

Cardiff University

IMAGED CONCEPTS:
ART AND THE NATURE OF THE AESTHETIC

by

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SUMMARY

The two research questions of this thesis are: ‘What is the aesthetic?’ and ‘What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?’ These questions launch an argument that seeks to challenge and reverse some recent ‘deflationary’ accounts of the aesthetic.

The research uses the foundational aesthetics of Hume, Baumgarten and Kant to counter the arguments of deflationary aesthetics, then, drawing upon evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience, it highlights the power of the aesthetic in both nature and art.

The ‘deflationist’ George Dickie called the aesthetic attitude a ‘myth’ and dismissed the concept of ‘disinterestedness’. Gombrich doubted whether shared aesthetic values are possible, while Danto initially argued that aesthetic properties are merely imputed to artworks through context. For Carroll, historical precedence determines the identity of art, with the aesthetic reduced to a contingency.

However, Hume and Kant testified to the realism of both disinterestedness and the aesthetic attitude, while Baumgarten proposed a new science of aesthetics to underscore the centrality of the senses to epistemology, rhetoric and art, notably through his postulated ‘imaged concepts’, the apparent source for Kant’s ‘aesthetic ideas’. Danto’s final acknowledgment of the artistic role of enthymeme and metaphor signalled his acceptance of art’s essentially aesthetic character.

Evidence from Darwin confirms that the aesthetic is a shaping force in evolution, rather than a construct of human culture, and much congruence is revealed between the aesthetics of Baumgarten and Kant, and recent cognitive neuroscience. It is argued that philosophical aesthetics needs to integrate the findings of science into its metaphysics. Accordingly, this thesis offers some new definitions of the aesthetic attitude, rhetoric and art, principally influenced by Baumgarten and biology. The arguments are further evaluated through three case studies: ‘bowerbird art’, the ‘nexus of art, power and crime’, and ‘sound sculpture’.

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Chapter One: Introduction

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ABSTRACT:

This chapter sets out the research questions of this thesis: ‘What is the aesthetic?’ and ‘What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?’ Both questions were provoked by ‘deflationary’ accounts of the aesthetic that were written in reaction to mid-twentieth century formalism. Deflationary aesthetics had tapped into ancient anxieties about the epistemological reliability of the senses, while signalling a renewed interest in the social and historical aspects of art. This first chapter introduces the central issues of this thesis and outlines the arguments to be presented in opposition to deflationary aesthetics, analysing its claims and testing them against a) foundational texts in aesthetics from the eighteenth century and b) recent empirical evidence from evolution and cognitive neuroscience. This chapter also outlines three case studies: ‘bowerbird art’, ‘the nexus of art, power and crime’ and ‘sound sculpture’.

1.1 Background to this Project

This thesis grew from puzzlement about contemporary arts practices and from dissatisfaction with sceptical and deflationary accounts of the aesthetic. How can the ‘deflationary’ Institutional Theory, which emphasises the social and conventional dimensions of art at the expense of the aesthetic, be squared with the ‘aesthetic’ aspects of art championed by formalism and paramount to many art lovers and practitioners? This clash over the status of the aesthetic leads to three lines of enquiry. The first analyses the arguments advanced against the aesthetic by the deflationists. The second investigates exactly what was meant by the term ‘aesthetic’ in some of the foundational texts of modern aesthetics written by Baumgarten and Kant. The third looks for empirical evidence for the aesthetic in the recently expanding fields of evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience. Finally, these arguments are tested against three case studies: ‘bowerbird art’, ‘the nexus of art, power and crime’ and ‘sound sculpture’.

1.2 The Construction of this Chapter

This chapter will introduce the central issues of the thesis. Then the chapter structure of the thesis is outlined, followed by a more detailed chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the forthcoming argument. There then follows a summary of the claims made and conclusions reached by the thesis as a whole.

1.3 The Central Issues of this Thesis

1.3.1 Outline of the Central Issues

The central issues of this research are a) the two research questions (RQs) and b) scepticism towards the aesthetic, symptomatic of a deflationary account of the aesthetic which will be challenged in this thesis. The research questions are:

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

RQ2 What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?

Both questions concern the status of the aesthetic in nature, ordinary life, and art. This thesis argues that the *arts* constitute a subdivision within the category of the *aesthetic*. If accepted, this argument would make the aesthetic *necessary* to art, thus challenging any ‘deflationary’ account that sees the aesthetic as *contingent* to art. This thesis, therefore, sets out to refute the following claim by the deflationist Noel Carroll, who argues that, in principle, aesthetics and the philosophy of art are separate domains:

Aesthetics is broader than the philosophy of art, since it studies nature as well. And a philosophy of art might define “art” without reference to aesthetic experience or audience reception. Such a philosophy of art would not regard aesthetic experiences or aesthetic properties as necessary ingredients in all art (although it might recognise them as important)¹.

Carroll’s deflationary position is represented in Fig. 1a, below *left*. The position defended in this thesis is represented in Fig. 1b, below *right*.



Fig. 1. The aesthetic in art: a) contingent, b) necessary

Today, the deflationary stance colours the studio talk and seminar speak of Art Colleges, where one might overhear such ‘sceptical hypotheses’ (SHs) as these:

¹ Noel Carroll (1999) *Philosophy of Art: a Contemporary Introduction*, London, Routledge, p. 159.

- SH1 “Dickie has proved that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a ‘myth’.”
- SH2 “It’s putting it in an *art gallery* that makes it art.”
- SH3 “The word ‘aesthetic’ connotes passive receptivity.”
- SH4 “Duchamp proved that the aesthetic is merely optional in art.”
- SH5 “The *historical* aspect of art ‘trumps’ the *aesthetic*.”
- SH6 “The term ‘aesthetic’ by definition excludes the cognitive, historical, or moral.”
- SH7 “The source of the aesthetic lies in *art* rather than in *nature*” (paraphrase of Hegel).

Challenging such opinions will involve enquiring into the nature of the aesthetic itself, taking arguments from two main sources: a) eighteenth century arguments foundational to modern philosophical aesthetics and b) empirical evidence. The eighteenth century sources will include Baumgarten, who not only provided the headline title of this research project, ‘Imaged Concepts’, but who also coined the term ‘aesthetic’ in its modern sense. The empirical evidence is of four kinds: a) from my experience of the teaching of drawing, b) from evolutionary theory, c) from cognitive neuroscience and d) from philosophical anthropology.

This investigation into the nature of the aesthetic leads to an attempt to formulate some new definitions clustering around the concept of the aesthetic, emulating the ‘axiomatic’ style of Baumgarten, that had itself been modelled on the argumentative style of Euclid and Spinoza². These new definitions of the aesthetic will be introduced in chapter two (section 2.5) and appear as a full sequence in Appendix A.

The evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience deployed in this thesis both entail an acceptance of Daniel Dennett’s argument that philosophy needs to take greater account of evolutionary theory³, and an acceptance, with a few modifications, of the modularity of mind often associated with the work of Jerry Fodor⁴ (See section 2.4.1).

² Baumgarten’s adaptation of the axiomatic style is explained in the ‘Introduction’ to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735; 1954 edn.) *Reflections on Poetry*, with an Introduction, Notes, and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp. 10-16.

³ Daniel C. Dennett (1995) *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London, Penguin.

⁴ Jerry A. Fodor (1983) *Modularity of Mind: an Essay on Faculty Psychology*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

Against the non-realist approach of sceptics towards the aesthetic, this thesis adopts a realist ontology of art adapted from the writings of Gregory Currie⁵ and John Searle⁶ (See section 3.6) but also influenced by Arthur C. Danto⁷ and Joseph Margolis⁸ (See section 3.5.2).

1.3.2 Initial discussion of the Central Issues

The phrase, ‘imaged concepts’⁹ is taken from Baumgarten’s first publication, his *Reflections on Poetry*, where he also coined the term ‘aesthetic’, defined as ‘the science of perception’¹⁰. This new discipline was intended by Baumgarten to include both the *scientific* study of sensory knowledge and the *artistic* use of images. Although the Greeks had used the word αισθητα to denote knowledge acquired through the senses rather than reason, they had not attempted to systematise the aesthetic into a science, as Baumgarten now proposed to do. Through his new science, aesthetics, knowledge acquired through the senses, could be systematised in a way analogous to the role of logic in regulating reason. As he wrote in the *Reflections on Poetry*:

If **logic** by its very definition should be restricted to the rather narrow limits to which it is as a matter of fact confined, would it not count as the science of knowing things philosophically, that is, as the science for the direction of the higher cognitive faculty in apprehending the truth? Well, then. Philosophers might still find occasion, not without ample reward, to enquire also into those devices by which they might improve the lower faculties of knowing, and sharpen them, and apply them more happily for the benefit of the whole world. Since psychology affords sound principles, we have no doubt that there could be available a science which might direct the lower cognitive faculty in knowing things sensately.¹¹ (Aschenbrenner and Holter’s translation)

⁵ Gregory Currie (1989) *An Ontology of Art*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

⁶ John R. Searle (1979) *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge, CUP.

⁷ Arthur C. Danto (1981) *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press.

⁸ Joseph Margolis (2001) *Selves and Other Texts: The Case for Cultural Realism*, University Park Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press.

⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* §29, *scholium*, p. 49. This is Aschenbrenner and Holter’s translation of the Latin, ‘*notio phantasmatum*’, which prefigures Kant’s concept of the ‘aesthetic idea’.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* §116, p. 78. The full context of this definition of aesthetics as translated by Aschenbrenner and Holter is as follows: ‘Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or AESTHETIC’; in the facsimile, p. 39, this sentence reads: ‘*Sunt ergo νοητα cognoscenda facultate superiore obiectum logices, αισθητα επιζητης αισθητικης sive AESTHETICAE*’.

¹¹ *Ibid.* §115, pp. 77-8.

In the very next paragraph, Baumgarten gives his famous definition of the new science of aesthetics, which omits any mention of beauty¹². That had to wait for his second definition of aesthetics, four years later¹³.

Not only a philosopher, but also a classicist and poet, Baumgarten was interested mostly in poetic imagery, though it is clear he intended his new discipline to have scientific applications¹⁴ and to embrace all the arts¹⁵. The term '*imaged concepts*' encapsulates the *cognitive* emphasis within Baumgarten's aesthetics, and his phrase 'imaged concepts' has been identified as the source of Kant's 'aesthetic idea'¹⁶.

Baumgarten's understanding of the term 'aesthetic' was very different from the much narrower use of the term by the formalists¹⁷ who were targeted for attack by deflationists. In their attack on formalism, the deflationists often avoided the term 'aesthetic', as for them it seemed to connote formalist assumptions¹⁸. The deflationist critique goes further, at one point arguing that the *formalist* model of the 'aesthetic' is the '*traditional*' meaning of that term, necessarily excluding from its meaning both *interpretation* and awareness of the *historical* interconnections of a work¹⁹. Such an interpretation has the effect of collapsing the 'aesthetic', without remainder, on to

¹² See footnote 10, above.

¹³ 'AESTHETICS is the science of sensorily knowing and proposing (the logical faculty of lower cognition, the philosophy of the graces and the muses, lower epistemology, the art of thinking beautifully, art as an analogy to reason);' my translation of §533 of the *Metaphysica* from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1983 edn), *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, extracts from the *Metaphysica* and other texts, published with Introduction, Translation into German, and Notes by Hans Rudolf Schweizer, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, p. 16. See my translation of §§501-623 of the *Metaphysica* from the Latin in Appendix D.

¹⁴ As expressed at the end of his second philosophical letter, written under the pseudonym *Aletheophilus* in 1741, reprinted by Hans Rudolf Schweizer in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1983 edn) *Op. Cit.* (pp. 67-72) p. 72.

¹⁵ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §41, pp. 52-3 mentions pictures. §533 from the *Metaphysica*, quoted in footnote 13, above, is even more explicit.

¹⁶ Paul Guyer (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 29. Kant's 'aesthetic idea', defined in Immanuel Kant, (1790; 1987 edn.) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett, §48, Ak 312-3, pp. 180-1.

¹⁷ Clive Bell is usually identified as the paradigmatic formalist, as in his (1914; 1949 edn.) *Art*, London, Chatto and Windus. Bell places all the value in visual artworks upon their formal or 'plastic' qualities, rather than their literary or sentimental content.

¹⁸ Noel Carroll (2002) "Aesthetic Experience Revisited" *BJA* (Vol. 42, no. 2) pp. 145-168.

¹⁹ This corresponds to sceptical hypothesis SH7, above: 'The term "aesthetic" by definition excludes the cognitive, historical, or moral'. See Noel Carroll (1986) "Art and Interaction" *JAAC*, Vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 57-68, reprinted N. Carroll (2001a) *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, CUP (pp. 5-20), pp. 15-6. Carroll has rowed back from his 1986 position, now allowing that, '... quality detection will usually be ineliminable in interpreting the thematic viewpoints of artworks', in Noel Carroll (2001b) 'Four Concepts of the Aesthetic' in Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001a) (pp. 41-62) p. 61. This appears to be the first publication of this essay, in a book which is otherwise a collection of reprints.

formalism. This was Carroll's sceptical stance towards the aesthetic, and he dubbed it the 'deflationary' account²⁰.

This thesis seeks to redress this line of deflationary argument, and also considers other forms of aesthetic scepticism, such as expressed by A. J. Ayer²¹ and Ernst Gombrich²². The central question of this thesis, therefore, concerns the *aesthetic*. What is it? Where does it come from? What is the true extent of its role in art? These questions have already been formulated, above, as Research Questions 'RQ1' and 'RQ2' ('What is the aesthetic?' and 'What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?')

In the spirit of Baumgarten, the arguments employed to provide answers will be drawn from both the arts and the sciences. For Baumgarten, aesthetics was about ways of *knowing* by means of the *senses*, as opposed to knowledge defined by *logical reasoning*²³. Bivalent logic, as a system of thought, is unable to analyse either physical images or poetic imagery²⁴. Baumgarten draws attention to the fact that *examples*, often employing *metaphor*, harness the resources of the *senses* to the understanding of abstract concepts²⁵. It is important to acknowledge the revolutionary nature, for a rationalist, of Baumgarten's assertion of the *epistemological* value of the senses. His position resisted two millennia of doubts about the *reliability* of the senses.

However, in addition to the ancient epistemological doubts about the sensory, aesthetics has for two centuries been divided by two other distinctions. The first lies between those who give differing values to the *synchronic* or *diachronic* aspects of art. Those who favour the *synchronic* approach tend to emphasise the *formal* qualities of artworks, and those who favour a *diachronic* approach tend to emphasise the *historical* dimension of art. Adapting from Kai Hammermeister²⁶, I call this the 'Synchronic versus Diachronic dialectic':

SvD1: an a-historical, aestheticising, synchronic account of art, versus

²⁰ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001b) pp. 58-62.

²¹ A.J. Ayer (1936) *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd Edition, 1946), London, Victor Gollanz, p. 113.

²² Gombrich is famous for saying, 'There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists', in (1963) *The Story of Art*, London, Phaidon, p. 5. Sheldon Richmond explains how this extends to a general scepticism about the aesthetic, in his (1994) *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the Philosophies of Science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, to be discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.5.1, below.

²³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §14, p. 42, and §116, p. 78.

²⁴ Metaphors were described as 'non-proper' terms: *metaphorici termini improprii* in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §83, facsimile, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid* §21 and its *scholium* pp. 45-6.

²⁶ The history of these divisions has been recounted by Kai Hammermeister in his 2002 book, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, CUP.

SvD2: an historicising, anti-aesthetic, diachronic account of art.

These two differing emphases align roughly with a second distinction, between those who emphasise *individual* versus *social* modes of engagement with art. These two divisions also align roughly with the split between ‘aesthetic’ and ‘deflationary’ accounts of art. Contemporary ‘deflationists’ can be seen as voicing a rejection of the dominant formalism of the early and mid-twentieth century model of aesthetics (SvD1) advocated by Clive Bell²⁷, Monroe Beardsley²⁸ and Jerome Stolnitz²⁹.

This thesis will argue that the leaders of the deflationary critique, George Dickie³⁰, Arthur C. Danto³¹ and now Noel Carroll³², assumed that formalism, which they identified with the term ‘aesthetic’, entails *synchronicity* at the expense of *diachronicity*. Unfortunately, they either ignored or were ignorant of the existence of an equally long-standing *diachronic* tradition within aesthetics itself³³. It will be argued in this thesis that this oversight has led deflationists to over-state the degree to which the *formalist* use of the term ‘aesthetic’ was *paradigmatic* or ‘traditional’ within the discipline of philosophical aesthetics as a whole; hence the present need to re-examine foundational eighteenth century texts. As Noel Carroll has admitted³⁴, Dickie had argued *strategically* in attempting the ‘demolition of the aesthetic’, in order to turn the attention of fellow philosophers of art away from the *aesthetic* as narrowly conceived by formalists, and towards *institutional* factors, which appeared to Dickie to be more central to the philosophy of art.

This thesis seeks to preserve the insights which undoubtedly accrued from the efforts of Dickie and the other deflationists in drawing attention to the nature of the

²⁷ Clive Bell *Op. Cit.* (1914; 1949 edn.).

²⁸ Monroe C. Beardsley (1983) “An Aesthetic Definition of Art”, in Hugh Curher (Ed.) *What is Art?* New York, Haven Publications, reprinted in Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (Eds.) (2004) *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: the Analytic Tradition*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 55-62.

²⁹ Jerome Stolnitz (1960) *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: a critical introduction*, Boston MA, Houghton Mifflin.

³⁰ George Dickie (1964) “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude”, *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-65.

³¹ Arthur C. Danto (1964) “The Artworld” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, pp. 571-84, reprinted in A. Neill and A. Ridley (Eds) (1995) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, Boston Massachusetts, McGraw Hill, pp. 202-11.

³² Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001a).

³³ Paul Guyer criticises the selectivity of Dickie and Carroll’s accounts of the character and history of the ‘aesthetic’ within the philosophy of art in his (2003) ‘History of Modern Aesthetics’ in Jerrold Levinson (Ed.) (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 25-60) pp. 29-31.

³⁴ Noel Carroll wrote: ‘I have always thought that Dickie’s classic article “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” can best be read as a demolition of the notion of “the aesthetic” for the purpose, ultimately, of undermining aesthetic theories of art – thereby paving the way for his own Institutional Theory of Art’, in his *Op. Cit.* (2001a) ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

‘extrinsic’ properties of artworks, so often ignored or denied by formalists who concentrated almost exclusively on the plastic or ‘intrinsic’ formal elements of artworks, as if their properties could be seen as equivalent to the properties of physical objects. However, this thesis also wishes to restore the status, realism and vitality of the aesthetic values that have been disparaged by some of the arguments advanced by deflationary aesthetics.

1.3.3. Introduction to the Case Studies

In order to help evaluate the account of art offered by this thesis, three case studies will examine some problems that are largely ignored by philosophical aesthetics, but which seem to have the potential to offer significant insights into the nature of art and the aesthetic. These three case studies are 1) the status of bowerbird art, 2) the nexus of art, power and crime and 3) the puzzle of ‘sound sculpture’. The first case study (See section 8.5.1, below), addresses the possibility that non-human species might also make art, of which the paradigm case is often taken to be the bowerbird, a cluster of 18 species in Australia and New Guinea, which Geoffrey Miller describes as, ‘The only other animals [apart from humans] that spend significant time and energy constructing purely aesthetic displays beyond their own bodies’³⁵. This issue is expressed simply as question BB:

BB Is the bowerbird’s bower *art* ?

The second case study, the ‘nexus of art, power and crime’ (See section 8.5.2, below) applies mostly, but not exclusively, to the visual arts: the alignment at many periods of history of the visual arts with centres of power. It is expressed as the question APC:

APC What is the reason for the nexus between Art, Power and Crime?

The third case study (See section 8.5.3, below) concerns ‘sound sculpture’. This case study was triggered by a series of encounters with works of ‘sound art’, usually described as ‘sculpture’, in galleries dedicated to the visual arts. The enquiry began by asking why it is meaningful to consider these works to be ‘sculpture’, rather than

³⁵ Geoffrey Miller (2000) *The Mating Mind*, Edition used (2001), London, Vintage, p. 267.

‘music’ or ‘drama’, and ends by offering an explanation, and confirming the capacity of this new medium to deliver great works of art.

1.4 The Structure of this Thesis

Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, this thesis comprises three pairs of chapters. The first pair examines scepticism towards the aesthetic, including the deflationary accounts of Dickie, Danto and Carroll. The second pair examines the eighteenth century aesthetics of Baumgarten and Kant, and asks what they might teach us about the sceptical questions raised. The third pair of chapters examines the empirical evidence for the aesthetic from evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience. The final chapter reviews and summarises all the arguments presented and applies them to the project’s three case studies: the art of the bowerbird (8.5.1), the nexus of art, power and crime (8.5.2) and sound sculpture (8.5.3).

1.5 Chapter-by-chapter Outline of the Argument³⁶

Chapter two presents a close reading of George Dickie’s famous paper, ‘The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude’, an early deflationary account, in which Dickie provocatively encourages sceptics of the aesthetic to ask whether the ‘aesthetic dimension’ is necessary to a work of art. He argues that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is not only a myth, but a *damaging* myth, because of the ways it ‘misleads’ criticism and the philosophy of art. Dickie aimed to undermine the aesthetic attitude by attacking its supposed paradigmatic characteristic: disinterestedness. He argued first that there is no special state of mind involved in the ‘detachment’ of the aesthetic attitude; there is only paying ‘close attention’. Then he criticised advocates of the aesthetic attitude, represented by Jerome Stolnitz, for setting three misleading limitations on the aesthetic attitude: a) restricting what is relevant in the aesthetics of an artwork, while claiming b) that the aesthetic attitude is incompatible with criticism and c) that the aesthetic attitude is incompatible with making moral judgments. An argument is then mounted against Dickie’s position. First, Fodor’s arguments for the modularity of mind will be sketched out, in opposition to Dickie’s view that states of mind are limited to paying attention or

³⁶ The following chapter summaries will not be footnoted, because references are provided in the main text.

failing to pay attention. Dickie's denial of the aesthetic attitude will be further tested, first against empirical evidence from the teaching of drawing and second against some findings in cognitive neuroscience. Then his accounts of the aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness, based entirely on Stolnitz, are compared to Hume's eighteenth century account of aesthetic experience. I conclude that Dickie's reasoning is at points incoherent, and despite his success in rebutting Stolnitz on some significant points of detail, his arguments against the aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness both fail. At the end of the chapter, I offer my own definition of the aesthetic and of the aesthetic attitude.

Chapter three continues the scrutiny of deflationary aesthetics, extending to other forms of scepticism towards the aesthetic. A number of questions are collated, to be checked, in chapters four and five, against some of the foundational ideas of aesthetics in the work of Baumgarten and Kant, and in chapters six and seven, against empirical evidence from the biological sciences. One of the key 'deflationary' ideas to be questioned is Stephen Davies' distinction between the 'functional' (aesthetic) and 'procedural' (historical/institutional) properties of works of art³⁷. Although, historically, there may have been good reasons for this deflationary move, it will be argued that the deflationists are responsible for steering too sharply away from formalism, thereby undervaluing the aesthetic in art³⁸. This thesis attempts to correct the direction of the debate, without losing the undoubted insights contributed by the deflationists. At the end of this chapter, I offer an argument in favour of an ontology of art, developed from Gregory Currie and John Searle, which places the aesthetic at its centre.

In chapter four, the quest continues for an understanding of the central place once accorded to the aesthetic in the philosophy of art. The quest comes to the door of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who most notably among Enlightenment philosophers followed Epicurus in valuing the senses for revealing to us both knowledge and beauty. Philosophers since Socrates have more usually distrusted the senses, both for moral reasons and for their supposed epistemological unreliability. Two texts by Baumgarten are studied, one of which has been translated into English from Latin for the first time. These texts claim for the senses a central role in providing 'imaged concepts' to the arts

³⁷ Stephen Davies (1991) *Definitions of Art*, Ithica, Cornell University Press. He draws this distinction in Chapter 2 (pp. 23-49, and develops it in Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 50-114).

³⁸ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001a and b) and *Op. Cit.* (2002).

and sciences, sensory images which make abstract concepts more tangible in the imagination, most notably in metaphor.

Chapter five consults Immanuel Kant on the nature of the aesthetic, and its relationship to the arts. I examine Kant's accounts of a) aesthetic judgment b) disinterestedness and c) the aesthetic idea. Some comparisons are made with Baumgarten's aesthetics. The split between synchronic and diachronic models of the aesthetic (SvD1 and SvD2³⁹) is considered, in order to understand the origins of the divide that led to the separation of formalist/aestheticising and deflationary/institutionalising tendencies in analytical philosophy's accounts of art. It is concluded that Kant's moral misgivings about the senses, his low estimate of their cognitive potential and the requirements of his own philosophical system, led to inconsistencies in his account, and reinforced a formalist tendency (SvD1) already present in the tradition. However, many of his insights, some of them based on Baumgarten's teachings, are still relevant today, including the aesthetic idea and the nature of aesthetic experience, which he memorably described as the 'free play of the imagination and understanding', an expression which, like Baumgarten's 'imaged concepts' unites sensation with cognition.

Chapter six attempts to ground the aesthetic in biology, the discipline where any attempt to naturalise aesthetics is likely to focus, in attempting to answer RQ1: 'What is the aesthetic?' The chapter tries to update Kant's account of the *sensus communis*, using arguments based on the discoveries of evolutionary biology. Two principal ideas are taken from Daniel C. Dennett's account of the relevance of evolution to philosophy: the invocation of a) 'sky hooks' or 'cranes' as explanations, and b) the existence of only one 'design space'. Following Darwin's insistence that human capabilities evolved in small steps from non-human animals, Dennett questions the feasibility of invoking concepts such as 'altruism' in human behaviour without giving an account of how these qualities might have evolved. Simply to 'help oneself' to such concepts is to invoke 'skyhooks'. To give an incremental, evolutionary, explanation is to describe an earthbound 'crane'. I apply this argument to the realm of the aesthetic. Dennett also emphasises that animals and humans evolve solutions within a single 'design space', which implies that there are, in principle, no solutions 'marked off' exclusively for human activity, and I would add, 'Not even art'. Various selective pressures for the evolution of the aesthetic dimension are considered, including sexual selection.

³⁹ SvD1: an a-historical, aestheticising, synchronic account of art; SvD2: an historicising, anti-aesthetic, diachronic account of art.

Chapter seven attempts to justify the central position given to the senses in the aesthetics of Baumgarten, using arguments drawn from psychology and cognitive neuroscience. The biological dimension is reflected in Gombrich's account of the survival need of animals to find, in their surroundings, meaning and order, which he interprets as identifying 'what?' and 'where?' The neuroscientist Zeki explains his theory that each visual module contributes a distinctive element to aesthetic pleasure, and each also contributes separately to an organism's understanding, as Zeki relates these factors to a viewer's response to works of visual art. Ramachandran attempts to state some 'laws' of art, and relates these to an organism's emotional responses. Through synaesthesia, he offers a contemporary explanation of the creative imagination and metaphor, in a way that seems to vindicate Baumgarten's emphasis on the senses in cognition and in the arts.

Chapter eight then reviews all the preceding arguments and, in order to evaluate them, concludes with an examination of the three case studies. The first defends the claim that the courtship activities of both male and female bowerbirds share a common ontology with human rhetoric and art, and can therefore be considered for classification as either rhetoric or art. How one decides whether bowerbird constructions are 'rhetoric' or 'art', as with many examples of *human* aesthetic production, is a matter of interpretation and therefore open to debate. The second case study investigates the nexus of art, power and crime, and the third argues that 'sound sculpture' may indeed be regarded as 'sculpture' rather than music or drama and that this new medium has the capacity to produce 'great art'. It is hoped that the combined insights from the three case studies secure for this thesis some fresh insights into the nature of art and the claims of the aesthetic.

1.6 Summary and Conclusion

This opening chapter has set out the research questions of this thesis: 'What is the aesthetic?' and 'What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?'

Both questions had been provoked by 'deflationary' accounts of the aesthetic that were written in reaction to the formalism which had been dominant in mid-twentieth century aesthetics in the analytical tradition. This chapter has outlined how the claims of deflationary arguments against the aesthetic will be challenged in chapters two and three, and the way the case for the realism and significance of the aesthetic can be supported by arguments advanced in some of the foundational texts of modern

philosophical aesthetics written in the eighteenth century, and how these are further supported by recent discoveries in evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience.

It is concluded that there would be merit in an account that combined an eighteenth century perspective on the aesthetic with a twenty-first century understanding of evolution and cognitive neuroscience. Such an account would offer a more complete explanatory framework for both the arts and the aesthetic than either formalism or the Institutional Theory.

Chapter Two: The ‘Myth’ of the Aesthetic Attitude?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will focus on George Dickie's influential article questioning the aesthetic attitude and its paradigmatic characteristic: disinterestedness. Dickie claimed: 1) that the aesthetic attitude is not characterised by a mental state such as 'distancing' - there is only 'attention' or 'inattention'; 2) that the aesthetic attitude is not attending in a special way (disinterestedly) - there is only attending more or less *closely*. The main target of Dickie's paper is Stolnitz's formalistic account of 'disinterestedness', which entails a) limiting the aesthetic relevance of the extrinsic properties of artworks b) the incompatibility of appreciation and criticism, and c) the irrelevance of moral questions to the aesthetic attitude. Dickie's arguments are tested in three ways: a) for self-consistency b) by comparison with an eighteenth century account of aesthetic response and disinterestedness and c) by considering empirical evidence from the teaching of drawing and from cognitive neuroscience. The conclusion is that although Dickie succeeds in defending the place of moral and critical judgments in our response to art, he fails to disprove the existence of either the aesthetic attitude or disinterestedness. New definitions of the aesthetic and the aesthetic attitude are presented.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Place of this Chapter in the Argument

This is the first of two chapters to examine the claims and arguments advanced in 'deflationary' and sceptical accounts of the aesthetic, which are being scrutinised in pursuit of this project's Research Questions (RQ):

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

RQ2 What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?

In this chapter, Dickie's claims in 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude'¹ will be tested against a) their self-consistency, b) a text in eighteenth century aesthetics and c) some empirical evidence. New definitions of the aesthetic and the aesthetic attitude are offered in opposition to Dickie.

In chapter three, some further deflationary arguments by Danto, Dickie, Levinson, Carroll and others will be challenged, including Stephen Davies' distinction

¹ George Dickie (1964) 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-65.

between ‘functional’ and ‘procedural’ definitions of art. Chapters four and five compare deflationary accounts with the claims of Baumgarten and Kant. Two more chapters enlarge upon the present chapter’s examination of empirical evidence: chapter six looks into evolutionary theory and chapter seven looks further into the findings of cognitive neuroscience. The final chapter reviews and summarises all the arguments presented and applies them to the project’s three case studies: the art of the bowerbird (section 8.5.1), the nexus of art, power and crime (section 8.5.2) and the problem of sound sculpture (section 8.5.3).

2.1.2 The Structure of ‘The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude’

Dickie opens his paper with a witty paragraph attacking the aesthetic attitude as a ‘myth’ and as an ‘encrusted article of faith’:

Some recent articles have suggested the unsatisfactoriness of the notion of the aesthetic attitude and it is now time for a fresh look at that encrusted article of faith. This conception has been valuable to aesthetics and criticism in helping wean them from a sole concern with beauty and related notions. However, I shall argue that the aesthetic attitude is a myth and while, as G. Ryle has said, “Myths often do a lot of theoretical good while they are still new,” this particular one is no longer useful and in fact misleads aesthetic theory.²

His preamble then sets out the results of his review of ‘attitude theorists’, couched very much in the idiom of ordinary language philosophy, listing some of the terms used to articulate the different varieties of ‘attitude theory’. He presents a taxonomy of three ‘grades’ of aesthetic attitude, the strongest, the weaker and the weakest, each described in separate sections of the paper, numbered I to III. The playful tone of the opening does not last until the end of the paper, where, rather than call for a better understanding of the ‘aesthetic attitude’, he admits that ‘an underlying aim of this essay is to suggest the vacuousness of the term “aesthetic”’³.

In section I, Dickie takes the ‘strongest’ version of the aesthetic attitude to be Bullough’s psychological theory of ‘distancing’. Dickie describes this as a supposed ‘action’ of distancing which ‘constitutes or is necessary for’ the aesthetic attitude⁴.

² *Ibid.* p. 56.

³ *Ibid.* p. 64. This opinion chimes well with pronouncements by A. J. Ayer and Ludwig Wittgenstein, quoted in section 3.2.2, below.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 56.

In section II, Dickie examines what he calls the ‘weaker’ version of the aesthetic attitude: ‘This weaker theory speaks not of a special kind of action (distancing) but of an ordinary kind of action (attending) done in a certain way (disinterestedly)’⁵. In this section, Dickie examines principally the writings of Jerome Stolnitz, Eliseo Vivas and J. O. Urmson⁶. In the first part of section II, which I will call section Iii, Dickie questions the concept of ‘disinterestedness’⁷. In the second part, ‘section Iiii’, Dickie elucidates his claim that disinterestedness and the aesthetic attitude mislead aesthetic theory⁸. As we shall see, there are reasons to consider that section Iiii carries this paper’s true message, an attack on formalism, which is expressed only indirectly in the paper’s headline title.

