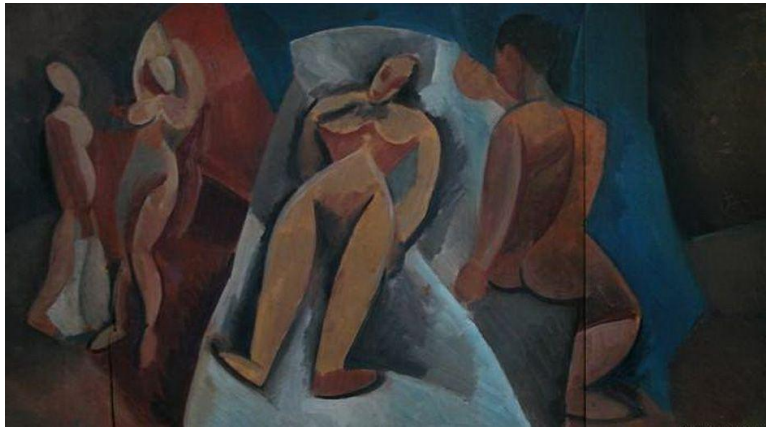
Fig. 1. Pablo Picasso, *Reclining Nude with Figures*, 1908 (oil on wood)
Source: Musée Picasso, Paris.

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Souvent, à peine ma lampe éteinte, je m'endormais si vite que j'avais pas le temps de me dire que je m'endormais. Aussi une demi-heure après, la pensée qu'il était temps de m'endormir m'éveillait, […] et j'étais bien étonné de ne voir autour de moi qu'une obscu-rité, […] qui […] apparaissait comme une chose sans cause et incompréhensible" (Proust 2019, 51). For a monography entirely devoted to the relationship between Proust the man and the author, his writings and sleep, see Mabin 2019 (esp. 159-182). *La Prisonnière* (1923) is directly quoted by Steinberg in "Picasso's Sleepwatchers" for its long digressions on waking, dreaming and sleeping conditions; the novel (along with the whole *Recherche*) can easily be focused within the lens of sleep; it cuts across a broad range of occurences, from the narrator who sleeps like a "divinité du ciel déposée sur un lit" (Proust 2020, 11) to the half-dead Albertine, passing from the delusional altered states of Bergotte under the effects of opiates: "Vers quels genres ignorés de sommeil, de rêves, le nouveau venu va-t-il nous conduire? Il est manteinant dans nous, il a la direction de notre pensée" (Proust 2020, 175). Among them, the most extreme case maybe is the analogy of Albertine's sleep-ing body with a dead corpse, which has assumed "une rigidité de pierre" (Proust 2020, 346) due to its horizontality, and that is tightly marked as 'processual,' as if it were a test bench: "Et en voyant ce corps insignifiant couché la, je me demandais quelle table de loga-rithmes il constituait" (Proust 2020, 346).

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At this stage, we have to be ask what consequences this radical modernist refocusing of the depicted human figure has had on the representation of affects and concepts, now intended as states of consciousness. Focusing on the beginning of the Cubist Period, Steinberg goes straight to the point by addressing the decisive issue of Cubism as "peinture conceptuelle" (Kahnweiler 1946, 269), precociously raised by Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in the second decade of the Twentieth century, when the so-called Analytical phase of Cubism was still developing. Taking a philosophical stance neo-Kantian mold, Kahnweiler was the first to regard Picasso's paintings as entirely focused on an ideal subject matter, made of the same substance of concepts. Steinberg wonders *if*—and more insistently *how*—Picasso's work does cope with conceptual "naked problems" (Steinberg 1988, 7) as Kahnweiler demanded.[8]

I would advance the hypothesis that Steinberg embraces the interpretative tradition, inaugurated by Kahnweiler and subsequently brought forward by several authors close to phenomenology, for which cubist paintings are incarnations of concepts. Steinberg, however, goes beyond, and encompasses even affectivity in the realm of conceptualized painting. His writings on Picasso bring out the possiblity that the kahnweilerian "peinture conceptuelle" may also represent—or rather *present*—emotions. In a Steinbergian way, Picasso handled emotions without any urge to empathy, with no need to express or arouse *pathos*, and free of dramatic interest; indeed, "states of consciousness" are very close to ideas and concepts. As a result of this, I suggest addressing the phenomenological lectures of Cubism: to see how Steinberg could have come to a similar interpretation of modernist painting as conceptual, and how this reading then leads towards a postmodernist image and a "flatbed picture plane."

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[8] In his essay on *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Steinberg quotes directly from Kahnweiler's seminal book *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (1915), in which Picasso's famous gallerist states the genesis of Cubism as "a desperate titanic clash with all of the problems at once" (Steinberg 1988, 7n), and connects the revolutionary ways of representing time-space relationships of Cubism to neo-Kantian philosophy. In his further book on Juan Gris, Kahnweiler describes the cubist treatment of depiction as a strong re-iconization of the world itself through a special kind of pictorial signs: "Les 'emblèmes graphiques' qu'elle [cubist painting] a créées sont emmagasinés dans l'imagination du spectateur, et c'est avec eux qu'il constitue son monde extérieur, quitte à enrichir, plus tard, d'autres assemblages d'emblèmes graphiques avec les images-souvenirs qui se sont ainsi constitués, jeu d'actions réciproques dans lesquels, toutefois, la peinture reste primaire" (Kahnweiler 1946, 103).

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2. Painting, Ideas and Emotions:
Theoretical Lectures on Cubism

Since its origins, cubist art has strongly appealed to philosophers, especially phenomenologists, as if it nearly claimed theoretical-interpretative reading. It was not only a matter of superimposing theory to artistic practice, but rather a series of attempts to arrive "à une sorte de réflexion pratique de l'art sur lui-même" (Klein 2018, 411). A radical assumption was at stake: "The hypothesis that Cubism does *the same* as phenomenology, that it performs *a parte imaginis* the same operation that phenomenology performs *a parte philosophiae*"; that cubist painting "is in itself phenomenological" (Pinotti 2010a, 64).

The common ground that links together most of the theoretical readings of Cubism, from Kahnweiler onwards, is the insistence on the loss by the representation of the referent and reference to actual data: "La disparition de ce que nous allons appeler la référence, l'être réel ou idéal auquel se misurait l'œuvre" (Klein 2018, 412). Phenomenologists have been the first to recognize this transfer's importance from a philosophical point of view: cubist image strongly detaches itself to any mimetic-imitative requirement, from traditional modes of representation derived from the perspectival conception of the Renaissance. According to them, the referent's absence begins with an increasingly evident awareness of the images's formal principles, in opposition to the pure forms of appearance.[9]

In the early Twentieth century, the German art theorist Fritz Burger played as a precursor by stating the cubist revolution as triggered by the "Gestaltungsproblem": the problem of configuration and conformation (i.e., of form as a result of a creative process), rather than the problem of form (i.e., of pure form as *a priori*, as a scheme superimposed in advance on the image), brought on by "die Erkenntnis [...] um das formende Prinzip"[10] (Burger 1918, 115-116). Hence Burger argues the ultimate dismissal of cubist painting—in this respect very close to Wassily Kandinsky's abstraction—from every need to reproduce reality through any mimetic procedure, because it "nicht das Geformte, sondern das Sichformende gestalten will" (Burger 1918, 119).

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[9] According to Robert Klein, this does not necessarily coincide with the move from figuration to abstraction: "L'agonie de la référence commence bien avant la disparition de la figure" (Klein 2018, 413).

[10] Burger opposes "der impressionistischen Raumillusion," still built on the mimetic depiction of appearances, and "die schlichten, abstrakten Formen" of Cubism, that capture the essence of figuration itself (Burger 1918, 115). An analogy can obviously be drawn with Paul Klee's "macht sichbar" mandate for art (Klee 1920, 28).

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However, ictorial abstraction, however, moves from the object-like[11] and from any duty to referentiality towards the complete liberation of representation. In contrast, Cubism gets close to the same operativity of thought in itself thanks to its capacity to operate through iconic conformations[12] or configurations (that is through representations that capture the essence of the perceptual process of reality), gets close to the same operativity of thought in itself: "Der Wert dieser Kunst wird zunächst darin liegen, daß sie schon durch den Wiederspruch zum Denken und Neugestalten zwingt" (Burger 1918, 120). Cubist art is then for Burger an analogon of Edmund Husserl's "vision of essences (Wesensschau)"[13] (Burger 1918, 123). Thus, thanks to its power to obliterate the mere objects on perception of their essence's behalf, Cubism began to be philosophically bounded to concepts and conceptualization.

Steinberg seems to accept this perceptual perspective, neither mimetic nor abstract, on Cubism (and, by extension, on Picasso) as a *conditio sine qua non*, when he indicates what he calls its desublimated and desublimating emphasis, achieved primarily by making a clean sweep of traditional ways (illustrative, descriptive, lyrical, didactic) to represent emotions: "The Cubist enterprise then being launched had no use for its sentiments. But before putting the subject away, Picasso stripped it of its private emotional connotations" (Steinberg 2007a, 95). To remain with our case study, the modernist depiction of sleep is also "depersonalized," as long as "a sensitive private theme becomes neutralized" (Steinberg 2007a, 96).

Despite being figures, Picasso's watchers and sleepers are no more strictly figural in the illusionistic and mimetic sense. Although Picasso depicts human beings in acts certainly charged with emotional and even erotic overtones, they do not illustrate definite emotional tones, liable to have arisen in the spectator in exact correspondence. They are figurations (or better configurations) that directly embody different states of conscious-

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[11] "Nur macht er [Kandinsky] sich hierbei im Gegensatz zu Van Gogh und Cézanne völlig vom Gegenständlichen los" (Burger 1918, 119).

[12] "Picasso bringt nicht mehr Gegenständliches zur Darstellung, die Welt als Organismus ist der Gegenstand seiner Gestaltung" (Burger 1918, 120).

[13] The analogy of cubist painting and husserlian vision of essences is drawn by Burger because, according to him, Cubism captures reality as if it nothing had in common with empirical experience. Cubist painting, instead, operates as "apprehension of essence (Wesenserfassung)" and stimulates vision as a "prehension of essences (Wesenfassung)," grasping the essence of objects beyond their existence as mere things (Burger 1918, 123). Burger uses Husserl's terminology by quoting directly from its *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (1911). For Burger's "modernist" and "aesthetologic" turn, see Filippi 2014 (esp. 103-110).

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ness: "Picasso's sleep-watching encounters are no accidents but juxtaposed states of being" (Steinberg 2007a, 101). Picasso's configurations of sleepers and watchers summarize the affective tones of sleeping and watching bringing them to the level of consciousness, thus subsuming feelings and emotions in the representation of the concepts of sleep, wake and watch.

Given the non-objective nature of Picasso's configurations—and the fact that it is not a matter of symbols or allegories: "They are never abstractions alone, nor mere symbols of watch and sleep" (Steinberg 2007a, 105)— we have to wonder how a painting that becomes conceptual, to the point of conceptualizing emotions turning them into states of consciousness, is compatible with the principles of modernist figuration. In other words: to what extent are Picasso's configurations of sleep and wake *conceptuelles* and at the same time not neutered of affectivity?

We can better understand the assimilation of emotions into concepts by looking at the next step towards a "phenomenological Cubism". This step has been taken by the French scholar Guy Habasque, who moved from Burger's "mystical" attachment to essences by linking cubist non-objectual paintings of the Synthetic phase to Husserl's eidetic reduction. The point here is not *platonesque* idealism, but the faculty of images to do the same of perception: in synthesizing *eidos* and body in the apprehensive exercise of consciousness over experience (see Habasque 1949). Such an adjustment, which takes into account the corporeal dimension in all its aspects, fits very well with Steinberg's treatment of Picasso's works—once symptomatically addressed as "a paronomasia induced by the sense of touch" (Steinberg 1995, 107), rather than by eyesight alone—as arenas in which the whole range of desire, even sexual, is displayed through figuration.[14] Hence the link between the representation of perceptions, at the same time bodily and conceptual, and modernist painting. For Steinberg, this synthesis of bodily and conceptual occurs, in Picasso's *oeuvre*, precisely because his painting strains both hints of perception within the iconic regime.

Contemporary studies of phenomenology and Cubism have switched to a parallel between Husserl's concept of *epochè*[15] and cubist metarepresentational figurality, (Sepp 1994). In this perspective, Cubism as a "pictorial

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[14] Robert Rosenblum as well, considering a painting of Marie-Thérèse, Picasso's lover in the late 1920s and 1930s, says that the painter "captures the fragile moment of transition between consciousness and sleep, [...] and the shift from the awareness of an external world to the liberation of subconscious desires", and that "this sexual unveiling is almost literal" (Rosenblum 1996, 4).

[15] The suspension of the judgment by parenthesizing the actual world with "eine radikale Zäsur im welterfahrenden Leben" (Sepp 1994, 295).

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epochè" incorporates the ideal-conceptual and physical features of depicted figures in their iconic destination; therefore, the stress is placed on the dimension of iconicity intrinsic to cubist painting. By considering images as philosophical instruments, this point of view brings justice to what is their own "immanent field," to their "immanenter Bereich [...], in dem das Gegebensein von selbst sichtbar würde."[16] Thus, the cubist image makes its pure figurality and its pure pictoriality visible: "Die 'res,' die Grundtatsache des Malerischen selbst" (Sepp 1994, 310-311).

Most phenomenologists have finally wondered if cubist painting can be juxtaposed or superimposed on ideas: the scope goes from Arnold Gehlen's full acceptance of Cubism as resulted from the conceptualization of the world of experience (see Gehlen 1986), to Hans-Georg Gadamer's explicit refusal to overlap rationality on painting as if it were an *a priori*.[17]

Steinberg seems to embrace most of the achievments of phenomenology on Cubism, whether by the side of conceptual painting, by the side of pictorial *epochè* or by the side of iconicity; he brings together their leading suggestions, notably when he speaks about the representation of sleep and watch as "iconized states of consciousness." Interpreting the depiction of the bodies in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, he asks himself: "are these morphological changes metaphors for states of existence?" (Steinberg 1988, 11). And for him this applies to the entire, vast, and incredibly varied figurative universe of Picasso.

Picasso deals with the ideal-conceptual and emotional features of the figure through the sole means of representation. What Steinberg calls "the representations of states of consciousness" is nothing more than the

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[16] "Erkennen wir dem frühen und noch dem analytischen Kubismus eine Reduktion bezüglich der Existenz des Wahrnehmungsgegenstandes in einem durchaus phänomenologischen Sinn zu, so ist die eine Reduktion, die letzlich nur darin von der genuin phänomenologischen unterschieden ist, als ihr Woraufhin die reine Bildfläche und nicht das reine Wahrnehmungserlebnis als einer phänomenologischen Gegebenheit ist" (Sepp 1994, 308).

[17] "Die Leitidee der 'Bildrationalität' wird m. E. dann entstellt, wenn Rationalität hier konstruktiven Aufbau aus Prinzipien im Sinne der Anwendung einer zuvor aufgestellten Theorie bedeuten soll" (Gadamer 1999, 312). Gadamer argues that an exact comparability of painting and ideas can never be taken for granted, because iconicity always exceeds the parameters of thought: "Eine ernüchterte Denkweise der Einsicht in die wirkliche künstlerische Produktionsweise nähergekommen ist—was gewisse Wechselwirkungen nicht ausschließt, aber weninger eine konstruktive Lenkung der künstlerischen Produktion durch Theorie bedeuten würde, als vielmehr die neue Entsprechung von Bild und Bilderwartung bezeugt" (Gadamer 1999, 314).

attempt to exhibit, in painting, other ways to "inhabit" the body, the figure, and the depicted space, presenting them as if they were apprehensions of consciousnesses; sleeping and watching figures "become readable as alternate states, twin phases of a single existence" (Steinberg 2007a, 105). They are given in configurations that are "materialized thought in which desire and form intersect" (Steinberg 2007a, 114). Furthermore, this is due to the fact a modernist non-objectual treatment of the figure (in the case of Picasso neither mimetic nor abstract) can make a sort of embodiment of the figure itself, an incarnation wherein the emotional and the conceptual, mutually interplaying, cohabit on the same ground (viz. the sphere of figurality, that encompasses them).

Picasso charges figures of desire via a "lifelong practice of projective inhabitation"[18] (Steinberg 1995, 116), which makes them "complex biological fantasies" (Rosenblum 1970, 342), often arising from the channeling of sexual drives.[19] What would have been previously represented only through symbol or allegory (like concepts, emotions and desires), in Picasso ends up being "eroticized," and directly presented with full force: form and content, style and will, idea and feeling are inseparably welded in their figural interpenetration. Also by this reason, in his paintings he faces the previously mentioned "naked problems," concerning concepts and feelings and well exemplified by the couples of watchers and sleepers, "as nude women" (Steinberg 1988, 33): he makes them act like living bodies, although desublimated and "progressively dehumanized" (Steinberg 2007a, 106) in their minimum figural trace (Fig. 2, Fig. 3). In painting, idea and feeling can wake up and make love figuratively, as if they were the same watching and sleeping figures who incarnate them.

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[18] "Picasso's sense of the inner feel of a gesture conditioned his art from its beginnings and never relaxed" (Steinberg 1995, 109).

[19] "The multiple aspects of sexual experience become a major obsession in his [of Picasso's] imagery, a phenomenon that may be explained, in part, by both public and private reasons" (Rosenblum 1970, 338).

Fig. 2. Pablo Picasso, *Study*, February 10, 1946 (pencil)
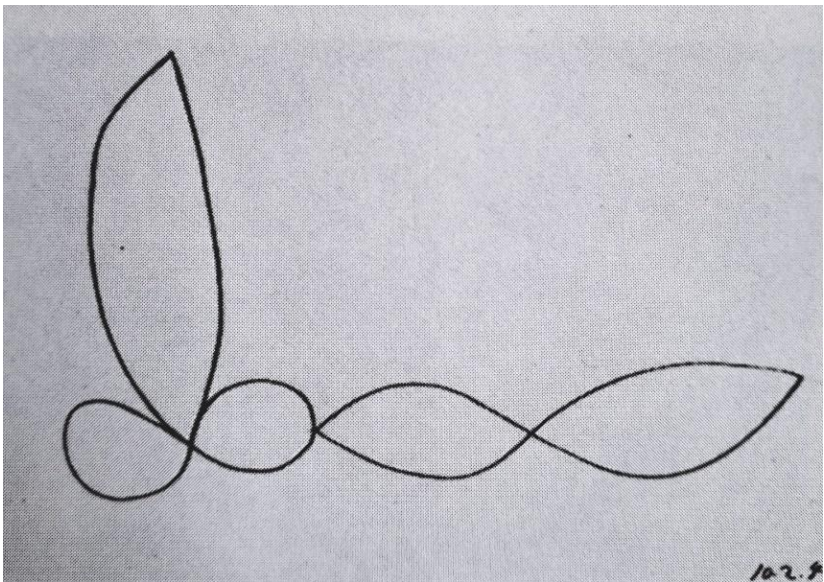Source: private collection.

Fig. 3. Pablo Picasso, *Two Figures*, April 20, 1933 (drawing)
Source: private collection.

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3. Picasso and Robert Rauschenberg:
from "Peinture Conceptuelle" to "Flatbed Picture Plane"

Such a heterogeneous conception of the image goes far beyond the circum-scribed boundaries of modernist painting, and this is evident in the way Steinberg refers to Picasso's handling of the picture plane. In his sleep paint-ings, Picasso's goal is "to get a plausible accommodation of solid body in a flat ground" (Steinberg 2007a, 96), e.g. how to fit his conceptualized con-figurations[20] to the unavoidable breakthrough of the Avant-gardes against mimesis and illusion.

    Watchers and sleepers' depicted bodies are acted on the picture plane in order to raise states of consciousness, while bypassing any form of illusion or illusionism; which is why "the whole surface, whether descriptive of solid or void, hardens into a crust, and the illusion of space is impaired" (Steinberg 2007a, 95). Picasso sets up his canvases as a means of giving his figures max-imum expression; their identities are "manifold" and always "oscillating between portraiture and abstraction" (Steinberg 2007a, 106-111), then they need a proper ground of action.

    This set-up translates into a picture plane that is, to use the lexicon of Mi-chael Fried, neither "theatrical" nor "literal": neither illusionist nor object-like (Fried 1998, 158-172). Furthermore, even though Picasso usually tends to flatten three-dimensionality within two dimensions, his picture flatness is never the sole actor on stage. It is not the same as the issue of "the integrity of the picture surface as a flat continuum" (Greenberg 1995, 167) that Clement Greenberg assumed as ontological to the essence of modernist painting.[21] For Steinberg, on the contrary, flatness is just one of the many

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[20] For Steinberg, in fact, Picasso's figures do not just enact a relational logic of the gaze, but also unfold a higher degree of conceptualization, although always linked to figurative-ness: "At any moment Picasso's imagery may require one to read his characters not as persons engaged in watching and being watched, but as a figuration of sleeping and wak-ing—dependent states that exclude and presuppose one another, nourish and infect one another, each lacking some richness the other has" (Steinberg 2007a, 105).

[21] As is well known, for Greenberg Cubism played a crucial and fatal role in achieving pictorial flatness. It has to do with cubist gradual abolition of any difference between actual pictorial surface and visual depth: "Contour and silhouetting lines were lost (espe-cially when the object was spread apart so as to show its surface from more than one point of view): the space inside the object now faulted through into surrounding space, and the latter could be conceived of as, in return, penetrating the object. All space became one, neither "positive" nor "negative," in so far as occupied space was no longer clearly differentiated from unoccupied. And the object was not so much formed, as exhibited by precipitation in groups or clusters of facet planes out of an indeterminate background of similar planes, which latter could also be seen as vibrating echoes of the object" (Green-

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options to embody the states of consciousness in painting; it is not a prerequisite, but rather a consequence of what can be called a modernist shift in approaching figuration: "The shallowness of the pictorial space is not given but won" (Steinberg 1988, 63). Picasso's 'crusts' do not sacrifice and, above all, do not neglect anything: they can canalize every stimulus because in them, "every spatial dimension—width, height, and depth—lives under stress" (Steinberg 1988, 63).

In opposition to Greenberg and formalist art criticism, Steinberg states that planarity and quasi-abstraction are not for Picasso the conditions of possibility of the picture, which make possible its evolution towards the self-determination of the medium, following a teleological scheme moreover. Albeit "modernist orientation ought to be to the flat picture plane" (Steinberg 1988, 11), the case of Picasso is peculiar and unique; "the flat picture plane is his whole working world" (Steinberg 2007a, 114), but this *scenario*, not being a pre-formed given frame, does not inhibit his figurative language. Indeed it makes it flourish.

Picasso's ultimate goal is not to resort to flat surfaces and bidimensionality. For him, it is an inevitable choice, which follows from the desublimation and depersonalization needed to represent states of consciousness in all their perceptual shades effectively; thereby, resuming affectivity in conceptual configurations. In Picasso's work, surface and depth flatten just enough to project the states of consciousness on figures; following our case study, depicted watchers and sleepers can turn into the representation of watch and sleep in themselves, in a process that conceptualizes emotions via figuration. With Picasso, painting has gone from being illustrative and emotional to being eidetic and perceptual: somehow *conceptuelle*, then.

Another element that shows the uniqueness of Picasso's achievements in the context of modernism is the issue—once again phenomenological—of horizontality *vs.* verticality, raised in particular by his watchers and sleepers. Steinberg says that in representing the theme of sleep *vs.* watch, Picasso is prompted to reorganize pictorial space by questioning the traditional vertical orientation of western easel painting.

Even modernist painters have struggled to get rid of the supremacy of verticality on several occasions, without ever succeeding, while Picasso does; in fact, his watchers/sleepers paintings display "a minimal statement of hor-

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berg 1995, 167-168). For the Greenbergian interpretation of the function of the inclusion of fragments of actual objects in cubist painting, in order to strengthen the impression of pictorial flatness, see Greenberg 1989a. For an analysis specifically focused on Picasso as a modernist painter, see Greenberg 1989b.

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izontality—which is all the ground that sleep needs" (Steinberg 2007a, 113). Thus, representing sleeping figures, lying or reclining, as modernist conceptualized configurations bring him to subvert the picture's characteristics, targeting horizontality. This subversion has substantial implications, both by the artwork's and spectator's side, and it ultimately leads Picasso's conception of the image past modernism, and very close to the Steinbergian notion of the postmodernist image as a "flatbed picture plane."[22]

Steinberg indeed argues that after the culmination of the modernist enterprise, ended more or less with Abstract Expressionism, and there has been a revolution concerning the ontology of the image; the new pictures of the 1960s presented themselves with a new look, featured with "a pictorial surface whose angulation with respect to the human posture is the precondition of its changed content" (Steinberg 2002, 27). Their angulation bends horizontally, and implies "the shift from nature to culture" in "the psychic address"[23] of the painting, which now makes possible "a different order of experience" (Steinberg 2002, 28), rooted in the perception of the picture as an operational and operative recollection of any data.

This address is the Steinbergian definition of the new surface: "Yet these pictures no longer stimulate vertical fields but opaque flatbed horizontals. They no more depend on a head-to-toe correspondence with human posture than a newspaper does. The flatbed picture plane makes its symbolic allusion to hard surfaces such as tabletops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards—any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed— whether coherently or in confusion. [...] [It] insists on a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes" (Steinberg 2002, 28).

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[22] "I borrow the term from the flatbed printing press." It's used by Steinberg to describe a radically new treatment of the picture plane as phenomenologically operational: "Any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is relevant analogue of his [of Robert Rauschenberg, the Steinbergian prime example of the new art] picture plane— radically different from the transparent projection plane with its optical correspondence to man's visual field" (Steinberg 2002, 27-30).

[23] The relationship between orientation of the human posture, mind and images has precociously been explored by psychologists such as Erwin Straus, see Straus 1963, esp. 316-330, 390-392. For an overall view on aesthetological reflections about orientation, direction and images in authors like Wölfflin, Schlosser, Faistauer, Uspenskij, see Pinotti 2010b. For the hypothesis of a phenomenological use of laterality by abstract expressionists, especially Barnett Newman, see Bois 2002.

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According to Steinberg, Robert Rauschenberg's works represent the paradigm of flatbed picture planes.[24] Rauschenberg was the first to treat the picture plane as a solid horizontal ground, on which all sorts of data could be enacted as artistic facts. His pictures were no longer optical *plenums* of visual flatness; in this respect, "the picture's flatness was to be no more a problem than the flatness of a disordered desk or an unswept floor"[25] (Steinberg 2002, 32). Rauschenberg began to handle the materiality of the visual field's flatness, now turned horizontal, and produced images very close to the realm of objectuality. Following Rosalind Krauss, Rauschenberg's pictures "embed" objects like images, and "images themselves, within the medium of Rauschenberg's art, *are* material substances": in a process of "physical incorporation of the image," they can be defined as "image-object[s]"[26] (Krauss 2002, 45-52).

The flatbed picture plane is not only a mere transfiguration of an *object trouvé*, but "a relocation of it;" its virtue lies in its power to re-signify the experience of the actual world through the iconic regime. It raises the marks of what we have called a configuration to a higher degree, since it presents and combines, in the image, every kind of data; even emotional ones, embodying them in a process of figural conceptualization (not figurative anymore but, in the case of Rauschenberg, objectual and almost literal). One of Rauschenberg's most famous works is closely related to the discourse of sleep. I am talking about *Bed* (1955, Fig. 4), an object-like image that can be read as a forceful index of the artist's sleep, and in which the sheets, instead of canvases or paper, function as "a pictorial surface that led the world in again"[27] (Steinberg 2002, 34).

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[24] "But on the New York art scene the great shift came in Rauschenberg's work of the early 1950s. Even as Abstract Expressionism was celebrating its triumphs, he proposed the flatbed or work-surface picture plane as the foundation of an artistic language. [...] Rauschenberg began to experiment with objects placed on blueprint paper and exposed to sunlight. Already then he was involved with the physical materal of plans" (Steinberg 2002, 28-29).

[25] "The flatbed picture plane lends itself to any content that does not evoke a prior optical event" (Steinberg 2002, 34).

[26] Krauss distinguishes between "the single-image" of modernist painting, conceived as autonomous entity, and the "part-by-part, image-by-image" (Krauss 2002, 40) of Rauschenberg's work, associated to materialization and to discursive ways of fruition. The second one has much in common with Steinberg's flatbed picture plane.

[27] "Perhaps Rauschenberg's profoundest symbolic gesture came in 1955 when he seized his own bed, smeared paint on its pillow and quilt coverlet, and uprighted ita against the wall. There, in the vertical posture of 'art,' it continues to work in the imagina-

Afterward, Rauschenberg will take the next step to the complete ob-jectuality in many of his 1960s and 1970s works; the theme of sleep will be developed in his *Hoarfrosts* (Fig. 5, see Fernandes 2008), in which the phan-tom of the canvas has vanished, and the work of art is given through the ostension of printed veils and sheets.

Fig. 4. Robert Rauschenberg, *Bed*, 1955
(oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and sheet on wood supports)
Source: MoMA, New York.

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tion as the eternal companion of our other resource, our horizontality, the flat bedding in which we do our begetting, conceiving, and dreaming. The horizontality of the bed relates to 'making' as the vertical of the Renaissance picture plane related to seeing" (Steinberg 2002, 34).

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Fig. 5. Robert Rauschenberg, *Hoarfrost*, 1974
(solvent transfer on fabric with pillow)
Source: The Menil Collection, Houston.

The Steinbergian interpretations, respectively of Picasso's and Rauschenberg's work, present evident analogies, as if Picassian "peinture conceptuelle" were a precursor of the Steinbergian flatbed picture plane. It is almost as if Picasso had been the only modernist voice with the foresightedness to anticipate postmodernist developments within the conception of images as operational and informational processes. At the end of his essay on Picasso and sleep, Steinberg accords Picassian configurations the same operational power of "flat bedding" the "columnar body" (Steinberg 2002, 27), because of the mutual interaction of verticality and horizontality on the picture plane, all in favor of the latter: Picasso's "upright watchers and reclined sleepers serve him as a means of constantly charting and redefining the ground of his canvas, his paper, or etcher's plate. [...] They stake out an elemental geometry" (Steinberg 2007a, 114).

As has been seen, this exceeds the field of the mere formal organization of the picture or the sole dramatic interest of its characters: "Perpendicular to each other and parallel to the margins, they [watching and sleeping figures]

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span and they scale the pictorial plane, so that horizontal and vertical materialize in ever-new personifications. The artist's will to lay down and erect the forms that perpetually reembody the conditions of his two-dimensional plane—this is more than a technical matter" (Steinberg 2007a, 114). Although Picasso remains anchored to modernist figurality, and does not trespass the threshold of objectuality, his configurations are situated at the border of modernism and tend to postmodernist drives.

When Steinberg describes the haptic features of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*'s impressions of spatiality, he interestingly employs a metaphor with Rauschenbergian echoes: "The space of the *Demoiselles* is a space peculiar to Picasso's imagination. Not a visual continuum, but an interior apprehended on the model of touch and stretch, a nest known by intermittent palpation, or by reaching and rolling, by extending one's self within it. [...] Picasso's space insinuates total initiation, like entering a disordered bed" (Steinberg 1988, 63).

In conclusion, it can be said that Picasso, through a modernist iconography of sleep, opened a radical change in the depiction of human figures. His conceptualizing configurations overcome both naturalism and modernist formalism, through a desublimating painterly *epochè*. He lets his sleeping and watching figures lay on a modernist picture plane, so that they could successively awaken on a "quasi-postmodernist flatbed picture plane."

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Amy Keating[*]

Sticky Aesthetics, Sticky Affect: Connecting through Queer Art

Abstract

This paper explores how the creative nonfiction writer, T Fleischmann, exemplifies a "queer sense of belonging" throughout the author's description of encountering a work of art and how it transmits this feeling to the reader. This sense of belonging is an affective feeling co-created through the intertwining elements of queer aesthetics and the encountering subject's contingent affective history.

Keywords

Queer Aesthetics Forms, Affect, Queer Temporalities, Embodiment, Autotheory

On a short trip to New York City, my companion and I perused a queer activist bookstore. As a queer scholar researching time and embodiment, the title *Time is the Thing a Body Moves Through*, a book by T. Fleischmann (2019), caught my attention immediately. The book's contents reflect a growing trend of 'autotheory' (Weigman 2020). Written in a similar vein as Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, Fleischmann's book narrates personal encounters with art and art production through both a creative and theoretical lens. Autotheory combines the terms "autobiography" and "theory" while acknowledging the instability of both of these categories (2020, 3). Autotheoretical work can take on many forms: the nature of its instability makes it difficult, or impossible, to pin it down (2020, 7). Unlike autobiography, many commentators discuss autotheoretical work's ability to value and produce scholarly and theoretical knowledge through personal experience while being playful in its presentation, illuminating creative writing's aesthetic value (2020, 6).

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   While reading Fleischmann's book, my engagement became imbued with affective belonging, impressing itself upon me as I read. This paper explores how Fleischmann's work illustrates a "queer sense of belonging" throughout the description of encountering a work of art created by the late queer artist, Félix González-Torres. This sense of belonging is an *affective* feeling co-created by intertwining elements of queer aesthetics and the contingent affective history of the encountering subject. I further contend that this queer affect can be transmitted in and through other queer bodies, particularly bodies marginalized by the ever-present constrictions of heteronormativity in the North American context. Borrowing from Sarah Ahmed's analysis of emotions and affect in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, I argue that a "queer sense of belonging" can "stick" and "be sticky." The stickiness of the affect depends on the non-neutral histories of the proximate subjects. Specifically, I focus expressly upon the queer subject: a reader, knowingly or otherwise, searching for belonging. By analyzing the dialogical interplay between queer embodiment, affect, and aesthetics, I show that the queer reader can encounter and *feel* this sense of belonging alongside Fleischmann.

Fleischmann's "Queer Sense of Belonging"

Fleischmann—who uses the pronoun "they"—details personal encounters with the "candy spill" sculpture, *Untitled (A Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, by the late González-Torres, within the first ten pages of the book. The sculpture, displayed posthumously, consists of a pile of colorfully wrapped candy in an art gallery corner. The sculpture's mass was weighed out to equal the weight of González-Torres' long-term partner, Ross Laycock, who died from AIDS in the nineties. Arriving to work with this knowledge, Fleischmann describes picking up a piece of candy with yellow foil:

> I placed it in my mouth./I sucked at the candy as I continued to look at the pile, slightly diminished./I felt for a moment an acute sense of loss and beauty, each indistinguishable from the other./The candy was very sweet, and it was melting (2019, 4).

   Gallery staff replenish the pile of hard candies, so the sculpture's mass always equals 79 kg (175 lbs), Ross Laycock's weight. Before the visit and after it, Fleischmann follows the motif of hard candies throughout this section of the book, for example, by describing a pile of candies wrapped in blue foil lying by a lamp in a room Fleischmann shared with their friend and complicated lover, Simon. Simon throws a couple of these candies into Fleischmann's purse, "little shards that will begin to melt in the heat of the

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subway" (2019, 6). While lamenting their recent longing to live for a summer in New York City, Fleischmann also reflects upon personal connections with González-Torres. This draw was nostalgic "because of what [New York] had been" (2019, 6), says Fleischmann. The author reflects on the city's queer contours throughout the prose in the book, in which glimmers of a queer past and present are incited by noting the spaces in which the author and the city intersect.

Fleischmann's narration of these experiences exemplifies how the sculpture's aesthetics affectively impact their embodiment. Readers of Fleischmann's essay share in the author's reflections of the work. As I can only conjecture the author's experience through my interpretation of these reflections, I take the following excerpt to be especially poignant:

> I experienced the act of removing the piece of candy, with its overt ritualization, as an act that both grounded me and pushed me further into an imaginative space./ The tactility of unwrapping the paper and tasting the melting sugar situated me in my body, while the fact of González-Torres's romance with Ross removed me from my experience./I know, however, that I was only in my own memories./My losses are squarely different than his,/as none of our losses are the same./His work moves between fact and imagination, the object and the memory, to open a new space:/from me, to something that exists beyond that limit./Like I was only a boundary before, and now I can move again—/pushing through a crowd until I come out the other side, and the air opens up and I breathe (2019, 8).

I suggest that this recreation of the aesthetic encounter is indicative of a "queer sense of belonging": a moment of reprieve from a hetero- and chrononormative world. The imagery conjures a sense of freedom made available to Fleischmann through the author's encounter with the piece. The air opening up becomes a moment to "unbind" from the confines of a world hostile to queer bodies. The piece's queer aesthetic forms resignify Fleischmann's relationship with time. Through this relationship, the forms seem to express a level of comfort and freedom unavailable to Fleischmann prior to and outside of the personal encounter with this work.

Queer Phenomenology, Temporality, and Embodied Discordance

My use of the term "queer" follows the work of Annamarie Jagose and Sara Ahmed. They both conceive "queer" as primarily describing a subject, object, or method that is non-normative, departing from the dominant norms and expectations of the relevant context. Jagose uses queerness to denote a chal-

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lenge to any notions of gender essentialism and how this might be reflected in an individual's sexuality. The "queer" marker allows for a fluidity depending on cultural and historical contexts (1996, 98). Ahmed's notion, however, invokes queer *embodiment* specifically. In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), Ahmed uses the term "queer" to indicate a directional movement along with sexual identity. For Ahmed, to move queerly is to move obliquely or become aslant to a "straight" path. Queerness is demonstrative of a "turning away" from straightness in the context of sexual identity, particularly her own lesbian identity (2006, 21). Both Jagose and Ahmed's usage of the term suggests that queerness is irreducible to sexuality alone. Queerness is also a deviation from other compulsory normalities. This deviation recalls Judith Butler's article "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (1993). Butler purports that gender norms are enacted through repetition and are not a stable indication of a subject's inherent identity. As such, Butler is wary of all supposed stable identities. Queerness, thus, not only proposes a turning away from the normative, often enacted through an expectation of a rigid and fixed gender identity (despite, for Butler, its impossibility), but represents a dynamism that can be historically and contextually contingent. Queerness is itself an elusive term, making it difficult to define its usage and parameters. I expressly limit my uptake of "queer" to an amalgamation of what is offered by these theorists: a turning away from the normative that can mean instability and dynamic identity, particularly concerning gender and sexuality.