In section III, Dickie discusses the ‘weakest’ version of the aesthetic attitude⁹, described by Vincent Tomas as ‘attending closely’¹⁰. This version allows Dickie to claim, that, once ‘purged of *distancing* and *disinterestedness*’ the aesthetic attitude is a ‘great letdown’¹¹. The term ‘letdown’ is a deflationary metaphor, which anticipates by decades Carroll’s coinage: ‘deflationary aesthetics’¹². Thus, despite the headline title of his paper, Dickie inconsistently accepts the existence of the aesthetic attitude, even if only in this form: ‘attending (closely)’. Although he calls this minimalist formulation ‘vacuous’, it nevertheless conveys some truth about the intensity of attention required for aesthetic engagement. The real target of Dickie’s attack, therefore, was not the aesthetic attitude, but the ‘baggage’ attached to it by formalists. Therefore, Dickie’s paper is an indirect attack on formalism, by means of a direct attack on the ‘aesthetic’, with unfortunate consequences for the wider understanding both art and the aesthetic. To resist Dickie’s reductive interpretation, this chapter will concentrate on his claims in sections I and II, in order to show that the aesthetic attitude cannot be collapsed onto ‘attending (closely)’, even though ‘attending closely’ is a vital and far from ‘vacuous’ element in adopting the aesthetic attitude.

⁵ *Loc. Cit.*

⁶ Also mentioned, but not discussed by me are I. A. Richards (p. 61), H. S. Langfield (p. 61) and David Pole (pp. 63-4).

⁷ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) pp. 57-60.

⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 61-4.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 64-5.

¹⁰ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 64.

¹¹ *Loc. Cit.*

¹² Noel Carroll (2001b) “Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience” in N. Carroll (2001a) *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, CUP (pp. 41-62) pp. 58-62.

2.2 Dickie's Arguments against the 'Aesthetic Attitude'

2.2.1 Section I: 'Distancing' is a Myth

As we have just seen, in section I of his paper, Dickie describes distancing as a supposed '*action* which either constitutes or is necessary for the aesthetic attitude'¹³ (my Italics). Dickie calls this the 'strong' version of the aesthetic attitude:

Psychical distance, according to Bullough, is a psychological process by virtue of which a person *puts* some object (be it a painting, a play, or a dangerous fog at sea) "out of gear" with the practical interests of the self¹⁴.

This gives Dickie his first line of attack. His first argument could be summarised as follows: if 'distancing' is a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude, then disproving *distancing* will also disprove the existence of the 'aesthetic attitude'. Dickie then quotes from the version of the theory presented by Sheila Dawson¹⁵:

Miss Dawson maintains that it is "the beauty of the phenomenon, which captures our attention, puts us out of gear with practical life, and forces us, if we are receptive, to view it on a level of aesthetic consciousness"¹⁶.

This is a description of the *phenomenology* of spontaneously falling into the aesthetic attitude. I shall argue that this is a description of a real, not a 'mythical' phenomenon. However, Dickie ignores the phenomenological character of this and several other descriptions of the aesthetic attitude in his article. Dawson maintains that some persons (e.g. critics and actors) 'distance deliberately'¹⁷. This refers to a learned ability to adopt the aesthetic attitude at will, as a mental *act*. I shall also argue that this, too, is real, and that teaching this mental skill is one of the main reasons for arts education.

In Bullough's example of a ship caught in a fog at sea, an aesthete on board must first 'distance' himself from the practical dangers facing him and the crew before

¹³ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 56.

¹⁴ *Loc. Cit.*

¹⁵ I treat Dickie as a primary source, and, by extension, as a reliable secondary source for most of the writers he quotes, including Sheila Dawson, Jerome Stolnitz, Eliseo Vivas and Vincent Tomas, whom I have neither cross-checked nor referenced individually.

¹⁶ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 56.

¹⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

he can enjoy the spectacle created by the fog¹⁸. According to Bullough's approach, a failure to adopt an aesthetic attitude can arise from 'over distancing' (insufficient engagement with the spectacle) or 'under distancing' (being in such a panic about the dangers, that our aesthete fails to engage with the visual spectacle). Accordingly, a jealous 'under-distanced' husband watching *Othello* might be plagued by his fears, whereas a visiting stage manager, concentrating on technical details, might be too 'over distanced' to follow the play itself.

Dickie is sceptical about this terminology and the existence of such actions:

When the curtain goes up, when we walk up to a painting, or when we look at a sunset are we ever induced into a state of being distanced either by being struck by the beauty of the object or by pulling off an act of distancing? I do not recall committing any such special actions or of being induced into any special state, and I have no reason to suspect that I am atypical in this respect¹⁹.

This denial seems to me unconvincing. A little reflection will confirm that a melody or natural landscape can cast an instant spell; a story or a picture can similarly transform consciousness. Dickie, however, claims that all these experiences are undifferentiated examples of focused attention. He rejects the 'technical metaphor' of being 'out of gear with the practical interests of the self'²⁰. For him, it is simply that, at such moments, we are not being *distracted* by practical concerns:

To introduce the technical terms "distance," "under-distance," and "over-distance" does nothing but send us chasing after phantom acts and states of consciousness²¹.

Ockham²² would have approved. Far more parsimonious to claim that there is only one unvarying state of consciousness, attention, which we can focus upon this object or that.

Two questions arise from this discussion of section I:

¹⁸ Edward Bullough (1912) "Psychical Distance", *British Journal of Psychology* (Vol. 5), extracts reprinted in Alex Neill, and Aaron Ridley (Eds) (1995) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, Boston Massachusetts, McGraw Hill (pp. 297-311).

¹⁹ George Dickie, *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 56-7.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 57.

²² William Ockham, medieval philosopher whose name is associated with the principle of parsimony of means in explanation, as also taught by Aristotle. Marilyn McCord Adams (1995) 'Ockham, William' and 'Ockham's razor, or the principle of parsimony' in Ted Honderich (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, p. 633.

IA: Why does Dickie ignore the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude as described by Bullough and Dawson and by others he quotes later?

IB: Is Dickie correct in claiming that ‘distancing’, ‘under-distancing’ and ‘over-distancing’ are ‘phantom acts and states of consciousness²³’, there being only ‘attention’ to an object, or ‘inattention’?

Question IB will be discussed in section 2.4, which examines some empirical evidence for the aesthetic attitude. However, it is possible to begin immediately to answer question IA.

The reason Dickie repeatedly ignores the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude was *tactical*. Dickie’s position is incoherent, both accepting the existence of the aesthetic attitude, as ‘attending (closely)’, and rejecting it as a ‘myth’²⁴. The only way to sustain this incoherent position is to mask it by claiming that ‘attending (closely)’ is so feeble (so ‘vacuous’) that it fails to secure the reality of the ‘aesthetic attitude’. This claim then requires Dickie to ignore the phenomenological descriptions of the aesthetic attitude contained in his paper. As Noel Carroll explains:

I have always thought that Dickie’s classic article “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude” can best be read as a demolition of the notion of “the aesthetic” for the purpose, ultimately, of undermining aesthetic theories of art – thereby paving the way for his own Institutional Theory of Art²⁵.

It is claimed in this thesis that, contrary to the claims of Dickie and Carroll, the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a term which denotes a *real* phenomenon which Dawson calls being ‘receptive’, and which I describe as an openness to our perceptual experiences and the thoughts and feelings they engender. Such openness is spontaneous in infants and young children, but not necessarily readily available in later life, for reasons that will be discussed. A baby as young as three weeks old can be enchanted by a visual array, such as a ‘baby gym’, surrounding an infant on all sides by brightly coloured patterns (see Plate 3). I would claim that a state of ‘rapture’ is a common response to an intensely positive aesthetic experience. Kant calls it a ‘quickening’ of the faculties²⁶, suggesting something different from merely focused attention.

²³ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 57.

²⁴ See the discussion of Section III of Dickie’s paper, at the end of section 2.1.2, above.

²⁵ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001a) p. 2.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant (1790), *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W.S. Pluhar (1987) Indianapolis, Hackett, §9, Ak 219, p. 63. The widely quoted use of the word ‘faculties’ occurs in Meredith’s translation, which says ‘quickening of both faculties (imagination and understanding)’, in Immanuel Kant (1790;

However, if the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is so obvious a phenomenon, how could Dickie deny its existence? First, the aesthetic attitude is somewhat elusive. It is often ‘switched on automatically’, so that, although people enter the state, perhaps at a fairly low level of intensity as they focus on something which has caught their attention, they may not classify the experience as an instance of the ‘aesthetic attitude’. As mentioned, it can, after childhood, require practice to cultivate it. Also, the aesthetic attitude can easily be over-ridden by the preoccupations of daily living; hence the need, expressed metaphorically, for ‘distancing’, or for getting ‘out of gear with practical affairs’.

This preliminary discussion of Dickie’s argument has been enough, however, for us to settle the first of our two questions:

- IA Why does Dickie ignore the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude as described by Bullough and Dawson and by others he quotes later?

I have argued that it was Dickie’s strategic agenda that encouraged him to overlook these phenomenological descriptions, because to acknowledge them would detract from his anti-formalist objective, which he thought required him to prove the aesthetic attitude to be a myth. I will argue further, in the next chapter, that it was also because Dickie shared a physicalist approach to artworks, influenced by positivism²⁷.

A second question was also raised in section I:

- (*)IB: Is Dickie correct in claiming that ‘distancing’, ‘under-distancing’ and ‘over-distancing’ are ‘phantom acts and states of consciousness²⁸’, there being only ‘attention’ to an object, or ‘inattention’?

This question has already been tentatively answered in the negative (bracketed asterisk) by the answer to question IA. However, a fuller reply will need to await consideration of some empirical evidence for the realism of the aesthetic attitude. Before that, it is necessary to analyse the rest of the argument in Dickie’s article.

2.2.2 Section II: ‘Disinterestedness’ is a Myth

1952 edn) translated James Creed Meredith, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 60. In the same place, Pluhar says ‘quickening of the two powers (imagination and understanding)’.

²⁷ See section 3.2.2, below.

²⁸ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 57.

Now it is time to look at Dickie's arguments in section II, which comprises most of his paper, covering what he calls the 'weak' version of the aesthetic attitude, defined as carrying out an ordinary action, 'attending', in a particular way, '*disinterestedly*'²⁹. There are two parts to section II, which I have called Ili and Ilii. The first, Ili³⁰, questions the concept of 'disinterestedness', and the second, Ilii³¹, contains what I believe to be Dickie's main argument. This is an indirect attack on formalism. Overtly, he attacks a target he had come to associate with formalism: the concept of the 'aesthetic' in art. He does this, as Carroll has shown, in order to prepare the ground for his own Institutional Theory, which, unlike formalism, emphasised the importance of the supposedly extrinsic (institutional) properties of artworks, as opposed to their supposedly intrinsic (aesthetic) properties. Although section Ilii contains very cogent arguments against some dogmas of modernist formalism, this chapter will argue that Dickie's arguments nevertheless fail to disprove the existence of the *aesthetic attitude*. First, we need to look at Dickie's treatment of 'disinterestedness'.

2.2.2.1 Attending 'Disinterestedly'

Dickie begins Ili by quoting Stolnitz's definition of the 'aesthetic attitude' as:

... "disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone"³².

Note Stolnitz's use of language. The words 'sympathetic', 'contemplation', 'for its own sake alone', have been chosen in order to evoke the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude. Dickie then quotes Stolnitz's explanations of key terms:

... "disinterested" means "no concern for any ulterior purpose"; "sympathetic" means "accept the object on its own terms to appreciate it"; and "contemplation" means "perception directed toward the object in its own right and the spectator is not concerned to analyze it or ask questions about it"³³.

Stolnitz's gloss on 'sympathetic' and 'contemplation' emphasises the intensity of perceptual engagement required for the aesthetic attitude. However, this aspect is ignored by Dickie, who comments only on the definition Stolnitz gives for

²⁹ *Loc. Cit.*

³⁰ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) pp. 57-60.

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 61-4.

³² *Ibid.* p. 57.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 58.

‘disinterestedness’. Dickie comments that an apparent *perceptual* difference (‘interested’ or ‘disinterested’) is, in fact, a *motivational* difference: i.e. with or without an ‘*ulterior purpose*’ (my Italics). This leads Dickie to his famous thought experiment involving Jones and Smith, the first listening to some music for an exam (i.e. *with an ulterior purpose*, hence supposedly *not* in the ‘aesthetic attitude’, according to Stolnitz) and the second, Smith, who listens ‘with no such ulterior purpose’. Dickie claims that, though the men might well have different *motives*, their *actions*, listening to the music, are identical:

There is only one way to *listen* to (to attend to) music, although the listening may be more or less attentive and there may be a variety of motives, intentions, and reasons for doing so and a variety of ways of being distracted from the music³⁴ (Dickie’s Italics).

This chapter will challenge the claim that there is only one way to listen to music.

Dickie then imagines someone who supposedly gives an *interested* response to a portrait, in that it reminds him of his grandfather, triggering a description of the older man’s exploits as a pioneer. Dickie finds it easy to dismiss this example (his own) as an obvious case of ‘distraction’ or ‘inattention’. In the same way, he dismisses as ‘inattention’ the case of someone who allows his mind to wander while reading a poem³⁵.

Next, Dickie discusses J. O. Urmson’s example of ‘aesthetic satisfaction’, contrasted with ‘economic, moral’ and other ‘satisfactions’. Seated in a theatre is the play’s impresario who is thinking about the ‘economic satisfaction’ of a full house. To Dickie, this and other examples are merely cases of ‘inattention’: thinking about the box office, or a visiting stage manager concentrating on the scenery movement, rather than attending to the play itself. Dickie offers another example, of a playwright attending an out-of-town performance of his own play with a view to making revisions. Dickie claims that, despite the playwright’s ulterior motives, his *attention* to the play would be no different from that of other theatre-goers.

Let us now assess Dickie’s arguments in section IIi. In some cases, his analysis is correct: Urmson’s impresario was thinking about money rather than attending to the play. However, Dickie’s visiting stage manager is surely ‘attending closely’, but his attention will differ from that of the average theatre-goer. This is not a straightforward

³⁴ *Loc.Cit.*

³⁵ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 60; this example is taken from Eliseo Vivas.

case of ‘inattention’; it is a case of a different *kind* of attention, which leads to Dickie’s example from Eliseo Vivas, of ‘disinterested’ or ‘interested’ readings of literature. For Vivas an *interested* approach is ‘nonaesthetic’:

By approaching a poem in a nonaesthetic mode it may function as history, as social criticism, as diagnostic evidence of the author’s neuroses and in an indefinite number of other ways³⁶.

The use of the word ‘nonaesthetic’ for the quality of attention is the obverse of Sibley’s use of the term for the properties in the artwork, which he contrasts with its ‘aesthetic properties’, as will be discussed in section 2.4.4, below. However, for Vivas, for a poem to be read in an *aesthetic* way, means adopting the *aesthetic attitude*, and Dickie quotes Vivas’ definition of this:

. . . an experience of rapt attention which involves the intransitive apprehension of an object’s immanent meanings and values in their full presentational immediacy³⁷.

Dickie seizes on the word ‘intransitive’, and asks what it would mean to read a poem ‘transitively’. Dickie thinks the meaning becomes clearer with the following passage from Vivas:

Having once seen a hockey game in slow motion, I am prepared to testify that it was an object of pure intransitive experience [attention] - for I was not *interested* in which team won the game and no external factors mingled with my interest in the beautiful rhythmic flow of the slow-moving men³⁸ (Dickie’s gloss and Italics).

Dickie concludes that ‘intransitive attention’ for Vivas means the same as ‘disinterested attention’ for Stolnitz: i.e. ‘for no ulterior purpose’³⁹. For Dickie, the ‘purpose’ should be immaterial; there is only ‘one way’ to listen to music (as with Jones and Smith) or one way to watch a hockey game. However, the most striking feature of Vivas’ definition of the aesthetic attitude and description of the hockey is the language in which he tries to communicate their phenomenology, describing them as different from simple ‘attention’. Again, Dickie ignored this phenomenological dimension, and moves

³⁶ Quoted by Dickie, *Ibid.* p. 59.

³⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Loc. Cit.*

quickly on to ‘transitive’ readings of poetry, which he treats as instances of ‘distraction’:

As deplorable as such a sustained practice [reading a poem as history] may be, it is at best a case of attending to certain features of a poem and ignoring others⁴⁰.

However, this is surely to concede the existence of different ‘states of mind’ depending on what is attended to. To Vivas’ example of reading a poem ‘*simply* as history’ (i.e. ‘non-aesthetically’) Dickie replies:

But even this meaning does not mark out a special kind of attention but rather means that only a single aspect of a poem is being noticed and that its rhyme, meter, and so on are ignored⁴¹.

This is a self-contradiction. To ‘notice’ one aspect rather than another is, indeed, to give it ‘a special kind of attention’. Thus Dickie contradicts his own claim that there is only ‘attention’ or ‘inattention’. To attend to ‘rhyme, meter and so on’ is to give ‘a special kind of attention’ to the *sensory qualities* of a poem rather than to its *historical content*.

Despite this self-contradiction, Dickie maintains that ‘ . . . “disinterestedness” or “intransitiveness” cannot properly be used to refer to a special kind of attention⁴²’.

Instead, he claims that all his examples fall into one of two groups; first, where there are ulterior motives, and second where there is inattention. Dickie claims that ulterior motives make no difference to the quality of attention, as with the music-listeners Jones and Smith. Similarly, distraction reduces the degree, but not the character of attention, as with the jealous husband⁴³. For Dickie, none of his examples demonstrates anything to justify invoking an ‘aesthetic attitude’, and the term ‘disinterestedness’ applies only to motives or judicial matters, not to the phenomenology of attention. All Dickie will admit is that attention can be ‘more or less *close*⁴⁴’ (interestingly, a ‘proximity’ metaphor, as opposed to Bullough’s ‘distancing’ metaphor).

Section IIIi has therefore given rise to another two questions which the argument so far has enabled us to answer in the negative (marked with an asterisk):

⁴⁰ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 60.

⁴¹ *Loc. Cit.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See the discussion of ‘distancing’ in section 2.2.1, above.

⁴⁴ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 60.

*IIiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

*IIiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’?

These two questions were linked. If Dickie were correct or incorrect in one, the same would apply to the other. I have answered both questions in the negative, by challenging Dickie’s analyses of his own examples of a) the visiting stage manager and b) the reader of poetry solely for historical information. As far as question IIiA is concerned, though both the stage manager and reader of poetry for history are motivated to ‘attend closely’ to the artworks, neither has adopted the ‘aesthetic attitude’, because they have not, in Bullough’s terms, ‘changed gear’ or ‘distanced themselves’ from their ‘everyday’ outlook, in a way that would lead them to monitor their subjective responses to the sensory qualities of the artworks, and to introspect on the feelings and thoughts engendered by the play’s action or the ‘sound’ of the poem’s words and their meanings. Dickie’s claim in IIiB is proved wrong because both respondents *are* attending *closely*, though ‘non-aesthetically’.

Now it is time to consider what I believe to be the true motivation for Dickie’s challenge to the aesthetic attitude: his claim that it misleads aesthetics.

2.2.2.2 Why ‘Disinterested Attention’ Misleads Aesthetics

In the most cogent part of his paper, Dickie challenges the dogmas of Stolnitz’s version of formalism, as he prepares the way for a theory of art which aims to take greater account of the supposedly extrinsic (institutional), rather than the supposedly intrinsic (aesthetic) qualities of a work of art. However, Dickie again disguises his attack, so that it is not overtly about *formalism*, but nominally about ‘*disinterested attention*’. Dickie opens section IIii with this modification of his claim:

I have argued that the second way of conceiving the aesthetic attitude is also a myth, or at least that its main content - (disinterested attention) – is [a myth]⁴⁵;

Despite the title of his article, this is further evidence that Dickie believes the aesthetic attitude to be *real*! The true focus of his disbelief and criticism is ‘disinterested attention’, which, according to Dickie, misleads aesthetics in three ways:

⁴⁵ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 61.

(1) the way in which he [i.e. the attitude theorist] wishes to set the limits of aesthetic relevance; (2) the relation of the critic to the work of art; and (3) the relation of morality to aesthetic value⁴⁶.

Dickie's first concern is over the limits of 'aesthetic relevance'. Stolnitz asked: 'Is it ever "relevant" to the aesthetic experience to have thoughts or images or bits of knowledge which are not present within the object itself?'⁴⁷, and Stolnitz concludes that it can be relevant:

If the association [i.e. thought, image or bit of knowledge not present in the object] re-enforces the focusing of attention upon the object, by 'fusing' with the object and thereby giving it added 'life and significance,' it is genuinely aesthetic. If however, it arrogates attention to itself and away from the object, it undermines the aesthetic attitude⁴⁸. (My gloss on 'association')

Here Stolnitz reveals himself to have rejected the narrowest variety of formalism, which would have placed all the value upon the surface, 'plastic' features of the artwork. However, Stolnitz limits the relevance of supposedly extrinsic properties by stipulating that they must enhance the *formal* congruence of artworks, and Dickie argues convincingly and against Stolnitz, that *all* aspects of a work, including its meaning, are relevant to our response⁴⁹.

This paves the way for Dickie to emphasise the relevance of those 'institutional' factors that were later to structure his philosophy of art. His second and third criticisms of Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness are equally significant. They concern the relationship of both criticism and morality to art. Dickie quotes Stolnitz's view that, if anyone 'has the purpose of passing judgment upon [a work of art] his attitude is not aesthetic'⁵⁰. Dickie's summary of Stolnitz continues, including some verbatim quotations:

He [Stolnitz] develops this line at a later stage of his book, arguing that appreciation (perceiving with the aesthetic attitude) and criticism (seeking for reasons to support an evaluation of a work) are (1) distinct and (2) "psychologically opposed to each other." The critical attitude is questioning, analytical, probing for strengths and weakness, and so on. The aesthetic attitude is just the opposite: "It commits our allegiance to the object freely and

⁴⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

⁴⁷ Quoted by Dickie, *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Dickie writes: 'The problem is perhaps best described as the problem of relevance . . . more generally, to a work of art, rather than aesthetic relevance'. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Quoted by Dickie, *Ibid.*

unquestioningly”; “the spectator ‘surrenders’ himself to the work of art.” “Just because the two attitudes are inimical, whenever criticism obtrudes, it reduces aesthetic interest”⁵¹.

Dickie’s explanation for this apparently rigid separation of ‘appreciation’ from ‘criticism’ lies in Stolnitz’s concept of disinterestedness, as having ‘no concern for any ulterior purpose’. The act of engaging with art in order to write criticism would indeed appear to involve an ulterior purpose. As Dickie says, Stolnitz, ‘confuses a perceptual distinction with a motivational one’⁵². According to Stolnitz’s definition of disinterestedness, an analytical and evaluative response to an artwork cannot be an ‘aesthetic’ one, whereas he would surely have to acknowledge that if criticism is to be at all illuminating, it must also incorporate something from the critic’s *aesthetic* response to the work. Dickie then explains how this can be done, drawing upon his own experience as a post-film-projection panellist. Far from detracting from his enjoyment, he found that having to prepare his comments helped him to focus more ‘perceptively and acutely’, enabling him to ‘appreciate things about the films I was watching which ordinarily out of laziness I would not have noticed’⁵³. However, it will be argued later in this chapter that Stolnitz’s use of language reveals an intuitive awareness of some kind of phenomenological distinction between critical, analytical thought about an artwork, and a more sensory, appreciative, ‘surrendering . . . freely and unquestioningly’⁵⁴ to it. It will be argued that this distinction corresponds to a real difference between two kinds of brain function, often expressed in the (admittedly short-hand) terms of ‘left-brain’ and ‘right-brain’ function. This topic will be addressed after this chapter’s look at empirical evidence. This could be expressed as the ‘Appreciation versus Criticism’ claim (AvC):

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states.

Dickie’s third criticism of the limitations placed on aesthetics by Stolnitz’s model of ‘disinterestedness’ concerns the place of morality in art, and again he quotes Stolnitz directly:

⁵¹ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) pp. 61-2.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁵³ *Loc. Cit.*

⁵⁴ Quoted by Dickie, *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 61.

‘Any of us might reject a novel because it seems to conflict with our moral beliefs . . . When we do so . . . We have *not* read the book aesthetically, for we have interposed moral . . . responses of our own which are alien to it. This disrupts the aesthetic attitude. We cannot then say that the novel is *aesthetically* bad, for we have not permitted ourselves to consider it aesthetically. To maintain the aesthetic attitude, we must follow the lead of the object and respond in concert with it⁵⁵. (Dickie’s ellipses)

Dickie criticises this view, because:

This conception of the aesthetic attitude functions to hold the moral aspects and the *aesthetic* aspects of the work of art firmly apart⁵⁶. (Dickie’s italics).

Here, again, Dickie inadvertently confirms his hidden assumption that the aesthetic attitude is a reality, contradicting his title, which claims it is a ‘myth’. His criticism is of ‘this conception of the aesthetic attitude’ (my underlining and italics). If his reservations are about *this* [formalist] *conception* of the aesthetic attitude, then it can only mean that he can conceive of a *different* conception of it. Dickie is probably correct in articulating Stolnitz’s reasoning in the following lines:

. . . the moral aspects of a work of art cannot be an object of aesthetic attention because aesthetic attention is by definition disinterested and the moral aspects are somehow practical (interested)⁵⁷. (Dickie’s parentheses)

That would accord with one of Kant’s stipulations for disinterestedness in judgments of taste⁵⁸. However, Dickie’s response to Stolnitz is surely correct, when he protests that:

. . . a work’s moral vision is a *part* of the work. Thus, any statement – descriptive or evaluative – about the work’s moral vision is a statement about the *work*; and any statement about a *work* is a critical statement and, hence, falls within the aesthetic domain⁵⁹. (Dickie’s italics)

This is one of the reasons Dickie gives for the ‘vacuousness’ of the term ‘aesthetic’, when it is used in a way which:

. . . segregates certain aspects or parts of works of art such as formal and stylistic aspects from such aspects as a work’s moral vision⁶⁰.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 63.

⁵⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

⁵⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

⁵⁸ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §4, Ak 207-8, pp. 48-9.

⁵⁹ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 64.

⁶⁰ *Loc. Cit.*

Thus, Dickie has made an effective move in an ultimately successful campaign to free analytical aesthetics from formalism. Paradoxically, by securing for the word ‘aesthetic’ a wider meaning than it had had in Stolnitz, Dickie in fact undermined his own professed aim, to suggest the ‘vacuousness of the term “aesthetic”’⁶¹.

Dickie, therefore, dismisses Stolnitz’s treatment of a) the effect of criticism upon aesthetic experience, and b) the place of morality in art. Dickie correctly attributes both problems to Stolnitz’s understanding of the concept of ‘disinterestedness’. However, it will be argued in this thesis that Dickie was wrong to assume that Stolnitz’s view of disinterestedness was the only possible, or even the standard interpretation of that concept. This mistake leads Dickie to overstate the achievement of his paper, when he claims he has proved that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ means no more than ‘simply attending (closely)’⁶² (Dickie’s brackets). Dickie’s claim has been challenged at several points in the present chapter, but these challenges will need to be consolidated a) by comparing the models of ‘disinterestedness’ as characterised by Dickie and Stolnitz’ against eighteenth century accounts (both in this chapter and in chapter five) and b) by looking for empirical evidence for both disinterestedness and the aesthetic attitude (in this chapter and in chapters six and seven).

To conclude: in section Iii, Dickie has revealed that there are shortcomings in the characterisation of disinterestedness by Stolnitz, who was strongly influenced by formalism. Stolnitz 1) underestimated the aesthetic relevance of factors considered by formalists as extrinsic to the art object, and 2) believed ‘criticism’ and ‘appreciation’ to be incompatible and 3) separated critical and moral judgments. Having revealed these shortcomings, Dickie goes on to claim that he has thereby nullified, if not disproved, the aesthetic attitude by ‘purging’ it of ‘disinterestedness’⁶³. However, he could only rightly claim to have achieved that if Stolnitz’s version of ‘disinterestedness’ were definitive. This gives us our first question for section Iii:

IiiiA Is Dickie correct in his assumption that Stolnitz’s interpretation of disinterestedness is the definitive version of that concept?

To answer that will require research into earlier models of ‘disinterest’ in aesthetics, a task to be begun in section 2.3, on Hume, and to be continued in chapter five, on Kant.

⁶¹ *Loc. Cit.*

⁶² *Loc. Cit.*

⁶³ *Loc. Cit.*

Paradoxically, Dickie argued for two incompatible views. First, he argued as if he accepted Stolnitz's word that disinterestedness is a *necessary condition* for the aesthetic attitude. Secondly, he also argued that the aesthetic attitude is itself a 'myth'. This gives us our last question:

IiiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

That question will need to be considered, as the thesis progresses, in the light of both eighteenth century aesthetics and empirical evidence.

2.2.3 Dickie's Arguments: Summary and Conclusion

This survey of Dickie's arguments against 'disinterestedness' and the 'aesthetic attitude' is now complete. Dickie's first attack was on the metaphor of 'distancing', which he characterised as the 'strong' version of the aesthetic attitude. Although I accepted Dickie's interpretation of some examples as cases of inattention, such as the jealous husband, I argue that in some other cases, the metaphor of 'distancing' describes a *real*, not a *phantom* 'state of consciousness'.

I have argued that, despite the title of his paper, Dickie failed to prove the aesthetic attitude to be a 'myth', and that his article is partial and incoherent. It is partial because he is working to an anti-formalist agenda, so that he ignored or discounted phenomenological evidence for the aesthetic attitude. It is incoherent, because he claims the 'aesthetic attitude' is a 'myth', while in section III he accepted its existence in the deflationary form: 'attending (closely)⁶⁴'. Although he poured scorn on the 'vacuousness' of that definition, this chapter will argue that 'attending (closely)' describes an important aspect of the aesthetic attitude, though it is not a complete account.

However, it was found that Dickie's criticisms of Stolnitz's model of 'disinterestedness' were justified, creating a good case against some of the claims of formalism. However, Dickie's assumption was not accepted, that the disproof of Stolnitz's account of 'disinterestedness' also disproved the existence of the aesthetic attitude. This was not accepted because Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness was flawed. There are other interpretations of disinterestedness, for example from eighteenth

⁶⁴ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 64.

century aesthetics. Also, other approaches to the aesthetic attitude, such as the biological, need to be considered. This chapter will start to examine both, beginning with an example from eighteenth century aesthetics.

2.3 Hume: An Eighteenth Century View of Issues Raised by Dickie

We can recognise descriptions of what came to be known as the ‘aesthetic attitude’ in the writings of David Hume (1711-1776), when he gives testimonial evidence for aesthetic judgment and the way this involves adopting a mental set⁶⁵, including ‘disinterestedness’.

First of all, it is clear that Hume, *contra* Stolnitz and *pro* Dickie, accepts the compatibility of criticism with appreciation; for him criticism is an unavoidable part of judgments of taste. First there must be refinement and sensitivity, which Hume calls *delicacy*⁶⁶, and his model is the wine tasting story from *Don Quixote*, where the palate of one connoisseur can detect a taint of iron, while another could taste a hint of leather, in an otherwise excellent vintage. At the bottom of the casket was found an old key on a leather thong. From this, Hume concludes:

The great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will teach us to apply this story . . .
. . . a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste; nor can a man be satisfied with himself while he suspects, that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved⁶⁷.

Thus, attaining full aesthetic satisfaction entails a process of criticism for Hume, who anticipates T. S. Eliot’s *dictum*, that, ‘criticism is as inevitable as breathing⁶⁸’. Hume places equal value upon identifying blemishes and noting excellences. This provides us with some negative evidence regarding claim AvC:

⁶⁵ Hume is relevant to the following questions arising from our reading of Dickie:

- IIiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?
- IIiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’?
- IIIiA Is Dickie correct in his assumption that Stolnitz’s interpretation of disinterestedness is the only version of that concept?
- IIIiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

⁶⁶ David Hume (1757) “Of the Standard of Taste”, Reprinted in Alex Neill, and Aaron Ridley (Eds) *Op. Cit.* (1995) (pp. 254-68), pp. 260-1.

⁶⁷ *Loc. Cit.* p. 260.

⁶⁸ T. S. Eliot (1919) “Tradition and the Individual Talent” reprinted in Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley *Op. Cit.* (1995) (pp. 53-9) p. 54.

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states.

To harness this delicacy of taste to a critical faculty requires a process, which Hume describes, giving us a clear description of the phenomenology of what later would be called the 'aesthetic attitude':

When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty⁶⁹.

The novice, who has not learned to adopt the aesthetic attitude, will be unsure of how to respond to and evaluate an artwork:

But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality . . . The mist dissipates, which seemed formerly to hang over the object . . . In a word, the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it⁷⁰.

Even the experienced critic might need time to peruse a new work before its excellences and blemishes become fully apparent:

There is a flutter or hurry of thought which attends the first perusal of any piece, and which confounds the genuine sentiment of beauty. The relation of the parts is not discerned: The true characters of style are little distinguished: The several perfections and defects seem wrapped up in a species of confusion, and present themselves indistinctly to the imagination. Not to mention, that there is a species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first; but being found incompatible with a just expression either of reason or passion, soon palls upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value⁷¹.

Hume sees comparison with other works as an inevitable part of this process, anticipating T.S.Eliot's description of how the entry of a new talent forces us to re-evaluate earlier artistic achievements within the tradition⁷². In this way, Hume has anticipated the emphasis on history usually attributed to Hegel and his followers, and

⁶⁹ David Hume *Op. Cit.* (1757; 1995 Edn.) p. 259.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 261-2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 262.