As I use Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, I claim that embodiment substantially enacts queerness. If we operate on a queer "slanted" path, a phenomenological account highlights the impact and impressions this might have upon embodiment. In turn, Elizabeth Freeman argues that the constraints of chrononormativity bound bodies (2010, p. 3). Chrononormativity indicates that we value and measure time in a North American context through a standard temporal framework. For Freeman, bodies are subject to expectations of temporal logistics that prioritize capitalist, racist, and heteronormative endeavors (Freeman 2010). Time is measured with productivity level; there are timelines to which a subject must adhere, indicating the correct method of completing life goals, such as marriage, reproduction, and career objectives. Our bodies are bound to the construction of a clock that prioritizes capitalism; simultaneously, according to Freeman, capitalism is neatly upheld by our current framework of heteronormativity. If bodies are bound to the expectations of a specific linear timeline, then deviation is also embodied.

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I have argued elsewhere that the attempt to adhere to chrononormativity is an embodied discordance and burden uniquely placed upon queer subjects[1] (Keating, in press). Queer bodies experience discordance when they must maintain the hyperproductive expectations of a heteronormative, capitalist world: a world within which we must exist at the expense of our survival. If this discordance is indeed the case, queer bodies require temporal frameworks and spaces in which they can "unbind" and relax. This space/time would offer a "queer sense of belonging" outside of the world not made for queer subjects. I have suggested that live performance can provide this space/time (Keating, in press). Fleischmann's experience demonstrates that this occurs through artworks in other forms, as well.

The Role of Affect Theory in Aesthetic Apprehension

The conceptualization of "affect" and the "affective turn" has invoked a contentious and varied uptake amongst theorists (Siegworth & Gregg 2010, 3; Cvetkovich 2012, 3). Despite its many usages, affect theory generally attends to elements of historically subjugated forms of knowledge production. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth discuss that affect is a feeling that can be relational, comprised of both intimate experience and interrelated bodies, "becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between 'bodies'" (2010, 2). Attention to these feelings that are personal yet interconnected with various bodies, bodies that can be objects or spaces or other people, are *apropos* for uncovering, mapping, and theorizing the *feeling* of belonging to a queer time and/or space through art. Queer bodies feel the discordance; I argue it is something that is, indeed, *felt*. Perhaps it is felt in a way beyond the capability for traditional languages and knowledge structures to capture, an example of an ephemeral knowing as offered by José Esteban Muñoz (2009). As well, in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), Ahmed argues that objects, locations, feelings, moods, words, *et cetera*, can have an impact and leave an impression on us through our embodied apprehensions. Our movement and bodies concurrently affect other bodies (2010, 23). I use affect to attend to how objects and others influence our embodied feelings and how we influence others. This lens exposes how encounters with artworks and aesthetic forms have an embodied affectivity.

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[1] This is most certainly not to suggest that other bodies deviating from a cis-hetero-white-patriarchal-capitalist norm do not embody these burdens. Rather, I am specifically focusing on the queer bodies in the purview of the paper, in that I attend to existing out of gendered and sexuality norms.

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Queer fashion theorist Roberto Fillippello upholds a similar notion of embodiment and aesthetics as he writes of photographic fashion images' ability to provide a Spinozian affective return: these photos have the "simultaneous capacity to affect and be affected," which activates the "periperformative field of aesthetic engagement" (2018, 79). Fillippello thus acknowledges the haptic quality of art can affect our bodies. Thus, an aesthetic encounter's material experiences can have an affective impact that can contribute to our embodied knowledge of the object. In his *Ethics* in Postulate Two at II/140, Spinoza writes: "The human body can undergo many changes, and nevertheless retain impressions, *or* traces, of the objects [...] and consequently, the same images of things" (Curley 1994, 154). The objects I encounter leave an impression upon me, and I impress upon them in turn. If we concede this haptic quality of apprehension through our senses, we can blur the boundaries of bodies by being reciprocally affective. Furthermore, this affective history that we incur reflects Butler's notion of identity as continually shifting and unstable.

Ahmed elaborates this concept by introducing the idea that bodies also do not arrive in neutral: "the acquisition of tendencies is also the acquisition of orientations toward some things and not others as being good" (2010, 34). This acquisition will speak to the nature of contingent subjectivity in apprehending certain aesthetic forms as some art pieces wield more affective power to one subject than another. Moreover, while I speak from the specificity of the queer reader, this opens up possibilities for other ways in which these moments and pieces of art impress others—perhaps differently, perhaps similarly—but very much dependent upon ones' embodied experiences and contextual contingent history. I further invoke Ahmed as she suggests that "what we receive as an impression will depend on our given situation" (2010, 40). Therefore, as I, Fleischmann, or anyone else encounters works of art, we do so with a given history, context, and embodiment that carries the impressions of our experiences with other objects.

Sticky Affect

Affect theory is relevant to Ahmed's discussion of disgust in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014). Ahmed's referencing of "emotions" parallels my own "affect." As she writes: "I explore how emotions work to shape the "surfaces" of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others" (2014, 1). I have discussed how subjects and objects can interact and impress upon one another under

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the heading of "affect." Thus, I use Ahmed's "emotions" similarly, mainly as she explores the nature of "disgust" and "sticky" emotions. Ahmed explores the affective nature of disgust as it is applied to and sticks to particular objects and spreads throughout interrelating bodies. As one object elicits a level of disgust by encountering our bodies, we attach "disgust" to the object itself. Other objects that encounter the disgusting object risk having that disgust then stick. I cautiously take up this idea through a notion of a queer sense of belonging that can stick to queer aesthetic forms. Despite not referring to the emotion of disgust, I suggest that affect can stick to queer art similarly to how disgust can stick to objects. According to Ahmed, "stickiness involves a form of relationality, or a 'withness,' in which the elements that are 'with' get bound together" (2014, 91). This "withness" depends upon our orientations to particular objects, which depends upon a body's affective history (2014, 87). I recognize there is risk in using a theory developed through a *normatively* negative emotion; queerness, as I have shown, works to renounce the normative. Ahmed suggests that the more something gets associated with disgust, the more likely it becomes associated with that emotion of disgust. Similarly, as the reader of *Time is the Thing* is sharing in Fleischmann's interpretation of art and imbuing it with a particular affect, this affect might stick to the art.

The reader then can feel this affect when encountering the art through the words offered by Fleischmann. Through the author's encounter of the González-Torres piece, the blurring of boundaries between the work of art and Fleischmann then brings this sticky affect into the proximity of the queer reader. To explore this messy and dialogical relationship that blurs boundaries of objects, I first consider the ways the sculpture fosters the affect of a queer sense of belonging through its aesthetic forms. Why does this affect stick to such a piece and then become transferred upon the page? I suggest this is in large part due to the nature of queer aesthetic encounters.

"Reading into It:" Queer Aesthetics

To name certain aesthetic forms as queer and others not-queer is antithetical to the fluidity of queer theory. Therefore, my analysis of the Felix González-Torres piece and Fleischmann's writing highlights the importance of relating-to and relating-with artistic forms in an ever-shifting identity. I situate my position through David Getsy's and Jennifer Doyle's work as they espouse their perspectives on queer relations as queer form (2013). The interlocuter's context and history are deeply relevant to the aesthetic

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experience, dovetailing with affect theory. I interpret the aesthetic forms through Fleischmann's interaction with them. As Fleischmann encounters the work of González-Torres as a trans and queer person,[2] it is evident that the author's identity plays a role in the subjective interpretation and apprehension of the González-Torres work. I must account for the impact and affect this can have on one's interaction with an artwork. Getsy also writes: "any queer formal reading must itself be relational, particular, and contingent on its situation and context" (2017, 255). As such, my uptake of these forms depends upon particular circumstances. It depends on a body's encounter and retelling, both of which are unstable as they detail their shifting identity and embodiment over time throughout the text. Therefore, I suggest a queer reading of aesthetics incorporates an analysis that is contingent upon the bodies involved and the very nature of these shifting subjectivities that occurs over time and space. This analysis accounts for my focus on a "queer sense of belonging" and the queer reader.

Similar to Getsy, Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical aesthetics offer the possibility for a queer aesthetic to focus more on how an encountering subject apprehends and relates to the piece (Palmer, 2001). Our situated histories reflect how our bodies perceive these elements, even before reflecting on the aesthetic's features and the artworks in their contexts. Phenomenologist Helen Fielding writes that our bodies may interact with "phenomenologically strong artworks," allowing us to attend to the immediacy of our worlds before reflection and beyond the background, to which we often relegate them, through repetition and familiarity (2015). Fielding argues that our social locations and experiences not only ground our reflection of further encounters but imply the need to "recognize the primacy of embodied perception that underlies cognition" (2015, 281). My analysis does not suggest any specific techniques, materials, and artistic methods that are inherently "queer." Instead, it is a matter of the interaction between the subjects and objects that allow queerness to become pertinent. This interaction includes, but is not limited to, the objects, forms, and techniques of the art piece.

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[2] It is important to note here that Fleischmann writes of their hesitance to use the term "queer" when denoting their sexual identity as its uptake, at the time of the book's publishing in 2019, has come to mean something beyond the fluidity they embrace. Therefore, I apply this category to Fleischmann rather carefully for the purposes of this paper. I simply intend for it to indicate a lack of adherence to 'normative' sexual and gender identities as they are contained at the context of the writing, and acknowledge that this might be ever-shifting.

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Getsy and Doyle both discuss the value of queer formalisms of art as "reading into" a history of art that has often negated queer forms of knowledge: The idea that art can evoke sexuality or eroticism, or suggest:

> Anything other than the obvious is "Reading into" or hopeful projective fantasy [...] That complaint about "reading into" [...] mistakes the effort to expand on how pleasure works for a taxonomical project, turning the queer reading into the abject shadow of art history's most conservative projects (2019, 59).

This idea of "reading into" artworks is elicited continually throughout our aesthetic experience as we account for embodiment, pleasure, and what Freeman calls "erotohistoriography," as ways of reading into the piece a queerness that might be available to encountering subjects.

Queer aesthetics, then, cannot be named neatly. Indeed, the messiness partially or wholly blurs the boundaries implicated between the subject viewer and the object of observation. This implication calls for a need to attend to affect. In other words, my aesthetic interpretation is dependent on my personal history. I name forms that occur both in the piece and in Fleischmann's account and use them in a way that could be interpreted as a "reading into." It might then seem that there are no queer aesthetics proper, rather a queer interpretation, queer interaction, a queer infusion, or a "queer sensibility," as Matthew Isherwood suggests (2020). Thus, I situate my analysis as taking seriously the "reading into" so often eschewed as projection and wishful thinking for embodied and affective feeling invoked by materials, taste, or proliferating texture, rather than as an undertaking of strictly technical analysis. My analysis assumes a contingent perspective that relies upon Fleischmann's embodiment.

Further, I take my subjective embodiment seriously as a knower and participant in meaningful art as I read Fleischmann's account as a piece of literature. To insist on co-creation of artistic meaning the way queer and hermeneutical aesthetics do is to implicate me by necessity when reading the book. Thus, I am only capable of interpreting it through my partial lens of experience.

Ingesting Art: An Erotohistoriographic Encounter

As Fleischmann describes ingesting the piece of candy from the González-Torres sculpture, the author arouses a particular manifestation of Freeman's notion of *erotohistoriography*. Freeman describes erotohistoriography to reconceive historical moments while inserting bodily sensations through

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"seepages" and pleasure. As attention to the body has often been ignored or "written out" of history, the past's sensate experience can be present. Eroto-historiography does not necessitate a historical turn to the past, but "[treats] the present itself as hybrid. It uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter" (2010, 95-96). Freeman argues that a queer time could be different from a chrononormative time as it can provide a counter-historiography in feeling history with an embodied complexity. Whereas traditional historiography has evaded the sensual, the embodied, and the pleasure of the past, "queer social practices" invoke an experience of a "history" that "is not only what hurts but what arouses, kindles, whets, or itches" (2010, 117). This experience reflects a queer "reading into" of artworks. Likewise, the hard-candy ingestion through the González-Torres sculpture challenges the boundaries of a past and present embodiment by requiring a contemporary subject's participation. The candy, as representing the body of González-Torres's lover, then becomes incorporated into the participants' lives and bodies, spreading and moving as they continue to move through their respective worlds. The candy's sugar quite literally seeps onto the subjects' tongues through their digestive systems and provides caloric energy for their movements. Indeed, Freeman's erotohistoriography also brings forth "Torok's notion of incorporation, of literally consuming an object that partakes of the lost body and thereby preserving it" (2010, 120).

In utilizing Freeman's erotohistoriography, Jaclyn Pryor argues that live performance can summon these moments of "insemination" (2017). This moment connects the audience and performer in a queer 'time slip' that, in Pryor's view, also challenges chrononormativity. In conjuring affective moments, queer performance artist Peggy Shaw transmits a connection outside of a traditional notion of temporality. Pryor writes:

> To touch, transmit, and inseminate without making contact is not only ontologically performative, as Taylor asserts, it is quintessentially queer. As nonbiological reproduction, it subverts the heterocapitalist mandate that situates the production of surplus capital and nuclear families as the nationalist project (2017, 70).

Like Shaw, González-Torres has physically given the embodiment of his partner, Ross, into future generations through a queer seepage beyond a chrononormative temporal expectation dependent upon heterosexual reproduction. The context of the AIDS epidemic during the 1980s and 1990s gave rise to queer temporal theorists who argued against futurity as a diagnosis of death faced by gay men who are unable to heteronormatively reproduce (Edelman, 2013). This sculpture, then, transmits Laycock's embod-

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iment into a "future" outside of heteronormative temporality. In doing so, queer bodies connect in a different, queer time. In a refusal of traditional procreation, Ross's queer body proliferates into the encountering subject, implicating the subject in a deviation from linear chrononormativity.

A sweetness, a pleasurable feeling, impresses upon Fleischmann concurrently with the ingestion of pieces of the sculpture. However, this pleasure is not without complexity: possibly akin to what González-Torres felt in the presence of their partner. Along with bodily incorporation, pleasure is conducive to an embodiment of a historiography. Freeman writes that there is the "very queer possibility that encounters with history are bodily encounters, and even that they have a revivifying and pleasurable effect" (2010, 105). Fleischmann's pleasure in eating the candy is also attached to a deep melancholy, not only in representing a diminishing body but also in Fleischmann's conflicting feelings present throughout their written reflection. They describe feeling both "loss" and "beauty" to be indistinguishable from one another. I suggest that this complicated feeling is conducive to a queer sense of belonging that sticks on the sculpture and Fleischmann's reinterpretation.

While the pleasure grounds them through ingestion, incorporating embodiment, Fleischmann could become inculcated with the public's complicity of the loss of Gonzalez Torres's lover due to AIDS (Isherwood 2020). Pryor's notion of "time slips" through live performance is illuminating here, as a chrononormative timeline does not allow for time to be "spent" on dallying in emotions that have yet to be healed or validated (2017, 32). For example, queer trauma at the hands of a heteronormatively systemic world is not given the "time" to be seen, heard, or healed within the forward march of a heteronormative clock (Pryor 2017). Nonetheless, Pryor also uses art to expose the cracks through which these feelings have been seeping. Pryor writes that "time slips are moments in live performance in which normative conceptions of time fail, or fall away, and the spectator or slip reveals a previously unseen aspect of either the past, present, or future (while complicating the presumably linear relationship among and between each)" (2017, 9). The moment that Fleischmann takes to ingest the sweetness of the candy, representative of Ross, is not merely a tactile grounding of pleasure but a moment to dwell in sadness. Thus, my conceptualization of queer sense of belonging also makes room for feelings not often associated with ease or comfort. I believe that they elicit an unbinding from bodily discordance in that queer bodies no longer have to contort themselves to ignore and move beyond their trauma in a way that adheres to a chrononormative forward march of time. Instead, they can take a moment to dwell in the sadness.

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For Fleischmann, this moment was also a "time slip," in that the sadness and beauty of González-Torres's time with Ross can be seen and ultimately felt and incorporated into the bodies of others. In a world that often sidelines queer tragedy, the moment to dwell in a sadness accompanied by pleasure and love is indeed a queer moment.

The hard-candy used to create this sculpture is not extraordinary but rather a reasonably accessible, everyday material. In this section of Fleischmann's narrative, it keeps cropping up, even outside of the art encounter (2019, 4-6). This inclusion of the object outside the curated sculpture gestures to ephemeral queerness's glimmers in the everyday object, a hard-candy, beyond the art piece. Isherwood argues that because a queer sensibility can orientate queer bodies toward seeing the queerness in every day, it "must detect queer desire in objects and situations that might not be obvious to others" (2020, 236). Indeed, for Isherwood, this is reflective of a Muñozian ephemeral knowing: "a queer aesthetic sensibility," he writes, "seems familiar to the practice of gay cruising and its reliance on one's capacity to detect ephemeral traces in queer possibility" (2020, 235). Fleischmann's references to candy outside of the encounter with the sculpture imply a connection to queerness in the everyday object: a queerness perhaps unavailable to those not searching for it. This connection might be demonstrative of Ahmed's analysis of the uses of objects. In *What's the Use?* Ahmed writes that "queer uses, when things are used for purposes other than the ones for which they were intended, still reference the qualities of things; queer uses may linger on those qualities rendering them all the more lively" (2019, 26). González-Torres's usage of hard candy becomes ever-more salient in its altering of the purposes of an everyday object; candy takes upon a different life—one that stays with its consumers, the participants of the sculpture, and perhaps Fleischmann—and thus it gestures at a queer possibility (Muñoz 2009; Isherwood 2020).

Ben Highmore also makes a case for the everyday object's aesthetics as being affectively significant in its messiness and "sticky entanglements." In his article, "Bitter After Taste: Affect, Food, and Social Aesthetics," Highmore complicates the distinction of embodied apprehensions:

> The interlacing of sensual, physical experience (here, the insistent reference to the haptic realm—touch, feel, move) with the passionate intensities of love, say, or bitterness, makes it hard to imagine untangling them, allotting them to discrete categories in terms of their physicality or the ideational existence (2010, 120).