⁷² T. S. Eliot *Op. Cit.* (1919; 1995 edn.) p. 55.

then claimed two centuries later as an innovation by Institutional and Historical Theorists⁷³. To Hume, the historical perspective is integral to any critical response:

One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius⁷⁴.

That this is not an ‘ahistorical’ evaluation, based mainly on formal considerations, is indicated by his rhetorical question, ‘Must we throw aside the pictures of our ancestors, because of their ruffs and farthingales?’ The context was the need, in judgments of taste, to avoid ‘prejudice’, which is how Hume couches his further discussion of disinterestedness. Mary Mothershill points out, however, that the avoidance of prejudice for Hume has its limits where morality affects the arts, quoting this passage from the same essay:

But where the ideas of morality and decency alter from one age to another, and where vicious manners are described without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation, this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments; and however I may excuse the poet on account of the manners of his age, I can never relish the composition⁷⁵.

Once again, Dickie’s assumption⁷⁶ that Stolnitz’s interpretation of disinterestedness constituted the definitive account of the concept, necessarily excluding criticism and morality from the aesthetic attitude, has now been disproved. Hume described the focusing of attention described by Dickie, but shows that this involves more than simply ‘attending (closely)’, for example making comparisons with other works (further disproving Dickie’s claims in *IiiA and *IiiB⁷⁷). Thus Dickie was wrong to treat Stolnitz’ interpretation of ‘disinterestedness’ as definitive⁷⁸. However, in the respondent’s need to clear the mind and focus on the artwork, Hume gives support for

⁷³ See section 3.3, below.

⁷⁴ *Op. Cit.* p. 262.

⁷⁵ Quoted by Mary Mothershill (1998) “Hume, David: ‘Of the Standard of Taste’” in Michael Kelly, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* Oxford, OUP, (4 Volumes) (Vol. 2, pp. 428-433) p. 432.

⁷⁶ In question IiiA: Is Dickie correct in his assumption that Stolnitz’s interpretation of disinterestedness is the only version of that concept?

⁷⁷ IiiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

IiiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’?

⁷⁸ Question IiiA, again; see footnote 76, above.

an affirmative answer to question IliiB: ‘Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?’

This initial foray into eighteenth century aesthetics will suffice at this juncture to demonstrate Dickie’s limited historical overview. We must now begin to test Dickie’s claims about the aesthetic attitude against empirical, biological, evidence.

2.4 Some Empirical Evidence for the ‘Aesthetic Attitude’

Until now, the approach in this chapter has been argumentative: enquiring into the nature of Dickie’s strategic move within philosophical aesthetics, examining his arguments for consistency and identifying his evasions over the phenomenology of the aesthetic. A pattern emerged of Dickie repeatedly ignoring the contradictory testimonial evidence provided by his antagonists. He minimises the significance of this evidence, as when he characterises as ‘vacuous’ Vivas’ description of the aesthetic attitude (‘attending closely’).

The aim of this section is to take seriously the testimonial evidence Dickie chose to ignore, and to enquire whether there is today any empirical evidence for the existence of the aesthetic attitude as a real, not a ‘phantom’, state of consciousness. This chapter will consult three sources. The first is the work of Jerry Fodor on the modularity of the mind. The second is the evidence of the laterality of brain function and the variable blood-flow to different regions of the brain, as researched by Roger W. Sperry and other neurologists, and applied by Betty Edwards to the teaching of drawing⁷⁹. I have practical experience of using her textbook to teach drawing to adults who ‘think they can’t draw’. The third source is Antonio Damasio, a neurologist whose research shows how our conscious experiences, including feelings, relate to the functioning of different parts of the brain⁸⁰. In chapter seven, further evidence for the aesthetic attitude will be adduced from cognitive neuroscience.

Because there is a range of sense modalities involved in aesthetic experience, I appreciate David Cooper’s suggestion that, instead of *the* aesthetic attitude, we should speak of ‘a motley of aesthetic attitudes⁸¹’. However, because I view the aesthetic

⁷⁹ Betty Edwards (1979) *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, (1993 UK paperback edition) London, Harper Collins.

⁸⁰ Antonio Damasio (1999) *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*, London, William Heinemann.

⁸¹ David E. Cooper (1992a) “Attitude, Aesthetic” in David E. Cooper (Ed.) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford, Blackwell, (pp. 23-7), p. 27. Semir Zeki expressed a similar view that each of the 30-

attitude as involving the intense inner ‘global’ monitoring of *all* feelings and thoughts, I shall continue to refer to ‘the aesthetic attitude’, in the singular.

The present review of empirical evidence for the aesthetic attitude begins with Fodor, who places his emphasis on the modularity of mind, rather than upon aesthetic experience. However, as we shall see both here and in chapter seven, recent research suggests that both the aesthetic attitude and aesthetic experience can be closely related to the function of individual brain modules and their interactions.

2.4.1 Fodor: modularity, creativity and communication⁸².

As already noted in section 1.3.2, above, Baumgarten presented the aesthetic as more or less synonymous with perception, and in so doing he was trying to push the aesthetic, interpreted as the *senses*, to the centre of epistemology. He wrote:

It is objected . . . that confusion⁸³ [i.e. the *sensory*] is the mother of errors. I reply that it is the *sine qua non* of discovering truth, without which nature could not make the leap from obscurity to distinctness. The growing light of dawn leads us from the darkness of night to the clarity of mid-day⁸⁴.

The exact relationship between ‘input systems’ and ‘central systems’ (to use Fodor’s terminology), or between the ‘Imagination’ and ‘Understanding’ (to use Kant’s), is still contested among philosophers and cognitive neuroscientists. Differing interpretations of how sensory experience relates to artistic response distinguish ‘deflationary’ accounts of the aesthetic from the account presented in this thesis, with the deflationists tending to minimise the aesthetic dimension, relative to social, institutional and historical factors. An attempt will be made to adjudicate upon this debate, using evidence from cognitive neuroscience.

odd visual processing modules imparts to consciousness its own distinctive aesthetic feeling, in his (1999a) *Inner Vision: an exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford, OUP, p. 87.

⁸² Jerry A. Fodor (1983) *Modularity of Mind: an Essay on Faculty Psychology*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

⁸³ As will be explained in Chapter 3, ‘confusion’ in Rationalist epistemology meant the ‘con-fusion’, or the ‘fusing together’ in perception of different properties which only science could separate and measure.

⁸⁴ My translation, from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1750/58; 2007 edn) *Aesthetika* reprinted in Latin as *Ästhetik* in 2 Volumes (Vol. 1 §§1-613) and (Vol. 2 §§1-614-904) with Translation into German, an Introduction, Notes and a Glossary, by Dagmar Mirbach, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, §7, p.14: *Obi. 5) Confusio mater erroris. Rsp. a) sed conditio, sine qua non, inveniendae veritatis, ubi natura non facit saltum ex obscuritate in distinctionem. Ex nocte per auroram meridies.*

Fodor postulated a taxonomy of three cognitive mechanisms which yield 'representations of the world' which 'co-vary' with changes in the world: 'transducers' (e.g. eyes), 'input systems' (e.g. visual cortex) and 'central systems' (e.g. thought-enablers)⁸⁵. In his description, the 'transducers' and the 'input systems' are 'encapsulated' and, to a great extent, removed from conscious control. On the other hand, Fodor describes the 'central systems' of semantic knowledge and thought as free-ranging, and 'unencapsulated'⁸⁶. The central systems look at what the input systems deliver, consult memory and come up with the 'best hypothesis'⁸⁷. Their workings are both 'isotropic' and 'Quinean'. In an isotropic system, anything known can be put to work, whereas a Quinean system is 'sensitive to the properties of an entire belief system'⁸⁸. I would claim that these isotropic and Quinean patterns operate in thought experiments, in generating and understanding metaphor and, of course, in the arts. Thought is not confined to abstract reasoning, but can dig 'top-down' into the store of sensory memory and harness the sense-based powers of the imagination⁸⁹. When the discoverers of Buxminsterfullerene came up with the formula 'C₆₀' for an allotrope of Carbon, the visual memory of Fuller's geodesic domes popped into consciousness, to explain the carbon-bond structure⁹⁰. When Albert Einstein imagined his tram in Berne travelling away from the clock tower at the speed of light, 'freezing' the image of the clock's dial, his *visualised* thought experiment demonstrated, *contra* Newton, that time is not *absolute*⁹¹. When Baumgarten offers Campanella's definition of 'fever' as, 'the war instigated against disease by the powerful force of the spirit'⁹², an *intensively*⁹³ *abstract* concept is made '*extensively clearer*', through the sensory, visualising power of metaphor.

Arthur C. Danto compared the structure of metaphors to that of artworks:

⁸⁵ Jerry A. Fodor *Op. Cit.* (1983) pp. 38-9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 104.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 105.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 105-7.

⁸⁹ Fodor, *Ibid.* p. 54, expresses doubts about the claims of painters and phoneticians to get, 'raw transducer output'. However, I believe there is evidence in their favour, which will be presented, later.

⁹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allotropes_of_carbon#Buckminsterfullerenes.

⁹¹ http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/ideas/2311_einstein.html.

⁹² Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735; 1954 edn.) *Reflections on Poetry*, with an Introduction, Notes, and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, §21, pp. 45-6.

⁹³ The term 'intension' refers to the meaning of a word, and 'extension' to the objects in the world which are referenced by that word, corresponding to the distinction between *connotation* and *denotation*. See A. W. Sparkes (1991) *Talking Philosophy: a wordbook*, London, Routledge, pp. 56-7.

... they do not merely represent subjects, but properties of the mode of representation itself must be a constituent in understanding them. It is, after all, a commonplace that every metaphor is a little poem. By dint of the features we have identified, metaphors are minor works of art⁹⁴.

Collingwood is prepared to push the aesthetic even further back, to a child's second cry, which is:

... deliberately uttered to call attention to its needs and to scold the person to whom it seems addressed for not attending to them. [This] cry is still a mere cry; it is not yet speech; but it is language. It stands in a new relation to the child's experience as a whole. It is a child aware of itself and asserting itself. With that utterance language is born; its articulation into fully developed speech in English or French or some other vernacular is only a matter of detail⁹⁵.

For Collingwood, that cry is not only the beginning of language, but also of art, for he shortly goes on to declare that: 'Every utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art'⁹⁶. This coupling of *sensory stimulation* (or its re-activation in the brain) with *cognition*, and their fit with *action theory* provides the ontological framework for the present account of art, derived from action theory, including the background concepts of speech acts, in the work of Gregory Currie and John Searle, to be described and discussed in section 3.6, below.

2.4.2 Sperry and Edwards: Left Brain, Right Brain and Learning to Draw

Young children seem to be in immediate contact with their aesthetic experience, and their responses are transparent and spontaneous (See Plate 3). In the early years, children are uninhibited artists; they draw, they act out dramas and make up stories. Betty Edwards describes how children learn to be more guarded and self-critical by the age of about eleven to thirteen⁹⁷. In our culture, this is the age at which many decide they are 'no good at art', and stop drawing for pleasure. The change may be related to the gradual loss of plasticity in the brain, as the different sense modules mature and consolidate their specialised functions, perhaps becoming more isolated laterally and

⁹⁴ Arthur C. Danto (1981) *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: a philosophy of art*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, p. 189.

⁹⁵ R. C. Collingwood (1938) *The Principles of Art*, Oxford, OUP, p. 236.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 285.

⁹⁷ Betty Edwards *Op. Cit.* (1979; 1983 edn.) Ch. 5, "Drawing on Memories, Your History as an Artist".

more integrated vertically (more encapsulated, according to Fodor's model⁹⁸; see section 2.4.1, above). One of the main processes in brain maturation is the stripping out of the connectivity between regions of the brain, which is at its maximum at birth⁹⁹, when, for example, the visual and auditory centres are linked together. Regions of the brain gradually lose their interconnections, but not totally, as we all remain to some extent synaesthetic, as the senses continue work in concert, not in isolation. Vision, for example, is heavily influenced by knowledge acquired through touch¹⁰⁰. Also there are cross-modal illusions, where lip-reading can change the perceived sound of a phoneme, from 'pa' to 'ka'¹⁰¹. Without some degree of synaesthesia, metaphors would be incomprehensible, and poetry colourless. This theory of brain connectivity, as described by Vilayanur Ramachandran in his 2003 BBC Reith Lectures¹⁰², now provides an explanation for experimentally identifiable synaesthetes, many of whom experience sounds with both auditory and colour sensations, apparently through having retained more of the infantile interconnections than others of more normal maturation¹⁰³.

The next piece of evidence comes from the work of Betty Edwards, who developed a method for teaching drawing, influenced by Roger W. Sperry, who won a Nobel prize in 1981 for his research into brain laterality. The subjects of his experiments were patients with so-called 'split brains', where the *corpus callosum*, had

⁹⁸ The maturational process is described in Colwyn Trevarthen's (1987a) entry on "Brain Development" in R. L. Gregory (Ed.) (1987) *Oxford Companion to the Mind*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 101-110. However, any adverse effect of this maturation on artistic development is my own speculation, as is my link with Fodor's theory in this context. I am referring to Jerry A. Fodor *Op. Cit.* (1983) pp. 104-7.

⁹⁹ Colwyn Trevarthen *Op. Cit.* (1987a). Fig. 3, p. 107: the caption reads: "The corpus callosum [linking the hemispheres] has a maximum number of fibres at birth (approximately 10¹⁰) but increases in size by fibre thickening, and myelin deposition, after a majority are lost in early infancy".

¹⁰⁰ Richard L. Gregory, contributor to 'Perception and the Senses', the 28 April 2005 edition of *In Our Time*, presented by Melvyn Bragg, with fellow contributors David Moore and Gemma Calvert, at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20050428.shtml.

¹⁰¹ David Moore gives this example in the same edition of *In Our Time*, as referenced in the previous footnote. This is known as the 'McGurk' effect.

¹⁰² The Reith Lectures 2003 "The Emerging Mind" by Vilayanur S. Ramachandran. Still available to "listen again": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lectures.shtml>.

¹⁰³ Other links experienced by synaesthetes are between numbers and colours, and more rarely, between words and tastes and smells. A report, posted on the internet, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4375977.stm>, states that scientists at the University of California San Diego believe that, 'This cross-wiring might develop . . . by a failure of the "pruning" of nerve connections between the areas [for processing different sensory information] as the brain develops . . .'. The second page of the article cites Vilayanur Ramachandran's well-known view that processes similar to synaesthesia might also underlie our general capacity for metaphor and might be essential to creativity. He is quoted as saying that, "It is not an accident that the condition [of synaesthesia] is eight times more common among artists than the general population".

previously been cut¹⁰⁴, thus separating the left and right hemispheres in order to reduce the violence of their epileptic seizures. These subjects revealed more about the specialisation of function in each hemisphere than can be observed in ordinary cases of brain trauma. Specialist structures are already present as anatomical asymmetries in the foetal brain at 24 weeks, apparently in preparation for linguistic specialisation (in the left hemisphere), and for the perception of form and ‘visuo-constructive skills’ (in the right)¹⁰⁵. In Sperry’s experiments, the left and right hemispheres could occasionally be seen to compete over a task, even to the point of one hand wrestling the other in an attempt to seize control. The relevance of this research to the aesthetic lies in three phenomena: 1) modes of thinking, 2) hemisphere dominance and 3) cerebral blood-flow. Edwards quotes Sperry on his split-brain experiments:

The main theme to emerge . . . is that there appear to be two modes of thinking, verbal and nonverbal, represented rather separately in left and right hemispheres, respectively, and that our educational system, as well as science in general, tends to neglect the nonverbal form of intellect¹⁰⁶.

As a result of our extended ‘left brain’ educational experience, perhaps, the left hemisphere, with its verbal and arithmetical-mathematical reasoning¹⁰⁷ becomes dominant in most of us, most of the time. However, in the joyous, sensuous play of early childhood, most of us also acquire sufficient visual-spatial ‘right-brain’ skills to perform adequately in our physical and cultural environments, before the brain modules involved fall into relative neglect, until reactivated in moments of peak experience, including contact with nature and engagement with the arts, sports and tasks with an aesthetic dimension.

A caveat is needed here, because subsequent research has shown that patterns of cerebral asymmetry are in fact rather more nuanced and variable than was at first believed following Sperry’s research. This makes the case for left-brain dominance less

¹⁰⁴ Betty Edwards gives an account of Sperry’s experiments, *Op. Cit.* (1979; 1983 edn.) pp. 26-32. The *corpus callosum* is a 10cm long commissure joining the cerebral hemispheres deep in the brain. According to *Gray’s Anatomy*, this enables the two hemispheres to act as one by the “transfer of information (including memorised data)”. See Williams, P.L. *et al.*, (1995) *Gray’s Anatomy: the Anatomical Basis of Medicine and Surgery* (38th Edition), Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone.pp. 1178-82.

¹⁰⁵ Colwyn Trevarthen, *Op. Cit.* (1987a). p. 108.

¹⁰⁶ Betty Edwards, *Op. Cit.* (1979; 1993 edn.) p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Geometrical/mathematical reasoning, on the other hand, is usually a ‘right-brain function’ (see Fig. 2).

clear-cut, and has revealed that, on average, the female brain is less asymmetrical than the male¹⁰⁸. Bearing this reservation in mind, the following table in Fig. 2 summarises Sperry's findings on hemisphere specialisation.

Left Hemisphere	Right Hemisphere
▪ Verbal ▪ Linguistic description ▪ Mathematical ▪ Sequential ▪ Analytical ▪ Direct link to 'consciousness'	▪ Almost non-verbal ▪ Musical ▪ Geometrical ▪ Spatial comprehension ▪ Temporal synthesis ▪ Link to 'consciousness'?

Fig. 2: Asymmetrical location of specialised brain functions
(from Gray's Anatomy¹⁰⁹)

Whatever the specific physical laterality in individuals, and this can vary, the pattern of separated functional areas is clear enough to enable us to speak, if only in short-hand, of 'left-brain' and 'right-brain' function. In Fig. 2, the question-mark following the 'link to consciousness' of the right-hemisphere implies that much of the information processed there remains unconscious in normal circumstances, which would imply the need for practice, as in musical or artistic training, to bring 'right-brain' activity more fully into consciousness. Hence practice, and study, as attempted by Jones in Dickie's thought experiment¹¹⁰, can help us to look and listen with more insight and appreciation.

It is at this point in the argument that the question of blood-flow within the brain becomes relevant. The brain's high level of metabolism is very expensive for the body to maintain. Although the brain comprises only about 2% of the body's weight, it receives 15% of the fresh blood from the heart, consumes 20% of the available oxygen¹¹¹ and 20% of the available glucose, even when at rest¹¹². In normal functioning, only limited regions of the brain can become active at any one time, and therefore the blood-flow within the brain is not equally distributed, but is directed, according to need, through rapidly dilating and constricting blood vessels, to the most active areas of the brain for any particular task. This process can be monitored more or

¹⁰⁸ P.L Williams. *et.al.*, *Op. Cit.*, (1995) "Cerebral Asymmetry", pp. 1183-6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1184.

¹¹⁰ See section 2.2.2.1, above.

¹¹¹ Sherwin B. Nuland (1997) *The Wisdom of the Body*, London, Chatto and Windus, p. 328.

¹¹² Susan Greenfield (1997) *The Human Brain: a guided tour*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, p. 28.

less in real time in fMRI scans¹¹³, though the phenomenon had already been observed, externally, in the nineteenth century¹¹⁴.

Sperry claimed that Western education has encouraged habitual 'left brain' thinking, and Betty Edwards' teaching method sets specific tasks intended to help adult students to harness their comparatively neglected visual-spatial skills to the task of drawing. That entails learning to divert blood-flow away from the dominant verbal 'left brain' to the right hemisphere. This shift, though not habitual in most adults, is possible because the brain circuits loosely referred to as 'right-brain' acquired in childhood the perceptual and manipulative skills needed for drawing, although these skills may have been neglected ever since. At first, it takes a struggle for adult drawing students to learn to suppress the (left) conceptual/verbal brain¹¹⁵. I have often witnessed this kind of a 'tug of war' between the hemispheres. Before students can improve their observational drawing, the 'left brain' has to 'relinquish control' to the 'right', enabling the 'right brain' to receive a sufficient supply of blood to accomplish the task. Plate 4a shows how concentrating on different aspects of the same visual stimulus activates different regions of the brain, and in so doing redirects the blood-flow. This refutes Dickie's claims that attention comprises only 'attention' or 'inattention', with no qualitative differences¹¹⁶. These differences are exemplified, as we shall see shortly, when a person enters right-brain mode, which reduces blood-flow to the left hemisphere, thereby suppressing the verbal/conceptual thought and the verbal/conceptual formulae of childish drawing, in favour of the perception needed to produce a sensitive observational drawing of a complex object.

¹¹³ Rita Carter (1998) *Mapping the Mind*, London, Weidenfield & Nicholson, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle (1994) *Images of Mind*, New York, Scientific American, (pp. 58-9) describe the case of Walter K., who had a congenital skull malformation, and whenever he opened his eyes, especially coming out of a darkened room, he reported a noise in his head. It was found that this was caused by an increase in blood-flow to his visual cortex, causing a *bruit*, which, with a stethoscope, was externally audible.

¹¹⁵ Betty Edwards sets specific tasks to help students become accustomed to the shift from left- to right-brain mode. The aim is to wrong-foot the verbal/conceptual side of the brain. One exercise involves turning an image to be copied through 180°, so that it is upside-down. This weakens the links to the verbal and cognitive, thus making the purely visual experience more accessible. See her *Op. Cit* (1979; 1983 edn.) Chapter Four, 'Crossing Over: Experiencing the Shift From Left to Right', pp. 45-59. See Plate 4a, in Appendix E.

¹¹⁶ Answering negatively the following questions arising from our analysis of Dickie:

IB: Is Dickie correct in his claim that 'distancing', 'under-distancing' and 'over-distancing' are 'phantom acts and states of consciousness', there being only 'attention' to an object, or 'inattention'?

IIiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

It is at this stage of the learning process that an unexpected dividend can be enjoyed. The act of inhibiting the verbal brain also silences for a while the voices of self-criticism, which usually assail students who have decided to try again to learn to draw, even though they feel they failed in the past. The room falls silent, and people experience the oceanic rapture of right-brain, non-verbal thinking. This kind of visual absorption is perhaps the origin of the concept of disinterestedness, and of descriptions of the aesthetic attitude, quoted, but otherwise discounted by Dickie, particularly Vivas' description of the hockey game in slow motion¹¹⁷. In some circumstances, it requires practice to make a voluntary, as opposed to a spontaneous, shift into 'right-brain' thinking. That is why adults who did not learn, through practice, to make the shift habitually before adolescence, find it requires conscious effort to learn, later. The old teaching method was for the apprentice artist to spend some years copying the master's drawings, like the young draughtsman in Chardin's painting (Plate 5). One way a teacher can help students to begin to make the shift at will, is to learn what the 'right-brain' mental state feels like, by setting a task that the 'left brain' alone cannot attempt. This makes it easier for control to pass over to the 'right brain'. Betty Edwards re-enforces this with an injunction to banish verbal thoughts. One of her preparatory exercises asks students to study two Japanese woodcuts: *Actor Dancing* and *Woman Dancer* (See Plate 4b). These show how art can ignite imaginative, 'right-brain' thinking. If we allow ourselves time to contemplate each image, we begin to 'hear' the percussive or mellifluous musical accompaniment of each dancer. 'Left brain' (rational, verbal) thinking could not achieve this, nor handle the visual response inspired by watching a high waterfall, or waves breaking on rocks; nor listening to music, which Schopenhauer considered the ultimate palliative for the trials of life¹¹⁸. With practice, it is possible to learn to induce at will such rapturous states of mind in contemplating the visual world¹¹⁹. With a little comic bathos, Betty Edwards conjures up, in the mind's eye, one of Leonardo's studies of drapery (See Plate 6) when she writes in one of her marginal asides:

In *The Doors of Perception*, Aldous Huxley described the effects of mescaline on his perception of ordinary things – in this instance, the folds of his grey flannel

¹¹⁷ Quoted by George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 59; see section 2.2.2.1, above.

¹¹⁸ Kai Hammermeister (2002) *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 117.

¹¹⁹ Edward Bullough believes that artists are "gifted" in achieving "distancing" (his term for adopting the aesthetic attitude) towards phenomena beyond "the usual subjects of Art", *Op. Cit.*, p. 302. I believe it is more a question of practice acquired through training or chance opportunity.

trousers. He saw the folds as “living hieroglyphs that stand in some peculiarly expressive way for the unfathomable mystery of pure living The folds of my gray flannel trousers were charged with ‘isness’.” Huxley continued: “What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescaline, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time¹²⁰.”

Rather than see it as a gift, I would agree with Betty Edwards that this change in mind-set can be learned, and her technique is to set students tasks that baffle the ‘left-brain’, thus encouraging ‘right-brain’ activity. This evidence would point us towards an affirmative answer to our fourth question in this section:

IIiiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

Another task set by Betty Edwards to baffle the left hemisphere, so that it cedes control to the right, is to copy, *upside-down*, a reproduction of Picasso’s portrait drawing of Igor Stravinsky¹²¹ (See Plate 7a). Students are told to refrain, while making the copy, from naming the parts of the body represented. As might be expected, the pre-course drawings of Edwards’ students A and B¹²² in Plate 7b (left) are similarly childish and ‘left-brain’ (conceptually dominated, or formulaic). In an experiment, their copies of the Picasso turned out very differently, although at a ‘beginner level’ their work had been comparable (See Plate 7b, right). Student A was asked to copy the drawing the ‘right way up’, making it easy for the left hemisphere to seize control, and impose its stereotypical visual/conceptual symbols for parts of the body, as learned in childhood. Student B, who had been tasked to keep the picture ‘upside-down’, and to avoid naming body parts, was able more effectively to ‘baffle and silence’ the ‘left brain’, enabling the ‘right-brain’ to undertake its visual-spatial task, with a much better outcome. John Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, gave an early description of just such a battle between cognition and vision, recently quoted extensively by John Onians in the Ruskin chapter of his recent book on ‘Neuroarthistory’¹²³.

It is not easy for adult students of drawing to establish such new habits of visual perception and manual skill. In my experience, one of the most difficult is to learn to see the spaces *between* or *around* objects as *discrete shapes*, and then to hold them in

¹²⁰ Betty Edwards *Op. Cit.* (1979; 1983 edn.) p. 88.

¹²¹ Picasso’s *Portrait of Igor Stravinsky* (1920), reproduced up-side-down, *Ibid.* p. 52.

¹²² All student drawings in Plate 7b are taken from *Ibid.* p. 54.

¹²³ John Onians (2007) *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven, Yale University Press, pp. 88-94.

short-term memory for long enough to be able to draw them. These shapes are known in studio jargon as ‘negative spaces’ (each marked by an ‘x’ in Plate 8a¹²⁴). Negative spaces include the shapes of bits of background, as in this diagram for beginners. They also include, for more advanced students, the gaps between items on a surface, such as the shapes of un-named tracts of skin, such as the spaces between the eyes, between the eye and the eyebrow, and so on. These are usually unnamed gaps between other, named, visual elements¹²⁵. They do not come ‘pre-packaged’ as items in the left brain’s word-bank. This verbal lacuna seems to make negative spaces, at first, very difficult to summon up into consciousness, where they can be mentally circumscribed, memorised and drawn. However, it is worthwhile persevering with this feat of mental gymnastics for two reasons. The first is that learning to see and then draw negative spaces helps to position landmark features in the correct relationship with each other. Secondly, it gives students another unexpected bonus: it can open their eyes to the ‘visual music’ of the beautiful forms of negative spaces, not only in the works of the old masters (Plate 8b), but also in the everyday world around them.

However, it would be an exaggeration to conclude that drawing and the aesthetic attitude are both entirely ‘right brain’ activities. It is clear from fMRI scans, that more than one part of the brain can be engaged in a task, and blood flow can be switched quickly from one part of the brain to another, while the ‘findings’ of the separate parts of the brain are somehow brought together in short term memory. It is here where words, previously banished by an act of will, can now be welcomed back to assist with the twin tasks of visual analysis and fleeting memorisation. The trick is to supply these nameless negative spaces with nicknames. As a drawing teacher, I might ask a student, “Can you see the *diamond-shaped* space between here and here?” as I point to a gap between elements in the visual array being drawn.

In one of the few scientific studies of the drawing process, the portrait artist Humphrey Ocean gave this commentary as he was drawing a portrait:

The shape you are putting down is always abstract. (. . .) That next rhomboid is the side of the nose – or it is an abstract shape. Each bit of the picture has to be able to exist in its own right. Even if there was none of the rest of the painting, if you put that bit down, it would work¹²⁶.

¹²⁴ The chair comes Betty Edwards *Op. Cit.* (1979; 1993 Edn) Fig. 7-19, p. 108; the ‘x’ letters were added by me.

¹²⁵ Named elements, like the upper lip, need to be ‘re-conceived’ as shapes to be drawn correctly.

¹²⁶ From the Concluding Remarks (Section 8) of a report posted on the internet by R. C. Miall and John Tchalenko (2001) “Eye Movements in Portrait Drawing” at

Using eye tracking equipment, it was found that, when drawing, the length of Ocean's fixed gaze directed at a detail of the model's face averaged about 1 second, twice that of novice artists (Plate 9a¹²⁷). When not engaged in drawing, Ocean's eye fixations returned to the average of about half a second. The most finished portrait drawing of the experiment is shown in Plate 9b. This shows the artist's clear mapping out of the negative spaces¹²⁸.

2.4.3 Sperry and Edwards: Discussion and Conclusion

What, then, are the conclusions from this preliminary excursion into brain anatomy and function? The first is to confirm our doubts about Dickie's claims in sections I and II of his article, that attention is a uniform, undifferentiated, state of mind¹²⁹. Empirical evidence now available indicates that the aesthetic attitude is a reality in that the qualities of mind experienced during a sensitive response to a natural object or work of art depend not only on the properties of the object, but also upon which areas of the subject's brain are prepared to engage and do in fact become engaged in the response. What I have been calling, in short-hand, 'right-brain thinking' appears to be partly a matter of learning to access more fully the early-stage processing of visual stimulation by the sensory modules of the brain. Fodor expresses doubts¹³⁰ about the claims of painters and phoneticians to be able to access this level of sensory awareness, but in my experience, this is what is required for people to learn to draw. I have

http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/drawing_cognition/portrait.htm. A shortened version of this Sci-art study appeared in *Leonardo* (2001), Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 35-40.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* (web posting), Fig 11.

¹²⁸ *Op. Cit.*, (web posting), Fig 12. A comparable study was carried out as part of the National Gallery's "Telling Time" millennium celebrations. This looked at the eye movements of people looking at paintings, to see whether artists of the past were successful, as is often assumed, in directing the gaze of viewers. The vast quantity of data collected has not yet been analysed to see if there is any difference between the way trained artists and other members of the public look at paintings (see http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/esri/applied-vision/projects/national_gallery/index.htm). Some other more general findings from the National Gallery project are briefly discussed in Andrew T Duchowski (2003) *Eye Tracking Methodology: Theory and Practice*, New York, Springer.

¹²⁹ This gives firm negative answers to questions IB, IliA and IliB:

IB: Is Dickie correct in his claim that 'distancing', 'under-distancing' and 'over-distancing' are 'phantom acts and states of consciousness', there being only 'attention' to an object, or 'inattention'?

IliA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

IliB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the 'aesthetic attitude' is a myth, because there is only 'attending' more or less 'closely'?

¹³⁰ Jerry A. Fodor *Op. Cit.*, (1983) p. 54.

observed that, until they attempted to draw an object using light and shade, some students had not learned voluntarily to bring to consciousness the pattern of highlights and shadows that constantly plays across objects. Hitherto they had seen objects *qua* objects, and only began to *notice* the way light gives three dimensional form to an object when they tried to *draw* it from observation. After all, Zeki would argue, the prime function of the brain is to pick out the *permanent characteristics* of objects against the ‘noise’ of such *fleeting contingencies*¹³¹.

The second conclusion is to confirm that Stolnitz’s claim of incompatibility between criticism (verbal/conceptual/left-brain thinking) and appreciation (non-verbal, ‘oceanic’, right-brain response) has received some support from observing the tug-of-war between the left and right hemispheres experienced by students of drawing, who can engage fully with some aspects of their visual perception only by relatively suppressing their language-dominated thinking. However, Dickie as film commentator, and Ocean as portrait artist, both learned the trick of switching rapidly between what we are calling ‘left-’ and ‘right-brain’ modes of perceptual engagement and thinking. Stolnitz detected, but over-stated, the divide between the two modes. A balanced appreciation of any artwork becomes less likely if one is locked into either left- or right-brain functioning. Jasper Johns argues for Stolnitz’s position, with his brick-shaped sculpture, *The Critic Sees* made in 1964, the same year as Dickie’s article, in which he modelled a pair of spectacles with talking mouths in place of eyes (See Plate 10). This goes a long way towards explaining the difficulty some people have with innovatory art, where their aesthetic experience is occluded by their linguistically articulated ‘rational’ objections to innovation. Children, with fewer preconceptions, are usually much more open to new or unconventional work, both in the visual arts and music. Therefore, the following claim, effectively contradicted by Hume in section 2.3 above, seems to acquire some credence from brain laterality, but must await further evidence:

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states.

The third conclusion is that, when we are learning anything, neural connections are strengthened between regions of the brain; in the case of learning to draw, perhaps, between the visual cortex, the motor cortex controlling the hand, nerves directing blood-

¹³¹ Semir Zeki (1999a) *Inner Vision: an exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford, OUP, p. 5. This view fits with Roger Fry’s distinction between the ‘imaginative life’ and the ‘actual life’, discussed in section 7.5, below).

flow and so forth. In order to accommodate the new demands being made on the brain, some neural patterns are weakened, others reinforced, and new connections grow, restoring some of the brain's connectivity lost in the maturational process¹³². This growing interconnectivity through learning seems to reduce the encapsulated modularity of the brain, which, in any case, is now known to be less rigid than Fodor at first believed¹³³. Not only is greater connectivity established 'vertically' in what Fodor called the 'input systems' (e.g. the visual cortex), but also within the 'central systems' linking concepts and different 'input systems'. Thus the perceptual skills acquired in learning to draw can impart a generally enhanced level of sensory and cognitive awareness and, not only towards art, but also towards ordinary life experiences.

I am not claiming that it is a necessary condition for this improving sensory (or even 'aesthetic') perceptiveness that it be acquired through practical activity, but there are indications that such learning can accelerate and in some ways deepen the process. For example, even a failed attempt to learn to play the piano can make one listen with more awareness to a performance of Chopin. Dickie was therefore wrong to claim, 'there is only one way to *listen* to (to attend to) music'¹³⁴. It is also clear that it is possible to learn to adopt the aesthetic attitude, simply by being an attentive member of the audience. David Hume had realised this, when he wrote that:

... the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it¹³⁵.

This acknowledges the powerful, but often unacknowledged, role of the perceptive patron, connoisseur or critic, a theme to which we shall return: the often overlooked Role of the Patron and Critic (RPC):

RPC Consider the role of the patron, critic and connoisseur of art.

We can conclude, therefore, that education and practice in aesthetic perception can help subjects to get more closely in touch with their feelings and perceptions. This

¹³² New dendritic growth in adulthood is still disputed by some scientists who insist on genetic determination. However Gray's Anatomy states: "There is some evidence that dendritic trees may be plastic structures throughout adult life, expanding and contracting as the traffic of synaptic activity varies through afferent axodendritic contacts (for review see Berry 1991)" (from "Dendrites" in P. L. Williams *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 922).

¹³³ See Jay L. Garfield (1994) "Modularity" in Samuel Guttenplan (Ed.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 441-8.

¹³⁴ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 58.

¹³⁵ David Hume *Op. Cit.* (1757; 1995 edn.) p. 262.

will not only increase the readiness and fluency with which they are able to adopt the aesthetic attitude towards objects of all kinds, but it has the potential to enhance their sensitivity and awareness in other aspects of their lives. This, of course, is one of the prime sources of value in the arts, and one of the main reasons for including the arts in education. Dickie's Jones and Smith thought experiment, designed to prove attention is 'on' or 'off', with no qualitative variation apart from degrees of inattention, therefore fails, as do its re-iterations by Noel Carroll¹³⁶.

We shall now consider another approach to the role of feelings and brain function.

2.4.4 Damasio: The Feeling of What Happens

In his book, *The Feeling of What Happens*¹³⁷, the neurologist Antonio Damasio explores the nature of consciousness and its basis in the brain, body and the emotions. Many of his case studies are of his own patients who have suffered brain trauma through accident or disease. Where bilateral lesions have occurred, the effect is to eliminate specific elements from consciousness.

The amygdalae aid survival and well-being by triggering a fear reaction, for example, causing us to leap back on to the pavement, automatically, when threatened by a passing bus of which we are unaware, until after the event. The amygdalae also operate in more subliminal ways. Damasio's patient S had lost the use of both of her amygdalae through calcification, and this led her, despite normal intelligence and learning ability, to be too trusting towards unsavoury characters¹³⁸. Damasio and his colleagues studied her deficit in a number of tests. One revealed that she had lost the ability to recognise the expression of *fear* in other people's faces, whereas she was able to recognise and even draw an expression of *surprise*. Another test presented her with a

¹³⁶ Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964) p. 58; Noel Carroll has 'Sydney and Evelyn' with pianist 'Jerome' in his *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 185-6; 'Oscar and Charles' in his (2001b) "Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience" in N. Carroll (2001a) *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, CUP, (pp. 41-62), pp. 48-9. In the latest version, Carroll stipulates that the brain computations of 'Charles and Oscar' in listening to the piece of music are 'type identical'. This is an impossible demand as all human beings have had different learning experiences which will give them different neural configurations. He claims the only differences between Oscar and Charles are differences in belief about the 'instrumental' or 'intrinsic' value of listening to music, making the one experience 'aesthetic' and the other 'non-aesthetic'. He has in effect abandoned the distinctions drawn by Dickie in 1964, and can only claim success for his argument by imputing an unrealistic position to those defending the aesthetic attitude. Clearly, Oscar and Charles have both adopted the aesthetic attitude, albeit with different motivations and beliefs.

¹³⁷ Antonio Damasio *Op. Cit.* (1999).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 62-7.

set of 100 portrait photographs, which had been rated for trustworthiness by a control group. Patient S agreed with the ratings of the trustworthy faces, but unlike patients with only one damaged amygdala, or members of the control group, she failed to identify any sinister-looking faces.

Although Damasio's focus is not on aesthetics, his neurological findings are relevant. We learn that, below the threshold of consciousness, the brain is constantly monitoring sensory inputs for signs of danger. This is effected by the brain sampling unrefined, early-stage sensory input, with many false alarms (e.g. being startled by a wind-blown plastic bag in peripheral vision, mistaken for a bird) resulting in rapid 'alert' signals to the amygdalae, by-passing the relatively slow-processing, but more reliable, higher sensory cortex. In this way, the amygdalae can trigger a quick physical response to avoid a bus, which could save a person's life.

Damasio's case study of patient S shows that the amygdalae carry out their danger-monitoring activity, even when someone is merely looking at photographs, with no immediate physical threat; they affect our state of mind whether we are engaging with real life situations or with media, such as works of art. The failure of the amygdalae in patient S meant that, to her, the sinister faces just didn't *look* sinister.

There are implications here for Frank Sibley's model of the aesthetic. As Colin Lyas has described, Sibley introduced a distinction between aesthetic concepts, such as 'balanced' and 'graceful', and non-aesthetic properties, such as having 'a red patch', or being 'curved', physical properties upon which the aesthetic properties 'supervene'¹³⁹. Although Sibley insisted there were no 'necessary conditions' for non-aesthetic properties to meet before aesthetic terms can be applied to them¹⁴⁰, he did argue that, within certain limitations, there is a near equivalence of objectivity between secondary qualities, such as colour, and publicly shareable, widely agreed, aesthetic properties¹⁴¹. Sibley deployed this argument in order to establish an ontological equivalence between aesthetic experiences and colour experiences. However, the case of patient S compels us to adjust his emphasis slightly. Rather than aesthetic properties being a matter of a publicly shareable correspondence between an object's primary qualities and its

¹³⁹ Colin Lyas (1992) 'Sibley, Frank Noel' in David Cooper (Ed.) *Op. Cit.* pp. 397-9.

¹⁴⁰ Frank Sibley (1959) 'Aesthetic Concepts', *Philosophical Review*, 68, pp. 421-50, (revised version in J. Margolis (Ed.) (1962) *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, 1st Edition, New York, Scribner's, pp. 63-88; edition consulted: F. Sibley (2001) *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 1-23) p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Frank Sibley (1968) 'Objectivity in Aesthetics', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Vol. 42, pp. 31-54, reprinted in F. Sibley *Op. Cit.* (2001) pp. 71-87.

aesthetic properties, as implied by Sibley's account of supervenience, the emphasis should perhaps make more allowance for the individual subject's capacity or preparedness to perceive certain aesthetic qualities¹⁴². This is already partly implicit in Sibley's awareness of the educational side, with 'arm-waving' to help novices to perceive subtler aesthetic properties. This would correspond to teachers encouraging students to focus on line, negative spaces, or light and shade. They are encouraging students to 'dig' below the formulaic expectations of conceptually-engaged (rather than visually-engaged) students, whose preconceptions cause them to be visually neglectful, as in the different outcomes for students A and B in the Picasso-copying exercise (See Plate 7b, right). John Onians quotes Ruskin's example of Northern European artists painting Italian skies intensely blue, because of their erroneous preconceptions¹⁴³. Perhaps Sibley's 'arm waving' is encouraging novices to go 'beneath' their stereotypical, linguistically dominated, expectations, in order to engage more intently, in 'right brain mode', with the sensory qualities of an aesthetic object, below their 'everyday' preoccupations and preconceptions. Perhaps Sibley should have spoken of 'subvenience' rather than 'supervenience'.

Thus, any adequate account of the aesthetic must allow for a widely variable level of what might be called aesthetic *preparedness*. For each individual, the aesthetic qualities they perceive, and their judgments, are as real and vivid to them as the colour red or the taste of sugar, and should therefore also be accorded an ontological status for those individuals, which is equivalent to their experiences of redness or sweetness. Such a statement seems seriously to compromise the *realism* of aesthetic properties. Sibley's reply would be that the aesthetic dimension should not be subject to a higher standard of objectivity than that demanded of other disciplines, such as history, or even physics, which also face a measure of inter-subjective undecidability. I believe that this would be Sibley's *riposte* to John W. Bender, who takes the harsh view that irresolvable aesthetic disputes are the 'nemesis' of aesthetic realism¹⁴⁴.

2.4.5 Preliminary Empirical Evidence: Summary and Conclusion

¹⁴² Sibley does consider psychological variability in aesthetic response: *Ibid.*, pp. 81-3.

¹⁴³ John Onians *Op. Cit.* (2007) p. 89.

¹⁴⁴ John W. Bender "Aesthetic Realism 2", in Jerrold Levinson (Ed.) (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 80-98) p. 93.

To conclude this preliminary investigation of empirical evidence, it can be said that Dickie's attacks on the aesthetic attitude have again been shown to fail, both his argument that there is only 'attention' or 'inattention' without qualitative variation, and that the aesthetic attitude is a 'myth'(*IB and *IIiB)¹⁴⁵. There are different qualities of attention, depending on the state of preparedness of the respondent. Consciousness is a confluence of many different streams of thought, sensation, emotion and past experience, arising from different parts of the brain and body; some are given prominence, by selectively increased blood-flow, other parts, relatively starved of oxygen and glucose, are pressed into the background or suppressed by other mental processes. Bullough's spatial metaphor of 'distancing' may not be ideal, but it does attempt to describe a real phenomenon, which is not unlike the experience of students learning to draw who have to 'distance' or suppress their verbal thinking, in order to engage more fully with their visual experience. Drawing students are striving to bring to the foreground of their consciousness aspects of their sensory experience that they had learned largely to ignore. To practise such ways of foregrounding sensory experience and other responsive feelings and cognitions is also to practise how to adopt the aesthetic attitude.

2.5 A Definition of the Aesthetic Attitude

2.5.1 Defining the Aesthetic

Although concerned with the ontology rather than the definition of art¹⁴⁶, this thesis attempts to redress deflationary accounts of the aesthetic by offering a robust definition of the 'aesthetic' and its cognates, applicable to nature, everyday life, and art. As quickly becomes apparent, these definitions reflect the biological content of section 2.4 above, and anticipate the biological chapters on evolutionary theory and cognitive

¹⁴⁵ This confirms the negative outcomes to the following two questions from sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.1:

*IB: Is Dickie correct in his claim that 'distancing', 'under-distancing' and 'over-distancing' are 'phantom acts and states of consciousness', there being only 'attention' to an object, or 'inattention'?

*IIiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the 'aesthetic attitude' is a myth, because there is only 'attending' more or less 'closely'?

¹⁴⁶ In writing this thesis, I did not intend to attempt a definition of art, but in reviewing my conclusions, it seemed but a small step to risk such a definition, for no other reason than to conclude the sequence of paragraphs begun in this chapter, and completed in Appendix A.

neuroscience to follow (chapters 6 and 7). The full set of my definitions appears in Appendix A.

The term ‘aesthetic’ can stand alone, but is usually found as an adjective in such phrases as ‘aesthetic attitude’ and ‘aesthetic experience’. This linking of terms seems to make circularity inevitable, as each definition builds on earlier ones, a pattern observed by George Dickie in his book, *The Art Circle*¹⁴⁷. It is also implicit in the structure of the ‘axiomatic’ style of argument employed by Baumgarten¹⁴⁸. At this point, only a few of my definitions will be given, but enough to indicate that the present argument follows Baumgarten in making a close link between perception and aesthetic experience:

- §1 The **AESTHETIC** is both an active and a passive resource for the flourishing of organisms.
- §2 The **PASSIVE AESTHETIC** comprises feelings and cognitions engendered by attention directed towards an external object or internal thought and/or feeling.
- §3 The **ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the presentation of a sensory profile by one organism to other organisms. The active aesthetic can be either tacit or expressive.

It is clear from the above, that this account of the aesthetic includes the sensory signalling and responses of both human and non-human species.

2.5.2 Defining the Aesthetic Attitude

On the basis of the arguments deployed in this thesis so far, and anticipating the findings of chapters six and seven, I now wish to oppose Dickie’s denial of the aesthetic attitude by offering the following definition, at this point in a draft form.

- §14 To adopt the **AESTHETIC ATTITUDE** is to take ‘time out’ from the flux of work-a-day practical necessities and, in a highly vigilant state of mind, to scrutinise an object or cognition in order to focus on the full range of feelings and cognitions it engenders in the subject. This ‘time out’ factor is the origin of the term **DISINTERESTEDNESS** in the context of aesthetics.

¹⁴⁷ George Dickie admits the problem, as reflected in the title of his book: (1984; 1997 edn.) *The Art Circle: a Theory of Art*, Evanston, Illinois, Chicago Spectrum Press.

¹⁴⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit* (1735; 1954 edn.). Aschenbrenner and Holther explain this style of argumentation in their ‘Introduction’, p. 10, and is briefly discussed in section 1.3.1, above.

An aesthetic experience is subjectively intensified: 1) through a heightened awareness of the sensory details within the subject's external or internal fields of perception, whether of objects, feelings or thoughts, and 2) by reacting to the cognitions invoked by the perceptual experiences, feelings or thoughts, and 3) by any emotions (affects) which may also have been triggered by any of the above.

2.6 Summary and Conclusion

2.6.1 Conclusions from the Dickie Questions

This chapter began with a detailed analysis of Dickie's landmark paper, 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', and argued that, although Dickie's paper purported to be about the 'aesthetic attitude' and 'disinterestedness', its real target was neither of these, but was Stolnitz's version of formalism. Stolnitz and Dickie had, indeed, employed the words 'aesthetic attitude' and 'disinterestedness', but Dickie's attack was made upon *eccentric*, rather than *paradigmatic*, versions of both concepts. It was found that, although Dickie correctly rejected Stolnitz's interpretation of disinterestedness, he does not attempt to correct Stolnitz's account, but instead claims to have 'purged' the aesthetic attitude of *distancing* and *disinterestedness*, leaving a 'vacuous' account of the aesthetic attitude as merely 'attending *closely*'. In making this move, Dickie damagingly misrepresented both the aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness, partly because he refused to engage with the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude as it is described in several quotations contained in his article. Nor does he consider alternative, historic, uses of the term 'disinterestedness'.

This chapter has begun to counter Dickie's claims by a) taking phenomenological accounts of the aesthetic attitude seriously as accounts of something real, rather than of 'phantoms', b) beginning to enquire into eighteenth century views of the aesthetic and disinterestedness, in this case the account given by Hume in his essay 'Of the Standard of Taste', and c) by beginning to look at empirical evidence for the aesthetic attitude and disinterestedness.

This evidence, from cognitive neuroscience and its practical application in Betty Edwards' method of teaching drawing to adults, is that the aesthetic attitude is a real phenomenon that entails 'disinterestedness'. This takes the form of suppressing verbal

thinking (and its ‘everyday’ preoccupations) in the task of learning to draw, by bringing direct visual experience more fully into consciousness. This entails a ‘distancing’ from ordinary life, and is a necessary part of adopting the ‘aesthetic attitude’. It was also confirmed in Hume’s account of engagement with the work of art. This by itself does not complete the re-examination of disinterestedness in the wake of Stolnitz’s version, as Kant’s approach to disinterestedness will also be examined in chapter five.

We have a tactical explanation for Dickie’s denial of aesthetic experience (IA), in his desire to redirect the philosophy of art away from the aesthetic and towards the ‘Institutional’. Our arguments have dismissed Dickie’s denial of different states of consciousness in aesthetic experience (*IB, *IiIA, and *IiIB¹⁴⁹). Dickie’s assumption that Stolnitz’ account of disinterestedness was the only one was false (*IiIA¹⁵⁰), and evidence has been found in support of disinterestedness being a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude (IiIB¹⁵¹).

It could be argued that Dickie’s paper has had a damaging and distorting effect on the debate in aesthetics in the analytical tradition. The damage is reflected in the widespread misapprehension among those who can remember only the misleading title of Dickie’s paper, who then reiterate such profound *aperçus* as chapter one’s Sceptical Hypothesis 1: “Dickie has proved that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a ‘myth’”. Thus Janaway feels licensed to end a commentary on the ‘Aesthetic Attitude’, with the words: ‘The notion of an aesthetic attitude deserves to be treated with some scepticism, as it has been in recent philosophy¹⁵²’.

2.6.2 Conclusions from Additional Questions and Claims

Two further issues arose in the course of reading Dickie’s paper, and the findings will be reviewed here:

¹⁴⁹*IB: Is Dickie correct in his claim that ‘distancing’, ‘under-distancing’ and ‘over-distancing’ are ‘phantom acts and states of consciousness’, there being only ‘attention’ to an object, or ‘inattention’?

*IiIA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

*IiIB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’?

¹⁵⁰ *IiIA Is Dickie correct in his assumption that Stolnitz’s interpretation of disinterestedness is the only version of that concept?

¹⁵¹ IiIB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

¹⁵² Dr. C. Janaway (1995) ‘Aesthetic Attitude’ in T. Honanrich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, p.8.

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states

The present enquiry has uncovered evidence both for and against such an incompatibility. The evidence from Hume weighed against Stolnitz and in favour of Dickie: the two activities of appreciation and criticism are not only compatible, but inseparable. However, the evidence from brain laterality would seem to indicate an incompatibility, owing to competition for blood supply between different brain modules. Nevertheless, the case of Humphrey Ocean, who became adept at switching rapidly between verbal/conceptual and visual/spatial states of mind, suggests that, by rapid switching, and holding the results of both forms of brain activity in short-term memory, it is possible to overcome this incompatibility. Although the switching can be automatic, to switch *at will* appears to be a learned skill, part of an artist's training. This interplay between the a) sensory stimulation and b) concepts, at work in drawing and in looking at art, seems to be the first clue to what Kant described as the '*free play* of the Imagination and Understanding', and this is a line of enquiry to be followed up in the forthcoming chapters.

The second additional issue concerned the role of the patron, critic or connoisseur:

RPC Consider the role of the patron, critic and connoisseur of art.

Hume pointed out that, even without learning the practical skills of the artist, the patron, critic and connoisseur can develop the mental skills involved in understanding, responding to and evaluating works of art, involving the same interplay between sensory stimulation and concepts¹⁵³. Hume describes how the novice needs to learn to harness and develop such critical skills. The important roles of patron, critic and connoisseur will be considered further as the thesis unfolds, where I will argue that their evolutionary origins lie in the aesthetic choices made by non-human animals, principally, though not exclusively, in mate selection.

2.6.3 Review of the Sceptical Hypotheses

¹⁵³ There is another parallel with linguistic competence, in that people can develop listening or reading skills in a language, without acquiring the 'practical' skills of speaking or writing.

At the beginning of chapter one, eight ‘Sceptical Hypotheses’ were introduced to express the tenor of recent deflationary scepticism towards the aesthetic. Two of these have now been eliminated by our study of Dickie (marked by an asterisk).

*SH1 Dickie has proved that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a ‘myth’.

*SH6 The term ‘aesthetic’ by definition excludes the cognitive, historical, or moral.

However, the following five will need to be carried forward:

SH2 “It’s putting it in an *art gallery* that makes it art.”

SH3 “The word ‘aesthetic’ connotes passive receptivity.”

SH4 “Duchamp proved that the aesthetic is merely optional in art.”

SH5 “The *historical* aspect of art ‘trumps’ the *aesthetic*.”

SH7 “The source of the aesthetic lies in *art* rather than in *nature*” (paraphrase of Hegel).

The next chapter will examine the wider picture of scepticism towards the aesthetic, including the way Dickie’s ‘deflationary’ account developed in Anglo-American analytical aesthetics over the next forty years, in his own work, and in the work of Danto, Levinson, Carroll, and Stephen Davies. Any sceptical questions left unresolved from that survey will be raised in the subsequent four chapters, two on eighteenth century philosophers and two on empirical evidence from the biological sciences. Finally, chapter eight will draw together the conclusions of the thesis, and apply them to the three case studies: the art of the bowerbird, the nexus of art, power and crime and sound sculpture.

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Chapter Three: Refining the Research Questions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to place the research questions of this thesis in the philosophical context of contemporary analytical aesthetics in the Anglo-American tradition, which for decades was dominated by a physicalist model of the artwork, inherited from positivism. Weaknesses in physicalist and non-realist approaches are analysed, and alternative approaches are sought by applying the realist ontologies developed by Gregory Currie and Joseph Margolis. The historical dimension of artworks is seen to assist the interpretation, rather than the identification of art. The distinction between ‘functional’ and ‘procedural’ models of art is rejected as a relict of physicalist thinking about artworks, and the aesthetic is reasserted as necessary to art, rather than merely contingent.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Place of this Chapter in the Argument

The second chapter exemplified the style of argument adopted by this thesis: first to examine scepticism towards the aesthetic, and then to counter it: 1) by contemporary philosophical argument, 2) by reference to eighteenth century aesthetics and 3) by empirical evidence. The present chapter will expand on the first step in that sequence by closely examining further sceptical challenges to the aesthetic, refining the issues raised, and attempting to reply to them using the resources of philosophical argument. Unresolved issues will be carried forward to chapters four to seven.

Chapters four and five will enlarge upon the second chapter’s questioning of eighteenth century aesthetics in the work of David Hume, by extending the enquiry to Baumgarten and Kant. It may be questioned why this historical survey has two large omissions: 1) the ancient Greeks and 2) nineteenth century aesthetics. Twentieth century ‘deflationary’ aesthetics made a number of claims about the meaning of the words ‘aesthetic’ and ‘disinterestedness’, and it became an objective of this project to ask how those words had been used, and the concepts understood, in the eighteenth century, the period in which modern philosophical aesthetics was consolidated¹. In the nineteenth century, particularly under the influence of Hegel, the emphasis had shifted towards the historical rather than the aesthetic, and for reasons of space and time, it was decided, rather than attempting to describe the development of the historical line of

¹ Paul Guyer (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP.

argument, to attempt 1) to clarify the eighteenth century context from which the debate arose, and 2) to attempt some kind of a synthesis.

Chapters six and seven will expand upon the second chapter's initial search for empirical evidence for the reality of the aesthetic, first considering the relevance of evolutionary theory, and then expanding upon the second chapter's turn to cognitive neuroscience. Chapter eight will review all the arguments presented in the thesis, and will attempt to apply them to this project's three case studies: 1) bowerbird art, 2) the nexus of art, power and crime and 3) sound sculpture.

3.1.2 The Structure of this Chapter

The arguments of this chapter are directed at the two prime research questions:

RQ1: 'What is the aesthetic?' and

RQ2: 'What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?'

Four new claims, sceptical of the aesthetic, will be examined in this chapter. Also, the discussion will involve some other issues raised in chapter one, such as the dialectic between synchronic and diachronic accounts of art, and also look at some of the unresolved questions and issues carried forward from chapter two:

From section 2.6.1:

IliiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

From section 2.6.2:

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states.

RPC Consider the role of the patron, critic and connoisseur of art.

Also under consideration are the six 'Sceptical Hypotheses' that were still unresolved by the end of chapter two, and listed in 2.6.3. The following are the four new sceptical claims that will be the main focus of this chapter:

ANR The Aesthetic is Not Real.

IHP Art is defined by its Intentional and Historical Properties.

F/PT Davies' Functional/Procedural distinction is Tenable.

AUA The Aesthetic is *necessary only* in 'Ur-Art'.

3.2 The ‘Non-Realism’ of the Aesthetic

This section will present the first part of this chapter’s attempt to refute the sceptical hypothesis expressed in statement ANR: The Aesthetic is Not Rreal. This section will attempt to present, and begin to challenge, relevant aspects of the background to deflationary accounts of the aesthetic.

As we have seen, George Dickie claimed that the aesthetic attitude is a myth². In the opposite corner, Sibley claimed that, ‘ . . . nothing is art that is not made with at least some aesthetic intention’, even if that intention were to reject the aesthetic³. This clash over the place of the aesthetic in art is part of a larger and as yet unresolved philosophical debate over the ontological status of the aesthetic and its place in nature, art and everyday living

3.2.1 Kant: an aesthetic non-Realist?

Questions of ‘realism’ and ‘non-realism’ are metaphysical questions, to do with ontology, which 1) questions which entities can be said to exist and 2) questions the nature of their existence. Typical conundrums for ontology include the existence of God, minds, material objects, abstract entities, aesthetic properties, and art⁴. According to the principle of Ockham’s razor⁵, philosophy abhors the postulation of any entities beyond the minimum necessary. The ancient and modern battles over ontology are too large a subject to be tackled in any detail here, though a position has had to be taken, despite the fact that there is not space here to argue for it at length from a general standpoint. However, arguments will be presented to challenge aesthetic scepticism and deflationism. It is the aim of this thesis to present an argument for the reality of the aesthetic and its centrality in art and other forms of discourse, as expressed in the

²George Dickie (1964) ‘The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude’, *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-65. This paper was examined in detail in chapter two.

³F. Sibley (1992) “Arts or the Aesthetic – Which comes First?” (Audiotape for the OU), script reprinted in (2001) *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics* (Ed. J. Benson and J.R. Cox, Oxford, OUP (pp. 135-141) pp. 137-8.

⁴Dale Jaquette (2002) *Ontology*, Chesham, Acumen; Reinhardt Grossman (1992) *The Existence of the World: An Introduction to Ontology*, London, Routledge.

⁵M. M. Adams, (1995) ‘Ockham, William’ and ‘Ockham’s razor, or the principle of parsimony’ in Ted Honderich (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, p. 633.

project's headline title, using Baumgarten's oxymoron, 'Imaged Concepts'⁶, uniting the senses to intellect.

Interestingly, it appears that there is nothing new in asserting the non-realism of the aesthetic, as it appears that a 'non-realist' argument can be found in Kant. At the end of the 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment'⁷ (§58), Kant describes aesthetic values as 'ideal', contrasting them with the 'realist' view, which he identifies with Rationalism, which would claim, with some apparent evidence in its favour, that the beauties of nature have been tailored to please our senses⁸. Kant rejects this view, using the example of the process of crystallisation, which he describes as purely 'mechanical'. Even though the result delights our aesthetic sense, there is no 'purposiveness' at work there. His evidence that 'the purposiveness in the beautiful in nature is *ideal*' rather than 'real' derives from his claim that:

Whenever we judge any beauty at all we seek the standard for it a priori in ourselves, and that the aesthetic power of judgment itself legislates concerning the judgment as to whether something is beautiful or not⁹.

Otherwise, we would always have to take our cue from nature:

In fact, however, what counts in judging beauty is not what nature is, nor even what purpose it [has] for us, but how we receive it. If nature had created all forms for our liking, such a purposiveness of nature would always be objective; it would not be a subjective purposiveness, based on the play of the imagination in its freedom, where it is we who receive nature with favor, not nature that favors us¹⁰.

Kant's argument could also be turned against an evolutionary account, where it might be claimed, perhaps by a socio-biologist¹¹, that aesthetic preferences are

⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735; 1954 Edn.) *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, reprinted in facsimile with an Introduction, Notes, and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther, as: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1954) *Reflections on Poetry*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, §29, *scholium*, p. 49.

⁷ Immanuel Kant. (1790/1987 Edn) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett; The 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' is Part I of the *Critique of Judgment*, comprising §§1-60; Part II is the 'Critique of Teleological Judgment', §§61-9.

⁸ *Ibid.* §58, Ak 346-8, pp. 220-2. In this way, they would mirror our assumption that the laws of the universe are purposive towards our powers of Understanding.

⁹ *Ibid.* §58, Ak 350, p. 224

¹⁰ *Loc. Cit.*

¹¹ Socio-biology is described by David Papineau as seeking 'to understand animal social behaviour as the genetically based product of natural selection,' in his article 'Biology, philosophical problems of' in Ted Honderich (Ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 93-4. The theory has been applied to aesthetics by Randy Thornhill in 'Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics', in, Eckart Voland and Karl Grammer (Eds.) (2003) *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, Berlin, Springer, pp. 9-35.

genetically pre-determined. However, it is argued here that, where learning takes place, the bias of nature can be modified. The position adopted in this thesis will argue for the view that the Intentional¹² properties of cultural objects are 'real', though their claims to realism differ from the realist claims of primary and secondary properties¹³. This will be more fully argued as this chapter unfolds.

3.2.2 Positivism, Behaviourism, Physicalism

There was a 'climate' in twentieth century philosophy, and in some other disciplines, which encouraged the search for the 'objective' standards of physics in academic disciplines where such standards are not at all times appropriate. The trio of such tendencies named in the above sub-heading seem to have contributed to a widespread philosophical scepticism towards the aesthetic for many decades. The logical-positivist A.J. Ayer announced in his youth that, ' . . . all metaphysical assertions are nonsensical¹⁴', and that, 'there is no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics, but only questions of fact¹⁵'. Wittgenstein considered it impossible to define aesthetic terms, likening it to trying to draw a sharply defined picture from a blurred one:

Won't you then have to say, "Here I might just as well draw a circle or heart or a rectangle, for all the colours merge. Anything – and nothing – is right." And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics¹⁶.

Joseph Margolis has articulated how the debate in Anglo-American analytical aesthetics was affected by these influences. He traces the problem to the split between

¹² The capital 'I' here indicates that I am following Joseph Margolis' usage defined in his (1999) *What, After All, Is a Work of Art?* Pennsylvania Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 55-6: ' . . . to mark a family of *sui generis* properties confined to the cultural world', and *Ibid.* p. 12 as 'symbolic, semiotic, representational, expressive, rhetorical, stylistic, genre-bound, traditional predicates'.

¹³ John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* provides the classic reference for the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, quoted by Roger Woolhouse in his entry on 'Primary and Secondary qualities' in Ted Honderich (Ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 718-9): ' . . . primary qualities (e.g. shape) are "utterly inseparable from . . . [a] body"', however small (II. viii.9) and secondary qualities (e.g. colour) "in truth are nothing in . . . objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us" II.viii.10', p. 718 .

¹⁴ Ayer's argument was that metaphysical assertions were neither tautologies nor empirical hypotheses; A.J. Ayer (1936) *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd Edition, 1946), London, Victor Gollanz, p. 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 113.

¹⁶ L. Wittgenstein (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* (2nd Edition, 1958), Oxford, Blackwell, Section 77, p. 36^e.

analytical and continental philosophy¹⁷. The discipline demanded of analytical philosophy, he says, was good for science, but impoverished the treatment of the arts¹⁸. There was, for example, the influence of Quine who rejected intentional properties, as described by Brentano¹⁹, whom he attacked in *Word and Object*²⁰. Margolis opposes this scepticism towards intentionality, arguing for human consciousness as *emergent* from the physical and biological world, generating ‘the arts, the sciences and history’, all of whose outcomes *are stable enough* to ‘permit objective analysis’²¹. This is his thesis of ‘cultural realism’. In his view, Beardsley, Goodman and Danto were all in thrall to physicalism, for example, in his opinion, leading Beardsley to an ‘excessively optimistic empiricism’ which led him to treat texts and artworks as physical objects²². Jaegwon Kim defines physicalism in the philosophy of mind as:

... an application of the general metaphysical thesis that everything in the space-time world is physical. Concerning the sphere of the mental, then, physicalism claims that all the facts about minds and mentality are physical facts²³.

This has sometimes led to the denial of mental properties, including the aesthetic.

During the same period, behaviourism had a similar effect in discouraging discussion of ‘private’ mental events, as opposed to publicly observable behaviours and language²⁴. Taken together, positivism, physicalism and behaviourism formed a background of scepticism towards the aesthetic, which would have a) encouraged Dickie to call the aesthetic attitude a ‘myth’, and also b) would have discouraged him from acknowledging the phenomenology of the ‘aesthetic attitude’, so eloquently described, as we observed, in Dickie’s own quotations from Eliseo Vivas²⁵. These debates continue to cast a shadow across aesthetics. The realism of the aesthetic is still contested, even now, in the twenty-first century, providing the motivation for this thesis. In the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, published in 2003, there are two essays on

¹⁷ Joseph Margolis (2001) *Selves and OtherTexts: The Case for Cultural Realism*, University Park Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Franz Brentano (1838-1917) is regarded as the ‘grandfather of phenomenology’, see Wilhelm Baumgartner (1995) ‘Brentano, Franz’ in T. Honderich (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 102-4.

²⁰ Joseph Margolis *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 13.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 3. Later in this chapter, we shall see a similar position taken up by Karl Popper.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 16-18.

²³ Jaegwon Kim (1995) ‘Physicalism in the philosophy of mind’ in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Ed. Ted Honderich) Oxford, OUP, pp. 679-80.