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However, acknowledging that everyday objects can be multiple, messy, and sticky, we must again acknowledge how subjectivity and personal history of affect are relevant in our encounter with art. Fleischmann points to this in their narration regarding the piece: "I know, however, that I was only in my own memories./My losses are squarely different than his,/as none of our losses are the same" (2019, 9). As Highmore suggests, it is not impossible to connect a sense of a beautiful sweetness with a positive affect beyond the taste itself. However, as Highmore also reflects, moments of "cultural experience" are "densely woven entanglement[s] of all these aspects [...] sticky entanglements of substances and feelings, of matter and affect are central to our contact with the world" (2010, 119). Fleischmann's encounter with the sculpture of using an everyday object is not only queer in its use, it also ties them to a tangled web of feelings that do not merely resolve. Instead, they are a bodily sensation that they see and feel in other spaces. The messiness of the mundane in its queer use sticks to Fleischmann.

Through these queer aesthetic interpretations of the piece and Fleischmann's rendition of their encounter, I have argued that the author felt a sense of "queer belonging." Despite González-Torres's and Ross's deaths, Fleischmann embodies them through the act of participating in the piece. This work opens up Fleischmann to a temporal structure that recognizes pleasurable embodiment and validates queer loss. It also can cultivate the queer into the messiness of the everyday. In a trans and queer body, Fleischmann was then able to breathe and perhaps felt an affect of belonging outside of a heteronormative framework.

Sticking to the Reader

Again, I consider the nature and relevance of "autotheory," Fleischmann's book is written in a similar way that incorporates creative elements. Autotheory also works in ways that are explicitly feminist as it serves to acknowledge idiosyncratic experiences as inseparable from the political. I acknowledge how I am only aware of Fleischmann's *narration* of their encounter. Simultaneously, there is an element of aesthetic form and technique within Fleischmann's text. Thus, through this paper, my analysis is layered. However, the layers are blurry. I first consider Fleischmann's retelling of their experience as they offer it, considering it to be a version of the truth. However, I cannot disentangle my subjectivity as I encounter this piece of work as art in itself. It is this within this messiness that things begin to get sticky.

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Not only is Fleischmann encountering González-Torres, but I am encoun-
tering Fleischmann recapitulating the personal encounter with the sculp-
ture. I am approaching and co-creating meaning in an artistic rendering of
their own experience. I have access to their feelings about the piece. I en-
counter the feelings with my non-neutral embodiment. Their words become
a unique conduit into the sculptural experience that can be affectively
profound for the reader. This profundity could be explicitly amplified for
the reader who regularly feels an embodied discordance and perhaps, even
unknowingly, is open to unbinding in a queer sense of belonging. Just as
Fleischmann's embodiment orientated them to a queer aesthetic sensibility
(Isherwood 2020), the reader of their essay comes to the piece with per-
sonal, historical subjective experiences. Fleischmann's narration, theoretical
inquiries, and analyses are offered to the stylistic reader, suggesting queerly
affective prose. As autotheory tends to oscillate between the narrative that
stretches the truth and biological "fact" (Weigman 2020), it might be that
"truth" and "fiction" become entangled. Elsewhere, Fleischmann argues that
traditional constructions of truth have been utilized to disavow and invali-
date marginalized peoples' experiences (2013). Thus, Fleischmann argues
for the value in considering these stories whose narratives offer perspec-
tives that bleed between truth and untruths in creative writing. For Fleisch-
mann, "the role of knowledge is not so much to inform, but to encourage
exploration, especially when that exploration leads us further into the place
we call the margins" (2013, 48).

As I consider how the author presents their embodiment in their book,
I do not require a picture of their experience whose "accuracy" is deter-
mined through traditional epistemological methods. The transmission of
Fleischmann's experience is truthful as it presents their experience of
the events that open possibilities for further interpretation from the reader.
I began my writing by acknowledging what led me to read Fleischmann in
the first place: much of this was contingent upon my queer scholarly pur-
suits. Indeed, this may mean that the words impress upon me in a way that is
open to particular *feelings* to which others in different circumstances might
not be privy. Thus, the author's stylistic choices let me cozy into cracks and
fissures of queer belonging that they have created. We create meaning to-
gether and with González-Torres as queer affect becomes transmitted
through the page, sticking to Fleischmann's art.

I suggest the writing recalls similar themes of the queer aesthetic rela-
tions and forms of the sculpture that reapplies this meaning, further allow-
ing the affect to stick. Fleischmann's text lingers, circles, dawdles and eludes

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any notion of linear temporality. Paragraphs of thick description are broken by lines of prose, allowing the reader to take a moment and indulge in perhaps a tangential thread of thought. These moments exemplify a queer timeline. Rather than adhere to chrononormative linearity that asserts a forward-facing continuous march, Fleischmann takes time to dally and tarry (Muñoz 2009; Freeman 2010). This also makes room for Pryor's "time slip." The reader is given a new time to join Fleischmann in their emotive and affecting reflections. Indeed, many of the incorporations of poetic accounts demand attention to one's embodiment, as Fleischmann's descriptions ground the author in their trans body. Highmore characterizes bodily experiences of aesthetic modes as being difficult to disentangle from one another. Thus, the reader can *feel* and be affected by Fleischmann's experiences alongside them. A queer reader can open themselves to the impressions of the candy, for example, and the space in which Fleischmann can finally breathe; we are drawn in with complex pleasure and sadness, connecting to Fleischmann and connecting to González-Torres and Ross Laycock. I suggest that residues of this "queer sense of belonging" stick to me, as I allow it to impress upon my queer body. This suggestion does not say that a non-queer-identifying reader would not have an affective experience. Instead, insofar as queer bodies are open and orientated to these experiences (Ahmed 2006; Isherwood 2020), the boundaries of these bodies and objects become blurred, unlike if an encountering subject is closed off, perhaps hardened, or at the very least not "reading into" the aesthetics for deeper, queer meaning (Doyle & Getsy 2013).

Conclusion

This reading of sticky affective aesthetics through an autotheoretical retelling can potentially open us to different timelines and different worlds that offer queer belonging. As Fleischmann details this affective experience of belonging, I feel its traces wash over me. The affective encounter with a piece of art can be transmitted poignantly through reinterpretations to a queer reader or a reader unknowingly open to a possible queer sense of belonging. To have this experience mediated through another queer person means to connect with their embodied interpretation of the event at a later date. When Fleischmann talks about how they suddenly feel like they have room to breathe, bodies bound up by chrononormativity can relax in tandem. Co-creation of meaning in art can occur across various formats that open possibilities for connections outside of the logic of chrononormative tempo-

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rality. While the interlocutor is apprehending a different mediated experi-
ence, there still is some level of access to the affective feeling of belonging as
Fleischmann transmits this through the page.

I wrote this paper during the time of forced closures due to the global
COVID-19 pandemic, which poses a unique challenge for art and artists.
Because of this, I considered how art, which presumes an embodied partici-
patory component, retains its possibility to be accessed despite our inability
to attend museums or performances at this time. If queer artists and writers
reinterpret and retell their embodied encounters, queer readers can connect
to these moments in a genuine and affective manner. This consideration
does not offer an all-encompassing solution to closures or the nature of ac-
cessibility via economic privileges or varying bodily abilities. Nevertheless,
it does show that affective elements of art, particularly art encompassing
queer aesthetic forms, can stick and transmit to other bodies in a way that
can be meaningful: by imbuing a queer sense of belonging.

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Jandra Boettger*

Guilty Wonder. An Exploration of the Aesthetic, Affective, and Political Implications of the Wondering Gaze[1]

Abstract

Wonder's affective neutrality and perceptive *firstness* have led to its connotation with innocence and *naïveté*. This paper challenges the perception that wonder is a value-free stimulus. Instead, it explores wonder's potential to unveil, expose and denude—thus playing on the difference between norm and exception. Wonder's history is loaded with othering's cruelty, the spectacularization of difference, and the libidinous entanglement of voyeurism, leading to the question, to what extent wonder is comprised of guilt? Subsequently, this paper supplements the notion of guilt with a differentiated account of indebtedness, following the hypothesis that wonder can also be conceptualized as a politically mobilizing affect if taken seriously.

Keywords

Curatorial Studies, Fascist Continuities, Privilege, Saidyia Hartman, Walter Benjamin

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> The wonder that the things we experience are "still" possi-
> ble in the twentieth century is not philosophical. It does
> not stand at the beginning of a realization, unless the idea
> of history from which it originates cannot be held.
>
> Benjamin 1980, I.2:697, trans. J.B.[2]

While reading Walter Benjamin's treatise *On the Concept of History* (1940),
I stumbled upon his condemnation of those wondering about fascism.
I paused to think about his specific critique of the wonder that fascism
evoked for some people already 80 years ago. Caught out by his critique,
I realized that I, too, had sometimes found myself in this state of wonder
about the increasing number of anti-Semitic and racially motivated attacks
in Germany over the last years. Reading Benjamin thus opened up a way to
challenge some problematic undertones of my thinking.

By taking my wonder about wonder as a point of advantage, this text
explores the guilty elements and downsides of wonder. I will first provide
a quick history of the concept of wonder and how its role was conceptual-
ized regarding aesthetic and epistemic processes. Then, I will lay out my
research question: to what extent is wonder comprised of guilt? I will sketch
normative presumptions, normalizing practices of othering, and wonder as

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[2] „Das Staunen darüber, daß die Dinge, die wir erleben, im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert
‚noch' möglich sind, ist *kein* philosophisches. Es steht nicht am Anfang einer Erkenntnis, es
sei denn der, daß die Vorstellung von Geschichte aus der es stammt, nicht zu halten ist"
(Benjamin 1980, I.2:697). Although the term *Staunen* is commonly translated to English as
amazement, I chose to translate it as *wonder,* as I am interested in the affective complex of
wondering including cognitive and evaluative processes. Benjamin's denial of it being non-
philosophical indirectly hints at the possibility of misunderstanding the bespoken affect as
triggering knowledge. Thus, as I will show, what kind of wonder is at stake in this quote is
not clearly determined from the outset.

Besides *wonder*, the second possible translation of *Staunen* would have been *astonish-
ment*, as Benjamin is very interested in the etymological relation of *staunen* to *stauen*
(Benjamin 1977, II.1:531) also to be found in astonishment. I will come back to this notion
later in this essay. While *wondering* is etymologically derivable from Proto-Germanic
wundra, *astonishment* is traceable to similar roots as *staunen*: from Proto-Germanic
stunona ("to sound, crash, bang, groan") or also from Proto-Indo-European: *(s)ten-,
*(s)ton- (to thunder, roar, groan), which is equivalent to a-stun (Seebold 2002, 277). Most
English Dictionaries suggest synonymous uses for astonishment, amazement and wonder,
with wonder being the only notion bearing reflective moments, see for instance (Johnson
1755).

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a privilege. Subsequently, the notion of guilt will be supplemented by a differentiated account of indebtedness, following the hypothesis that wonder can also be conceptualized as a politically mobilizing affect if taken seriously.

Although "wonder" is an aesthetic emotion,[3] there is a significant line of research that understands wonder as an "epistemic emotion" (Candiotto 2019), with "its epistemic function [being] [...] the one of questioning triggered by the recognition of a problem" (ibidem, 853). The question, whether wonder plays a valuable role in epistemic processes or forestalls it, is part of a philosophical struggle that is as long as philosophy itself: for Plato (1982, 155d) and Aristotle (Aristotle, 1989, 13 [982b]), wonder primed the beginning of philosophic revelation. In contrast, due to the dangers of excessive wondering,[4] and of falling appraise to the spectacle, Descartes opted for its banning (Descartes 2010, 22, §76).

Wonder as an epistemic emotion can be differentiated from wonder as an aesthetic emotion in line with Kant's distinction between theoretic cognition and aesthetic judgment: "[T]heoretical cognition abstracts from the particulars of individual phenomena. In contrast, aesthetic judgments are in the end [...] about individual objects, and they try to do justice to subtle nuances in appearance rather than abstract from these individualizing nuances" (Menninghaus et al. 2019, 175). As an epistemic emotion, wonder confuses the categories and irritates us, driving us to learn more about what we wonder about. Wonder as an aesthetic emotion denotes the capability to see between the categories of rational thinking, which is also why Adorno takes wonder to be a vital feature against instrumental reason (Adorno 1970, 7:192).[5]

Thus, we can sketch two main traditions of interpreting wonder:[6] wonder as stimuli, initiating scientific curiosity, and wonder as mere amazement, for which "ignorance" is not escaped but instead accepted for the sake of the spectacle.[7] Both interpretations build similarly on wonder's aesthetic

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[3] For wonder as *the* aesthetic emotion, see: Fingerhut and Prinz 2018. For a discussion of aesthetic emotions in general, see Menninghaus *et al.* 2019 and Keltner and Haidt 2003.

[4] Descartes speaks of wonder (fr.: étonnement) as an excess of admiration (fr.: admiration).

[5] In "Aesthetica" (Baumgarten 2007 [1750]) dedicated an entire chapter to aesthetic wonder: "The art of preserving the new and miraculous in beautiful thoughts, and of awakening curiosity and wonder is called aesthetic thaumaturgy." For critical discussion, see Menke 2003.

[6] For an overview of the history of wonder, see: Matuschek 2011 and Gess 2017.

[7] Gallagher et al. distinguish wonder from awe, with the latter denoting "a direct and initial experience or feeling when faced with something amazing, incomprehensible, or

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elements, e.g., changes of perception, and its affective elements, as it changes our mood and affective relation towards the object. Wonder then is a means to focus, to steer attention, to perceive something, yet it does not contain value judgments: "wondering at x doesn't involve any value-judgment on x; it doesn't prompt one to seek x or to avoid it, all it involves is curiosity about x, a desire to know more about it" (Descartes 2010, 20, §71). Common denominator of both strands is that wonder touches upon the borders of one's knowledge by *perceiving* something new and being in any way *affected* by it.

From this quick survey of different conceptions of wonder, wonder appears to be a relatively neutral affect, as no emotions (like love, hate, disgust) come into play besides a (slight) shock. The affective neutrality and perceptive *firstness* are why wonder has the connotation of innocence, maybe *naïveté*. However, in this paper, I want to challenge the perception that wonder is only the start, a stimulus, and besides that value-free: Benjamin's wonder does *not* stand at the beginning of a cognition process or a philosophical questioning. Thus, it follows, there is a wonder at the end of something, or it is not philosophical, or, of course, both. I suggest it is a gazing wonder, staring, therefore exposing the fragile border between norm and exception. This text aims at exploring the wonder Benjamin gestured at, specifically wonder's potential to unveil, expose and denude—thus encompassing elements of violence and vulnerability, practices of othering, habits of overseeing. Consequently, this paper explores my very own presumptions and privileges exposed when I wonder about that which Benjamin condemned eighty years ago.

The first part of this text concentrates negatively on dimensions of guilt in wonder, e.g., wonder at the end of the possibility to know, complicit with the victor's narrative, and thus willing and able to ignore or deny constant structural oppression. The second part of this text focuses on the possibility of wonder being the turning moment between knowing and not-knowing, between perception and callousness, constructing a politically constructive conception of guilt.

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sublime" (Gallagher et al. 2015, 6). Wonder, then, denotes "a reflective experience motivated when one is unable to put things into a familiar conceptual framework—leading to open questions rather than conclusions" (Gallagher et al. 2015, 6). For this paper, no differentiation between both dimensions of wonder shall be made, as both the inhibiting as well as the igniting dimension of wondering are at work in Benjamin's denunciation: Wonder exposes not only the object wondered at, but also the wondering person and the historical structures that crafted the object of wonder as the *exception* to the rule, the *extraordinary* in midst of *ordinariness.*

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1. Wonder as Privilege

According to Benjamin, wondering about fascism does not uncover fascism
but rather exposes those wondering. He accuses them of believing in
an "idea of history," which has normalized "progress" and made fascism into
a regression to be wondered at: it reveals the wondering person's assump-
tions about the world, based on which a distinction between the normal
and the exceptional is made (Benjamin 1980, I.2:697). Benjamin opposes
the view in which a "state of emergency" is the exception. Instead, he asks
his readers to perform a mental twist: for as long as a society was built on or
integrated oppressing structures (which is forever, in Benjamin's view),
what feels like a state of emergency had to be endured by those oppressed:
"The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in
which we live is not the exception but the rule" (Benjamin 1980, I.2:697).

Two opposing conceptions of history are at work: "on the one hand,
the cosy 'progressive' doctrine, for which historical progress, the develop-
ment of societies towards more democracy, freedom or peace is the norm,
and, on the other, the one [...] which takes as its standpoint the tradition of
the oppressed for whom the norm or rule of history is the oppression, bar-
barism and violence of the victors" (Löwy 2005, 58). Two subsequent ways
of relating to fascism emerge. For those believing in constant progress, fas-
cism "is an exception to the norm of progress, an inexplicable 'regression,'
a parenthesis in the onward march of humanity" (ibidem, 58). For those
being on the other side of history, fascism is only the "most recent and brutal
expression of the 'permanent state of emergency' that is the history of class
oppression" (ibidem, 58). As Hartman puts it, the "intransigence of racism"
and its "antipathy and abjection naturalized in Plessy v. Ferguson" build "an
amazing continuity belied the hypostatized discontinuities and epochal
shifts installed by categories like slavery and freedom" (Hartman 1997, 7).

Wondering implies a privileged position of being at a temporal or spatial
distance to whatever we wonder about.[8] Distance is a core feature of won-
dering, but also a reason for it being a "guilty pleasure": to favor distance as
the only mode of observation means to join in into an outdated conception of
objectivity, which strips vision off from the seeing body, passions, and inter-
ests: "The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity—honed to

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[8] "Wonder creates the distance from which only reality can become the object of ob-
servation and, on the other hand, man can become the observer" (Matuschek 2011, 8,
trans. J.B.).

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perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy—to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power" (Haraway 1988, 581). It is a distance that divides the seeing eye from its position in the world. Thus, to connect wonder with distance is, on the one hand, valid, as it leaves you for a short moment detached from your other surroundings. On the other hand, it is not valid, as wonder sucks you in, it intensifies the relation with the object, it *attracts* you. To strip away wonder from its alluring, non-rational side and reduce it to mere observation means contributing to a masculinist perception of objectivist observation. It is a privilege to gain distance from the perceived object, especially when the object is a constant means of oppression.[9]

Hartman similarly pointed to this affective entanglement of vision when she claims, the "act of 'witnessing'[is] a kind of looking no less entangled with the wielding of power and the extraction of enjoyment" (Hartman 1997, 22). By spelling out the libidinous dimensions of witnessing, the problematic dimension of spectacularism also at work in the act of wondering surfaces: "Are we witnesses who confirm the truth of what happened in the face of the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortions of torture, the sheer unrepresentability of terror, and the repression of the dominant? Or are we voyeurs fascinated with and repelled by exhibitions of terror and sufferance?" (Hartman 1997, 4-5). Hartman shows that the witnessing gaze is not neutral and discernible from the situation but rather shares an affective investment in the situation. Witnessing is not mere observation, as it involves your entanglement in a situation where your observations matter.