²⁴ Owen Flanagan (1995) ‘Behaviourism’ in T. Honderich (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 81-2.

²⁵ See chapter two, section 2.2.2.1.

‘Aesthetic Realism’ one by Nick Zangwill²⁶, the other by John W. Bender²⁷. Zangwill says that Realists assert that aesthetic thoughts and experiences represent ‘aesthetic properties and states of affairs’, whereas non-Realists deny that aesthetic experiences have such ‘metaphysical commitments’. The non-Realist position would roughly correspond to Kim’s description of *property physicalism*, where all properties are physical, and the realists’ position would correspond roughly to his description of *ontological physicalism*, which accepts the existence of non-physical properties such as intentionality²⁸. Realists would insist upon 1) the ‘experientiality’ of aesthetic judgments, grounded in subjective response; hence my emphasis in chapter two on the *phenomenology* of the aesthetic attitude, against Dickie’s *deflationism*, which ignores this phenomenology. The Realist would also insist 2) on the ‘normativity’ of aesthetic judgments, i.e. some aesthetic judgments can be better or worse than others, which could only hold if those judgments had ‘realistic representational content’, where aesthetic experiences can be said to correspond with ‘states of affairs’²⁹. This last is the position adopted by the present thesis: aesthetic experiences are ‘real’, based in our biology, developed and nuanced by learning, which itself also becomes embodied in our biology, as will be argued in chapter six. Zangwill concludes that the onus is on the non-realist to argue that aesthetic judgments do not ‘represent what is really in the object’³⁰. My position is not identical to Zangwill’s, because I wish to add to his claim a further claim. Not only do aesthetic properties ‘represent what is really in the object’, but I would claim that aesthetic properties are also *dependent on what is really present in the mind of the prepared subject*, and that both early stage sensory processing and ‘top-down’ cognitive influences are involved. This theme will be developed in chapter seven on cognitive neuroscience.

John W. Bender is less confident than Zangwill of any claim for aesthetic realism. For Bender:

. . . any irresolvable dispute among well-situated and experienced critics regardless of shared or disparate tastes, is enough to raise the non-realist flag³¹.

²⁶ Nick Zangwill (2003) ‘Aesthetic Realism I’, in J. Levinson (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 63-79.

²⁷ John W. Bender (2003) ‘Aesthetic Realism II’, in J. Levinson (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 80-98.

²⁸ Jaegwon Kim *Op. Cit.* (1995) p. 679.

²⁹ Nick Zangwill *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 68.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 78.

³¹ John W. Bender *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 92.

I would argue that setting the truth conditions for aesthetic values so high as to demand unanimity is unreasonable. An equivalent scepticism would have to hold for any area of knowledge, including science, where equally well-informed minds sometimes reach divergent conclusions. In section 3.5.1, I will take the Popperian view, extrapolated by Sheldon Richmond from Popper's philosophies of science and society, that aesthetic terms and values, like scientific theories, are 'guesses' which are put into the public arena, and are open to scrutiny and debate, in a process of testing and refining³². This does not abandon the claims of aesthetic terms and values to realism, but simply admits that the issues are complex, though nevertheless 'real', and the 'hypotheses' and 'tests' for them are more elusive than in most of the physical sciences, making the issues in the humanities less amenable to 'knock down' resolution.

3.2.3 The Development of Dickie's Deflationary Aesthetics

As we have just seen, the context in which Dickie began his career was one where positivism and behaviourism had combined to suppress 'mentalism', as philosophy tried to emulate the 'scientific objectivity' of physics. George Dickie in 1964 seems to have accepted this set of assumptions, trying to use entirely 'extrinsic' terms, to achieve a 'classificatory', as distinct from an evaluative definition of art³³.

Dickie's Institutional theory evolved over several years, and in its early versions, was somewhat inconsistent with his earlier avowal that the aesthetic attitude is a myth³⁴. As Danto pointed out³⁵, Dickie's 1974 version of the Institutional Theory retained a space for the aesthetic by his inclusion of 'appreciation' in his definition of art. Dickie quoted this version ten years later, in *The Art Circle* of 1984:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artefact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for *appreciation* by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld)³⁶. (My Italics)

³²Sheldon Richmond (1994) *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the Philosophies of Science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, Rodopi.

³³ George Dickie (1984) *The Art Circle: a Theory of Art*, New York, Haven; edition used: (1997) Evanston, Illinois, Chicago Spectrum Press p. 8. An evaluative definition is one in which the term 'work of art' is used to express approval or appreciation of an object or performance. In the case of Dickie it seems the aim is also to exclude any value criteria from the definition.

³⁴ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964).

³⁵ Arthur C. Danto (1981) *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, p. 91.

³⁶ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1984; 1997 edn.) p. 8.

Dickie's evolving accounts have been scrutinised by Stephen Davies, who criticises them for failing to describe the 'rules and roles' by which the artworld is governed³⁷, saying this weakens the *institutional* characteristics of Dickie's theory. He speculates that Dickie might have shrunk from a more strongly institutional account because of his desire to make the institution of art appear democratic, rather than ruled by a snobbish clique, as alleged by some critics of 'elitist' modernism³⁸. Thus Dickie claims that a urinal salesman might have turned one of his samples into *Fountain*, whereas Davies thinks only Duchamp would have had the authority to do this, having been empowered 'as a result of achieving recognition as an avant-garde artist'³⁹. The concept of 'authority' in an institutional sense does not seem appropriate in democratic societies (outside of the powerful state-funded art bureaucracies) though it has played a role in such tyrannies as ancient Egypt⁴⁰, and the Church in the Counter-Reformation⁴¹.

The institutional (or perhaps *social*) dimension of art, which is undeniable, would have to be included in any adequate ontology of art, and included in that would have to be the personal authority, and sometimes *charisma*, which undoubtedly accrues to an artist who has acquired a reputation. Davies, however, fails to criticise Dickie's Institutional Theory for omitting to say why art is considered to have any value in the first place, although this has been a frequent complaint about the Institutional Theory. The question of the value or point of art, says Davies, is a matter for a general theory of art, but is not essential for a definition⁴². This seems a strange move. Despite the faults he finds in Dickie's version, Davies says his own aim is to defend the idea of an institutional theory⁴³. However, his defence fails to rescue the Institutional theory from its own failure to address the point or value of art, a lacuna very apparent in Dickie's final version of the theory, stated in five steps⁴⁴:

³⁷ This would be a necessary step if aesthetic properties are not themselves real, but only matters of institutional rules and conventions; see Steven Davies (1991) *Definitions of Art*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, Ch. 4 (pp. 78-114) pp. 97-100.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 80.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 88.

⁴⁰ It took the power of a blasphemous Pharaoh, Akhenaten, to bring about a short-lived departure from the canons of proportion which imposed a remarkable continuity of style over thousands of years. See H. W. Janson, (1962) *A History of Art: a survey of the visual arts from the dawn of history to the present day*, London, Thames and Hudson, pp. 47-8, figs. 63-5.

⁴¹ Veronese was famously summoned by the tribunal of the inquisition for including 'improprieties' in a painting of the *Last Supper*. His solution was to change the title to *Supper in the House of Levi*. See H. W. Janson *Op. Cit.* (1962) pp. 381-2, and Fig. 565.

⁴² Steven Davies *Op. Cit.* (1991), *Ibid.* p. 113.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 84.

⁴⁴ First presented in George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1984); in 1997 edition, pp. 80-82; quoted by Davies (1991) p. 84, and again by Dickie (2001) *Art and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell, p. 28.

1. An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.
2. A work of art is an artefact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.
3. A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them
4. The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.
5. An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.

Not a sniff of phenomenology to be had! It is an amusing task to write a similar five-step definition of medicine beginning, '1. A doctor is a person who participates with understanding in the enactment of medical procedures'. It is possible to complete the five steps without any mention of disease or cure⁴⁵. Even if Dickie's timid set of statements do achieve some sort of a definition of art, it appears a purely nominal one, with so little purchase on the real world of art as to be pointless, or to borrow a word from Dickie's 1964 paper, entirely 'vacuous'. As Davies says, Dickie could not have recourse to the *aesthetic* to assist his definition, having dismissed it in his 1964 paper, an action he has not retracted⁴⁶.

Dickie revisits the problem of definition in the first half of *Art and Value*, where he declares that his project is not one of denying that psychological mechanisms play a role in art, but he denies that there are any psychological mechanisms 'specifically and sufficiently productive of art'⁴⁷. He smacks down the most obvious counter-example to this view, the bowerbird's bower, by the simple expedient of denying that it is art⁴⁸.

This is a common resort for those who wish to dispose of inconvenient counter-examples to their definitions of art⁴⁹. He views the bowerbird's activities as 'instinctual'

⁴⁵ Continuing: '2. A medical procedure is an act carried out on patients. 3. A patient is one of a set of persons who are prepared to some degree to undergo medical procedures. 4. A medical world is the totality of all medical systems. 5. A medical system is a framework for the enactment of medical procedures by doctors.'

⁴⁶ The 'Myth' of the aesthetic attitude was discussed in chapter two, above; Stephen Davies discusses Dickie's predicament in this regard in *Op. Cit.* (1991) p. 110.

⁴⁷ George Dickie (2001) *Art and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

⁴⁹ Noel Carroll offers the following list of works denied art status by some philosopher for definitional reasons: 'Duchamp's readymades, Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, Merce Cunningham's choreography, Robert Mapplethorpe's photography, and, more recently, Damien Hirst and Janine Antoni', in Noel Carroll (1999) *Philosophy of Art: a Contemporary Introduction*, London, Routledge p. 252. James O. Young excludes almost the whole of the *avant garde* of the

and closely tied in with reproductive behaviour and evolution. He does not even consider the possibility that human art-making might have evolved under similar selective pressures over a period of millions of years, and that these factors might still be operative today in a significant proportion of artistic activity. This question will be addressed in chapter six, which will examine the evidence for evolutionary aesthetics, and again in chapter eight.

The psychological theories to which Dickie is opposed include *mimesis* and expression theories, and in an interesting move, he classifies such theories as 'natural kind' theories. This brings the discussion into an area where philosophy of language and ontology overlap. A natural kind cannot be defined by argument alone, but requires expert empirical data, such as the atomic number of gold. Dickie's argument is that the definition of art is not a question for scientists, but for members of the artworld. It is a 'cultural kind', a category which includes institutional, historical and intentional theories.

At this point it is necessary to introduce Stephen Davies' distinction between the 'functionalist' and 'proceduralist' theories of art, which align roughly with 'aesthetic realism' and 'aesthetic non-realism', though the distinction also rests on a difference of emphasis placed on the supposedly 'intrinsic' aesthetic properties of artworks, and their supposed 'extrinsic' ties, such as historical provenance. In this thesis, Davies' distinction between the 'functional' and the 'procedural' will be challenged. Meanwhile, suffice it to say that he classifies Beardsley's aesthetic definition of art as 'functionalist' and Dickie's Institutional Theory as 'proceduralist'.

Returning to the argument of this section, Dickie finds a) Danto's criterion that works of art are 'about' something to be 'functionalist', in the old manner of essentialist theories, and b) he finds Danto's emphasis on history 'proceduralist'⁵⁰. Dickie seems to accuse Danto of muddled thinking: the man should come down on one side of the argument or the other! This points to one of the problems with the way some philosophers handle definitions. The desire seems to be irresistible to find a single essentialist explanation to trump all the others. The idea that 'reality' might be more complicated, that light can be a wave motion and a particle, seems inconceivable. Perhaps a fuller consideration of the ontology of art would allow us to accept that a

visual arts in his (2001) *Art and Knowledge*, London, Routledge, even arguing for its destruction.

⁵⁰ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 36.

phenomenon as complex as art might just be *both* a natural kind *and* a cultural kind. Dickie's response to the counter-evidence presented by his critics is to marginalize its significance, though his stance of scepticism against the aesthetic had clearly softened by the time he wrote:

... a cultural-kind theory of art will not deny that the content of art can involve natural-kind activities, for example, the enjoyment of the basic aesthetic qualities of the kind Beardsley has in mind, but it would not make such activities *defining*⁵¹ (my italics).

Thus he upholds his project to *define* art above the (surely more rewarding) task of trying to give an adequate account of the bigger picture. Similarly, he responds to the many criticisms which assert that the institutional theory is a-historical by replying that 'All the talk about art history . . . is perfectly consistent with the institutional theory', it is just not involved 'in the defining of "art"'"⁵².

However, Dickie finally comes up with a surprising confession:

I have always thought of the institutional theory and all the other theories of art as having an ontological function rather than an epistemic one. It seems perfectly reasonable to me that even if one had a completely adequate definition of 'art' that it would still be possible that one might not be able to tell whether a given object is a work of art. For example, if the object's history is unknown, it might be impossible to tell if it is an artwork⁵³.

This lends support to the view that behind the different ways of defining art must lie an ontological question: what *kind* of a thing a work of art is. Furthermore, this thesis insists that, behind that question, lies another, which asks what *kind* of a thing the '*aesthetic*' is. That seems to be the fundamental question that might unlock the others, and it is argued here that the solutions found will be *Realist* rather than non-Realist.

3.2.4 Summary and Conclusion

This section reviewed four different non-realist approaches to the aesthetic, giving several reasons to reject the first of the new Sceptical Hypotheses:

ANR: The Aesthetic is Not Real.

Kant's idealism saw aesthetic values as, *a priori*, free from natural laws, whose determinations would have rendered aesthetic values 'realist' in his terms. This thesis

⁵¹ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 49

⁵² *Loc. Cit.*

⁵³ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 43.

would reject the argument that aesthetic properties would be 'real' only if entirely predetermined by natural causes, such as genetics. Instead, the view is taken that aesthetic values are 'emergent' properties of the physical and biological worlds, an argument from Margolis that also resists the reductionist pleadings of Positivism, Behaviourism and Physicalism that seek to deny the 'realism' of mental properties.

This section's review of the development of Dickie's thought found that he remained a convinced 'Institutionalist' in the definition of art, though his anti-aestheticism has lost its edge, as he came to accept that aesthetic properties play a role in art, even if they are not 'definitional of art'. It would appear that, unlike the Dickie of 1964, the Dickie of 2001 would not support our new Sceptical Hypothesis:

ANR: The Aesthetic is Not Real.

3.3 Intentional/Historical Definitions of Art: 'Ur-Art'

Now we come to the next sceptical stance of deflationary aesthetics to be considered in this chapter, expressed as our hypothesis IHD:

IHD Art should be defined by its Intentional and Historical Properties

This hypothesis, in attempting to exclude the 'aesthetic' from the definition of art, would support Carroll's position, shown in the diagram in Fig. 1 at the beginning of chapter one, showing the aesthetic to be contingent, rather than necessary to art. However, it will be argued this attempt was not successful, as it still left a gap open for the aesthetic in 'Ur-Art', requiring another new sceptical hypotheses, AUA:

AUA The Aesthetic is *necessary* **only** in Ur-Art.

3.3.1 Intentional and Historical Definitions

The first Intentional/Historical definition was proposed by Jerrold Levinson⁵⁴, and Noel Carroll has followed with an historical narrative method for identifying works

⁵⁴ The sources used in this study were J. Levinson (1979) "Defining Art Historically", *BJA*, Vol. 19, reprinted in J. Levinson (1990) *Music, Art and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Ithaca New York, Cornell University Press, pp. 3-25, and the original 1989 article "Refining Art Historically", *JAAC*, Vol. 47, pp. 21-33.

of art⁵⁵. These definitions are interpreted here as further attempts to define art in 'extrinsic' terms, rather than according to either the formalists' 'intrinsic' or 'plastic' properties of artworks, or in terms of the 'aesthetic' mental properties which were denied by physicalist, behaviourist and positivist perspectives.

Despite staking their claims to historical definitions, Levinson and Carroll were by no means the first philosophers to point out the importance of history to an adequate understanding of art. That honour is usually bestowed upon Hegel who is widely credited for making the most important contribution by a philosopher to the History of Art⁵⁶. Nor were Levinson and Carroll the first to point out the potential of intentionality as a route to defining art, an honour ascribed to Mandelbaum⁵⁷. Definitions in Anglo-American analytical aesthetics, thereafter, usually included the intention to make art, as a way of separating artworks from natural objects and other 'mere real things', as in Beardsley's definition of an artwork as 'something produced with the intention of giving it the capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest'⁵⁸.

In this thesis, the question of 'intention' will be turned through 180 degrees, to become one of detecting 'agency', making the viewpoint that of the percipient of the artwork, not the maker. This means that sometimes percipients respond unbidden to what Danto would refer to as 'mere real things' in ways that are more appropriate to *artworks*, responding to the sensory structure as they find it, while also seeing *agency* in it. The animist, pagan and Christian see *agency* in the events of nature, as Augustine

⁵⁵ The version studied is in N. Carroll (1999) *Philosophy of Art: a Contemporary Introduction*, London, Routledge, pp. 249-264.

⁵⁶ Gary Shapiro writes, 'It is indeed the case that Hegel's aesthetics played a fundamental role in the formation of literary history and the history of art in the nineteenth century'; Gary Shapiro (1992) 'Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich' in D. E. Cooper (Ed.) (1992) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 182-8. p. 182. However, Hegel was not a lone voice. Michael Inwood credited other aestheticians of the times with investigating the history of art. He writes that these aestheticians 'paid as much attention to the content of art as to its formal aspects. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) [*A whole generation before Hegel*] stressed that poetry springs from the religion, language and customs of a people, and explored the early 'folk poetry' of the Germans.' Michael Inwood (1993) "Introduction" to Hegel *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (1886), edited by Michael Inwood, London, Penguin, (pp. ix-xxxix) p. xii.

⁵⁷ Maurice Mandelbaum (1965) "Family Resemblances and Generalisations Concerning the Arts", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 9, pp. 219-228, reprinted in A. Neill and A. Ridley (Eds) (1995) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, Boston Massachusetts, McGraw Hill, pp. 192-201.

⁵⁸ Monroe C. Beardsley (1983) "An Aesthetic Definition of Art", first published in H. Cutler (Ed.) *What is Art?* New York, Haven Publications, pp. 15-29. The Edition referred to here is the reprint in P. Lamarque, and S. H. Olsen (Eds.) (2004) *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: the Analytic Tradition*, Oxford, Blackwell, (pp. 55-62) p. 58).

saw the world as God's poem⁵⁹. Such an aesthetic perception, full of heightened awareness, did not 'make the world into a work of art' for *other* percipients, only for the person or persons who perceived it in that way, with a 'free play' between their 'understanding of God' and their vision of the world as his 'work of art'.

Baumgarten echoed this idea twice in his *Reflections on Poetry*: 'We observed a little while ago that the poet is like a maker or a creator. So the poem ought to be like a world', and 'things in the world follow one another for disclosing the glory of the Creator, the ultimate and highest theme of some immense poem, if one may so speak⁶⁰'.

3.3.2 Levinson

Jerrold Levinson declared that he wished to build an improved definition of art, on the model of the Institutional Theory, which, he thought, had two faults. Both stemmed from 'that murky and somewhat exclusive institution, the *artworld*⁶¹'. The first fault was the act of *conferring* the status of 'candidate for appreciation' on an artefact by an artworld member, as described in Dickie's early version of the Institutional Theory⁶². Levinson wished to replace this *externally* applied *act* with a different process, namely the artist's *internally* driven *intention* to make a work of art⁶³. The second fault Levinson targeted was Dickie's failure to explain satisfactorily what he meant by the 'appreciation' for which the tendered artwork was a candidate. As has been noted, Dickie himself could not have expressed this in terms of the aesthetic, in view of his rejection of that phenomenon⁶⁴. Levinson's correction to Dickie is the deflationary removal of *appreciation*, and its replacement with *history*. Art status is achieved when a) it is the artist's intention that b) the work should be received in an *historically accepted manner*, which Levinson dubs a 'regard', or set of regards, each appropriate to the individual reception history of different art forms⁶⁵. It is worth noting that this move severs the definition of art from any overt mention of the percipient's *phenomenological* experience of art. Because of the problems of conceptual artists

⁵⁹ K. E. Gilbert and H. Kuhn . (1956) *A History of Esthetics* (2nd Edition), London, Thames and Hudson, p. 135.

⁶⁰ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735; 1954 edn.) transl. K. Aschenbrenner and W. B. Holther, Berkeley, University of California Press. §68, p.63 and §71, p. 64.

⁶¹ Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 4.

⁶² George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1997) p. 8.

⁶³ Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 21.

⁶⁴ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1964).

⁶⁵ He explains that 'regard-as-a-work-of-art' is 'regard in any of the ways works of art existing prior to it have been correctly regarded'; Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 6.

‘dubbing’ public buildings and natural features as their artworks, there is also a curious phrase about ownership. Here is his definition in its simplest form:

X is an artwork at t = df	X is an object that a person or persons having the appropriate proprietary right over X, nonpassingly intends for regard-as-a-work-of-art – i.e., regard in any way (or ways) in which prior artworks are or were correctly (or standardly) regarded ⁶⁶ .

As Levinson was aware, and as Dickie was happy to re-emphasise when discussing ‘similarity art’⁶⁷, this gives Levinson a problem with what he calls ‘*ur-art*’, namely an infinite regress to something which was not art, which therefore threatens to reverse the arthood of everything which had been carefully traced back to *ur-art*. To prevent this reversal, examples of *ur-art* must already have become art by a different process than he is expounding through his historical theory. As Dickie points out, Levinson undermines his own historical definition before he has even set it out, when he describes a thought experiment, designed to attack the Institutional Theory. He imagines a solitary Amazonian Indian who:

. . . steals off from his nonartistic tribe to arrange coloured stones in a clearing, not outwardly investing them with special position in the world. Might not this also be art (and note, before any future curator decides that it is)⁶⁸?

Dickie observes that this passage shows that Levinson, at this moment at least, sees art as a natural kind, not a cultural kind, and therefore this shows that he is at heart a ‘functionalist’, not a ‘proceduralist’⁶⁹. However, Levinson is not secure on this issue, as is shown by two of his other thought experiments, which point to contradictory conclusions.

The first thought experiment attempts to apply one of the necessary conditions contained in his definition, that the artist or curator must have ‘the appropriate proprietary rights over X’⁷⁰. This is clearly a *cultural*, i.e. ‘procedural’ factor. He asks us to imagine, mounted ‘for regard-as-a-work-of-art’ in an art museum ‘a strange ornate receptacle whose original purpose is unknown’. This object originates from ‘an ancient

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁶⁷ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1997) pp. 32-3.

⁶⁸ Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 5.

⁶⁹ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 48.

⁷⁰ Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 9.

Mexican culture thought to have died out⁷¹. In the story, a fully informed and documented descendent of the tribe unexpectedly turns up and demands the removal from public display of this 'sacred ritual object', not intended 'in any sense for appreciation'. Levinson concludes from this:

I maintain that the object in question does not just revert to being nonart – it never was art at all, because our present art establishment unknowingly lacked the right to make it such⁷².

Thus Levinson gives priority to the cultural context of the object's original creation over either the aesthetic criterion that the bowl was 'a strange ornate receptacle', or the later classification of the object as art by the curator. Levinson seems to accept Sceptical Hypothesis 5 from chapter one:

SH5 The *historical* aspect of art 'trumps' the *aesthetic*.

What seems strange about this thought experiment is the view that a) the ritual purpose of the object and b) its status as an artwork should be mutually exclusive (an example of inappropriate bi-valent logic imported from science to art). At a stroke, such a view would eliminate a vast number, if not the majority, of pre-modern works of art. It is argued here that the historical informs *interpretation*, but does not determine an object's classification.

By contrast, the second thought experiment seems to reverse Levinson's priorities, in favour of the object's aesthetic properties and against the definitional determination of preceding art-regards. This will be labelled the 'Z' thought experiment, and it is an extrapolation upon Levinson's account of how Duchamp's readymades could graduate, from their initial non-art status, to become artworks⁷³:

A naïve art-unaware creator makes an object Z at t , which he intends for a kind of treatment or regard that is not a correct way of regarding any artworks existing prior to t_1 . However, it is a kind of treatment or regard that *will be* correct for certain artworks θ existing 200 years after. I think we want to say that the naïve creator's work is art beginning around $t_2 (= t_1 + 200)$ but not before⁷⁴.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 13.

Here the art status of the piece is entirely dependent on a kind of regard which became possible only hundreds of years later⁷⁵. This seems to be inconsistent with Levinson's earlier Amerindian thought experiment, in which the piece was art from the time it was made. He adds to the 'Z' thought experiment that:

Z becomes art 200 years after its intended creation, when the history of art, so to speak, catches up with what Z's creator was engaged in⁷⁶.

The problem is that Levinson is confusing the work's ontological status (as art) with the quality of its critical reception. Levinson contradicts himself here. He says in his definition that the object had been intended 'for a kind of treatment or regard that is not a correct way of regarding any artworks existing prior to t_1 '. However, though not 'correct' at the time t_1 , clearly the artist at time t_1 must have conceived it, and therefore it must have been *possible*, at that time, even if only for that one person. Therefore, it seems more rational to argue that the work Z was art from the outset, but was only *recognised* and appreciated as such, when the history of art, and with it critical appreciation, had 'caught up'. The case of the Eighteenth Century Welsh painter, Thomas Jones, comes to mind⁷⁷. His oil sketches of Neapolitan buildings were ignored in the eighteenth century, and were soon entirely forgotten in family archives. However, by the mid-Twentieth century, cultural sensibilities, which had been shaped by photography, impressionism, surrealism and even abstraction, had evolved to the point where this handful of tiny, meticulous sketches could be identified as rare masterpieces⁷⁸. It seems reasonable to assume that they were art from the beginning, even if dismissed as merely strange sketches until the history of art had 'caught up'. This supports the contention of this thesis that for art the most important role for history is in interpretation and evaluation, rather than in art's definition or classification against non-art. Although Levinson's historical definition suffers from the problem of infinite regress, blocked only by *ur-art*, which has, therefore, to become art by a different, functional, and (therefore contradictorily) *non*-historical criterion, his historical approach does give valuable insights into the way in which works of art are experienced and interpreted in the light of earlier artworks and 'art regards'.

⁷⁵ This raises another question of how a new 'art regard' could arise, if art regards are validated by historical precedent.

⁷⁶ Jerrold Levinson *Op. Cit.* (1990) p. 13.

⁷⁷ Some philosophers reject studies and preparatory sketches as art, such as Ian Ground (1989) *Art or Bunk?* London, Bristol Classical Press, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Ann Sumner and Greg Smith (Eds.) (2003) *Thomas Jones (1742-1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, plates 110-116, pp. 220-226.

3.3.3 Carroll

Noel Carroll's criticism of Levinson differs from Dickie's. Carroll does not find *ur-art* to be a problem. Echoing both Levinson's Amerindian stone composition thought experiment and the one involving the Mexican ritual bowl, Carroll imagines an object made by a pre-artistic Neolithic tribesman. Carroll proposes that the piece attains art status retrospectively, because it happens to elicit an art regard, which was destined in later history to become a standard way of looking at art⁷⁹. This interpretation may be trying to explain how we see cave art as art, even though it may have been a by-product of shamanistic ritual. The argument appears to be as follows:

- *1. x is a piece of *ur-art*, but it is not yet art because it elicits a regard which has not yet become an art regard.
- 2. y is a later piece of acknowledged art, which by chance happens to elicit the same kind of regard as x.
- *3. Retrospectively, x can be accorded art status by those able to see that x elicits the same kind of regard as y⁸⁰.

This retains an echo of Dickie's first version of the Institutional Theory, with members acting on behalf of the artworld, although it differs in being retro-active across the millennia. The argument, however, seems to be counter-intuitive. It will be argued in chapter six that the strict separation of 'nature' from 'culture' implicit in this stand-off cannot be sustained. This would seem to suggest that an *ur-artwork* was art from the beginning, as art is first of all just as much a natural kind as a cultural kind.

Furthermore, even today many of the characteristics of art are still those of a natural kind, though they are now closely intertwined with the cultural accretions integral to human art. Step two of the above argument can stand unchanged, though steps one and three should be reworded:

- 1. x is a piece of *ur-art*, which had not at the time been recognised as 'art'.

⁷⁹ Noel Carroll (1999) *Philosophy of Art: a Contemporary Introduction*, London, Routledge, pp. 242-3. This, at least, is how I construe the following passage: 'We recognise the Neolithic tribesman's stones as art, even if he and his culture lacked the concept of art and an artworld, because his intention that the stones be regarded as sources of visual pleasure, even if only by him, happens to correlate with a historically well-precedented artistic intention'.

⁸⁰ This is my attempt to search out the underlying argument; it might be a distortion of Carroll's argument.

2. y is a later piece of acknowledged art, which by chance happens to elicit the same kind of regard as x.
3. Later, x can be *recognised* as art by those able to see that it elicits the same kind of regard as y.

Carroll's criticism of Levinson is that his Historical definition is too broad, because old 'art regards', far from setting the criteria for arthood, can become obsolete, and admit too many unworthy things to art status. He gives the example of verisimilitude, which was still appropriate as an 'art regard' even a century ago. However, Carroll argues that verisimilitude as an art regard has now been overtaken by commonplace 'home videos or Polaroids'⁸¹. It seems here that Carroll is making the same mistake as he has found among advocates of Formalism and what he calls 'neo-formalism', namely to confuse a classificatory definition with a commendatory definition. 'Neo-formalism', according to Carroll's terminology, accepts as art that which satisfyingly combines form and content. This, according to Carroll is a commendatory definition, not a classificatory one, making neo-formalism into:

... a theory that tracks only good art, art worthy of commendation for its satisfying marriage of form and content. But this overlooks all the bad art⁸² ...

However, he himself used this criterion earlier in the same book, when he expressed reluctance to accept the verses in commercial greetings cards as art, as they expressed generalised rather than particular feelings⁸³. Also, we have just seen Carroll reject the possibility of art status both for commonplace technological image making, and he extends his *fatwa* to such highly designed but mass-produced objects as motorboats⁸⁴ and production automobiles⁸⁵. Strangely, he accepts architecture as art⁸⁶, though he offers no argument to explain why architecture is art, but other highly designed though functional manufactured goods are not. There appear to be different factors at work. In the case of home videos and Polaroids, history changed the *evaluative status* of items achieving verisimilitude, but not their classificatory status as art. Here Carroll is making an evaluative not a classificatory move. In the case of the motorboats and automobiles,

⁸¹ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999). p. 246.

⁸² *Ibid* p. 134; for a similar comment regarding Formalism, see p. 115.

⁸³ *Ibid*. p. 62.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*. p. 175.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*. p. 180.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*. p. 32.

commonplaceness again seems to be a factor, effecting a critical evaluation, rather than classification:

Cars too often afford occasions for aesthetic experience . . . buyers purchase such vehicles in order to say something about themselves to the world . . . But our highways are not jammed with artworks⁸⁷.

The question of rarity or commonplaceness as aesthetic properties will feature in the biological account of art to be set out in chapters six and seven. However, Carroll's philosophical stance requires him to minimise the role of the aesthetic in identifying artworks, and in this he is very much the disciple of Dickie, though he stops short of Dickie's early claim that the aesthetic attitude is a myth⁸⁸. Carroll's position is to limit the aesthetic to matters of interpretation and response, rather than to allow the aesthetic a fundamental role in the identification of art, a function he allots to history. The present thesis will seek to reverse this emphasis, allotting to the aesthetic the prime moving force in art, with history playing a supportive role in its *interpretation* and *evaluation*, expressed as statement H (for 'history'):

H Historical factors affect the ontology and interpretation of art rather than its definition and classification.

Having found Levinson's historical definition to contain valuable insights, Noel Carroll subtracted from it Levinson's ambition to use history to define art in general. Instead, Carroll took on the valuable, if humbler, task of explaining how we recognise *individual* artworks as artworks, whether ordinary ones or the wilder offerings of the *avant-garde*. Carroll emphasises that this is not just an academic question:

Should a scattering of dirt and grease on the floor be interpreted or cleaned up? Should we attend to the expressive properties of a (sic) amalgam of crushed and mangled automobile chassis or consign them to the junkyard?⁸⁹

Carroll argues that, despite unsuccessful past attempts, one should not conclude that defining art is impossible⁹⁰. However, Carroll felt that a definition of art is not

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 180.

⁸⁸ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 3.

⁸⁹ Noel Carroll, *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 249-50. Such inadvertent pieces of well-meaning vandalism are reported from time to time, as in the Guardian of 13/01/05, when a sculpture of yellow plastic sheets, assembled by German artist Michael Beutler, was mistaken for rubbish and incinerated by Frankfurt bin men. Thirty of them were subsequently sent to modern art classes to try to ensure that the same mistake would never happen again. As Danto would say, a dose of theory might help, though artists' originality should ensure a good future supply of ill-fated indiscernibles.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 251.

really needed, as in general we are proficient at distinguishing art from non-art⁹¹. But Carroll had observed that, whenever disputes arise, solutions seem to be sought in the presence or absence of links with earlier art⁹². Carroll draws the analogy between art and speciation according to the phylogenetic method of classification, which stresses the line of descent, rather than the phenetic method, which classifies organisms according to structural similarity⁹³. This is one of several references to evolutionary biology by Noel Carroll, some of which would tend to support a naturalistic account of art and the aesthetic. For example, he says we see expressive properties in artworks because:

. . . natural selection has invested us with such a hair-trigger capacity to recognize the ‘shape’ of emotion in others that it often kicks in even when we are attending to nonhuman things⁹⁴.

This question of the evolutionary origins of the aesthetic will be examined in chapters six and seven, so this is not the point at which to examine the issue in detail. The aim here is to challenge the limitations which Carroll is attempting to place on the aesthetic in art. For example, in one of his remarks on Duchamp’s *Fountain*⁹⁵, Carroll says that it was designed to afford no ‘aesthetic experiences in any “ordinary” sense of the phrase⁹⁶’, which he insists must include ‘disinterested contemplation’. He argues elsewhere that aesthetic experience need not include disinterested contemplation⁹⁷, and it is therefore not open for him to use this argument here in order to prove the absence of an aesthetic intention in *Fountain*. It is correct that, with *Fountain*, Duchamp was attacking ‘retinal⁹⁸’ art, and that the work was ‘one in the eye’ to formalists, both addressing, and then confounding, their ‘retinal’ expectations. But it is clear that there are other forms of response to art which may not be ‘retinal’ but involve the mind, and

⁹¹ *Loc. Cit.*

⁹² Noel Carroll, *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 252.

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp. 256-7. Quite independently, in 2000, I made a similar analogy between the evolution of species and art forms, in the thesis for my M.A. Fine Art, (2000) *Reflections on Art and Evolution: towards a descriptive taxonomy of contemporary art forms*, (M. A. Fine Art Dissertation), University of Wales Institute, Cardiff.

⁹⁴ Noel Carroll, *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 100.

⁹⁵ Marcel Duchamp’s 1917 submission to the Independents exhibition, but not shown. This image is so familiar, it seemed unnecessary to reproduce it here. For an account see Calvin Tomkins (1997) *Duchamp: a biography*, London, Chatto and Windus, pp. 180-86.

⁹⁶ Noel Carroll, *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 180.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 179.

⁹⁸ Calvin Tomkins writes, ‘It was Gustave Courbet, [Duchamp] argued, who had turned art into a retinal affair; until Courbet, art had appealed to the intellect in many different ways . . . but the powerful example of Courbet had ruled all that out – with disastrous consequences,’ in his *Op. Cit.* (1997), p. 58.

are nonetheless *aesthetic*. After just two more paragraphs, Carroll himself draws attention to Duchamp's *Paris Air*, a glass vial of fifty cubic centimetres of the eponymous gases. Carroll calls this piece 'impish' because it 'affords an aesthetic experience of quality of impishness'⁹⁹. Surely 'impishness' is no more 'aesthetic . . . in any "ordinary" sense of the phrase' than words one could use to describe *Fountain*, such as 'outrageous', 'original', 'cheeky', 'abject' or 'witty'. Carroll goes on to claim that *Paris Air* is impish 'just because it is an artwork'. This conforms to Sceptical Hypothesis 7, from chapter one:

SH7 The source of the aesthetic lies in *art* rather than in *nature* (paraphrase of Hegel)

This seems counter-intuitive. It would still be impish if sold in a Paris tourist information office as a souvenir¹⁰⁰. The point which Carroll is trying to make is that an artwork's aesthetic properties are dependent on our classifying it as an artwork, and of course the perception of agency is one of the factors which colour our aesthetic response to anything we encounter¹⁰¹. Ian Ground plays with this issue in *Art or Bunk?* in which he asks the reader to consider which properties would match an object which is a meteorite, compared to the properties of its identical counterpart, which happens to be a Henry Moore sculpture¹⁰². The point here is that the classification of the object as art will change the aesthetic response, but this is not always a factor, as people often respond aesthetically to objects they know to be natural forms (e.g. the Malvern Hills) or to man-made objects they do not really consider to be works of art. Examples of the latter would be the Eiffel tower or the Clifton suspension bridge, which could equally be considered as feats of engineering. To claim that aesthetic properties devolve upon the classification of an object as a work of art is far too limiting a claim, and does not

⁹⁹ Noel Carroll, *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 181. Note: the expected definite article before 'quality' is absent in Carroll's text.

¹⁰⁰ This statement adopts Carroll's viewpoint for the sake of argument, which assumes that he would not classify such a souvenir as an artwork. According to the inclusive ontology to be proposed later in this thesis, a souvenir equivalent of *Paris Air* would indeed be accepted as an artwork, even if only a piece of 'folk art'.

¹⁰¹ Julian Opie plays with this factor brilliantly, in his piece *H*, in the Tate collection. It is a subtly abstracted imitation of a wall heater, designed to catch out art-lovers who are fearful of being caught lavishing their aesthetic attention on mere fixtures and fittings. In this case, if they are too cautious, they will miss the work entirely. See Plate 1d, in Appendix E.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=20363&searchid=9613>.

¹⁰² Ian Ground (1989) *Art or Bunk?* London, Bristol Classical Press, p. 26.

reflect the full range of our traffic with the aesthetic in nature and everyday life, let alone in art.

In his deflationary impulse to restrict the remit of the aesthetic, Carroll misrepresents Baumgarten's position:

Baumgarten chose this label [aesthetics] because he thought that artworks primarily address sensory perception and very low-level forms of cognition. The important thing to notice about Baumgarten's usage of the term is that he looked at art from the reception side of things. He conceived of it from the perspective of the way in which art addresses spectators¹⁰³.

Although the aesthetic movement in the Nineteenth Century might have rendered the concept of the aesthetic rather effete, it is inaccurate historically to attribute such a position to Baumgarten, who emphasised cognition in his definition of the aesthetic as, 'the science of sensuous knowing' (*scientia cognitionis sensitivae*)¹⁰⁴. Nicholas Davey has written that Baumgarten's aesthetics are often underestimated because few seem to realise that he went on to develop his concept into the more *active* 'science of sensuous representation *and expression*' (my Italics) (*scientia sensitive cognoscendi et proponendi*)¹⁰⁵. A fuller discussion of Baumgarten and Kant's aesthetics will follow in Chapters Four and Five. All that is necessary to say here is that Carroll's conception of the aesthetic, while much more balanced and comprehensive than that of his mentor Dickie in 1964, nevertheless gives an unwarrantedly restricted account of both the role and the importance of the aesthetic dimension in the arts:

One can at least imagine a philosophy of art that renders questions of aesthetics peripheral, particularly in terms of the definition of art . . .¹⁰⁶

. . . a philosophy of art would not regard aesthetic experiences or aesthetic properties as necessary ingredients in all art (although it might recognise them as important)¹⁰⁷.

Hence the diagram in Fig. 1, in section 1.3.1, which shows the aesthetic as *contingent* rather than *necessary* in art. Carroll's estimation of the role and importance of the

¹⁰³ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from *Aesthetica* § 1 by Nicholas Davey (1992) "Baumgarten", in David Cooper *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 41-3, p. 40 Col. 1. The translation is Davey's own; when I translate the word *sensitive* I use the word 'sensorily', following the example of Paul Guyer (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 29, on the basis he gives that the words 'sensitive' and 'sensual' have other connotations.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas Davey (1989) in "Baumgarten's Aesthetics: a Post-Gadamerian Reflection", *British Journal of Aesthetics* (Vol. 29), 101-115, p. 107.

¹⁰⁶ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 159. The quotation is given more fully in Section 1.3.1, above.

¹⁰⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

aesthetic might well have been adequate if aesthetic properties were in fact delimited in the way he describes. Ironically for the advocate of an historical/narrative account, Carroll fails to take account of the way the context of history itself modifies aesthetic properties. His cut-down model of the aesthetic as merely ‘design awareness’ means that Carroll, who presents himself as the advocate of an ‘historical account’, is arguing for a version of aesthetic properties which are conceived in a-historical terms, as described by Sibley¹⁰⁸, which are supervenient, in Carroll’s words, on the ‘bare properties’ of artworks:

- 1) Expressive properties (sad)
- 2) Character properties (bold)
- 3) Gestalt properties (unified)
- 4) Taste factors (garish) and
- 5) Mental States (sublime, beautiful)¹⁰⁹.

The mistake Carroll seems to be making is to see the aesthetic exclusively in psychological, or even physiological, terms, as responses to the primary and secondary properties instantiated in the physical objects of art. To be fair to Carroll, he finds plentiful historical and contemporary evidence for this narrow and arguably inappropriate application of what he calls, ‘beauty theory’ to aesthetic theory¹¹⁰. However, his response is not to try to broaden the current use of the term ‘aesthetic’ in analytical philosophy of art, but he chooses to follow Dickie in trying to ensnare the meaning of the aesthetic within the tunnel vision of formalism¹¹¹.

Carroll was indeed correct to identify an influential ‘formalist tendency’ running through Hutcheson, parts of Kant, through Schopenhauer and Bell to Beardsley¹¹². However, this formalist tradition was not the sole tradition within aesthetics to place a

¹⁰⁸ F. Sibley (2001) *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP.

¹⁰⁹ This is a compressed summary of Carroll’s account of ‘The aesthetic dimension’, in *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 182-201, which includes the dimension of ‘design appreciation’ he had earlier described in his section on artistic form, pp. 137-152. At the end of the section on ‘The aesthetic dimension’ he tries unconvincingly to qualify his position, in a statement rather out of keeping with the tenor of the rest of the book. Perhaps one can detect the hand of an editor or a well-wisher trying to spare the author possible criticism: ‘Limiting the scope of the aesthetic in this way does not disparage it. Aesthetic experience is of overwhelming importance to art’ (p. 201). One could not have guessed it from reading the rest of his account.

¹¹⁰ His gives a particularly hard-hitting attack on aesthetic theories of art in Noel Carroll (1991) “Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory” *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 22n no. 4, pp. 307-34, reprinted N. Carroll (2001a) *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, CUP, pp. 20-41.

¹¹¹ Paul Guyer criticises Carroll for his unbalanced account of the history of these issues in his (2003) “History of Modern Aesthetics” in Jerrold Levinson (Ed.) (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 25-60).

¹¹² Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1991; 2001a edn.) pp. 20-41.

high premium on the sensory in art. A different tradition saw sensory cognition and expression as defining factors of the aesthetic, as we shall see in our study of Baumgarten, in chapter four. Carroll seemed unaware, when he made the following assertion, of this vigorous alternative *aesthetic* tradition to formalism:

One way to attempt to save the aesthetic approach is to effectively redefine what is meant by ‘aesthetic’ in such a way that anything that is an appropriate response to art is redesignated as an *aesthetic* response¹¹³.

However, Carroll claims that to make this move would be:

. . . at best a stipulative redefinition, if not a downright misuse of language. Moreover, and more important, to redefine ‘aesthetic’ in this way is tantamount to giving up the core of aesthetic theories of art, viz., the reliance on a unique aesthetic experience, different in kind from those of other realms of human activity, and therefore, suited to separating art from morality, utility, knowledge, and so on¹¹⁴.

This is not a balanced account of the ‘traditional’ meaning of the term aesthetic, nor even of the beauty theory of Hutcheson or Kant, though it might represent a strand which included Schopenhauer or Bell. The view that the aesthetic and the moral are separate realms is neither necessary nor universal, as we saw in the case of Hume, in the last chapter. If any ‘redefinition’ has taken place, it was the redefinition of the term ‘aesthetic’ by the ‘art for art’s sake’ movement, continuing in Modernist formalism¹¹⁵, which Carroll persists in trying to pin to the chest of the ‘aesthetic’, despite plentiful counter-evidence to invalidate such a move. His account of Kant’s aesthetics is based on the first 22 (out of 60) sections of the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, and Carroll ignores *dependent beauty* and the *aesthetic idea*, apart from giving one nominal mention to each¹¹⁶. He even denies that Kant had a philosophy of art¹¹⁷, and there is no mention of Kant’s theory of Genius, in which Kant claimed that the artist presents, in sensory form, the abstract Ideas of Reason, such as freedom and morality.

Carroll’s position tries to rob aesthetic properties of their purchase on cognition, morality and utility, because of the historical accident that the same word, ‘aesthetic’, has been employed in at least two different ways, a) the narrow formalist sense associated with beauty theory and Bell, and b) the broader cognitivist sense as coined by

¹¹³ *Ibid.* Footnote 51, printed on p. 399.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* Footnote 51, continued on p. 400.

¹¹⁵ Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (2003) and Kai Hammermeister (2002) *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, CUP.

¹¹⁶ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1991; 2001a edn.) p. 31.

¹¹⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

Baumgarten, of which Carroll seems ignorant. The account of the aesthetic presented in this thesis is trying to reclaim the vision of Baumgarten, who taught that aesthetic knowledge is different from scientific knowledge, but is still to be valued for the way it communicates by means that are not available to logic. Carroll seems unaware that the responses to art that he terms ‘*artistic*’ were originally classified as *aesthetic*. The term ‘aesthetic’ in this sense is employed as Baumgarten intended, not in the way in which it was used after being diverted away from cognition, as began to happen, it appears, following Kant’s definitions of ‘free beauty’ (See sections 5.3.1 and 5.5.1, below).

Nor does Carroll seem to appreciate that the very aesthetic properties that he is trying to restrict and cut loose from history, are in fact integrally shaped by the historical context of each artwork. It will be argued in this thesis that aesthetic properties are not fully or adequately accounted for as properties supervenient upon physical properties, transmitted by raw light-waves or sound pulses to act upon our sense-processing systems, called ‘input-systems’ and ‘transducers’ by Fodor. They are also affected by ‘top-down’, ‘isotropic’ and ‘Quinean’ systems¹¹⁸. In overlooking the role of ‘higher processing’, Carroll is forcing upon any aesthetic account of the arts a crude ‘empiricist’ model of aesthetic properties, which Currie showed to be untenable¹¹⁹. The historical context of the creation of any artwork will have a crucial bearing on a work’s aesthetic properties, as Danto demonstrated in his paper, ‘Art and Meaning’¹²⁰. This features the three versions of the *Brillo Box*: the ‘commercial art’ by Harvey, the ‘original’ by Warhol and the ‘appropriation’ by Bidlo. Although (in theory) ‘indiscernible’ from each other, all three installations had very different *aesthetic* properties, depending on their place in the narrative. Each makes a separate contribution to the ‘conversation’ that is the story of art, as Carroll’s own historical narrative theory fully acknowledges¹²¹, although he fails to acknowledge the reciprocity between the historical and the aesthetic¹²². In other words, in his attempt to force the ‘aesthetic’ back

¹¹⁸ See chapter two, section 2.4.1.

¹¹⁹ Gregory Currie (1989) *An Ontology of Art*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, Chapter 2, “Empiricism”, pp. 17–45.

¹²⁰ Arthur C. Danto (2000) “Art and Meaning” in N. Carroll (Ed.) *Theories of Art Today*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press. (pp. 130–140).

¹²¹ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* p. 255.

¹²² The nature of this link is not a new discovery, but was even commented upon by the ancients, who were well aware that the new realism differed from the earlier archaic style, a matter which Plato apparently deplored, but of which Quintillian approved: ‘For indeed there is very little grace in a body which stands upright; the face, for example, looks straight ahead, the arms are allowed to hang down, the feet are joined, and the work as a whole is rigid from head to toe. But the familiar relaxed curvature and, as I might even call it, movement, provides a kind of liveliness

into the formalist straitjacket, Carroll is guilty of ignoring the relevance to aesthetic experience of history, history being, supposedly, his major contribution to the philosophy of art. Carroll's model of the aesthetic as 'design awareness' would have no way to deal with the aesthetic discriminations made by Danto between the three Brillo Box installations.

Finally, Carroll distinguished two uses of the word 'art', standing for 1) the practice of art and 2) the artwork¹²³. He finds that an equivocation over these two uses of the word is the flaw in the Neo-Wittgensteinian¹²⁴ account: 1. 'art' as practice is an *open* concept, but 2) 'art', meaning the objects of such practice, is *closed*. Rather than say that it is impossible to define art, Carroll sidesteps the task, choosing to hold to the prize of explaining how we identify individual artworks through *narrative*, a process especially useful with *avant-garde* artworks. However, this still leaves Carroll with Levinson's problem of regression to the *ur*-arts, and he returns to this problem at the end of his book, *Philosophy of Art*. He seems to accept Dickie's criticism of Levinson's explanation of *ur*-art, which requires an earlier, 'pre-historical' *functional* definition. He wafts the objection aside, however, as he claims that this functional definition is only very limited. He claims that 'protosystems', like tribal art, are outside the Western artworld and therefore require different criteria. However:

Historical narration does not collapse into functional analysis, since functional analysis only makes sense with respect to protosystems¹²⁵.

Faced with a similar explanation for art and *ur*-art by Levinson, George Dickie had joked about someone being 'just a little pregnant'¹²⁶. So, apparently, a naturalistic aesthetic is needed only to 'kick-start' art, and history takes over thereafter. Carroll even manages to draw comfort from this inconsistency:

The fact that we employ more than one method for identifying art merely reflects the complexity of the phenomenon¹²⁷.

and emotion.' (translated J.J. Pollitt (1965) *The Art of Greece 1400-31 B.C.: Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, p. 63.

¹²³ Noell Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 219.

¹²⁴ This is an allusion to a famous paper by Morris Weitz (1956) "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", *JAAC*, Vol 15, pp. 27-35, reprinted in A. Neill & A. Ridley (Eds.) (1995) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, Boston, McGraw Hill, pp. 183-92. Weitz argued that 'art' was an 'open concept', where it was inadvisable to try to define art, which might set boundaries to possible future developments.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 263.

¹²⁶ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 42

¹²⁷ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 264.

Dickie, too, realises that his artworld is beset by a similar problem, and his response to it is also unconvincing:

For the institutional theory, the first arts are those that have a place within the institutional structure that is the artworld when that structure gels – the gelling may take place over a considerable period of time. Ur-arts are things that resemble later art but that do not yet have an artworld to fit into¹²⁸.

It seems that little thought has been given to the nature of that phenomenon being invoked, on all sides, by the term ‘aesthetic’ and which is both disparaged while being seen by these deflationists as the spark which ignited Ur-art. In chapter two, a start was made to investigate the nature of the aesthetic in art by looking to see if there is any empirical evidence for the ‘aesthetic attitude’. It appeared that there was. Chapters six and seven will try to probe further into the scientific evidence, for there must be some more fundamental factors at work than narrative, and it will be argued in this thesis that those factors are the aesthetic and the perception of *agency*.

3.3.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter section examined and found wanting the arguments advanced in favour of two of the new Sceptical Hypotheses (IHP and AUA):

*IHP Art should be defined by its Intentional and Historical Properties

*AUA The Aesthetic is *necessary only* in Ur-Art.

The arguments advanced by Levinson for IHP again removed the phenomenology of aesthetic experience from the discourse, replacing it with observable behaviour (a ‘regard’) which had been sanctioned by an institutional process, ‘history’. It was argued, against IHP, that although history has an important role in artistic response, it is in the domain of art’s interpretation and evaluation, not in its definition and classification, where, against AUA, the role of the aesthetic is *necessary* to all art, and not *contingent* to all bar Ur-Art, as claimed. Thus the role of history was formulated as item H:

H Historical factors affect the ontology and interpretation of art rather than its definition and classification.

¹²⁸ George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 42.

It was observed as an irony that Noel Carroll, advocate of narrative history as a means of identifying works of art, ignores the relevance of history in shaping the aesthetic qualities of artworks, which he insists in portraying in empirical terms as ‘design awareness’ and responding to the (physicalist) ‘bare properties’ of art objects, ignoring the ‘top-down’ conceptual factors which will be explored in chapter seven on cognitive neuroscience and the aesthetic.

It is now time to challenge the widely accepted distinction made by Stephen Davis between ‘functional’ and ‘procedural’ theories of art.

3.4 Questioning Davies’ Functional/Procedural Distinction

The case for deflationary aesthetics has been cemented firmly into the fabric of recent Anglo-American analytical aesthetics by Stephen Davies’ book on *Definitions of Art* of 1991¹²⁹, a remarkably comprehensive survey of all the relevant publications on that topic over the previous 30 years, with rigorous analytical arguments at every twist in the story. He thereby succeeded in structuring the subsequent conduct of this debate, most notably with his claim for a principled distinction between ‘functional’ and ‘procedural’ art theories. He has repeated this message recently in his undergraduate textbook of 2006, named, like Carroll’s undergraduate textbook, in the Hegelian manner: *The Philosophy of Art*¹³⁰. He also followed Hegel and Carroll in ignoring the aesthetics of nature. Like Carroll, he also avoids proffering his own a definition of art. After his 1991 book on that subject, he wrote that it had not been his aim to arrive at a ‘formulaic definition’:

Rather than settling the issue of the definition of art, my aim has been to demonstrate the usefulness of an approach to aesthetic issues – problems of ontology, evaluation, and interpretation, as well as of definition – which views the debates involved in terms of a distinction between functional and procedural conceptions of the nature of art¹³¹.

¹²⁹ Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (1991).

¹³⁰ Stephen Davies (2006) *The Philosophy of Art*, Oxford, Blackwell. Hegel might be seen to have launched the sceptical approach to the term ‘aesthetic’, at a time when was the word was unavoidable as the title of his lecture series of the 1820s. He explained why he would have preferred to call his lectures *Philosophy of Art* or *Philosophy of Fine Art*: ‘By adopting this expression we at once exclude the beauty of nature’. See chapters 1 to 3 of Hegel’s *Introduction to Aesthetics*, reprinted in A. Neill & A. Ridley (Eds) *Op.Cit.*, (pp.139-149) p. 139. Their source was *From Hegel’s Introduction to Aesthetics, being the Introduction to the Berlin Aesthetics Lectures of the 1820s*, (1975) trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

¹³¹ Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (1991) p. 218. It is worth remarking that, in this instance, his use of the word ‘aesthetic’ is much broader than the narrow meaning he tries to pin to Beardsley’s chest.

Stephen Davies makes it clear that this distinction between the functional and the procedural follows from Danto's view, based on such thought experiments as the 'can opener', simultaneously, but independently, created by a) an artist and b) an inventor; the one a sculpture and the other, though physically identical, a mere kitchen utensil¹³². Thus Danto compares the artwork, with its artistic properties, to its 'indiscernible' *doppelgänger*, which lacks artistic properties. Davies says that Danto taught him that,

... whatever aesthetic properties artworks may share with their real counterparts (should they have them), they take on other aesthetic properties when seen properly as artworks falling within artistic traditions¹³³.

The question arises as to whether this functional/procedural distinction will stand up to analytical questioning.

The tactic employed by Dickie, Carroll and Davies is to confine the aesthetic to a very narrow base, an extreme version of formalism that even Clive Bell could not confine himself to emotionally, when it came to his own enthusiastic response to William Frith's painting of Paddington Station, which spills over into his appreciative criticism of the work he is supposedly dismissing as 'not art'¹³⁴. When Stephen Davies also pigeon-holes the 'traditional aesthetic view' into the very untypical position that 'aesthetic interest' can refer only to the intrinsic, plastic properties of the work, and not at all to the work's extrinsic relationships, he is either guilty of a deliberate misrepresentation in order to diminish the aesthetic by a *reductio*, or he is mistaken in his understanding of 'the traditional aesthetic view'¹³⁵.

Stephen Davies' argument (or his assumptions) would seem to go like this (items that are in my opinion false are marked with an asterisk):

- *1. Traditional ('functional') aesthetics acknowledges as aesthetic properties only those intrinsic features which are directly, sensorily, perceivable to the respondent.
2. However, the ('procedural') philosophy of art has revealed the importance to the classification and understanding of art of extrinsic factors such as those revealed by historical knowledge.

¹³² Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) pp. 29-30.

¹³³ S. Davies, *Op. Cit.* (1991) p. 69.

¹³⁴ See Clive Bell (1949) *Art* (New edition; first published 1914) London, Chatto and Windus, p. 18. The painting, by William Powell Frith (1819-1909) is *The Railway Station* (1860-2) at Royal Holloway College. It is illustrated in Lionel Lambourne (1999) *Victorian Painting*, London, Phaidon, Fig. 321, p. 265.

¹³⁵ See Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (2006) chapter 3, especially sections 3.3-3.4, pp. 60-68.

- *3. Therefore traditional aesthetics did not acknowledge the importance of history in the classification and understanding of art.

One is inclined to ask whether (3) is true. It takes only a few minutes to find evidence to the contrary. The appreciation of art has long been historical, if not from the beginning¹³⁶. The importance of history to art was not the discovery of Danto, Levinson, Carroll, Davies or even of Hegel. Vasari wrote of Giotto as a ten-year-old boy, talent-spotted by Cimabue and brought to his workshop in Florence, where:

. . . . in a very short space of time, Giotto not only captured his master's own style but also began to draw so ably from the life that he made a decisive break with the crude traditional Byzantine style and brought to life the great art of painting as we know it today ¹³⁷

If the conclusion (3) is false, it must be because either one or both of the premises were false. The deflationists' *aunt sally* version of the aesthetic, given in statement (1), is a myth, as Dickie might say, constructed by them for the sake of argument, as Carroll admitted, when commenting on Dickie's 'demolition job'¹³⁸. This account of the aesthetic is a myth that both Noel Carroll and Stephen Davies continue to present in their recent undergraduate textbooks¹³⁹.

It is important, therefore, to challenge this 'functional/procedural' dichotomy. The argument used by the early Danto, and later by Carroll and Davies could be summarised as follows:

- 1 Both artworks and 'mere real things' have 'intrinsic' aesthetic properties that have been described as 'supervenient' upon their physical properties.
- *2 Artworks also have 'extrinsic' relations with entities outside their own boundaries, and these relations determine the artwork's 'artistic' properties, but only once the artwork is identified as *art*.
- *3 Only the extrinsic ('procedural') artistic properties depend on external relations, such as their place in history.

¹³⁶ If tribal arts are any guide to what might have been going on in *ur-art*, Denys Dutton reports that, among the potential additional candidates for his list of eight elements characteristic of tribal arts, is one summarized by Dutton as follows: 'the inherent tension between artistic tradition and novelty.' See Denys Dutton (2000) "But They Don't Have Our Concept of Art" in N. Carroll (Ed.) *Theories of Art Today*, Madison Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, (pp. 217-238) p. 232. Dutton found this in H. Gene Blocker, (1993) *The Aesthetics of Primitive Art*, Lanham, Md., University Press of America, p. 148.

¹³⁷ Giorgio Vasari (1568) *Lives of the Artists*, translated George Bull (1965) Harmondsworth, Penguin, p. 58.

¹³⁸ See Section 1.3.2.

¹³⁹ Noel Carroll *Op. Cit.* (1999) and Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (2006).

- *4 Therefore the artwork's intrinsic ('functional') aesthetic properties do not depend on relations with entities outside their boundaries, such as their place in history.

This thesis argues that this is a flawed argument and seems to reflect a misunderstanding of the aesthetic, which, on the contrary, is itself *essentially contextual*, or *relational*. Red berries have evolved to be red, because selective pressures favoured species of trees whose fruits were easily visible to birds and primates with colour vision: red dots against a background of green, a *relational* property. This example also has a temporal dimension: the fruits were green, but are now red, signalling a significant change. Clearly, all 'aesthetic' choices operate against a background of contrast, which can be spatial or temporal (i.e. historical), whether visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, haptic or in any other possible perceptible way. In music, aesthetic properties are relational; a note by itself cannot exist without the contrast of relative silence, and the contrasting pitches of other notes, whether contemporaneous, preceding or following. In the above argument, (2) , (3) and (4) appear to be false, and with them the claim that 'procedural' artistic properties are relational or extrinsic, while 'functional' aesthetic properties are intrinsic to the object, and therefore different in kind, because they are not relational. If my argument is accepted, the corrected argument should be:

- 1 Both artworks and 'mere real things' have 'intrinsic' aesthetic properties that have been described as 'supervenient' upon their physical properties.
- 2 All objects also have 'extrinsic' relations with entities outside their own boundaries, and these also contribute to objects' aesthetic and other properties.
- 3 Therefore, an artwork's intrinsic ('functional') aesthetic properties are affected by their relations with entities outside their boundaries, including their place in history.

The point of the above is not to argue that there are no differences between artworks and 'mere real things', but that the nature of the aesthetic, and the functional/procedural dichotomy has been misrepresented by deflationary aesthetics. There is no principled way to separate the 'artistic' properties claimed by Danto, Carroll and Davies as exclusive to art, from the common or garden variety of mere 'aesthetic' or 'functional' properties. This does not remove from Danto his insight, as Davies summarises it, that 'artworks stand to their real (including representational) counterparts as actions stand to

mere movements and persons stand to their bodies¹⁴⁰. Rather, it is arguing that there is only one aesthetic, for nature, interpersonal relationships and art. For this reason, Davies misread the state of affairs when he believed that, after Duchamp, ‘ the procedures of art making have parted company with point of art¹⁴¹’, revealing the nature of art as essentially *procedural* rather than *functional*. This thesis will argue that it never was ‘functional’ in Davies’ sense, nor ‘procedural’, but invariably *both at the same time*, as both factors are always present and interactive.

The conclusion, therefore, is that Sceptical Hypothesis F/PT is invalid:

*F/PT Davies’ Functional and Procedural distinction is Tenable

Finally, it is apparent that the prior dominance of formalism has been exaggerated in rhetoric designed to aggrandise the supposed historical and institutional revolution brought about by the concerted deflationist interventions. All that is needed to confirm that their claims are exaggerated, is to consider one aspect of the pedagogical history of Humanities teaching in American colleges. A textbook from the 1950’s reveals that the undergraduates of that time were taught a catholic combination of ‘design appreciation’ *together with history*. The experience of teaching generations of freshmen had shown the professors that there was a task to be done, to open the eyes of novices to the rhetorical devices of artistic media. The following quotation comes from a 1957 textbook, *Learning to Look*, compiled from the handbook which had been developed to support the University of Chicago’s required Humanities I course, comprising literature, music and art. Joshua C. Taylor, describes the book’s rationale:

In the presentation of each of the arts, it has been a guiding premise of the course staff that all study, whether critical or historical, logically begins with the work of art itself. This in no sense means, as becomes clear during the progress of the course, that the study of a work stops with what can be immediately seen or heard. This is only the beginning. But unless the student has become critically aware of and has learned to define his own immediate experience in confronting a work of art, the superstructure of history, critical theories, and other elucidating systems (including those of purely formal analysis) may effectively smother the all-important spark of vitality that separates the meaningful study of art from a routine academic exercise. Seeing, we have found, is sometimes more difficult for the student of art than believing¹⁴².

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (1991) p. 69.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 218.

¹⁴² Joshua C. Taylor (1957) *Learning to Look*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. v.

In chapter two we saw what seems to be involved in ‘learning to see’ in the context of drawing, and why it might be helpful to teach it. It is something of an exaggeration to claim that 1964 was the Damascene moment when the fogs of formalism were pierced by the light of history and institutional common sense. As Sheldon Richmond has commented:

Given that Gombrich and other historians of art, including Malraux and Marxists such as Ernst Fischer, have discussed works of art, and *traditions* of images, as part of traditions and institutions, Dickie’s theory of art appears commonplace and unoriginal¹⁴³.

The argument now turns to a different case of scepticism towards the aesthetic, from an unexpected quarter, Ernst Gombrich. The solution to the conundrum this poses provides a very useful way into considering the realism of the aesthetic, from Karl Popper, in a way complementary to the approach suggested already in this chapter by Joseph Margolis. Also, the next chapter section follows the development of Danto, particularly in the last chapter of the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, from physicalism to aesthetic realism.

3.5 Beyond Deflationism: Gombrich, Popper, Danto and Margolis

The names in the above heading do not look an immediately obvious grouping. Gombrich looks a less likely choice than Goodman, whose approach to exemplification will be touched on in the chapter on Baumgarten. Nor is Popper known for his aesthetics.

Gombrich’s relevance arises from his scepticism towards expressions of aesthetic value. Sheldon Richmond has shown that in the area of aesthetic value, Gombrich failed to apply Popper’s philosophy in the way he had used it to address questions of interpretation and the history of representation and style¹⁴⁴. An argument by Richmond that Popper’s principles can also be applied to aesthetic values will be

¹⁴³ Sheldon Richmond (1994) *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the Philosophies of Science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, pp. 88-9. Also, space did not allow me to include W. G. Gallie’s compound anticipations (by nearly a decade) of Danto’s ‘artworld’, Dickie’s ‘Institution Theory’ and Levinson and Carroll’s ‘Historical’ approaches, in two brilliant but neglected papers, his (1956a) ‘Essentially Contested Concepts’ in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 56, pp. 167-198 and 1956b) ‘Art as an Essentially Contested Concept’, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, pp. 97-114.

¹⁴⁴ Sheldon Richmond *Op. Cit.* (1994).

quoted here as a counter-argument to aesthetic non-realism. In a footnote, Richmond comments on the way Dickie's attack on the aesthetic attitude leads to relativism:

. . . [Dickie's] theory of art is an improvement over the a prioristic approach and the over the 'attitudinal' approach with one reservation: unlike Gombrich he equates the aesthetic with the social conventions of critics, and hence falls into relativism . . . The a prioristic and attitudinal approach[s] escape relativism. 'A priorists' postulate *universal* rules of criticism. 'Attitudinalists' postulate an *inter-subjective* aesthetic attitude or aesthetic stance. Because Dickie equates the aesthetic with the conventional standards of critics, he relativizes the aesthetic to the variety of historical standards of critics¹⁴⁵.

The same criticism of relativism also applies to socially motivated sceptics who view the aesthetic as merely a 'snob's charter' (to be discussed in section 8.5.2.2, below).

Although Danto was caught in the cross-currents of positivism and played a role in deflationary aesthetics, here it will be argued that, in the last chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*¹⁴⁶, he presents an approach to art that can be seen as Realist, and congruent with Baumgarten's account of the aesthetic. The last name in our line-up, Margolis, for long a scourge of Danto's aesthetic scepticism, argues both for aesthetic realism and for the possibility of a plurality of interpretations which is close to Popper's account of 'guesses' open to peer review that he sees as the test-bed for cultural values.