A third problem related to the strict division between seeing the subject and the perceived object becomes apparent when looking at the common proximation of wonder and the feeling of the sublime.[10] Attempting to grasp the feeling of being overwhelmed at the sight of nature, Kant sketched the concept of the sublime (Kant 1990, 164). Adorno paraphrased: "[…] the high mountains speak as images of a space freed from the shackles of constraint and restriction and of possible participation in it, not by oppressing it" (Adorno 1970, 297). "Nature" reveals itself as an agent, but what it is freed from is *my* instrumental gaze in which *I* perceive *it* as a mere resource.

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[9] Derrida (2001, 113-114) builds on Levinas' critique of the visual metaphor in Greco-Christian philosophy. Here, similarly to Haraway, he isolates the cruel relationship between the claim to objectivity and possessive strivings.

[10] See: Matuschek 2011, 42-44, and Menninghaus *et al.* 2019.

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Again, the reciprocity of wonder becomes apparent, and, at this point, problematic. I seem to wonder at nature's power, yet my perception is freed from the constraints and one-dimensionality of instrumental thinking.

Adorno, with Kant against Kant, explicitly criticized modern perception for categorizing the perceived in too general categories, therefore losing sight of that in-between, the small, the deviant: "The more densely people have spun a categorial web around what is other than their subjective mind set, the more have they disaccustomed themselves to *the wonder of that other* and deceived themselves with a supposedly growing familiarity of what is foreign" (Adorno 1970, 7:192; Emph. J.B.). Adorno gestures at wondering being the very capacity of perceiving that which does not fit into familiar categories, for instance, nature as a complex, living multitude of agents that is by no means a mere resource. To take the feeling of sublimity seriously means not only to shudder at the sight of high mountains but also to shudder at any little rock lying in your way. It means to feel yourself as a part of "nature," and not only attend the spectacle from a safe distance and then turn away. In this case, as indicated, safe distance denotes the privilege to see with a "gaze from nowhere" (Haraway 1988, 581), but not to get involved with the situation and interrogate your position in it.

2. Othering, Exhibiting, and Exposure

Wonder is not only a perception but also an action: the *staring* moment is inextricable from the *reflecting* moment, as both are intertwined in one *act* that not only perceives but, again, can be perceived. Although my reaction is no action in an emphatic sense (as I might not have the chance to act otherwise in the very moment of wondering, see: Makropoulos 1989, 23), it is perceivable and thus constitutes an interaction with the world. Additionally, my wonder manifests what I perceive as usual and what is not. It thus reveals the normativity of perception: the compromise of being seen and judged as "different."

Wondering involves elements of Othering (Brons 2015) since a difference is inserted between the subject and object in the wondering act of the person who wonders about something. "An analysis of the other-not-me (or of oneself) does not occur without the intervention of the me (or of one's 'higher' self), and the division between the observer and the observed. The search for meaning will always arrive at a meaning through I" (Minh-Ha 1989, 70). As Mihn-Ha shows, perceiving something as Other works only

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while constituting an "I." What is therefore reproduced in terms of "truth, reality, and otherness" cannot reach the irreducible presence of that which is perceived but always needs to cross the chokepoint of the "intervening me."

Wondering means to differentiate between the "familiar" and the "strange": This becomes particularly evident with the history of exhibition-making when the exhibition of looted art from imperial and colonial endeavors was institutionalized in the *Cabinets of Wonders*. Cabinets of Wonders and similarly world fairs sought to perpetuate the difference between "civilized" and "barbaric" peoples. The concept of world fairs can even stand paradigmatically for the exoticization- and othering-practices of Western colonial society (Wyss 2010; Lonetree 2012; Brons 2015). That these practices are still operative is shown in the ongoing debate about the Humboldt-Forum, Berlin:

> As already was the case during those times when 'exotic curiosities' were displayed in the 'cabinets of wonders' belonging to the Princes of Brandenburg and the Prussian Kings, the Berlin Palace-Humboldt Forum will apparently serve the purpose of developing a Prussian-German-European identity. This concern is in fact directly opposed to the aim of promoting a culture of equality in the migration society and is being pursued to the detriment of others. The supposed 'stranger' and 'other' will be constructed with the help of the often centuries-old objects from all over the world, and the extensive collection of European art on Berlin's Museum Island will be put to the side. In this way, Europe will be constructed as the superior norm.[11]

Colonial exhibitions, and their practices of collecting and displaying "exotic" findings, inextricably bind the concept of wondering, understood as a particular strategy, to a power nexus in which Western Europeans impose their ways of belief by exposing the other.

To move on from this colonial mode of exhibiting and invent other possibilities for art intervening in politically charged circumstances, Ivana Bago and Antonia Majača created an alternative exhibition format, setting *Exposure* as a new leitmotif. The irreducible grammatical openness of the terminus *exposure* precisely encompasses the two-fold character of the notion of wonder, as it denotes both the event causing wonder and the reaction in the subject:[12] "Exposures opens itself up above all as a point for the gathering together and mutual empowerment of projects that resist the imperative of

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[11] In: "Stop the Planned Construction of the Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace!", No Humboldt 21!, 3 June 2013, [online] www.no-humboldt21.de/resolution/english.

[12] See Hentschel and Krasmann 2020.

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static representation and whose vision is directed to the generation of new models of joint action and the transformative effect on all who become a part of the project, whether as authors, participants, curators, organizers or the publics" (Bago and Majača 2010, 85).

The term exposure draws together contradictory, but often simultaneously occurring dimensions of perception also at stake in the act of wondering: it stands on the one hand for agent-centered intentional actions directed towards an object such as uncovering [*Enthüllung*], disrobing [*Entblößung*], unmasking [*Bloßstellen*], exhibiting [*Ausstellen*], excavating [*Offen-* and *Freilegen*] or even threatening [*gefährden*] (Willmann and Messinger 1993, 361). On the other hand, exposure refers to an experience in the subject, such as being exposed, denuded, or exhibited. Exposure can be an event and a subjective state simultaneously; it can refer to the exposed object or the exhibiting subject.

Exposure, with the implied reflectivity and reciprocity, can help to redefine the practice of exhibition-making and to transgress the imperial spectacularity and paternalistic gestures in exhibition-making: "Rather than exoticizing Bosnia Herzegovina as this post-conflict space, we decided to invite colleagues working in other contexts, with the focus on Europe, to meet in Bosnia Herzegovina, and talk about the issues that dominate the West-European perception of the Balkans, but were hardly endemic to the region" (Majača and Bago 2020, 62).

The curators used long-term, locally anchored practices to connect different, already existing projects with one another, thus seeking a dialogue between groups in which people prepared to show themselves as vulnerable. In this way, the curators aimed to transform formats intended to showcase contemporary art exhibitions into platforms to form new communities and alliances.

Moving away from reproducing stereotypical differences between the self and other challenges the traditional, modern exhibition setting and its normative account on what counts as (Western) art: "Some of the works that we have shown could even be described as 'bad art' by some generic standards of curatorial judgment, some of them were only half-developed, some bordering kitsch. But it is exactly this disobedience towards the idea of a curator as the confident, omniscient arbiter of value that is in itself a form of exposure" (Majača and Bago 2020, 70).

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3. Wonder as a Break

The privilege of a safe distance conceptualized in visual terms in the section above can as well be construed in temporal terms. Then, guilty wonder is not pointing at the privilege of a *safe distance* but a lack of historical consciousness. This point is emphasized by Hartman's notion of a faux "amazing continuity" which can only be upheld if categories of "freedom" and "slavery" remain valid as clear-cut historical periods: "The abolition of chattel slavery and the emergence of man, however laudable, long-awaited, and cherished, fail to yield such absolute distinctions; instead fleeting, disabled, and short-lived practices stand for freedom and its failure" (Hartman 1997, 13). Similarly, Benjamin criticizes the Left for their libertarian arrogance when they work on abstracted notions of freedom and thereby dismiss fascism's "intimate relation with contemporary industrial-capitalist society": "For Social Democracy, Fascism was a vestige of the past; it was anachronistic and pre-modern. In his writings of the 1920s, Karl Kautsky explained that Fascism was possible only in a semi-agrarian country like Italy, but could never prevail in a modern, industrialized nation like Germany" (Löwy 2005, 59). Opposing this view, Benjamin denotes fascism to be "deeply rooted in modern industrial and technical 'progress' and was, ultimately, possible *only* in the twentieth century" (ibidem, 59). Ephemerality, in addition to distance, is another reason why wonder seems to be guilty for Benjamin, for in the moment of wonder, we are disconnected from history and left in a state of unknowingness.

This wonder is not about the innocent amazement of a child who sees something *for the first time*, asks questions, and receives explanations. Instead, the sacrifice of the possibility of knowledge to the belief in progress feeds Benjamin's guilty wonder. It describes the danger of wonder without history, which is not at the beginning of knowledge or politically catalyzing but is the expression of a locked-in attitude. This wonder cannot be translated into political action because it perceives structures as isolated and loses the understanding of deeper connections and contexts.

Nevertheless, in this ephemerality, wonder's absolute dedication to the *Augenblick*, Benjamin himself envisions a positive potential. Written three years before the *Theses on the Concept of History*, Benjamin described another image that sheds light on a more optimistic relation between wonder, revelation, and political action.[13] Here, wonder offers a moment to pause,

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[13] Die Stauung im realen Lebensfluß, der Augenblick, da sein Ablauf zum Stehen kommt, macht sich als Rückflut fühlbar: das Staunen ist diese Rückflut. Die Dialektik im

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a moment in which the flow of life comes to a halt, and time begins swelling. Wonder then can be perceived as a metaphorical backlog; it is the heightened threshold of perception, the water flooding the surrounded areas. As he narrates further, wonder focuses on the "dialectics of standstill," the micromovement of a forth and back that only oneself can feel. As indicated in the song, the fugitivity of a moment (in which the wave breaks at your foot) shall not be prolonged, and it cannot be extended. It is only a moment, and it will be gone as soon as you realized it was there. However, it would be a mistake to withdraw your foot from this zone of possible exposure, as then, the possibility of wonder would be gone for good. Remain open, this verse seems to say, and close to the movement of the world.

However, the third part of the quote, again, foreshadows some of the dark sides of wonder also pointed out in this text: "If the stream of things breaks at the rock of wonder, there is no difference between human life, and a word. In the eternal theatre, both are only the wave's crest" (Benjamin 1977, II.1:531). In the moment of wonder, our affective state is in high vigilance. It is the bodily reaction to perceiving something new. We are at the disposal of the situation, yet it can be a word and a human life in danger that similarly affects or does not affect us. Benjamin's pessimistic account of how wonder can mobilize people may thus seem realistic. We may wonder about cruelty and forget about it again. We may wonder about cruelty and stay attuned to it as long as it is spectacular. We may wonder about cruelty and just get used to it, losing the *first-ness* of a situation that should always remind us: we shall never get used to any form of oppression.

4. Between Vulnerability and Capability

Ahmed connotates wonder positively, as it is *the* affect able to break the slick surface of the ordinary, thus conceptualizing a different account between wonder and history: "I would suggest that wonder allows us to see the surfaces of the world as made, and as such wonder opens up rather than sus-

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Stillstand ist sein eigentlicher Gegenstand. Es ist der Fels, von dem herab der Blick in jenen Strom der Dinge sich senkt, von dem sie in der Stadt Jehoo, ,die immer voll ist, und wo niemand bleibt', ein Lied wissen, ,welches anfängt mit: Beharre nicht auf der Welle, / Die sich an deinem Fuß bricht, solange er / Im Wasser steht, werden sich / Neue Wellen an ihm brechen.' Wenn aber der Strom der Dinge an diesem Fels des Staunens sich bricht, so ist kein Unterschied zwischen einem Menschenleben und einem Wort. Beide sind im ewigen Theater nur der Kamm der Welle (Benjamin 1977, II.1:531).

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pends historicity. History is what is concealed by the transformation of the world of the ordinary, into something already familiar, or recognizable" (Ahmed 2014, 179). Ahmed conceptualizes wonder as an aesthetic and affective feeling, as "wonder expands our field of vision and touch" (ibidem, 169), and as a condition for social relation: "Wonder is the precondition of the exposure of the subject to the world: we wonder when we are moved by that, which we face" (ibidem, 179).

For Ahmed, wonder is the point of advantage for political mobilization: "Wonder is what brought me to feminism; what gave me the capacity to name myself as a feminist." (ibidem, 180) However, apart from wonder, anger, pain, joy, and hope also pushed her towards political activism (ibidem, 69). It was not only wonder directed at the familiar but also the *normalcy* of the familiar. After the wonder, a process of questioning and sharing begins in which one's own experience is compared with the wondering of others. Ahmed describes the process leading from individual pain to talking about pain as a process of collectivization that the experiences of exposure characterize: "We could think about feminist therapy and consciousness-raising groups in the 1970s precisely in terms of the transformation of pain into collectivity and resistance. Carol Tavris argues that consciousness-raising groups were important because 'to question legitimate institutions and authorities, most people need to know that they are not alone, crazy, or misguided'" (ibidem, 172).

Indebted to her account on wondering, as a practice that puts you in response to your surroundings, I will in the following construct a positive conception of the guilt of wonder, building on the critique developed with Benjamin. Before that, I will show how Brecht actively conceived wonder as aesthetic-political means, which Benjamin appreciated as a positive form of sparking interest by making people wonder, thus perceiving it as an ability (Benjamin 1977, II.1:531).

Bertolt Brecht made wonder the "central category" of his theater practice (Rebentisch 2011, 353). He developed a theater praxis to keep wonder fresh, to relearn wondering. He "exhibited reality," which meant for him "to alienate it in such a way that its real 'condition' is revealed to the audience. One's own becomes recognizable as foreign, the ordinary is exhibited and thus becomes tangible" (ibidem, 350). By orienting his plays as closely as possible to his audience's everyday experiences, Brecht blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, causing the supposedly normal to take on an absurd color. Instead of reacting sympathetically to something depicted and thus producing pity for something foreign, one wonders about one's own

and everyday circumstances. Wondering about oneself brings into the foreground what otherwise remains in the background. "What appear [sic!] before consciousness, as objects of perception, are not simply given, but are effects of history: 'even the objects of the simplest sensuous certainty are only given to him through social development, industry and commercial intercourse' (Marx and Engels 1965, 57). To learn to see what is ordinary, what has the character of 'sensuous certainty' is to read the effects of this history of production as a form of 'world making'" (Ahmed 2014, 180). The familiar emerges; it is no longer a convenient background but becomes conspicuous through minimal changes and exaggerations (Rebentisch 2011, 350). The specifically political effect is the questioning of familiar structures revealed in the work as contingent.

Wonder describes in this context the perception of oneself as strange. It denotes the exhibition of familiar structures that elicit a process of productive alienation. As Rebentisch locates the ethical-political potential of art in a "reflexive distance to what is represented" (ibidem, 368), wonder not only describes the act of exposing and alienating conventions but also of exhibiting oneself, as de-familiarization of the familiar. Benjamin claims that the epic theater is not *presenting* conditions [*Zustände wiedergeben*], but instead, it discovers them, it let them be explored, through disruptions of procedures (Benjamin 1977, II.1:522). What follows is a discovering-audience, a mass exploring themselves, thereby—in the ideal case—becoming aware of suppressing structures and their collective power. The distancing moment of wonder turns emancipatory, and it denotes a rupture that Brecht employed as an artistic means to re-learn wondering about the given status quo.

With Benjamin and Brecht, we can conceptualize wonder as an artistic strategy to let people stumble about the oppression they grew accustomed to. This wonder is a fugitive thing, which needs to be grasped in the same moment or grasp us in the right moment.

5. Wonder's Claim

How Benjamin conceptualized this relatively positive yet fragile account on wonder also offers an answer: wonder in the *Eighth Thesis* does not have to be conceptualized as failed political knowledge and action. Instead, wonder may be conceptualized as a non-philosophical revelation, as Benjamin differentiated between different kinds of knowledge. Two are essential here: *Determined Knowledge* [Bestimmtes Wissen], and *Knowledge gained from Insights or Revelations* [Wissen erlangt durch Einsicht oder Erkenntnis]

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(Benjamin 2007, 73, trans. J.B.). The first is the knowledge that "directs us to transcend ourselves and becomes action" (Konersmann 2007, 345, trans. J.B.), it is secured knowledge that can be communicated. The latter, however, is transitory and different from a consecutive form of knowledge, existing "between an intuition [*Ahnung*] and the knowledge of truth" (Benjamin 2007, 74, trans. J.B.). Konersmann attaches an explicitly philosophical responsibility to this fugitive kairological [*kairologisch*] insight: as a constitutive element and not only entangled, the perceiving subject is actively participating in the situation (Konersmann 2007, 335).

Bringing *kairos* [καιρός], the "right moment" and the "window of opportunity" together with wonder, it becomes clear that both trigger a similar kind of knowledge: it is the moment in which something reveals itself, and only in this time frame, the revelation, the opportunity, or an idea can be grasped. As kairos, wonder is a gift in which something presents itself, and it needs to be followed up. In a kairological moment, we are not the ones in control of perception and knowledge, but it is the things entering our lives: "Nicht wir versetzen uns in sie, sie treten in unser Leben" (Benjamin 1991, V.I:273). It follows that every moment bears the burden of an operational decision. Every moment is an action, which means that every moment has a claim-right on us. The moment of wondering is when something new reveals itself to us, and it is upon us to decide whether we accept the invitation.

The notion of guilt can then be formulated positively as a form of being expected by the kairos, a moment in time that was waiting for us: "Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with *weak* messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. Such a claim cannot be settled cheaply. The historical materialist is aware" (Benjamin 1980, in: Löwy 2005, 29-30). Here, we can see the "weak messianic power" as the gift waiting to redeem its claim. As any gift, it awaits its reciprocation. The historical materialist, the person noting and registering every event and in particular, advocating the endless list of acts of suppression, is aware that the past's claim is not settled cheaply. Thus, wonder is not philosophical knowledge, as it is not a determined one, it is not secured, and not in immediate relation to an action. Instead, wonder is when the subject succumbs to the power of things and must quickly decide how to deal with it. Thus, wonder is not necessarily a category of distance but of intense absorption *in the disruption* of everyday life. The disruption bears the potential for political action. I conclude, in the act of wonder, one is indebted to the object wondered at: what affects me has the power to become the starting point for

political action.[14] If the latter fails to appear, the former remains guilty. Wondering is then about an intuition making its claim on you. It does not stand at the beginning of a realization, and it is not philosophical, yet it may stand at the beginning of a very personal process of de-normalizing the familiar, sharing wonder, and exposing oneself to the world.

Conclusions

The normative dimension of the wondering gaze is what parts the familiar from the unfamiliar. Thus, wondering is a practice of recognizing and exploring the unknown and acting out as the manifestation, reproduction, and normalization of perception norms. Wonder is guilty if it involves practices of othering. Secondly, if failure is detected and political action would not redeem the wonder. From this, it follows that wonder also has a political potential and denotes a capability that can be learned. It is then the power to see the unfamiliar, estrange the ordinary, and abstract from the given.