3.5.1 Gombrich and Popper

Ernst Gombrich opened the *Story of Art* with one of the most famous expressions of aesthetic scepticism: 'There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists'¹⁴⁷. Paradoxically, Gombrich will enjoy two incarnations in this thesis, both as a sceptic of the aesthetic, here, and as its advocate in chapter six. While known primarily for his application of Popper's philosophies of Sociology and Science to a) the history of art and b) to the history of representation¹⁴⁸, Sheldon Richmond has shown that Gombrich rarely addressed the *aesthetics* of 'fine art'¹⁴⁹, and that when he did it was in

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 89.

¹⁴⁶ Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: a Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

¹⁴⁷ Ernst Gombrich (1950; 1963 edn.) *The Story of Art*, London, Phaidon, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Ernst Gombrich (1960) *Art and Illusion: a study in the psychology of pictorial representation* (consulted: 1963 reset of 2nd Edition, 1962), London, Phaidon.

¹⁴⁹ Sheldon Richmond *Op. Cit.* (1994). Although Richmond does not mention the fact, Gombrich does discuss the aesthetics of decorative art, in Ernst Gombrich (1979) *The Sense of Order: A Study in the psychology of decorative art* (consulted: 2nd edition, 1984) London, Phaidon.



sceptical vein, revealing an inconsistency in Gombrich's application of Popperian principles to art. Although Gombrich applied Popper to the historical, sociological and representational problems of art, he failed to apply the same principles to art's aesthetics¹⁵⁰.

Richmond says that the aim of Popper's sociology was to explain the intended and unintended consequences of people's rational actions¹⁵¹. To apply this, Gombrich drew on three Popperian principles for the study of technical and sociological problems in art history to explain why artists work in different styles in different traditions:

1. Artworks are the outcome of rational actions (called the 'zero method').
2. The task of art history is to show how artworks are the result of *individual artists'* actions on the basis of their *individual aims* (called 'methodological individualism').
3. Artists work in historical contexts. These contexts a) set problems for artists to solve and b) supply them with certain expectations, styles and techniques (both together are called 'situational logic').

Gombrich was also indebted to Popper's advocacy of *methodology* in the philosophy of science¹⁵², in the form of 'trial and error'. This Gombrich applied to the history of representation, in which artists refined their techniques to achieve illusions by improving upon their less successful attempts, in a process of 'making and matching', analogously to scientists testing and improving their theories by trial and error.

However, Richmond observed that in the case of aesthetics, Gombrich took up a position similar to Michael Polanyi's rejection of methodology in science¹⁵³ on three grounds: a) historical, b) psychological and c) logical¹⁵⁴. Polanyi argued that history confirmed that scientists did not work according to method, but often ignored inconsistent results. His psychological argument stated that, in order to understand a theory, scientists needed to like it, being committed to the tacit understandings of an authoritative 'master scientist'. His logical argument was that scientific method was

¹⁵⁰ Richmond gives an outline of all the arguments in the Introduction (Chapter One), *Op. Cit.* (1994) pp. 9-19.

¹⁵¹ Karl Popper (1957) *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

¹⁵² Karl Popper (1959; 1972) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

¹⁵³ Michael Polanyi (1958) *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, London, Harper.

¹⁵⁴ Sheldon Richmond *Op. Cit.* (1994) pp. 13-14, expanding his arguments in footnotes and in Chapter 3, pp. 54-89.

defeated by Meno's paradox, which held that if you are searching but do not know what you are looking for, you won't know when you've found it¹⁵⁵.

Richmond summarises Popper's known replies to these arguments. To the historical and psychological arguments, Popper replied that methodology is not designed to give a) an historical account of scientific practice, or b) to take the tacit understandings of experts into account. Instead, its role is to give 'guidelines', so that explicit results can be openly discussed and tested. Finally, c) Meno's paradox is not relevant, because science is not a process of 'finding truth', so much as 'removing error'.

Because Gombrich did not discuss these issues explicitly, Richmond gathers scattered comments from his writings. These reveal that Gombrich's scepticism towards the aesthetic is analogous to Polanyi's scepticism towards scientific methodology, particularly in addressing the prime question: 'How do you know if an artwork is any good?'

Richmond shows that Gombrich's objections, like Polanyi's, are a) *historical*, b) *psychological* and c) *logical*. Gombrich argued that, a) *historically*, with changes of fashion, artists have regularly over- or under-valued other works of art. His *psychological* argument b) claimed that, in order to understand a work and respond to it aesthetically, you need the expert knowledge of a connoisseur (equivalent to Polanyi's tacit understandings of the master-scientist), and also you need to *like* an artwork. Gombrich's *logical* argument c) is that the words used in aesthetics are vague (echoes of Wittgenstein) and are rendered more precise only by the application of 'non-aesthetic' frameworks, such as using historical principles to select a group of works for comparison. This refusal of 'non-aesthetic' frameworks in making aesthetic judgments suggests that Gombrich had adopted some of the formalists' separation of the 'aesthetic' from other aspects of art, which had been one of George Dickie's objections to formalism.

Richmond shows that Gombrich is consistent, however, in his application of Popper's *sociological* rules: 1) artists have their own aims¹⁵⁶, 2) artists act rationally¹⁵⁷ and 3) artists solve the problems presented to them by their social contexts¹⁵⁸. This

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, in summary pp. 13-14, expanded in chapter three, pp. 54-89.

¹⁵⁶ 'methodological individualism'.

¹⁵⁷ 'zero-method'.

¹⁵⁸ 'situational logic'.

gives Gombrich his explanation for the rapid turnover of styles in the twentieth century. Artists were faced by a choice: to remain ‘traditional’ or to do something new, a choice which he called ‘The Logic of Vanity Fair’¹⁵⁹, leading to polarised groups, with artists caught up in the ‘logic of fashion’ which compromised their independence and made critical evaluation impossible.

Just as Polanyi had insisted that tacit knowledge and attraction to a theory underpinned scientific understanding, Gombrich insisted that appreciation of an artwork depends on human psychology, contingencies of individual background, such as erudition and connoisseurship, leading to a personal involvement and liking for a work, making ‘objective’ evaluation, according to *universal rules or principles*, impossible¹⁶⁰. This is consistent with Stolnitz’s view that appreciation and criticism are incompatible, discussed in section 2.2.2.2, above, and expressed in our issue AvC:

AvC Are appreciation and criticism incompatible mental states?

However, such a view is in direct opposition to Popper’s principle of learning by trial and error, with debate and discussion, leading to improved understanding, in all areas of human activity. Richmond makes it clear that this divergence from Popper did not mean that Gombrich was a relativist. Although Gombrich believed in objective aesthetic values, he thought that they were applicable only on a case-by-case basis, as all masterpieces are singular¹⁶¹, and thus not subject to general categories and principles¹⁶².

Richmond then interpolates three ‘Popperian’ replies to Gombrich¹⁶³:

- 1) To Gombrich’s *historical* argument: although aesthetic theories might at times be historically false, their role is not to produce definitive (‘universal’) evaluations of art, but the *means* of critically discussing them, as method in

¹⁵⁹ Ernst Gombrich (1965;1974) ‘The Logic of Vanity Fair’ in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, pp. 925-55, summarised by Richmond, *Op. Cit.* pp. 35-8.

¹⁶⁰ Sheldon Richmond *Op. Cit.* (1994), pp. 63-5.

¹⁶¹ On the scholastic principle of *individuum est ineffabile*, *Ibid.* p. 59.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* p. 84, footnote 41: Richmond contrasts Gombrich’s position with George Boas, who ‘argues similarly to Gombrich that there cannot be universal rules for the discussion of aesthetic norms because of the bias of the variety of cultural backgrounds’. Boas argues for aesthetic relativism, all evaluations being ‘equally true’, allowing room only for interpretation and analysis. Gombrich rejects Boas’ relativity, holding, in Richmond’s words, that ‘aesthetic judgments can be true or false, depending upon one’s *competence* or *expertise*’.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* pp. 138-9.

science provides a *means* of discussing theories critically, rather than a fail-safe determination of ‘eternal truths’.

- 2) To Gombrich’s *psychological* argument: although aesthetic theories might be embedded in tacit frameworks familiar to connoisseurs (just as master scientists hold tacit understandings), by agreeing on aesthetic principles, contingencies can be sidelined and artists can adopt critical attitudes to artworks.
- 3) To Gombrich’s *logical* criticism that aesthetic terms are so vague that it would be impossible for critics to contradict each other, the Popperian reply would be that, although aesthetic terms might be inexact, there can be discussion of their use, and critical norms can be established.

To Gombrich’s claim that artworks are unique and ineffable, Richmond frames this reply:

... the aim of aesthetic criticism is not to capture the uniqueness of each work of art, but rather to place them in a spectrum of aesthetic values¹⁶⁴.

In conclusion, this Popperian framework clears a space for the debate of aesthetic concepts, which through criticism can refine the evaluation of artworks. Like competing scientific theories, different aesthetic evaluations are competing ‘guesses’ supported by evidence and argument. Incompatible aesthetic evaluations are therefore not the ‘death of realism’ in aesthetics, but serve to identify areas of debate which, in dialogue, can move in the direction of future consensus (‘the test of time’).

3.5.2 Danto, Margolis and Popper

Although in section 3.4 above, Danto’s name was grouped with others I have dubbed, ‘aesthetic deflationists’, he is the least deserving of this rather pejorative characterisation, because of his love of art, knowledge of its history and role as a contemporary art critic in New York¹⁶⁵. His credentials as a sceptic of the aesthetic are mixed. Early in the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Danto accepted, unlike Dickie¹⁶⁶, the reality of ‘distancing’, saying any object can be the focus of the aesthetic

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 139.

¹⁶⁵ Margolis has pointed out the paradox that Danto’s work as an art critic is ‘about what, on his own theory, does not and cannot exist’; Joseph Margolis *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ See chapter two, section 2.2.1 above.

attitude, adding that this is why the aesthetic attitude cannot be used to define art¹⁶⁷. He also had no problem accepting the phenomenology of aesthetic perception, which he parodies in this example to show how it can be morally compromised:

- to see a riot, for instance, in which police are clubbing demonstrators, as a kind of ballet, or to see bombs exploding like mystical chrysanthemums from the plane¹⁶⁸.

Immediately after this apparent acceptance of the realism of ‘distancing’, Danto surprisingly praises Dickie for rejecting it:

It certainly was no aim of the art of the high Baroque to be perceived disinterestedly: its aim was to change men’s souls. For this reason, then, I rather applaud the polemic of George Dickie, who contests what he speaks of as “the myth of psychic distance” and says that what prevents us from attempting to intervene in actions we see on a stage is not due to some mysterious sort of attitude, but to the fact that we know how to look at a play: we have mastered the conventions of the theater¹⁶⁹.

Here Danto is confusing ‘distancing’ with ‘disinterestedness’, assuming they are linked in the way formalists like Stolnitz¹⁷⁰ had taught. This led Danto to conclude that a) aesthetic experience and b) the framing conventions of art are *alternative*, rather than *complementary* factors in artistic response. After flirting with the Institutional Theory, Danto rejects it, as it cannot explain the conditions under which certain objects, and not others, are deemed by the ‘experts’ to be artworks¹⁷¹.

We have just seen how Danto’s linking of the ‘aesthetic’ with ‘disinterestedness’ shows the imprint of formalist assumptions on his thinking. There are other signs of empiricist formalism in the *Transfiguration*. Here, near the opening to chapter four, on ‘Aesthetics and the Work of Art’, Danto asks if:

. . . our responses, aesthetically speaking, would be the same to objects that are outwardly exactly the same, though one is a work of art and the other a mere object, however spectacular.

He replies:

¹⁶⁷ Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 22. The idea that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ could be used to define art was a mid-twentieth century formulation of theorists like Beardsley and Stolnitz, rather than a central concept of ‘traditional aesthetics’ as deflationists are wont to claim.

¹⁶⁸ *Loc. Cit.*

¹⁶⁹ Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 23.

¹⁷⁰ In his *Op. Cit.* (1964), Dickie uses Stolnitz’s aesthetic definition of art as a paradigm of formalism. See chapter two, above.

¹⁷¹ Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 31. Dickie claimed this was a misreading of the Institutional Theory (see his 2001 *Art and Value*, Malden, Mass., Blackwell, ch. 3) but seems to me to have been a likely interpretation of his 1974 definition, discussed in section 3.2.4, above.

Such a question raises serious philosophical questions, for should our responses *differ* – and I shall argue that they must – it will be extremely difficult to suppose that aesthetic response is at all like a form of sense-perception, all the more so if our knowledge that one is an artwork makes the difference in how we respond. In that case aesthetic response must be conceptually mediated in ways it will be instructive to identify¹⁷².

Here Danto is making a separation between ‘sense-perception’ and ‘aesthetic response’, in which he sees ‘aesthetic response’ (and not ‘sense perception’) to be ‘conceptually mediated’. The manner in which Danto makes this distinction reveals two assumptions: a) that ‘mere’ sense-perception is not ‘conceptually mediated’, which will be disputed in chapters six and seven, and b) he seems to think that realising that *aesthetic response is ‘conceptually mediated’* might be considered to be some sort of a revelation. As we shall see, Baumgarten’s originality consisted in a) his rejection in 1735 of Rationalism’s comparatively a-cognitive model of sense perception, together with b) Baumgarten’s advocacy of the jointly *cognitive* and *sensory* nature of aesthetic experience, as encapsulated in his expression, ‘imaged concepts’¹⁷³. Nor should postulating the cognitive nature of artistic response appear revelatory to readers of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, if they have persisted beyond the ‘formalist’ section of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’¹⁷⁴ to read his descriptions of the sublime¹⁷⁵, artistic beauty¹⁷⁶ and the aesthetic idea¹⁷⁷.

Margolis has drawn attention to Danto’s reiterated separation of artworks from ‘mere real things’, a refrain which can be read to imply that, unlike their *objects*, artworks themselves are not *real*. Margolis writes that:

... speaking of art is, for Danto, purely a rhetorical flourish regarding things that are real (‘mere real things’) but are never, qua real, artworks!¹⁷⁸

Margolis argues that all Danto’s instances of ‘indiscernibles’ rest on a physicalist model of artworks, where the physical properties of the art object (the ‘mere real thing’) are real, but where the intentional properties which viewers ‘assign’ to artworks to constitute and interpret them are ‘not real’. Danto, he says, understands better than

¹⁷² The two quotations here form a continuous piece of text, Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 91.

¹⁷³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 Edn.) §22, p. 46.

¹⁷⁴ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) Book I, §§1-22, Ak 203-43, pp. 43-95.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* §§23-9, Ak. 244-67, pp.97-126.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* §48, Ak 311, p. 179.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* §49, Ak. 313, pp. 181-2.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Margolis *Op. Cit.* (2000) ‘The Deviant Ontology of Artworks’ in Noel Carroll (Ed.) *Theories of Art Today*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press (pp. 109-129), p. 109.

Beardsley the historical and intentional complexities of art, but his ‘realism’ remains ‘essentially committed to the constraints of physicalism’¹⁷⁹, making the expressive and representational ‘attributes’ of artworks merely ‘imaginatively’ ascribed, not ‘perceptually discernible’¹⁸⁰.

Margolis protests that we *do* see a *painting*, not a ‘mere real thing’, and ‘hear the sonata form’, not merely the sensorily discernible sounds¹⁸¹:

We do see painted representations of things. Any refusal to admit that we do will [mean] that we never see anyone *doing* anything, we see no more than ‘bodily movements’ (or sense data answering to them), which we imaginatively invest with the intentional features of human actions. If that were true, we would never hear speech: we would hear no more than sound . . . like language and action, artworks are the culturally apt utterances of culturally formed selves (ourselves)¹⁸².

Therefore Margolis is sceptical of Danto’s claim that theory is something added that the ‘eye cannot de(s)cry’, because:

. . . sensory perception is always and already freighted with conceptual elements . . . There is no mere “sensory” perception that we can report, except that we agree to abstract from the culturally freighted perceptual reportings that we normally learn to make¹⁸³.

The realism espoused by Margolis includes 1) ‘selves’ (uniquely languaged, ‘second natured’ human agents), and 2) ‘Intentional utterances’ (intrinsically interpretable artworks, histories, deeds, speech acts)¹⁸⁴. One of the questions which this thesis asks, while accepting Margolis’ criticisms of Danto on this point, is ‘Why only *human* agents?’ Animals also have intentional states and many make ‘Intentional utterances’. This question will be discussed in the final chapter, in the context of the bowerbird.

Margolis’ ontology of artworks as ‘cultural entities’, ‘Intentional’ rather than physical objects, enables him to question philosophers like Beardsley, Wollheim and Stecker who model their theory of artworks, including interpretation, on the metaphysics of physical objects¹⁸⁵. For Margolis, no way exists ‘to construe “cultural

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Margolis *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 29.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 57.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 60-1.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* p. 61.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 62.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 104.

entities” (artworks or selves) as entities on a *par* with physical entities¹⁸⁶. Stecker, for example, tries to apply bivalent logic to the interpretation of artworks, which Margolis believes can have objective, valid but *incompatible* interpretations¹⁸⁷, such as the two incompatible interpretations available for Wordsworth’s Lucy poems¹⁸⁸. Contrary to the fears of some, aesthetic realism and incompatible critical interpretations can be seen to be compatible¹⁸⁹.

The way artworks and other cultural items such as language can have Intentional properties has been described by John Searle as ‘derivative Intentionality’, as distinct from the ‘intrinsic Intentionality’ of mental life itself¹⁹⁰. Dale Jacquette refers to Heidegger’s description of the way an artefact, such a hammer, has ‘derivative Intentionality’. A tool or utensil is a product of thought; it embodies purpose, so much so that it becomes even more conspicuous when damaged (*Auffälligkeit*):

... as Heidegger charmingly puts it in *Being and Time*, even on the rubbish heap it ‘bids farewell’ to we thinkers and makers¹⁹¹.

Jacquette’s ontology, which proposes subcategories of 1) physical entities and 2) abstract entities, proposes a third subcategory, 3) ‘Qualia-bearing intentional entities’, following Searle’s terminology in describing this class as comprising both ‘intrinsically intentional entities’ (minds) and ‘derivatively intentional entities’¹⁹²:

If cultural artefacts are as much dual aspect entities as the minds that create them, then, like the mind, they require special provision in a third main category of a preferred existence domain. The world of culture, as Karl R. Popper, in *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, for quite different reasons, has also maintained, is a third distinct ontological realm, a World 3.¹⁹³

Popper’s philosophy of critical debate, combined with Margolis’ model of the multi-valent interpretation and evaluation of Intentionally-structured cultural entities, combined with Currie’s ontology, and Danto’s view of art as rhetorical ellipsis, to be discussed below, all combine to give us a good framework for understanding the nature

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 103.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 105.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 127.

¹⁸⁹ John W. Bender *Op. Cit.* (2003).

¹⁹⁰ John R. Searle (1983) *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 27.

¹⁹¹ Dale Jacquette (2002) *Ontology*, Chesham, Acumen, p. 271.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* p. 272.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 273; footnote 3 refers to K. R. Popper (1972) *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, esp. pp. 31, 74-5 and 106-28.

of cultural and artistic life, to be tested and possibly extended by studying Baumgarten and Kant, and empirical evidence from evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience.

A postscript is therefore required to complete our picture of Danto, and to further rehabilitate him from the charge of aesthetic deflationism.

In the final chapter of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, helpfully analysed in great detail by Michael Lafferty¹⁹⁴, Danto points out the importance, to an understanding of art, of rhetorical ellipsis, which he introduced separately as rhetoric and ellipsis. Lafferty quotes Danto on the rhetorical element:

... it may just be one of the main offices of art less to represent the world than to represent it in such a way as to cause us to view it with a certain attitude and with a special vision¹⁹⁵.

The ellipsis comes into play by leaving a missing element, which the respondent has to fill in. It is not a simple matter of 'reading a message', but of supplying the missing element as part of the interpretative process. In Danto's words:

... works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representations, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented¹⁹⁶.

Danto then compares the rhetorical merits of *enthymeme* and *metaphor* as devices in rhetoric and art, *enthymeme* requiring specific knowledge to complete, and *metaphor* allowing for wider interpretation¹⁹⁷. Lafferty summarises Danto's conclusions about the rhetorical nature of art:

- 1) Artworks cannot be paraphrased.
- 2) Artworks are not 'basic objects in the world', but are interacted with in a two-way process of interpretation.
- 3) Artworks are contextual: historical knowledge is needed to understand the metaphors and close the enthymematic gaps¹⁹⁸. (My summary of Lafferty)

This anticipates the three elements (albeit in a different order) in my adaptation of Gregory Currie's *Ontology of Art*, to be described in the next section, OA:

¹⁹⁴ Michael Lafferty (2006) *Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art*, Ph.D. thesis (unpublished) Warwick University pp. 123-94.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 131; Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 167.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted by Lafferty, *Ibid.* p. 133, from Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 147-8.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 150; from Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 170-1.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Lafferty *Op.Cit.* (2006) pp. 154-7.

OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Response appropriate to art.

The 'sensory structure' is the 'intensional' element that 'cannot be paraphrased' but requires interpretation. The second element in Lafferty's summary of Danto corresponds to my third element, 'a response appropriate to art'. Finally, the 'heuristic' in Currie corresponds to the contextual nature of artworks in Danto.

It would be a diversion to discuss Danto's further account of metaphor, intensionality¹⁹⁹, expression and style in art, much of it highly contestable. Instead, this chapter will consider the project's underlying ontology of art adapted from Currie and Searle. There will then be a concluding summary of these discussions and a review of the sceptical and deflationary questions raised at the opening of chapter one, to see if any of them have yet been adequately addressed, and to identify those to be further considered in the next four chapters.

3.6 Ontology of Art: Adapting Currie and Searle

Ontology deals with the nature of 'being'²⁰⁰. What kinds of entities exist in the world? What is the nature of their 'being'? It might be felt that the description of art by Collingwood at the end of the section 2.4.1, that 'Every utterance and every gesture that each one of us makes is a work of art'²⁰¹ was a trifle over-inclusive. However, the expressive impact of the baby's cry he had referred to, fifty pages before, could find a place in an ontology of art which adopted a continuum model, rather than either an evaluative²⁰², an intentional²⁰³, or a definitional model furnished with necessary and sufficient conditions²⁰⁴. The baby's cry could belong in an ontology that saw the category of 'art' as a continuum stretching from a Dulux ceiling to the Sistine ceiling, with the aesthetic deployed to different degrees, and with different levels of complexity,

¹⁹⁹ For a discussion of Intentionality, see Joseph Margolis *Op. Cit.* (2000) pp. 109-129. For Margolis, artworks are real objects with 'emergent' Intentional (i.e. both intentional and *intensional*) properties. Michael Lafferty gives a very clear explanation of Danto's view of intensionality in metaphor and art: intensional expressions cannot be straightforwardly substituted, e.g. 'Juliet is the sun' does not mean 'Juliet is the small star at the centre of the solar system'; there is a gap which has to be filled by interpretation. See Michael Lafferty *Op. Cit.* (2006) pp. 157-69.

²⁰⁰ Dale Jaquette *Op. Cit.* (2002).

²⁰¹ R. C. Collingwood (1938) *The Principles of Art*, Oxford, OUP, p. 285.

²⁰² Such as the normative model proposed by Gordon Graham (1997; 2000 edn.) *Philosophy of the Arts: an introduction to aesthetics*, London, Routledge.

²⁰³ Such as proposed by Monroe C. Beardsley *Op. Cit.* (1983).

²⁰⁴ Such as that proposed by George Dickie *Op. Cit.* (1984; 1997 Edn.)

all the way down, and all the way up²⁰⁵. The artist and philosopher, Michael G. Lafferty²⁰⁶ has recently proposed a 'spectrum of artistic presence' which could, I believe, accommodate the wilful cry of a baby at the very edge of a sonic map that had Verdi's *Requiem* somewhere near its apex.

I believe it might be possible to derive such a continuum from Gregory Currie's ontology of art²⁰⁷, which can be summarised, without too much loss, as follows²⁰⁸:

- a) A work of art is an 'action type'. This is Currie's 'Action Type Hypothesis'. He relates 'action types' to C. S. Peirce's type/token distinction²⁰⁹: shutting the door is an example of an action type, shutting it at 10.15am and again at 12.30pm are two action tokens of that type.
- b) The 'action type' that constitutes a work of art comprises the following essential elements: 1) the production of a 'sensory structure', which can be linguistic, musical, sculptural, and so forth. This is produced 2) by means of a heuristic process, which Currie compares to a scientist's struggle of discovery²¹⁰. The 'sensory structure' and the 'heuristic' are the two factors evaluated by critics. Currie believes that his account of the resource-constrained heuristic process of art-making is a theoretical formulation of the art historical practices described by Michael Baxandall in *Patterns of Intention*²¹¹. In this heuristic process, the producer of the artwork has to solve problems, and it is vital, in interpreting and evaluating the work:

²⁰⁵ This would fit in with Daniel C. Dennett's visualisation of 'one design space' in (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London, Penguin, pp. 107-13.

²⁰⁶ Michael G. Lafferty *Op. Cit.* (2006) pp. 198-214.

²⁰⁷ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (1989). Currie's ontology of art has so far received little support from other philosophers, apart from David Davies, who has attempted to develop the ideas further, in his (2004) *Art as Performance*, Oxford, Blackwell.

²⁰⁸ This is a slightly simplified summary of Gregory Currie; *Ibid.* Ch. 11 'Works as Action Types', pp. 66-71.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 3.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 64-5. He says the following are 'inessential' components to the constitution of a work: 3) the identity of the agent or agents, and 4) the time. These are left as inessentials to allow for the possibility of the same action types being constituted on 'twin earths' or at other times by different artists, provided they follow the same heuristic.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p. x. Michael Baxandall describes the factors which combined to influence the design of the Forth Bridge, a painting by Chardin, and Picasso's analytical Cubist portrait of Kahnweiler, in his (1985) *Patterns of Intention: on the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

- 1) to have some idea of the artist's heuristic or discovery trail leading to the final 'shape' of the artwork's embodiment in its 'sensory structure' or 'action token', and
- 2) to appreciate the intellectual, material and technological resources that were available for constructing the 'action token' of the artwork.

The resulting 'action token'²¹² is the artwork's publicly available 'sensory structure' (e.g. the manuscript of a novel, a dance performance, a painting).

- c) Once this 'action token' has been constructed, it can then be embodied in many 'instances', which are 'tokens' of the *sensory structure* (e.g. printed copies of the novel, performances of the dance, copies of the painting, etc.). The multiple instances are not tokens of the *work* (which is the full 'action type'), but they are tokens of the *sensory structure element* of the work. Thus, Currie argues that the sensory structures of visual artworks may exist in multiple instances, contrary to the opinion of earlier philosophers, such as Richard Wollheim²¹³, who separated those works that are physical objects with a *single* instance, from other kinds of works of art which he thought could be *multiply* instanced. Currie rejects this dualism, along with Goodman's similar autographic/allographic distinction²¹⁴. Instead, Currie advances an 'Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis', to assert that all works of art share the same ontology. It is possible to reduce Currie's ontology of artworks as 'action types' to:

$$\text{Artwork} = \text{Sensory structure} + \text{Heuristic}$$

It is the somewhat counter-intuitive result of an artwork being an 'action type', that no artwork is simply an *object*. This has been a stumbling block for some commentators²¹⁵. However, Currie contends that the *object* associated with an artwork is only *part* of the 'action type' that is the full artwork, because its apprehension as art

²¹² The action type is normally instanced in one token, made up from all the elements listed in b), above. However, in theory, in the special circumstances of a thought experiment, more than one action type with an identical token could occur, for example by a different artist, either at a different time, as with Borges' Menard, discussed by Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981), pp. 33-6, or on a 'twin earth', as with Putnam's thought experiment which Currie references to Hilary Putnam (1975) "The Meaning of Meaning" in *Mind, Language and Reality, Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, London, Cambridge University Press.

²¹³ Richard Wollheim (1968; 1980 edn.) *Art and Its Objects* (2nd Edition), Cambridge, CUP.

²¹⁴ Nelson Goodman (1976) *Languages of Art: an Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (2nd Edition) Indianapolis, Hackett. He introduces the autographic and allographic distinction on pp. 112-5.

²¹⁵ For example Stephen Davies *Op. Cit.* (2006) p. 82.

also requires some knowledge of the *heuristic process*. However, the heuristic process is not always displayed explicitly, like a picture frame, as part of the sensory structure. Though clues may be present in the work, a great deal depends on the respondent's prior knowledge, a point which is often overlooked, because so much is assumed by us in our engagement with works from a cultural background familiar to us. Marcel Duchamp²¹⁶, as Currie points out²¹⁷, was exceptional in the relative emphasis he placed on the heuristic process as opposed to the sensory structure (See Plate 1a).

The object associated with an artwork, then, is an *instance* of the work's *sensory structure*, not an instance of the *artwork itself*. There could be other objects which correctly instantiate the same *sensory structure*, but they are not instances of the *full* artwork, either, because the artwork is an *action type*, not an *object*. Therefore, this sensory structure is not self-sufficient, but depends upon contextual knowledge, part of the work's *heuristic*. The necessity for a 'sensory structure' gives Currie an argument against the 'mentalism' of Croce and Collingwood, because the method of application of the paint, for example, is so important that it is not possible to speak of the 'work in the artist's mind' as being '*the work*'²¹⁸.

I believe that Currie's ontology of art helps to explain why we continue to value works of art that are either ephemeral, have been damaged or even destroyed, provided there is some memory or record of their existence. As long as we know about the heuristic, and have at least an inkling of the sensory structure, that can be sufficient for an artwork to 'live on' in our imaginations²¹⁹. Gustave Courbet's *Stonebreakers* (1848) used to hang in the State Picture Gallery in Dresden, but was destroyed in 1945. Nevertheless, it enjoys an afterlife in art-book illustrations²²⁰. The famous Bamiyan Buddhas, destroyed by the Taliban in February 2001, are more vividly present on the

²¹⁶ Marcel Duchamp is an exception to this, as he placed great emphasis on the heuristic process, and sometimes published his preparatory notes, for example for the *The Large Glass* in *The Green Box*, in an edition of 300, with 10 luxury boxes which included an original sheet each in 1934; Calvin Tomkins *Op. Cit.* (1997) p. 297.

²¹⁷ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (1989) p. 77.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 91.

²¹⁹ One's experience of a play or opera is not confined to the period between entering and leaving the theatre, but can be mulled over and revisited in the imagination for the rest of one's life. Something similar applies to all the arts, in a way which favours permanent art forms which can be revisited in a more concrete form than simply in memory, even though the respondent will probably perceive the same artworks differently, having meanwhile had other experiences.

²²⁰ H. W. Janson *Op. Cit.* (1962) Fig. 736, p.489.

internet and in the world's imagination now, than they had been before their destruction²²¹.

The Action Type Hypothesis echoes speech act theory²²². Rather than 'doing things with *words*', artworks are 'doing something communicative with *objects*'. Works of art also share, with language, Grice's distinction between '*utterance* meaning' and '*utterer's* meaning²²³'. Both need to be accommodated in an adequate account of art. The buyer, commissioner, or thief, are all 'doing something' (*utterer's* meaning) by their acts of acquisition, apart from responding to the aesthetic properties and internal meanings of a work (*utterance* meaning). Artists are also 'doing something' (*utterer's* meaning) apart from fashioning art objects (*utterance* meaning). Artists and patrons are all engaged in dialogues, in 'conversations', and these can bridge centuries, and can include many 'eavesdroppers'. First Donatello made a bronze statue of David, an emblem of Florence²²⁴ (See Plate 2). The slight, effeminate figure is full of a certain classical beauty and grace, which Michelangelo took as a challenge to make an elegant colossus²²⁵. This rather static and closed work was, in turn, a challenge to Bernini, to make a work which projects its impact on to the space around it²²⁶. This has become a dialogue of objects, not only between the artists, but between the patrons, entire cities and even generations of tourists, across centuries. This helps to explain how the *aesthetic/perceptual*²²⁷ and the *historical/interpretive*²²⁸ aspects of art are joined. It is the aim of this thesis to demonstrate how and why *both* aspects, *synchronic* and *diachronic* are integral to art, though their relative importance varies with different artworks.

This application of Currie's ontology, however, reveals an omission in his formulation which until now I have summarised as 'artwork = heuristic + sensory structure'. It will be argued in this thesis that Currie's formulation needs to be expanded

²²¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1664713.stm>.

²²² J. L. Austin (1962) *How To Do Things With Words*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

²²³ H. P. Grice (1968) 'Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning,' *Foundations of Language*, Vol. 4, pp. 224-42; reprinted in his (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, ch. 6, pp. 117-137.

²²⁴ H.W. Janson *Op. Cit.* (1962) fig. 481, p. 312.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* fig. 534, p. 357. Janson refers to Michelangelo's David as 'the civic-patriot symbol of the Florentine republic'. The size of Michelangelo's David derives from the fact that it was commissioned originally to stand high on one of the buttresses of Florence cathedral (pp 358-9).

²²⁶ *Ibid.* fig. 609, p. 408.

²²⁷ synchronic: SvD1, an a-historical, aestheticising, synchronic account of art

²²⁸ diachronic: SvD2, an historicising, anti-aesthetic, diachronic account of art.

to include the respondent, who is also a necessary contributor to the ontology of art, expressed in this thesis as ‘OA’:

OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Art-appropriate Response.