Wonder then denotes the ability (Benjamin 1977, 531) not to surrender to principles of familiarity and "universal" categories, under which the variation is violently subsumed, but to perceive the extraordinary and to take it seriously without spectacularizing it. With Ahmed, the concept of wonder can be expanded to include the dimension of vulnerability: it is an opening of oneself towards the unusual and a passion to explore it. In this sense, wonder is the basis of a distance to, and positioning in the world connected with forms of exposure. The courage to position yourself, as I showed with Ahmed, can be learned. Following Adorno, wonder as ability can be seen as the basis of a critical attitude, as it allows you to break up categories, dive into new sensoria, and relocate yourself.

With *Exposures*, I provided a curatorial alternative to wondering as a normative practice of exhibiting. With Brecht, I showed how an aesthetic practice could train the capability to wonder about oneself, and thus a practice of othering can be prevented. With Marx and Ahmed, I sketched a philosophical way to wonder, yet not stagnate in a lack of historicity and depoliticized gazing.

Wonder—between exhibiting and exposure, between witnessing and voyeurism, between vulnerability and capability—comprises hope, recognition, sensibility, and openness; but also normalization processes, manifesta-

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[14] For a conception of guilt as the origin of community (munus, lat: burden, obligation, gift, office) see Esposito 2004.

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tions of norms, and reproductions of violent regimes of visibility and envisioning. Wonder's history is loaded with othering's cruelty, the spectacularization of difference, and the libidinous entanglement of voyeurism. Reformed artistic and curatorial strategies can reflect upon the violence and power dynamics implicit in practices of seeing, exhibiting, and wondering and therefore inherit the potential to transform them. I aimed to outline some of these aspects in this article. Although this text did not pursue a systematic approach to the affective and aesthetic entanglements of guilt and wonder, I invite you to take it as a reason to wonder about wonder and a reminder not to wonder carelessly. Mobilize!

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Patrick Martin*

The Shock of the New:
The Experience of Groundlessness
in Vattimo's Aesthetics

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the themes present in Gianni Vattimo's *Art's Claim to Truth*. I argue that there is a central phenomenon that links his aesthetics to his hermeneutics: the e x p e r i e n c e o f g r o u n d l e s s n e s s. I consider how three aspects color this experience: the artwork's lack of foundations, the ungrounding of our world, and an element of a-rationality/irrationality indicated by the event of art as experience—i.e., as expressed in affectivity.

Keywords

Gianni Vattimo, Aesthetics, Affectivity, Novelty, Groundlessness

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the themes present in Gianni Vattimo's writings on art, with a focus on *Art's Claim to Truth (Poesia e Ontologia)*. Perhaps against Vattimo's explicit stance, I will argue that there is a central phenomenon present in his philosophy and that this is the e x p e r i e n c e o f g r o u n d l e s s n e s s. His hermeneutics of w e a k t h o u g h t might easily give the impression that at issue is simply an experience of nihilism or relativism. This is not the case. However, it is also not intuitively self-evident what this experience of groundlessness is. By focusing on Vattimo's aesthetics, I aim to provide a more balanced representation of this phenomenon.

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My investigation is partly motivated by a particular discrepancy between Vattimo's hermeneutics and his aesthetics. Therefore, I will first make some contextual remarks that, in brief, introduce Vattimo's notion of weak thought. However, these introductory remarks are only meant to give the reader a point of anchorage. As to the inquiry into Vattimo's aesthetics, I aim to bring forth the phenomenon at hand: the experience of groundlessness. The presentation of his aesthetics will be thematic, with a focus on the novelty of art. I will emphasize three fundamental notions that clarify this experience: dwelling/inhabiting, ontological difference, and affectivity. Each of these notions introduces a sense in which "groundlessness" could arguably constitute our experience of art.

However, I must address two problems with the suggested approach. First, it presumes that there is a coherence between Vattimo's aesthetics and hermeneutics. From Vattimo's perspective, this assumption is potentially problematic, depending on the implications drawn from this presumed coherence. For example, we can find such coherence in Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.[1] In Gadamer's hermeneutics, this coherence implies that a notion of the experience of art grounds his hermeneutics. Vattimo, for his part, makes no such explicit claim. On the contrary, he (1997, 103) reproaches Gadamer on exactly this point. Vattimo argues that the effort to base hermeneutics on a particular experience is contradictory to the hermeneutic endeavor. In his critique of Gadamer, Vattimo notes that Gadamer is not self-consciously "plagued" by how radically, seriously, the fact of interpretation needs to be taken.[2]

Vattimo's position is not un-complicated. On the one hand, his theoretical—post-metaphysical—convictions seem to demand that his hermeneutics cannot merely be based on "an experience of art" (1988, 12). On the other hand, however, he admits that "[i]n order to describe, on a subjective level, this experience of ungrounding […] the only model we have at our

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[1] See Gadamer 1989, xxiii & 164. In the introduction to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer presents his task as follows: "the following investigation [aims] to defend the experience of truth that comes to us through the work of art […] it tries to develop from this starting point a conception of knowledge and of truth that corresponds to the whole of our hermeneutic experience" (1989, xxiii). Later, Gadamer states that "hermeneutics must be so determined as a whole that it does justice to the experience of art." The key phrase is that "hermeneutics must be so determined."

[2] Thaning calls Vattimo's hermeneutics "a hyper-allergic overreaction to foundationalism" (2015, 13). Thaning's assessment is that "Vattimo's constructivist hermeneutics rejects an intrinsic connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics […] [in that] Vattimo claims that such use of phenomenological analysis inevitably entails the self-contradictory pretense to provide an 'objective' description of reality" (2015, 23).

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disposal is precisely that of *Erlebnis*, of aesthetic consciousness" (1988, 128). In other words, he admits that the only way to make sense of his hermeneutics is to consider the experience of art. At the same time, he maintains that his account is theoretically incompatible with any attempt to provide fixed foundations.

In examining Vattimo's aesthetics, I will entertain the possibility of coherence between his aesthetics and hermeneutics. I do not think that Vattimo would categorically object to this phenomenologically oriented approach, as long as it remains so-to-say hermeneutically self-aware: aware that it is primarily an act of interpretation tied to texts.

This proposal brings me to the second problem of approaching hermeneutics phenomenologically—be it Vattimo's or Gadamer's. It is a problem tied to the fact that, in *Art's Claim to Truth*, Vattimo primarily interprets texts and engages with the philosophical tradition. However, he admits that he is concerned with interpretation to the extent that it allows him to further his argument. Thus, in "Art, feeling, and originality in Heidegger's aesthetics," Vattimo remarks that he will offer an interpretation that attempts to recover "the unity of Heidegger's thought [...] above all [in order] to draw some useful indications for my argument on art" (2008, 59). Alternatively, in "Critical methods and hermeneutic philosophy," Vattimo states that "my current project is not a matter of following Heidegger but of drawing inspiration from him" (2008, 116). These statements I take as additional support for my approach.

However, considering Vattimo's aesthetics as part of his hermeneutical project gives rise to a perplexing discrepancy. It has to do with a difference in the emphasis accorded to the experience of groundlessness. Specifically, while his hermeneutics revolves around the notion of weak thought, his aesthetics speaks of art as an event of truth in the most vital possible sense: as an event that changes our world and shocks us. This discrepancy raises the following question: if the truth of tradition (art included) is somehow "weak," mediated by a sense of historical contingency, then how are we "shocked" by it? It is this paradoxical experience that I aim to clarify.

Weak Thought

I have chosen to focus on Vattimo's aesthetics, which means that there will not be enough space to sufficiently consider his hermeneutics of weak thought. The reason for my choice is that his account of art more emphatically brings to the fore the experience in question. Also, the secondary litera-

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ture is partial to Vattimo's nihilistic hermeneutics. Nevertheless, let me
briefly introduce the notion of weak thought to provide some background
and intimate the point of contrast.

For my concerns, the critical question is, to what kind of experience does
the logic of weak thought allude? Is this a "weakened" experience of truth?
Vattimo (1992, 42) uses precisely this expression in *The Transparent Society*,
but what does it imply? The expression might lead us to think that Vattimo
is speaking of a truth experience corresponding to relativism. However,
he (1992, 38-39) distinctly distances himself from a position of cultural rela-
tivism because this view bypasses the problem of history.[3] Thus, a "weak-
ened" experience of truth does not necessarily refer to a "weak" experience
of truth.

In *The End of Modernity*, Vattimo states that he aims to "open up a non-
metaphysical conception of truth," which is tied to a "post-modern—in Hei-
deggerian terms, post-metaphysical—experience of truth" (1988, 12).
By referring to a post-modern experience of truth, Vattimo can be taken as
analyzing modernity as post-traditional.[4] However, my purpose here is to
focus more narrowly on the logic of weak thought as an experience of truth
and not to get tangled up in Vattimo's account of modernity and postmoder-
nity—although these two accounts are closely linked. Let me conclude this
section by presenting what I take to be one of Vattimo's most emphatic ren-
ditions of what he considers weak thought.[5] The description is tied to an
explication of Nietzsche's "philosophy of mourning":

> [w]hat he [Nietzsche] calls in *Human All Too Human* a "philosophy of mourning" is
> precisely a kind of thought that is oriented towards proximity rather than towards the
> origin or foundation. This way of thinking about proximity could also be defined as
> a way of thinking about error, or better still, about erring. The latter emphasizes that it
> is not a question of thinking about the non-true, but rather of examining the process of
> becoming of the "false" constructs of metaphysics (1988, 169).

"False" is here within quotation marks in that one cannot confidently
speak of these "constructs" as merely false. This statement would presup-
pose access to a "true" foundation upon which this judgment is made.
Accordingly, Vattimo continues,

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[3] According to D'Agostini, "[w]eak thought isn't some sort of amalgamated, all-purpose
relativism; it's a calculated combination of different modes of relativism [epistemological
and historical] in order to get to somewhere else beyond relativism" (2010a, 3).

[4] See Giddens' "Living in a post-traditional society" (Beck, Giddens, & Lash 1994, 56-
109).

[5] See also D'Agostini 2010a, 4.

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there is no longer a truth or a *Grund* that could contradict or falsify the issue of erring, all these errors are to be understood as kinds of roaming or wandering [...] [the] only rule is a certain historical continuity that is in turn devoid of any relationship to a fundamental truth (1988, 170).

In short, Vattimo's notion of weak thought is tied to an acute sense that history is all there is—without teleology or ultimate grounds. However, there is still this past, this tradition, to which we belong. We cannot disregard it or simply leave it behind. Therefore, with the advent of postmodernity, our traditions are not overturned, "recognized" as errors, but conserved, albeit in a distorted fashion, stripped of much of their legitimacy— or claim to truth.[6] Thus, according to Vattimo, the transition from modernity to postmodernity engenders a " 'weakened' experience of truth" (1992, 42).[7] To understand this experience, Vattimo suggests that we consider the experience of art. However, what we find there is an experience that can hardly be said to be "weak."

Vattimo's Aesthetics: The Novelty of Art

The two central elements of Vattimo's aesthetics are novelty and shock. Before going into more detail, let me first provide an overview of his aesthetics. In *Art's Claim to Truth*, Vattimo argues for the novelty of art, and he does this differently. He (2008, 68) characterizes this novelty as "absolute" and "underivable" (from the world as it is). He ties it to a notion of "originality" (2008, 99) and speaks of art as an "origin" (2008, 100-101). In short, art is, for Vattimo, an ontological event in the Heideggerian sense. What Vattimo (2008, 13) takes himself to be articulating is an o n t o l o g i c a l a e s t h e t i c s: i.e., an aesthetics that does not "forget" what Heidegger calls the o n t o l o g i c a l   d i f f e r e n c e (i.e., the distinction between Being and beings). This distinction means that art represents an encounter with the "radically other" (2008, 22). Art is not just a being among beings. Art— the accomplished work of art—makes us aware that it is not part of our world. Therefore, art bewilders us, and it shocks us. Now, what manages to

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[6] See Valgenti 2010, 67. He notes that "[t]his does not mean, however, that weak thought rejects all foundations; rather, it points to a situation where foundations are inherited from a tradition but never accepted as truly foundational."

[7] See D'Agostini 2010b, 44-45. In her words, "such a theory implies that—culturally speaking—we are now faced with a sort of disappearance of truth; yet, this is only the symptom of a new conception of truth" (2010b, 45).

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shock us is less something specific depicted by art than the simple "fact" of art: the fact that there is art. This train of thought roughly summarizes how Vattimo presents the phenomenon of art.

In other words, when Vattimo argues for the novelty of art, he is trying to take the fact of art as seriously as possible. One could say that he is asking, what does it mean that there is art, that this object I see before me is not just an object (of use) but art—something that challenges and breaks with my usual comportment towards things? In what follows, I will consider three ways the novelty of art is present in the essays of *Art's Claim to Truth*, three ways that clarify how Vattimo takes art seriously. First, I will briefly introduce his distinction between art as essential and inessential; then, I will consider Vattimo's appropriation of Heidegger's notion of dwelling; and finally, I will look at how Vattimo uses the notion of ontological difference.

The distinction between art as essential and inessential is the basis of Vattimo's argument in "The work of art as the setting to work of truth." In this essay, he offers a critique of representationalism and formalism. In contrast to these positions, he defends a Heideggerian account of art. In short, Vattimo argues that representationalism and formalism fail art because they both presuppose a given "outside" correlate to the artwork. Representationalism defines the task of art as representing a given state of affairs. The formalist view explains aesthetic enjoyment by the workings of our intellect or sensibility. Vattimo (2008, 153-155) maintains that these positions are both variations of the correspondence theory of truth, which for him entails that the actual work of art becomes "provisional" and/or "inessential."

Dwelling and Belonging

The way Vattimo takes art seriously is perhaps best captured by his appropriation of Heidegger's notion of d w e l l i n g.[8] Vattimo (2008, 102; 1967, 86) understands Heidegger's notion of dwelling more or less in terms of being-in-the-world: to "dwell," for him, means to inhabit (*di abitare*) the world founded by the work of art. However, what exactly "inhabiting" the artwork's world amounts to, varies slightly in different texts. In "The work of art as the setting to work of truth," Vattimo speaks of living "in the light of" an artwork, and "rearranging one's own existence" according to the world of the artwork (2008, 159). Similarly, in "From phenomenological aesthetics to ontology of art," Vattimo suggests that the encounter with art amounts to

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[8] See further Heidegger's "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1975, 143-161).

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"a reconfiguration of our being-in-the-world" (2008, 102). However, in "The ontological vocation of twentieth-century poetics," Vattimo offers a more modest suggestion. Dwelling, or "inhabiting," means "to enter into dialogue with": "that is to say, to grasp and to be grasped by the work at the same time" (2008, 53). To enter into a dialogue suggests something more open-ended—uncertain—compared to the decisive act to rearrange one's mode of existence; nevertheless, as we shall shortly see, these are not contradictory elements for Vattimo.

Vattimo also introduces some supplementary distinctions that further clarify the appropriate relationship to art proposed by the notion of dwelling. In "Critical methods and hermeneutic philosophy," he presents the distinction between the closed and the open work of art. Vattimo advances an argument in the form of a critique of criticism—which he (2008, 116) considers the prevalent approach to art. He reproaches this view for considering the artwork "as a fact of the past," "as a final point" (2008, 112). For Vattimo, this method is equal to historicism's, which "freeze[s] the work of art into the category of the past" (2008, 112). The problem is that the artwork's significance is thus closed off: the work only relates to the past. In this case, art only functions as a witness to the past. He further develops this argument in terms of belonging. With this notion, Vattimo distinguishes the practice of criticism from dwelling in the following way. Whereas the former establishes a relationship where the work "belongs" to the reader, the latter overturns this relationship so that "the reader belongs to the work" (2008, 116).

To illustrate what this means, Vattimo (2008, 118) turns to the example of the Bible and provides the following assessment:

> this relationship [i.e., that of the Western tradition to the Bible] in its broadest sense is an example of the founding character of the work and of the interpreter's belongingness to the work [...] In the case of the Bible, we stand before an entire civilization that constitutes and develops itself as the exegesis of a book. The history of the West is in its essential development the history of the interpretation of the Bible. To belong to this civilization signifies belonging to that specific text, and in this sense we should conceive of the belonging of the reader/interpreter to the work in its fullest form (2008, 118-119).

We could take this example of the Bible as the most explicit elucidation of how Vattimo understands Heidegger's notion of dwelling. For Vattimo, the Bible is "the hermeneutic phenomenon par excellence" (2008, 118). However, I cannot help but wonder, is Vattimo still talking about "art"? Or is

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he taking art too seriously? Vattimo defends his choice in the following way. He claims that if we want to know what it means that there is "art," we need to consider how the Bible has affected our world and shaped the Western tradition. He (2008, 55-56) admits that the Bible is an example of "huge proportions" and cannot be equated with art in general. Nevertheless, with this portrayal of the Bible's place within the Western tradition, Vattimo clarifies how dwelling—inhabiting—accommodates the different definitions presented above: how a work can reconfigure our being-in-the-world and remain open to interpretation.

In sum, Vattimo appeals to the Bible as an example to argue for a sense of belonging to art in the most robust possible sense. In contrast to the closed work belonging to the critic, Vattimo claims that art can form the future in being open to interpretation. However, Vattimo invites specific problems by appealing to such a world-founding example as the Bible. For example, by defining the encounter with art as dwelling, it becomes difficult to differentiate the aesthetic experience from being-in-the-world (2008, 160). Vattimo is aware of this problem. Nevertheless, the example of the Bible provides the first glimpse of the experience of groundlessness. According to the above, the artwork's founding character is tied to a sense of being unfounded in being open to interpretation. In more general terms, Vattimo accordingly states that art "founds the world while showing at the same time its lack of foundation" (1988, 128).

The Ontological Difference and the Experience of the World

Let us move on to consider Vattimo's use of the ontological difference and his argument for how art affords us an experience of the world.[9] The argument that the experience of art is an experience of the world builds upon two notions: the novelty of art and the ontological difference. It is also with reference to these two notions that Vattimo differentiates his ontological aesthetics from traditional aesthetics.

In "Towards an Ontological Aesthetics," Vattimo (2008, 16) argues that, in general, aesthetics either forgets the ontological difference or assumes that it is based on a positive relationship between Being and beings. In contrast, Vattimo's aesthetics emphasizes two implications of this ontological difference. First, the relation between Beings and beings is negative: Being

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[9] Vattimo (2008, 103) uses "world" in the Heideggerian sense: i.e. to refer to a meaningful totality.

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is not a being among beings. Second, a beautiful work of art generates a movement from the work to the world founded by it (2008, 102). In Vattimo's words, "the ontological difference does not simply signify that Being is not a being, but also positively that the truth of a being consists in its relationship with the other, in being open to an other that is radically other than itself" (2008, 22).

In other words, the ontological difference—as well as his account of the novelty of art—implies that there is a disjoint between the artwork and our world: the work of art "does not allow itself to be set into the world as it is" (Vattimo 2008, 98). This disjoint between the artwork and our world signifies that art suspends "our habitual relationships with the world." Also, the artwork "puts our own world into crisis" by a "refusal" to be "set into the world" (2008, 99). More accurately, art suspends the self-evident validity of our habitual comportments by questioning our "world" (2008, 102).

According to Vattimo, the work of art does not "set" itself into the world (as it is) because it is not just "another thing in the world." Thus, we do not encounter art in the same way as we encounter other everyday objects. The difference is that the encounter with art is an encounter with "another perspective on the world." As a perspective on the world, art offers a view, a take on the "comprehensive totality" that is the world.[10] Consequently, art is also "the real foundation of a new world" (2008, 99).

With these considerations, Vattimo adds another layer to the experience of groundlessness. It is not only the interpreted work that shows itself to be ungrounded; it is also the foundations of our world that become shaken in the encounter with art. In the following, I turn to consider Vattimo's "Art, Feeling, and Originality in Heidegger's Aesthetics." In this essay, Vattimo adds a third layer to the experience of groundlessness with his account of affectivity.

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[10] With that said, it is interesting to note that Zabala suggests that "Duchamp's Fountain is probably the best example of art's ontological bearing" (2008, xv). This example is worth considering. Of course, Duchamp's *Fountain* (and his ready-mades) are objects "derived" from the world. Yet, the *Fountain* was refused entry into the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917. To make sense of this, I find Groys' (2002, 56) distinction between the cultural archive and the profane room helpful. According to Groys, the event of the new is, in essence, a readjustment and re-evaluation of the boundaries, the relationship, between these two domains—or "worlds." Thus, before Duchamp invented the ready-made and presented his *Fountain*, the urinal was not part of the cultural archive. It was only perceived as a use object. The event of the ready-mades changed the cultural archive as a totality of meaningful relations.

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Affectivity and Shock

With "Art, Feeling, and Originality in Heidegger's Aesthetics," Vattimo ties
the notion of the novelty of art to the experience of shock. In short, Vattimo
argues that art shows us the world "being born," "the world in its nascent
act" (2008, 69). This birth is an experience of shock—Stoß—which Vattimo
considers analogous to dread or angst.[11] However, from a phenomenological
point of view, Vattimo's argument presents us with two difficulties. First,
there is a challenge because Vattimo's primary concern is interpretation.
What he sets out to do is to offer a unified interpretation of Heidegger's
thought, one that reconciles *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) with the later
Heidegger. Second, there is a difficulty with how Vattimo deals with the
shock of art. He is not concerned with any specific response to art but pri-
marily deals with emotions' structure—or affectivity.

Let me begin with a brief presentation of Vattimo's interpretation of
Heidegger in this essay before moving on to the second issue. As mentioned,
Vattimo offers an interpretation that aims "to recover the unity of Heideg-
ger's thought" (2008, 59). The way he does this is by first locating "an emo-
tive view on art" (2008, 58) in *Being and Time*, an account that considers
poetry as tasked with articulating the possibilities of attunement—or "affec-
tivity," which is how Vattimo (2008, 61) translates *B e f i n d l i c h k e i t*. Sub-
sequently, he (2008, 66-67) turns his attention to Heidegger's "The origin of
the work of art," where poetry—through language—brings forth something
"radically new" and founds a world. In short, Vattimo ties together these two
accounts of poetry.

As to the second difficulty, Vattimo does indeed admit that a shock is
"produced by the work" (2008, 69) and that "the *Stoss* is a 'subjective reac-
tion'" (2008, 71). However, despite these admissions, Vattimo maintains that
the phenomenon under consideration—the experience of art—should pri-
marily be thought of ontologically: i.e., concerning affectivity. In Vattimo's
words, "[t]he equivalent of this [ontological] event for readers or consumers
of works of art is a phenomenon that must be thought above all at the level
of affectivity" (2008, 68). What is the reason for this emphasis? As noted,
Vattimo is articulating ontological aesthetics tied to Heidegger. This articula-
tion means that the focus is on art as an "ontological event" (2008, 104):[12]
i.e., how art relates to Being, how it constitutes an event of Being. Vattimo

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[11] See also Skorin-Kapov 2015, 108-109.
[12] "Fatto ontologico" (Vattimo 1967, 88).

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expresses the matter as follows: "[a]rt has to do with feeling not to the extent that it expresses this or that determinate and individual feeling, but only inasmuch as it is a work, namely, an ontological event" (2008, 72).

However, at the level of affectivity, Vattimo's account is also not without its difficulties. There are two issues that I will address: first, his claim that affectivity grounds the other existentials; second, the claim that shock refers us to the groundlessness of the emotions. Both issues are somewhat difficult to critique in that Vattimo's argument is closely tied to an interpretation of Heidegger—and I will not dispute the validity of Vattimo's interpretation of Heidegger. Nevertheless, I will try to make sense of the phenomenon as presented. In his interpretation of Heidegger, Vattimo argues for the primacy of affectivity. He maintains that "attunement comes first insofar as it has a grounding position with respect to the others [i.e., understanding and discourse]" (2008, 62), that "pre-understanding is more originally rooted in *Stimmung*, attunement" (2008, 62),[13] and that "before being inside a web of meanings, being-in-the-world is inside attunement, an affective valence" (2008, 63).[14] In these ways, Vattimo claims that affectivity is ontologically primary in relation to the other existentials.

I feel compelled to ask, what has happened to Heidegger's (2010, 138) claim that understanding and attunement are e q u i p r i m o r d i a l? Such an account is understandable. It would also be understandable to claim that attunement has a specific e p i s t e m o l o g i c a l priority: i.e., to find oneself in a specific affective situation is how we initially become aware of the world. Vattimo does hold this view: in his words, *Befindlichkeit* "more clearly and more directly" makes known "the fact of being-thrown" (2008, 64). However, Vattimo also seems to make the stronger o n t o l o g i c a l claim: that the emotions are groundless.

To be more precise, let us consider how these two claims are present in Vattimo's text. We can find the argument for the epistemological priority of affectivity in the following remarks: "[i]t is affectivity that allows the fact of existence and finitude to come to light in all its groundlessness" (2008, 66); and "feeling is solely [...] the way in which Dasein encounters the origin, that is to say [...] a certain world" (2008, 72). With such remarks, Vattimo claims that through affectivity, we primarily experience our thrown-ness: the "fact"

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[13] "La precomprensione stessa, piú originamente, si radica nella *Stimmung*, nella situazione affettiva" (Vattimo 1967, 151).

[14] "Prima di essere dentro a un sistema di significati, è un essere dentro a una situazione affettiva" (Vattimo 1967, 152).

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of existing in the world. We could take these remarks to indicate that affec-
tivity is grounded or equiprimordial with the world. In this case, the emo-
tions would understandably mirror a certain pre-understanding of the
world.

However, Vattimo's argument seems to be that the experience of ground-
lessness reflects the groundlessness of the emotions/feelings. This argument
brings us to his ontological claim. Vattimo claims that "[w]hat comes forth in
the groundlessness of feeling is the same groundlessness that is constitutive
of existence" (2008, 65).[15] Note that he is not speaking of the feeling of
groundlessness but the groundlessness of our feelings. Thus, I read this
claim as stating that the experience of groundlessness is also a reflection of
the groundlessness of our feelings.

Vattimo develops this notion by claiming that feelings/emotions are fully
realized as a shock. In his words, "what we are accustomed to calling feelings
(i.e., love, joy, melancholy, and so on) are to be considered from an ontologi-
cal perspective only as 'special cases' of the structure of feeling that is fully
realized in the experience of *Stoss* and dread" (2008, 72-73).[16] This quota-
tion indicates that Vattimo makes no clear distinction between feelings and
emotions: e.g., he calls love a "feeling." This non-distinction implies that, e.g.,
love is said to have the same ontological structure as shock. It is undoubtedly
true that love is tied to certain feelings and sensations. However, the non-
distinction between feelings and emotions invites problems.

Such an account of affectivity is not unprecedented, but it does not corre-
spond with a standard account of emotions. It might coherently fit into
Vattimo's philosophy, but it is problematic as a standalone clarification of
emotions' nature. Let me, therefore, conclude this section by noting how we
could take Vattimo's account of affectivity to represent what Solomon (1993,
xv) calls the "myth of the passions"—or the "myth of passivity." In Vattimo's
text, this conception is perhaps given its most precise articulation in the
following passage:

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[15] "Quel che viene incontro nella infondatezza dei sentimenti è la stessa infondatezza
dell'esistenza" (Vattimo 1967, 155).

[16] "Quelli che siamo abituati a considerare i sentimenti (amore, gioia, melanconia, ecc.)
vanno considerati, da un punto di vista ontologico, solo dei 'casi speciali' di una struttura
del sentimento che è realizzata in modo pieno nello *Stoss* e nell'angoscia" (Vattimo 1967,
164). For a critique of the argumentative move that attempts to reduce all emotions to
a choice example see Bollnow 1956, 27.

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> [t]o find oneself in such and such a [sic] emotional disposition—sympathy, antipathy, love, fear, mistrust, and so on—cannot be modified or commanded [...] *Stimmung* evades completely any form of control and therefore is the most visible sign of finitude. In this way, the ontological meaning of feelings emerges precisely from the character that are most striking in them, that is, their complete groundlessness (2008, 65).

Here, the essential point is that we say our "feelings" are beyond our control and completely groundless. Now, moods may be challenging to command, but emotions less so.[17] To consider "feelings" to be overwhelming "forces" beyond our command, Solomon equates with the "myth of the passions" (1993, xiv). According to Solomon, emotions are neither beyond our control nor groundless but are precisely grounded in our world. Solomon (1993, 62) would not deny that there can be a suddenness to the emotions. However, he considers it a fallacy to define emotions' essence based on such a crisis or eruption. In his words, "[a]n emotion is not a crisis" (1993, 100).

Now, it might be the case that Vattimo is only generalizing his interpretation of Heidegger and that one should not read too much into this account of affectivity. However, I wish to highlight the possible implications of such an account—by mentioning Solomon—in that there is a crucial difference in the connotations accorded to Vattimo's notion of the experience of groundlessness that depend upon the emphasis given to his account of affectivity. In other words, if one views Vattimo's account as exemplary of the "myth of the passions," then the experience of groundlessness acquires a sense of i r r a t i o n a l i t y. Whereas, I would argue that the experience suggested by Vattimo's hermeneutics at large is an experience of the a-r a t i o n a l i t y of the world.

Concluding Remarks

I proposed investigating Vattimo's philosophy as centered around the experience of groundlessness. From a certain point of view, this suggestion defies Vattimo's anti-foundationalist position. However, I argued that such a judg-

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[17] Solomon presents the example of John stealing his car. Solomon points out that his hypothetical anger relies upon the belief that John stole his car. Now, if something were to affect this belief, then this would also alter his emotions. Thus, Solomon maintains that "I cannot be angry if I do not believe that someone wronged or offended me" (1993, 126). So, if or when Solomon finds out that John did not steal his car, then Solomon notes, "[m]y anger v a n i s h e s instantly, but the feeling—that is, the p u l s i n g and flushing—remains for a m o m e n t" (1993, 119). See also D e o n n a & T e r o n i (2008, 11). They also a r g u e that emotions such as fear are amenable to correction. They illustrate this point with a simple example: if someone were to fear the gentile dog Médor, one could say that there is no cause for fear, and this might slowly dissipate the fear.

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ment depends upon the significance given to this experience. Vattimo him-self acknowledges that his notion of groundlessness is best understood with reference to the experience of art. With a focus on *Art's Claim to Truth*, I em-phasized three notions (dwelling/inhabiting, ontological difference, and affectivity) that clarified three aspects of this experience of groundlessness: first, as tied to the artwork's lack of foundations; second, as the ungrounding of our world; and finally, as expressed in affectivity, as an experience of irra-tionality and/or as an experience of the a-rationality of the world.

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Carsten Friberg*

The Education of Senses.
At the Intersection between Affectivity and Aesthetics

Abstract

This article makes the argument and emphasizes that aesthetic education is central for a discussion and critical awareness of affectivity with our self-perception and world-relation. Our affective relations are a component in our interaction with others with whom we share feelings and emotions, formed and learned through this interaction. Judgments of taste in which social norms are made explicit demonstrate such an education and emphasize the centrality of aesthetic education for a critical awareness of our self-perception and world-relation.

Keywords

Aesthetics, Education, Taste, Affectivity, Perception

Introduction

At the intersection between affectivity, as a common notion for feelings and emotions, and aesthetics, we find education. I understand education as the formation of our feelings and emotions, enabling our social participation based on feelings shared with others and constitutive for our self-perception. In what follows, education is not about acquiring formalized competencies but becoming competent in living. Although it makes no sense to ask for a curriculum for our social learning; nevertheless, we are subject to specific rules. They form our feelings and emotions because we actively and unknowingly bring our feelings and emotions in concordance with them.

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As a sentient being, an individual acquires a sensorial training that forms sensorial, cognitive skills such as, among others, an acute sense, imaginative capacity, wit and astuteness, good memory, expressive or poetic skills, and taste. Sensorial cognition is what A.G. Baumgarten called aesthetics, and the cognitive skills mentioned above are from his work *Aesthetica* (§§ 30-35).

The problem we face in aesthetics is the relation between the individual and the general, between sensuous intuition and conceptual understanding. The aspect in question is when something becomes present in an intuition that cannot be conceptually determined, yet it does relate to a general idea (Gadamer 1980; Bubner 1989). Aesthetic relation to something is double: it is to something concrete, that touches us as concrete, and also becomes something revealing a truth to us not as the concrete object as such, but as the concrete object that is simultaneously more than what we intuit as being sensuous present to us (Ritter 2010, 78).

Aesthetics concerns a tension between the senses and spirit (*Geist*). It concerns staying in that tension; otherwise, it becomes either an episte-mological question or a psychological characterization. The balance in this tension is delicate. It is one of intuition, which is no mere intuition because it implies something more yet asks to be in the center of attention. It is the determination that is indeterminate because it never brings us to a conclu-sion. In that tension, we are concerned with an acute relation to the present in a social context, using our imagination to produce good ideas and inter-pretations based on our memory to interpret and express our relationships. We are in the context of cultural artifacts concerned with a relation between us and what they offer to us, so we can recognize and learn from—if we use the characterization of Hans Robert Jauß, we experience a self-enjoyment in the enjoyment of what is other (*Selbstgenuß im Fremdgenuß*) (1982/1997, cf. Gadamer 1960/1990, 102 f.).

The experience we advance here, the aesthetic experience, is one that can be characterized by following Jauß to include three aspects: a receptive, a productive, and a communicative aspect, for which he uses the Greek *aisthesis, poiesis,* and *katharsis* (Jauß 1982/1997, 71 ff., for elaboration on *katharsis* and communication see 170). The three components significantly parallel Balthasar Gracián's *agudeza* (acuteness or wit), *ingenium* (inven-tiveness), and *concepto* (concept) (Bianchi 2020, 34 ff.). This experience comes about through continuing attempts of imagining, grasping, and ex-pressing, accompanied by feelings of excitement, frustration, relief, and shock, for example. Such feelings and emotions are equally crucial for guid-ing us in social encounters where they enable us to interpret and act appro-priately. Aesthetic education relates to becoming a socially skilled person by forming feelings and emotions to correspond to the social environment.

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I begin by elaborating on the intersection between affectivity and aesthetics, which is vital for establishing common feelings and shared emotions and is where aesthetic education belongs. This educational focus requires a section to establish and emphasize aesthetics, leading to taste as a meeting point of the sensorial and social. I conclude by discussing a critical potential of the sensorial training of aesthetic education with Sara Ahmed's example about the feeling of happiness to emphasize the importance of including this perspective on aesthetics in reflections on forming one's self-perception and world-relation.

1. Why Aesthetic Education?

Researchers approach the role and importance of feelings and emotions for our relation to the social environment from many perspectives (e.g., Goldie 2000; Slaby 2008; Fuchs 2012; Scheer 2012; von Scheve *et al.* 2013; Röttger--Rössler 2015; 2019; Mesquita *et al*. 2016; Fuchs 2016; Thoma *et al.* 2017; Slaby *et al*. 2019). They represent discussions on the significance of affectivity for perception. My contribution is not to the characterization of different affective states, nor to discuss, for example, the relation between affect and rationality (De Monticelli 2015), the difference between feeling and emotion (Ratcliffe 2005), or between a minimal and a narrative self (Bortolan 2020). In contrast, my focus is on how our affectivity is acquired, formed, and made to become ours.

The focus on how we relate to the social environment centers on having a sense for people and situations, and a sense shared with them—to have a common sense, as Samuel Thoma and Thomas Fuchs say (2017). Their use of common sense concerns a sensorial and bodily relation to standard rules and norms that serve our intersubjective bodily presence and social interaction by allowing us to use our senses in ways that make sense (see also Fuchs 2012; 2016). The sensorial and bodily relations form a foundation for our social presence and interaction and our intellectual capacity to reflect and question what we do. We should look at how we form our concrete sensorial, emotional, and bodily habits and skills.

When exercising our skills to act knowingly, our relation to the environment belongs to what Aristotle calls, in his *Topics*, dialectical reasoning, where we start from what is generally accepted. Dialectical reasoning does not imply that utterances are arbitrarily and relative. The starting point is, as said, generally accepted, because it relates to shared conditions of our social existence that we cannot be without: "no matter how hard man tries

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it is impossible for him to divest himself of his own culture, for it has pene-
trated to the roots of his nervous system and determines how he perceives
the world" (Hall 1966/1990, 188). Aristotle says, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*
(1104b 3 ff.), that feelings, in particular of pleasure and pain, are at the roots
of moral excellence because we have, since childhood, learned how to feel
something, along with when it is appropriate to have the feelings and in
what form.

Common sense, dialectical reasoning, and education are critical elements
in reflections on forming human existence in communities found in the liter-
ature on moral and political issues, on rhetoric and grammar—in short,
in what belongs to a humanistic tradition that provides us with knowledge
about the human condition. We learn about human existence, and we learn
how to exist as an educated individual. The emotions activated by the play
we see are not merely for passive entertainment; they also exercise how
I should feel, as a spectator, about something and the other spectators.

Emotions are, as Fuchs in line with Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasizes,
a matter of bodily resonance through which we interact with others (Fuchs
2016). Emotions become incorporated, making the body "our capacity
to see, touch, move, etc." (Fuchs 2012, 10; see Slaby 2008, 436 f.). They are
a capacity embodied to act immediately. Incorporated means they are not
added-on, which is the essential critical point against ideas of separation of
reasoning from feelings and emotions made by Peter Goldie. According to
the add-on theory, it is possible to "distinguish emotional thought and action
from unemotional thought and action." However, "[a]cting out of emotion is
not acting without emotion (explained by feelingless beliefs and desires)
plus some added-on ingredient or ingredients." As Goldie exemplifies, "one
just has to think what it is like to be made love to with feeling for this to be
obvious: it is not like being made love to without feeling, plus feeling" (Goldie
2000, 40). When emotions are incorporated, bodily resonance means that
individuals' emotions are shared. The feeling of being in love can take many
forms between individuals in terms of intensity, feeling of being possessed,
permanence, *et cetera*, yet we know what it is about, despite individual dif-
ferences that can lead to misunderstandings, but not to a lack of understand-
ing. We can talk about affective arrangements, meaning "a material-dis-
cursive formation as part of which affect is patterned, channeled, and modu-
lated in recurrent and repeatable ways" (Slaby *et al.* 2019, 5).

My feelings and emotions are formed and educated in interacting with
other people and cultural events and artifacts. For example, I learn about
love in a way familiar to those with whom I share a cultural environment.

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Affective arrangements and common sense relate to our concrete lives embedded in sensorial and bodily forms unless the distance in culture and time is considerable and only partially resonates or requires interpretation. Such learning is an aesthetic education. We learn what to do, for example, when we meet another person and must exercise different gestures to engage with the other—greeting someone by extending our arm for a handshake, placing our hand over our heart, bowing, or what we in the situation perceive to be the correct behavior by doing what we have learned. We also learn to have a sense of the situation, i.e., the appropriate action. Some of these acts require more attention than others because we are insecure about our role in them. Sometimes we end up with a sensorial and bodily reaction beyond our control because our performance was wrong, and we sweat, turn red, and feel uncomfortable.

This lifelong training of feelings and emotions form our appearance as sentient beings, and we must add that this training is the aesthetic education that should not be confused with the training of our skills in making judgments about aesthetic qualities, whether in artworks or any other artifact.

2. Aesthetics

In Erasmus of Rotterdam's small treatise about civility in boys (*De civilitate morum puerilium*) from 1530, he instructs how one should be present to others in concrete ways like stating there should be no snot in the nostrils and one should not wipe the nose on the cap like a peasant or use the hand and then wipe it on one's clothing; instead, one should use a cloth and turn away while doing it (Elias 1939/2000, 49). The examples are sensuous dimensions of what we think of as civilized behavior, good manners, and not doing what others consider disgusting. The treatment of one's nose appears to be an enduring problem. Lord Chesterfield can, two centuries later on 25 July 1741, advise his son, then at the age of 9, to stop "putting his fingers in his nose, or blowing it and looking afterwards in his handkerchief, so as to make the company sick" (Chesterfield 2008, 19). The blowing of one's nose is illustrative because it relates to a mild, at least, sense of disgust. The appearance of a virus causing a pandemic in 2020 probably has made many people react with discomfort to someone's nasal habits since they represent a potential risk. Someone's behavior reveals ideals of manners, and we express our views of them in a judgment of taste.

The most revealing phrase about ideals about one's presence comes from another educational treatise if we move from what comes out of the nose to what comes from the mouth: Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria.* Here the orator

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is characterized as *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (XII, 1, 1), i.e., the good citizen skilled in the art of speaking, the "good citizen," is a loose translation since *vir* means man. However, the man in question exercises a citizen's role, i.e., by being politically active. Speaking well is to combine this virtue as a citizen with a sense of the situation and the people present to express the desired discourse in the best possible way.

Speaking well, of course, relates to the words used. They are chosen for stylistic reasons and for addressing the situation, i.e., the audience and the topic. Rhetoric as an *ars bene dicendi* is about affecting the audience by speaking well, by having the audience turning an opinion presented into its own. Rhetoric is often said to be about persuasion, *dicere ad persuadendum accommodate* Cicero writes in *De Oratore* (1, 138), but this does not imply persuasion done by any means. Rhetoric is not to create effects contrary to truth. To follow Hans Blumenberg, it is not about a possible alternative to an insight that one could *also* have. It is an alternative to evidence that one currently *cannot* have, and the art of persuasion is not a means of manipulation but to transform *cannot* into *can* (Blumenberg 2001, 412). Using any means is no *ars*, i.e., knowing how to use the right means in the situation. The art of speaking well requires a sense of the situation to exercise this knowledge to choose the most appropriate words for the present audience. Such a sense of the situation is what Gracián in *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* from 1648 calls *agudeza*, i.e., wit. To have such a sense, to know what the situation is and what to do, i.e., to exercise a sense of judgment, is a sensorial cognition and something an empirical-based and methodological secured knowledge marginalizes. It is a cause for concern that Giambattista Vico expressed in his *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* from 1709 and a motive for Baumgarten to legitimate the sensorial cognition as knowledge (see Cassirer 1932/1998, 368 ff.; Franke 1972; Linn 1974).

Knowing how to appear and how to act in others' presence may relate to following the rules of etiquette. However, knowing about etiquettes does not imply knowing when and how to apply them, i.e., to have a sense of judgment. Aesthetics as the problem of the relation between sensuous intuition and conceptual understanding becomes apparent here. It is to acquire a sense of a situation, *agudeza*, and wit, which comes about by training our feelings, emotions, and perceptions that make us capable of performing in different situations in ways acknowledged by others present. Reason can here give us the general norms, but it is impotent to make them concrete as G.W.F. Hegel brilliantly explains in his short essay *Wer denkt abstrakt?* (*Who Thinks Abstractly?*) from 1807. General laws should be blind to con-

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crete interests, but we should not be blind to how they must be applied to factual matters, requiring a sense of judgment. Hence, in the eighth letter on the aesthetic education of man (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*), Friedrich Schiller can write that his age's most urgent task is to develop the sentiments.

For Schiller, it is about how fine art through form affects the human being in its totality (Schiller 2009, letter 22); it is a process of education to empower reason. We are with Schiller in a transition of reason from a Kantian desire to encourage reason to a Hegelian maturation. A stepping stone in this transition is aesthetics, where an ideal of imitating beauty in nature in human production becomes a creation of a human spirit. *Imitatio* becomes *imaginatio* (Ritter 2010, 52). The creation of a human spirit requires investigation into the faculties at work, what they are and what they can and should do—the products of imagination should not become infatuated or merely sentimental. For Schiller, encouraging and maturating is an educational process to mature humanity which is a gift of nature (Schiller 2009, letter 26). Freedom, the grand topic of his age's philosophy, is a reconciliation of senses, subject to law, and the law giving reason. However, the faculty of reason is impotent if it cannot make itself real, and man is, consequently, not free. The sensuous and the free formal drives must be united in what he calls play, which appears in beauty (Schiller 2009, letter 15). Here artistic beauty proves its educational task, the form that affects the human being, and it proves that the end is the complete artwork, which is the creation of political freedom (Schiller 2009, letter 2).

While this points clearly towards ideals of spirit and freedom dominating the aesthetics of Schiller's age, where his idea that beauty is freedom in appearance (Gethmann-Siefert 1995, 162 ff.) resonates with contemporary philosophers and writers; we must come back from such ideals to the tension between the senses and spirit, intuition and idea. In the lengthy note to the 20th letter, Schiller explains how we can think of all phenomena in four different ways, where the aesthetic is how something has a relation to the totality of our faculties without being subject to a specific one. A person can cause sympathy by the mere appearance, without us thinking of the person's character or their deeds. We, thus, judge the person aesthetically. As written above, we return to bodily resonance and the importance of feelings and emotions in social matters due to their education. An important meeting point of senses and common understanding expressed in such judgments is taste, which demonstrates the importance of combining aesthetics with affectivity and installing aesthetics in an educational role.

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3. Taste

Taste is a feeling communicated to others, revealing our shared views of cultural phenomena. We utter a judgment of taste with the expectation that others share the feeling expressed. We demonstrate such shared feelings when we discuss cultural artifacts and individuals' appearances. If perception is only about identification, we talk about knowledge. I can identify themes in the novel I read, such as difficulties in reflecting on one's appearance and self-identity. I can also identify the novel as Luigi Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (*One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*).

Nevertheless, while reading it, I also feel affected by its poetic forms, and I am invited to engage in it with my imagination and relate it to my environment's norms and actions, i.e., to share my subjective impression in inter-subjective forms. My aesthetic engagement of a receptive, productive, and communicative form allows me to perceive and learn about social, psychological, and existential conflicts in a way different from factual-based knowledge, yet it is still to be called knowledge. I learn about what others feel and think and interpret my feelings and emotions in accordance, and I learn to feel similar to how they do.

This forming of sensuous responses is different from information, which can change our view on something factual. We can tell people who are concerned about a black cat crossing their road that their belief is nothing but superstition, and they may agree, yet it is clear that the feeling of discomfort when seeing the cat does not go away as quickly. Lord Chesterfield may explain to his son how to enter a room full of strangers, and the son may, after performing the act many times, start feeling it natural to do so, including feeling how his entrance is also received. Feelings and emotions do not change overnight. If that were the case, a mere instruction would suffice, and there would be no need for a training of sensorial awareness and for exercising our sense of judgment. His contemporary, David Hume, can write in *The Skeptic*, that here lies "the chief triumph of art and philosophy: it insensibly refines the temper, and it points out to us those dispositions which we should endeavor to attain, by a constant *bent* of mind, and by repeated *habit*" (Hume 2008, 105, emphasis in original).

While focusing on bodily resonance and common sense, our interest is in how we move from the subjective feeling to a shared and communicated one. Edmund Burke writes that "I mean by the word Taste no more than that faculty, or those faculties of the mind which are affected with, or which form a judgment of the works of imagination and the elegant arts" (Burke 1757/

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1990, 13). This meaning is how we usually understand taste—as a faculty of the mind. However, we should not understand taste in purely intellectual terms. The sense of taste matters, as Caroline Korsmeyer (1999) makes us aware.

Taste is a feeling, a sense, and as such private, yet taste as a feeling communicated concerns spirit. The transformation from sense to spirit probably relates to our cultivation of the sense of taste, which enables an act contrary to immediate desires. We prove to be free, moral beings that can influence and form sensuous habits (Gadamer 1960/1990, 40 ff.). We come here to the intersection between affectivity and aesthetics as a moment for education. It makes sense to illustrate this educational moment through discussions of the taste of wine. The development of a common language, such as used in enology, exemplarily demonstrates the intersection between affectivity and aesthetics in making something as private and individual as the taste of wine accessible for discussions. A motive for such a desire is to develop American wine production in need of a common language among producers. The enologist Maynard A. Amerine hoped for objectivity to explain "how the identifiable constituents of wine cause the sensory experiences that can be so described" (Shapin 2016, 437). The hope is questionable since tasting is not a matter of measuring the constituents, such as chemical components causing taste buds' reactions, but of how the wine tastes. The presence of chemical substances can only secondarily explain the taste. The taste's complexity defines the quality of the wine, including the pleasure of drinking it, not a chemical composition (Deroy 2007; Shapin 2016, 452).

What is exemplary with wine tasting is the cultivation of our sense of taste. For Amerine, enologists' language is not intended to be used beyond the producers themselves (Shapin 2016, 438); nevertheless, it has become operationalized with Ann C. Noble's development of the Wine Aroma Wheel. It makes it possible to coordinate subjective experiences and give them a common language, which, in return, enforces the way one sense characterizes, and communicates about taste (Shapin 2016, 450 f.). Wine tasting has become a social affair—we could enjoy what we drink without talking about it—where one shares judgments of taste to demonstrate that one recognizes qualities like sommeliers and other experts do. Furthermore, contemporary wine tasting focuses on flavors that have had no role in characterizing wine throughout history. Instead, we find characteristics concerned with medical use, quality—meaning merely good or bad (i.e., unhealthy), correspondence to the four temperaments, and other issues (Shapin 2012).

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In his *Of the Standard of Taste*, Hume retells a story by Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quixote* in which two of Sancho Panza's relatives detect the taste of leather, for one relative, and iron for the other, in a glass of wine. They discover, "[o]n emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom an old key with a leathern thong tied to it" (Hume 2008, 141). This case is for Hume, an example of delicacy in taste, i.e., where "the organs are so fine as to allow nothing to escape them" (Hume 2008, 141), and such individuals are "easily to be distinguished in society by the soundness of their understanding" (Hume 2008, 149). Apart from noticing that in Hume's story, there is no word of how the wine tastes of any likeness to contemporary discourses of wine, we learn of the importance of refined senses for understanding how the standards of the social environment matter to how we educate our senses to become someone of good sense, *bon sens*.

In taste, we express the education of our senses, feelings, and emotions, and consequently our interpretation and understanding of ourselves: "Internalized into the psyche and integrated into everyday social life, this worldly intelligence of taste determines how one acts and also how one thinks of oneself" (Ferguson 2011, 381; see Ratcliffe 2005, 48). This integration implies having specific feelings at the right time, regarding the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way. As Aristotle tells us, they are the signs of virtue (*Nic. Eth.* 1106b 20). What "right" means is a matter of ethics. Acquiring these feelings belongs to aesthetics.

We often find ourselves engaged in discussions of good and bad taste related to a value judgment of social hierarchies where the well-educated is thought of as one better skilled in performing etiquettes and showing tact (Highmore 2016). However, it suffices to see it as a relation to our world, as an attachment, as Antoine Hennion explains. He calls taste "another declension of the word 'attachment'" (Hennion 2007, 111). Of course, we are interested in knowing the τέλος of the education of the senses. It is not the same if our attachment to the world concerns discussing qualities of wine or Schiller's ideals of political freedom. Of course, discourses in aesthetics may include such discussions. If something ideal appears in our sensuous intuition, we wish to learn about what appears to us and about the means of making something appearing in the way it does. Sensorial cognition invites us to investigate faculties and skills at work. However, I would like to conclude by asking if we should pay more attention to the education of our feelings and emotions to become better aware of what is at work in the formation of our self-perception and world-relation.

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4. Concluding Reflections

For a concluding reflection on the critical potential of aesthetic education, I will use how Sara Ahmed, in her book *The Promise of Happiness*, relates happiness to a feeling. She explains how happiness entails a direction of desire. It is not about what happiness is but what it does; it is about making life choices (Ahmed 2010a, 19). She states that happiness involves affect and that "happiness creates its objects," and these objects accumulate "positive affective value as social goods" (Ahmed 2010a, 21). We should not restrict the term "object" to a narrow sense. It is "anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness" (Ahmed 2010a, 29; 2010b, 41). The family is an example of a happy object. It affects us, and the importance of family for self-perception and social position makes it an object of desire (Ahmed 2010a, 45 ff.).

Happiness objects do not cause a feeling of happiness. Only retrospectively are they seen as the cause of the feeling, which becomes self-affirmative "so that when we feel the feeling we expect to feel, we are affirmed" (Ahmed 2010a, 28). Happiness, indifferent from what we understand it to be, is a word for "a feeling-state or state-of-being that we aspire toward" and "the word is often articulated with optimism and hope" (Ahmed 2010a, 200); "the promise of happiness is what makes things promising" (Ahmed 2010a, 181).

For Ahmed, happiness seems to be more than a question of feeling—she notices how happiness refers to the virtuous life for Aristotle (Ahmed 2010a, 36) but how far she will go in that direction is not clear. What is clear is "that happiness involves good feeling" (Ahmed 2010a, 13). What Aristotle would agree with is the claim that no one put to the rack can be called happy (*Nic. Eth.* 1153b 20). Her ideas of happiness clearly imply hedonistic views in which feelings can be measured and profited from (Ahmed 2010a, 4 ff.). Perhaps this comes from her agreement with "the empiricist account of the passions offered by John Locke" (Ahmed 2010a, 15 and 22; see also 2010b, 31), which brings her within an understanding of feelings as established empirically, manipulative, and measurable psychological reactions—something added-on in Goldie's critique mentioned above in sect. 1, and serving the contemporary market and its interests in profiting from happiness (Davies 2015). She points out the problem, but I believe she does not escape it in the examples she gives. Perhaps it is merely a question of taking her intended critique one step further. Perhaps the instrumental approach she takes in combination with the empiricist add-on presumption form a hin-

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drance. I do not intend to formulate a critique of her, given that the point is
that she illustrates the role of aesthetic education for our self-perception and
world-relation, a role I believe should be taken a bit further than she does.

She points out the hedonistic narratives that influence what we feel and
how we feel, to the point where we naturalize the way we feel. To oppose
such communal feelings implies creating uncomfortable feelings for others
because such opposition kills a good atmosphere. It is to become a killjoy
or—to use an old German word—a *Spielverderber*, one who "refuses to con-
vene, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness" (Ahmed 2010a, 65).
Ahmed follows classical Western ideals that being free means avoiding mak-
ing oneself slave to something, here to the narrative structure of ideals ap-
pearing as "happy objects," and through the critical distance to liberate one-
self from prevailing norms.

A rebellion against the norms that one internalizes and what makes one's
feelings and emotions natural is, of course, immensely difficult and can lead
to "an anxious narrative of self-doubt" (Ahmed 2010b, 37). She proposes
a struggle with values we have installed into our desires and turn the bodily
resonances, to use Fuch's characteristic, essential for our interaction with
others, into dissonance. The case of abuse may reveal the difficulty of such
a rebellion against feelings constitutive for our perception of situations and
people. The abused person who feels violated, hurt and angry, can also feel
ashamed and, for that reason, refrain from confronting or revealing the vio-
lation. Even though others would be supportive, a feeling of shame may be-
come dominant and motivate the victim to remain silent. Such feelings have
been formed through multiple narratives affecting us, and an example of
such narratives can be the films Ahmed discusses. Her focus is on their liber-
ating messages when the protagonists insist on ideals in conflict with soci-
ety's expectations. However, one could also find they reproduce an ideology
of individualism, one of the individuals who emerge through conflicts as the
victorious individual. In that light, they convey a message of feeling ashamed
when one is incapable of performing like the narrative's individual.

Ahmed illustrates difficulties at the intersection between affectivity and
aesthetics. She points at two elements, the importance of our sensorial edu-
cation and cognition and the inevitable ideological content of that education.
An aesthetic analysis is about ideals present in the sensuous and the sensu-
ous means at work. An analysis of the latter can be in danger of becoming
an experience of the object or situation isolated from the world within which
it appears because it is considered subject for a unique experience: the aes-
thetic. When we demonstrate our delicacy in taste, it can become a demon-

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stration for fellow aestheticians enjoying an experience of wine, etiquette, and artworks. However, what we simultaneously demonstrate, and what Ahmed points at, is our embodying of norms including or excluding participants; norms we internalize in our feelings and emotions become apparent in our presence; norms acquired through a sensorial education form bodily resonance, common sense, and shared emotions.

Unfortunately, Ahmed seems to stop short of how far-reaching the implications of aesthetic education are. The examples of narratives with protagonists that are exemplary for liberating themselves from the social restraints should make us ask if we really have a self that can liberate us from such acquired and appropriated feelings? Furthermore, if we have such a self, what is it if it can act against our innermost feelings—a self without feelings? Do we have to address the question of a minimal and a narrative self, i.e., "a sense of self intrinsic to any phenomenally conscious state," a "pre-reflective self-consciousness," and a self with an identity and history (Bortolon, 2020, 68)? Or could we believe that persons can "reflect on their incorporated social background and then deliberately strive to transform their own habitus" (Fuchs 2016, 204)? We step into a new line of questions about affectivity, for which aesthetics is a prominent partner for how our feelings and emotions come to have the form they have and what they do to our self-perception and world-relation prior to our awareness of them and to our rebellion and self-cultivation.

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