This formulation introduces an element of circularity, which seems to be unavoidable in this area of philosophy²²⁹, and the reasons for this will be discussed further in later chapters. Fodor gives an instance of a similar circularity, which occurs in the perception of speech. He writes that the brain’s ‘computational systems’ for perceiving speech ‘operate only upon acoustical signals that are taken to be utterances’²³⁰. This appears to be circular, in a way mirrored by the reception of artworks. In the differential processing of speech or non-speech sounds, there is the opportunity for corrective action. If speech is mistaken for non-speech briefly, a swift ‘gear-change’ can be made, to bring the correct ‘computational systems’ into play. The same kind of ‘gear change’ seems to apply to the reception of artworks, and the same metaphor was used, famously, by Edward Bullough to describe ‘distancing’, which puts a phenomenon ‘out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends’²³¹. Bullough saw ‘distancing’ as:

... one of the essential characteristics of the “aesthetic consciousness,” –if I may describe by this term that special mental attitude towards, and outlook upon, experience, which finds its most pregnant expression in the various forms of Art²³².

Julian Opie made a sculpture that plays with exactly such a ‘gear-change’ (Plate 1c). Gallery-goers see what looks like a wall heater, and might overlook it completely, unless they happen to notice the label, or they might have begun to scrutinise the object as a sculpture, before nervously shifting back to ‘real life’ mode, for fear the object really is a heater after all, as they do not wish to be observed lavishing an unreserved aesthetic attitude on to a mere fixture (‘a mere real thing’ in Danto’s terms). Then, if they notice the museum’s label, they can resume their intense scrutiny of the object.

²²⁹ Hence the title of George Dickie’s book *The Art Circle: a Theory of Art* on art as an ‘inflected concept’, *Op. Cit.* (1984; 1997 edn.).

²³⁰ Jerry A. Fodor (1983) *Modularity of Mind: an Essay on Faculty Psychology*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, p. 49.

²³¹ Edward Bullough (1912) “Psychical Distance”, *British Journal of Psychology* (Vol. 5); reprinted in Alex Neill, and Aaron Ridley (Eds) (1995) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, Boston Massachusetts, McGraw Hill (pp. 297-311), pp. 298-9.

²³² *Ibid.* p. 299.

John Searle wrote that, ‘ . . . the literary is continuous with the non-literary. Not only is there no sharp boundary, but there is not much of a boundary at all’. Whether something is ‘literature’ is, according to Searle, for readers to decide, reflecting, ‘a set of attitudes we take towards a stretch of discourse, not the name of an internal property of this stretch of discourse²³³’. If we rephrase this and substitute ‘*art*’ for ‘literature’, ‘*respondent*’ for ‘reader’ and ‘*work*’ for ‘stretch of discourse’, we have another statement of the ontology of art to guide this thesis, designated as S (for Searle):

- S Whether something is art is for respondents to determine according to the nature of their response, reflecting a set of attitudes that they take towards a work, not the name of an internal property of the work.

Just as a work of literature is produced from the same raw materials as non-literary discourse, so are works of art produced from the same raw materials as non-art objects. The difference lies in how the works are perceived and responded to. Certainly, there is a ‘fact of the matter’ concerning the artist’s original intention, but this is only indicative, not necessarily decisive. The artist may fail to inform or convince potential respondents that an item is intended to elicit an art-appropriate response. On the other hand, even though the concept of ‘art’, or the word for ‘art’ may be absent, this would not preclude any particular focus of attention from being an artwork, if there is a) a sensory structure b) an heuristic process and c) an art-appropriate response. This sketch of an ontology will be tested as the thesis unfolds.

3.7 Summary and Conclusion

3.7.1 Summary and Conclusion to this chapter

Chapter three has continued this project’s pursuit of answers to its two main research questions, RQ1: ‘What is the aesthetic?’ and RQ2: ‘What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?’

²³³ John R. Searle (1979) *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 59.

The method in this chapter has been to expand on the first two chapters' analyses of the aesthetic scepticism that has been so influential in recent Anglo-American analytical philosophy. In attempting to answer RQ1 (What is the aesthetic?) this chapter has touched on the influences of positivism, behaviourism and physicalism. Despite the influence of this intellectual background, the conclusion of this chapter is that aesthetic values, like other cultural properties are (in the words of Margolis) 'emergent' properties of the physical and biological worlds, a viewpoint to be developed in chapters six and seven. As such, these properties can stake a claim to realism, and a level of stability that makes their 'objective analysis' possible, so they can be publicly debated and the ideas refined, in the same way as other ideas, though with different standards of proof from the bi-valency (two-place answers: yes/no; true/false) that applies in logic and the hard physical sciences. Multi-valency is the condition of World 3, in Popperian terms, and the reality of aesthetic values is refined in a process of inter-subjective exchanges of observation and argument. Therefore our aesthetic hypothesis ANR can be set aside already, even though further arguments for the realism of the aesthetic will be added as the thesis progresses:

*ANR The Aesthetic is Not Real.

Similarly, historical factors (such as the precedence of earlier 'art regards') fail to secure non-Realism concerning the aesthetic, and in any case they have to appeal to a 'primitive aesthetic' to 'kick-start' 'Ur-art'. It has been argued that the 'historical' is most pertinent to the interpretation and evaluation of art, and is not decisive in the classification or definition of art. Therefore IHD and AUA fail, and H is accepted:

* IHP Art is defined by its Intentional and Historical Properties.

*AUA The Aesthetic is *necessary* **only** in Ur-Art

H Historical factors affect the ontology and interpretation of art rather than its definition and classification.

It was argued that it is not possible to sustain Davies' distinction between the 'functional' and 'procedural' properties of artworks, as his functionalist hypothesis is based on a physicalist model of the art object, and his proceduralist hypothesis involves the 'attribution' of *non-Real* properties to artworks, in the manner proposed by Danto in the early chapters of the *Transfiguration*. It was argued, in place of this dichotomy, that both artworks and 'mere real things' have the equivalents to both 'functional' and

‘procedural’ properties, which are inter-connected. Thus, so-called ‘procedural’ factors, such as historical provenance, modify the perception of so-called ‘functional’ (‘aesthetic’) properties, nullifying the basis in principle of Davies’ functional/procedural distinction. Hence F/FT fails:

*F/PT Davies’ Functional/Procedural distinction is Tenable.

Danto had an epiphany in the last chapter of the *Transfiguration*: there is something different about art from that which we expect from ‘mere real things’, in art’s use of *enthymeme* and *metaphor*, to affect the respondent by the way an ‘aboutness’ is conveyed. Among the deflationists, Danto leaves open the largest gap through which the aesthetic can be smuggled back into art. Such a smuggling operation is the aim of the remaining chapters of this thesis, and a start has been made by accepting various insights into the nature of art:

- 1) Margolis’ characterisation of artworks as ‘derivatively Intentional entities’,
- 2) Danto’s vision of art as intensional expression through enthymeme and metaphor,
- 3) my adaptation of Currie’s ontology of the artwork as ‘sensory structure + heuristic + art-appropriate response, and
- 4) Lafferty’s model of ‘artistic presence’ in a continuum throughout human activity²³⁴.

Chapter three mentioned another variety of scepticism towards the aesthetic: that taking a socio-political view, to be discussed in section 8.5.2 2, below. Chapter three also examined the interesting case of art historian and theorist, Ernst Gombrich.

Gombrich’s scepticism about the aesthetic was based in the turbulent conflict of twentieth-century art movements and partisan critical opinion among artists who stridently espoused opposing styles and theories. Sheldon Richmond has performed a signal service in showing how Karl Popper’s philosophies of sociology and science, so successfully employed by Gombrich in his treatments of representation and style, can also lend support to the realism of aesthetic values, refined through criticism and debate, through the exploration of inter-subjective experience.

3.7.2 Review of the informal ‘Sceptical Hypotheses’

²³⁴ Michael G. Lafferty *Op. Cit.* (2006) pp. 198-214.

In chapter one, section 1.3.1, I listed seven sceptical or deflationary statements, imagined as puzzled or puzzling utterances voiced in Art College studios or seminars. Some of these have already been dismissed at the end of the last chapter. The remaining ones will be briefly reviewed here:

*SH2 It's putting it in an *art gallery* that makes it art.

This appears to be the way Dickie's Institutional Theory and Danto's contextualism have diffused their influences into the minds of art students, some members of the general public, and even some curators who are paid good salaries from the public purse. One of my conclusions from these first three chapters would be that derivatively Intentional objects and the concepts surrounding them are endlessly contestable, there being few hypotheses about them, outside experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience, which can be tested experimentally, unlike the methodology available to physical science. For derivatively Intentional objects, there is only debate and consensus, in a *lebensformlich* manner, or Popperian critical debate.

Unfortunately, therefore, I have to disagree with Michael Lafferty when he says the 'arthood' of readymades is 'a matter of fact' (because they have been accepted as art by art history)²³⁵. The contested nature of 'derivatively Intentional objects' must allow for the possibility that the present curatorial consensus could crumble at some time in the future. The tedious 'urinal, hat-stand and comb' experiences of my own exposure to the Duchamp collection in Rome's Museum of Modern Art were enough arouse my own scepticism towards these 'masterpieces'.

SH3 The word 'aesthetic' connotes passive receptivity.

The process of learning to draw from observation provided some preliminary evidence in chapter two that aesthetic activity, in the production and self-performance-monitoring processes of drawing, are close to the processes involved in responding to and evaluating artworks, and are intensely active mental processes. However, this question will be the subject of further discussion in later chapters.

*SH4 Duchamp proved that the aesthetic is merely optional in art.

This opinion does not hold, unless one is working from a physicalist model of works of art, which would claim that their only 'real' properties are the primary and

²³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 55.

secondary properties which apply in virtue of their being objects in the universe, like rocks photographed by a landing craft on Mars. However, there is good evidence, in the form of descriptions of Duchamp's works, such as *Fountain*, that artworks have other Intentional properties, which Margolis counts as 'real' and Goodman describes as 'metaphorical exemplifications'. To take the case of *Fountain*, it was described by Danto, despite his underlying physicalist model of artworks, as: 'daring, impudent, irreverent, witty and clever'²³⁶, though at the time he rather inconsistently seems to have held these not to be 'real' properties, but imaginatively assigned by the viewer to a 'mere real object'²³⁷. The terms he applies to *Fountain*, like 'impudent' and 'witty', are 'aesthetic' because they show how the respondent's feelings have been engaged. Baumgarten gives an example of a piece of verse that obeys the rules of Latin prosody, but fails as poetry partly because it does not engage our emotions²³⁸. It is 'perfectly formed' as verse and as logic, but is not 'poetic', a term which seems to be equivalent in Baumgarten to 'aesthetic' or 'artistic' in modern usage. A scientific discovery will engage the feelings and emotions of the discoverers, but though these feelings will be motivational, they are ultimately incidental to the science, where value is placed on the logical conclusions reached. In art, the sensations and feelings are the point of the activity, albeit often closely intermeshed with concepts. Aesthetic properties such as 'daring' and 'irreverent', though unrelated to an artwork's physical properties, are nevertheless emergent properties of Intentional objects, available to inter-subjectivity, and hence it is argued here that they *are real*.

*SH5 The historical aspect of art 'trumps' the aesthetic.

Jerrold Levinson, in his thought experiment about an ornate receptacle from an ancient Mexican tribe, 'caved in' in the face of 'historical evidence', in a bi-valent style of arguing (i.e. 'It's art' or 'It's not art') without acknowledging the Popperian possibility of debate, and equally valid divergent opinions (see section 3.5.2). There is a case that artworks can be identified on the basis of agency and aesthetic properties, with only the loosest connection with history, which offers a way of interpreting the

²³⁶ Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) pp. 93-4.

²³⁷ This at least is Margolis' interpretation of Danto's ontology of art, in such essays as his *Op. Cit.* (2000) pp. 109-129, and I find his argument persuasive.

²³⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 Edn.) §14, p. 42. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.5, below.

‘heuristic’ component of the model of art’s ontology expressed in the formulation OA, adapted from Gregory Currie:

OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Response appropriate to art.

History itself is most valuable in its contribution to interpretation. Once more, this opinion will be carried over into the second half of this thesis, for further debate. There are two arguments relevant to this issue: the ontological and the empirical. So far, the argument already presented has been philosophical, and this would tend to counter the view expressed in *SH5 above. The sceptical hypothesis *SH5 depends upon the separation of a work’s ‘empirical’ aesthetic properties from its ‘extrinsic’ properties, possible only upon a physicalist model of the art object, whereas the present thesis accepts an ontological model of the artwork as a ‘derivatively Intentional object’, which holds that the artwork’s Intentional properties are equally as *real* as the primary and secondary properties of the ‘*mere real thing*’, as Danto would identify the object which ‘embodies’ (in Margolis’ terms) the artwork²³⁹. The second counter-argument will follow in the second half of this thesis, where it will be argued that the sensory and biological dimensions of the aesthetic have generally been rather underestimated in philosophical aesthetics, and need to be reassessed and, if found relevant to the debate, asserted more strongly.

*SH7 The source of the aesthetic lies in *art* rather than in *nature* (paraphrase of Hegel).

Once again, this view can be dismissed, as it is based on a non-Realist model of the artwork, whose properties are ‘imputed’ to ‘mere real things’. One of the aims of this thesis is to trace the aesthetic back to its roots in biology.

In summary, as far as this thesis is concerned, discussion of all but one Sceptical Hypothesis raised at the beginning of chapter one will now be considered as concluded. Even the one which remains has been questioned by the level of activity involved in the drawing process described in chapter two (sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). SH3, will however be carried forward into the second half of the thesis for further evidence:

SH3 The word ‘aesthetic’ connotes passive receptivity.

²³⁹ Following Margolis and Popper, I would argue that an artwork’s Intentional properties are ‘determinable’ in debate, rather than ‘determinate’ through hypothesis and testing.

Finally, there have been many other issues raised in this thesis. Some of them have been dealt with and, at least for the purposes of the present argument, concluded. However, there are other outstanding issues from the first three chapters and these will help to structure the shape of forthcoming chapters.

The next chapter will look at the foundational aesthetics of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, to examine his thinking on the aesthetic and its relationship to art, insofar as it is possible to make such comparisons across 250 years. What did he intend by his coinage, 'aesthetics'? How did he conceive of the aesthetic's relationship to art?

Chapter Four: Imaged Concepts: Baumgarten

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ABSTRACT

The quest for an understanding of the ‘aesthetic’ brings this enquiry to Baumgarten, who, most notably among Enlightenment philosophers, followed Epicurus in valuing, for both knowledge and beauty, the senses, which have more usually been distrusted by philosophers since Socrates. The two primary sources studied, one translated into English from Latin for the first time, claim for the senses a central role in providing to the arts and sciences ‘imaged concepts’, sensory images which make abstract concepts more tangible in the imagination, perhaps most notably in metaphor.

4.1 Introduction

After studying the attacks on aesthetics by positivists and their allies, this thesis now turns to the work Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62), the philosopher respected on the Continent as one of the founders of aesthetics, but often known in the Anglophone tradition for little more than christening the discipline, ‘aesthetics’.

4.1.1 The Place of this Chapter in the Argument

There are many questions that exercise students of aesthetics today. They stem not only from decades of philosophical combat, but also from many new puzzles of interpretation and evaluation arising from the contemporary arts. There are also ethical problems, usually ignored in aesthetics, involving the nexus of art, power and crime. Also, with our present-day knowledge of brain function and the natural world, empirical evidence may be available to help us to understand some aspects of aesthetic experience and to ask whether the arts are, indeed, an exclusively human attainment. These issues were outlined in chapter one. In trying to tackle them against a background of philosophical scepticism towards the aesthetic, I concluded that the problems all revolved around questions concerning the nature and role of the ‘aesthetic’ itself. This led to the project’s two research questions:

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

RQ2 What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?

I decided that in order to reply to deflationary arguments, it was necessary to understand all the issues raised by the deflationists, beginning with George Dickie’s

1964 paper, 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude'¹, analysed in chapter two. In chapter three, the wider philosophical sources of aesthetic scepticism were examined, and challenged. However, the debate now requires a positive account of the aesthetic, attempted here by posing the research questions to the founder of the modern discipline, Baumgarten. Next, the same questions will be asked of Kant's more influential aesthetics. Then there are two chapters that will extend the preliminary investigation into the empirical evidence for the aesthetic attitude begun in chapter two. The final chapter draws conclusions in favour of the realism of the aesthetic and re-examines any unresolved issues that might be addressed by future research.

4.1.2 The Structure of this Chapter

The argument in this chapter begins by sketching in the background to Baumgarten's thought, followed by an introduction to the present state of Baumgarten studies in the Anglophone world, including problems in gaining access to his ideas. Then there will be a section on the meaning of the aesthetic in Baumgarten, and another on the relationship of the aesthetic to art. In the course of these arguments, there are a number of related questions designed to test Baumgarten against the sceptical opinions surveyed in the first three chapters. Three questions arise from Dickie, including his claim that the concept of the aesthetic is 'vacuous', his denial of qualitative differences between aesthetic experience and ordinary 'attention', and his denial of the realism of the aesthetic attitude. These issues have been framed in the following Baumgarten questions (B1, B2 and B3):

B1 Did 'the aesthetic' have a substantive meaning for Baumgarten? Did he consider 'the aesthetic' to exist?

B2 Did Baumgarten identify any qualitative differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic states of mind?

B3 Are there any clues in Baumgarten's writing for the existence of an 'aesthetic attitude'?

There are three other issues which have been carried over from the first chapter which are relevant here. There are the two 'sceptical hypotheses' (SH3 and SH5),

¹ George Dickie (1964) 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', *The American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-65.

imagined in chapter one as voiced in an Art College context, but also found in the writings of Noel Carroll²:

SH3 The word 'aesthetic' connotes passive receptivity.

SH5 The *historical* aspect of art 'trumps' the *aesthetic*.

Then there is an ontological statement³, adapted from John Searle (S) to be discussed in this chapter:

S Whether something is art is for respondents to determine according to the nature of their response, reflecting a set of attitudes which they take towards a work, not the name of an internal property of the work.

The following issues will be tackled after considering the aesthetic in Baumgarten (section 4.4): RQ1, B1, B2, and SH3. After considering the relationship of the aesthetic to art in Baumgarten (section 4.5), the following questions will be tackled: RQ2, B3, SH5 and S.

4.2 Rationalism, Sensual Pietism and Poetry

Baumgarten was a philosopher who tried to innovate while remaining within the German rationalist tradition of Leibnitz and Wolff. His aesthetics could be seen as a pre-Kantian attempt to bridge the gap between the rationalism of Descartes, Leibnitz and Wolf, and the empiricism of Locke.

It appears that the insights that led him to propose a new science, 'aesthetics', were derived from the unique circumstances of his upbringing and education, according to Steffen W. Gross⁴. Also, given his reputation as a rather dry scholar, it is perhaps a surprise to discover his evident love of the ancient poets, a cast of mind that may have been the reason he continued to write in Latin, rather than in the vernacular⁵. Had he been alive today, he might have been considered as much a classicist as a philosopher.

² Noel Carroll (1999) *Philosophy of Art: a Contemporary Introduction*, London, Routledge. p. 156 ('passivity' of Baumgarten's aesthetics) and pp. 240-264 (historical definition of art).

³ See chapter three, section 3.6, above, where this thesis offers a second ontological statement (OA):
OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Art-appropriate Response.
This is my adaptation of Gregory Currie's ontology of art.

⁴ Steffen W. Gross (2002) 'The Neglected Programme of Aesthetics' *BJA*, (Vol. 42) pp. 403-414.

⁵ There is one exception: in 1741, Baumgarten published a series of weekly philosophical letters in German, under the pen name 'Alethiophilus', the second one of which was reprinted by Hans Rudolf Schweizer, pp. 67-72 in his his dual-language (Latin and German) edition of §§501-623 of the *Metaphysica*, published as A. G. Baumgarten (1983) *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, extracts from the *Metaphysica* and other texts, published with Introduction, Translation into German, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag.

Poetry was his passion⁶ and is the paradigm for the arts in his aesthetics. Aware perhaps that Leibnitz had given little thought to the arts⁷, he feared that many would consider the subject of poetry to be ‘too trifling and remote to deserve the attention of philosophers’⁸. Also, Ernst Cassirer says that, although Baumgarten followed an academic career in philosophy, he had personal experience as a poet, and Cassirer believes this had given Baumgarten an insight into the difference between the scientific and poetic uses of language⁹. Perhaps this enthusiasm for poetry made him feel that philosophers, since Plato, had undervalued the arts. Whatever the motivation, Baumgarten was the first German philosopher to lecture regularly on aesthetics¹⁰, and he was clearly hoping to make a major contribution to philosophy with his *Aesthetica*, sadly left unfinished at the time of his premature death in 1762, aged only 47¹¹.

The rationalists’ distrust of the senses, familiar since Plato¹², was confirmed by Descartes who ruled that: ‘. . . comprehension by the senses is in many instances very obscure and confused’¹³. Leibnitz systematized this further. Kai Hammermeister gives a useful précis of Leibnitz’s psychological theory¹⁴, based on his theological world view, strongly influenced by a puritan Pietism and the mortification of the flesh. According to Leibnitz, there is a hierarchy of perception, from the unconscious level of our ‘petites perceptions’, which are too *obscure* even to allow recognition of its objects, to the complete comprehension which is available only to God. I have attempted to diagram the continuum in Fig. 3. below:

⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735) *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, reprinted in facsimile with an Introduction and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (1954) with Notes, as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Reflections on Poetry*, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, p.35.

⁷ Such is the view of Aschenbrenner and Holther, in their Introduction, *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 Edn.) p. 5, and confirmed in a qualified way by other scholars, such as Mary G. Gregor, who says Leibnitz saw the arts as valuable mainly for moral education, in (1983) ‘Baumgarten’s *Aesthetica*’ in *Review of Metaphysics* (Vol. 37, pp. 357-385) p. 363. In the *Reflections*, Baumgarten quotes Leibnitz on the topic in §22, *Op.Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) p. 46. However, Gilbert and Kuhn (1956) *A History of Esthetics* (2nd Edition), London, Thames and Hudson, pp. 227-8, give a more positive account of Leibnitz’s estimation of the arts.

⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954), p. 36.

⁹ Ernst Cassirer (1951) *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (trans. Fritz C.A. Coellin and James P. Pettegrove (1968 Edition), New Jersey, Princeton University Press, p. 349.

¹⁰ Paul Guyer (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 3.

¹¹ Baumgarten died a few weeks short of his 48th birthday: b. July 17, 1714, d. May 26, 1762.

¹² Plato (1993) *Republic*, Translated with Notes and an Introduction by Robin Waterfield, Oxford, OUP Book 3, 410, pp. 99-100, where Socrates held up his fingers, arguing that the senses could not make reliable distinctions, possible only by intellect and measurement.

¹³ Rene Descartes (1997) *Descartes: Key Philosophical Writings*, Translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Edited Enrique Chávez-Arviso, Ware, Herts., Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, in the ‘Sixth Meditation’ (first published in Latin in 1641), 80, p. 182.

¹⁴ Kai Hammermeister (2002) *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, CUP. pp. 3-6.

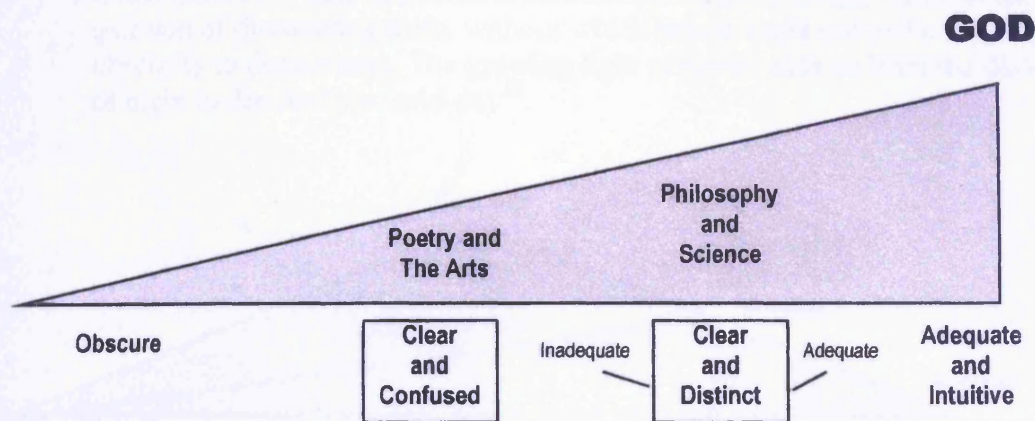


Fig. 3: Leibnitz's continuum of perception.

An example of an obscure perception would be the sound of one individual wave, lost in the general roar of the breakers. *Obscure* cognition is contrasted with *clear* cognition. At the higher end of clear perception, cognitions can be 'clear and distinct', where it is possible to list all the separate features, thereby enabling a complete definition of something, such as gold, to be given¹⁵. Nevertheless this perception remains 'inadequate' until described scientifically or given mathematical expression, such as gold's specific gravity, or atomic number, which would make the description 'adequate'. Only the all-knowing God himself enjoys the highest level of perception, both 'adequate' and 'intuitive'.

At the lower end of clear perception, the object is described as 'confused'. An object perceived as clear and confused will include many sensible features, but they (con)-fuse together, so that they cannot be listed separately. This form of cognition is 'rich, multi-faceted, lively, even emotionally charged'¹⁶, and it is at this level that Leibnitz locates art and beauty. However, for Leibnitz, our aesthetic judgments are not *justifiable*, but mere 'statements of emotional response', triggered by a '*je ne sais quoi*' factor, making beauty a by-product of flawed human cognition.

It is here that Baumgarten's epistemology makes a break not only with Leibnitz, but with Plato and puritanical forms of religion. He turns the negatively-conceived senses into a positive link between the obscure 'petites perceptions'¹⁷ of Leibnitz and rational cognition¹⁸ (see Fig. 4, overleaf). As Baumgarten wrote in the *Aesthetica*:

¹⁵ I am indebted to Mary J. Gregor's example of gold in her *Op. Cit.* (1983) pp. 361-2.

¹⁶ Hammermeister's summary, *Op. Cit.* (2002) p. 5.

¹⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

¹⁸ At this point, Hammermeister, *Ibid.* pp. 7-8, references Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* §7 and §41,

It is objected . . . that confusion is the mother of errors. I reply that it is the *sine qua non* of discovering truth, without which nature could not make the leap from obscurity to distinctness. The growing light of dawn leads us from the darkness of night to the clarity of mid-day¹⁹.

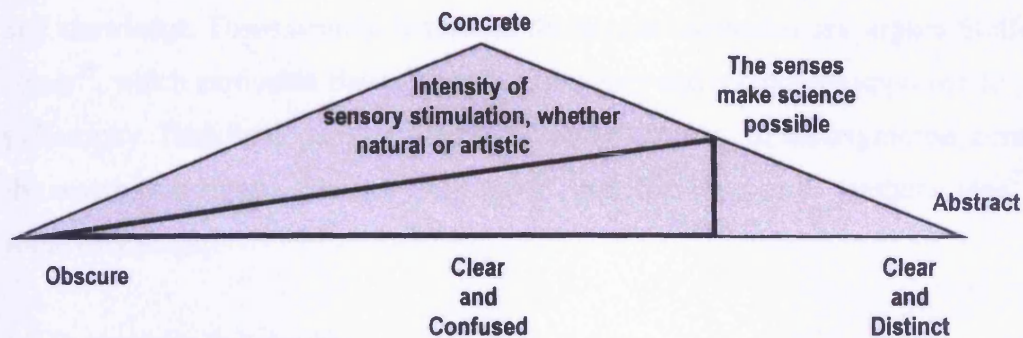


Fig. 4: Baumgarten's adaptation of Leibnitz's continuum of perception.

Here the senses usher in both the arts and the sciences. When, at the end of the *Reflections on Poetry*, Baumgarten proposed a new science of aesthetics, he was well aware that 'The Greek philosophers and the Church fathers' had 'carefully distinguished between *things perceived* [αἰσθητά] and *things known* [νόητα]²⁰. However, as Baumgarten was also surely aware, there had not been unanimity among pre-Christian philosophers on the inferiority of sensory perceptions. The Stoics and Epicureans had rejected Plato's stance. J. C. A. Gaskin writes that Epicurus argued for 'an epistemology affirming the veridical nature of perception²¹'. Although suppressed by an alliance of Platonism, the Stoics and Christianity, Epicurean ideas were rediscovered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and became 'a major influence on modern science and humanism²²'. Cassirer makes a link between Baumgarten and this Epicurean revival²³, which appears to have influenced the sensual and emotional form of Pietism practised in Halle, where the eight-year-old Baumgarten was sent to a progressive orphanage after both his parents had died in Berlin²⁴. Though Baumgarten was raised in that institution's unique strain of benevolent Pietism, which rejected rationalism and

¹⁹ My translation, from Baumgarten (1750/58) *Aesthetika* (2 Vols) reprinted (2007) *Ästhetik*, in 2 Volumes (Vol. 1 §§1-613) and (Vol. 2 §§1-614-904) with Translation into German, an Introduction, Notes and a Glossary, by Dagmar Mirbach, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, p.14, §7: *Obi. 5) Confusio mater erroris. Rsp. a) sed conditio, sine qua non, inveniendae veritatis, ubi natura non facit saltum ex obscuritate in distinctionem. Ex nocte per auroram meridies..*

²⁰ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) §116, p. 78.

²¹ J. C. A. Gaskin (1995b) 'Epicurus' in Ted Honderich (Ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, (pp. 240-1) p. 240.

²² *Ibid.* p. 240.

²³ Cassirer cites Lamettrie, 'The Art of Enjoyment', Saint Evremont, Rémond le Grec, *Agathon ou dialogue de la Volupté* (1702), in *Op. Cit.* (1951) p. 355. I have not been able to follow this up.

²⁴ Steffen W. Gross *Op. Cit.* (2002).

theological disputation, his education included a thorough-going training in Wolffian rationalism. The young Baumgarten, therefore, had witnessed this clash between the sensual and emotional Pietists and the dogmatic rationalists, apparently leading him to conclude that neither bias, taken alone, could give a full account of human experience and knowledge. These seem to have been the unique circumstances, argues Steffen W Gross²⁵, which motivated Baumgarten's innovatory and integrative approach to philosophy. Thus Baumgarten's aesthetics can be captured in his oxymoron, combining the senses with reason: 'Imaged Concepts'²⁶, anticipating Kant's 'aesthetic idea'²⁷ by some fifty years.

4.3 Baumgarten Scholarship

Paul Guyer wrote recently that Baumgarten was the first philosopher to combine sensory perception, cognition and affect into a coherent aesthetic theory²⁸. These remarks are part of a growing interest in Baumgarten's relatively neglected achievements, his reputation having suffered from his close identification with the rationalists and his relative eclipse after Kant's epoch-making Critical philosophy²⁹. Nevertheless, though the claim is disputed by Copleston³⁰, Baumgarten is accepted by Cassirer, and by many other commentators, to be the founder of modern philosophical aesthetics³¹.

The relative neglect of Baumgarten has been most acute in Anglophone philosophy, probably because only one of his works has so far been published in English, the *Reflections on Poetry*³², written when he was twenty-one, and lovingly translated by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther as late as 1954, and long since out of print. Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, published just four years after the *Reflections*, expanded gradually to 1000 sections over seven editions. This work was

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954), §29, *Scholium*, p. 49.

²⁷ Immanuel Kant (1790;1987) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett, §49, Ak. 313, pp. 181-2.

²⁸ Paul Guyer (2003) 'History of Modern Aesthetics' in Jerrold Levinson (Ed.) (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 25-60) p. 25, and *Op.Cit.* (2005) Ch. 1 'The Origins of Modern Aesthetics 1711-1735', pp. 3-36.

²⁹ Baumgarten receives only one mention in Ted Honderich (Ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP.

³⁰ As mentioned by Nicholas Davey (1989) in 'Baumgarten's Aesthetics: a Post-Gadamerian Reflection', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 29, 101-115, p.101.

³¹ Ernst Cassirer, *Op. Cit.* (1951) p.339.

³² Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954).

used for many years by Kant as a teaching text³³. It included a section (§§501-623) on ‘empirical psychology’, translated here from Latin into English for the first time (see Appendix D)³⁴. The full Latin text of the *Metaphysica* is now available on the internet, and is being translated into English by Dr. John Hymers, who at the time of writing had reached §350³⁵. Apart from the reprint by Hans Rudolf Schweizer³⁶ of the chapter from the *Metaphysica* on empirical psychology, the *Metaphysica* has been out of print for over 200 years, apart from a Latin facsimile of 1963³⁷. Paul Guyer suspects that the reason for Baumgarten’s comparative neglect, despite his importance to Lessing, Kant, Schiller and Hegel³⁸, may lie in the inherent difficulty and subtlety of his work, written, as it is, in a rather dry academic Latin³⁹, which might have encouraged even Kant to rely on Meier’s German language popularisation of his ideas, *The Beginner’s Guide to All the Fine Arts*⁴⁰, rather than to read, ‘Baumgarten’s own intricate and lengthy Latin magnum opus’⁴¹. Baumgarten’s *Aesthetica* had to wait until 1961 for its second printing, in facsimile⁴², and although Schweizer opened up access to the *Aesthetica* in 1973 by publishing some extracts in a dual-language (Latin and German) edition, with

³³ Hans Rudolf Schweizer (Ed.) *Op. Cit.* (1983) p. X.

³⁴ Translated from *Ibid.* pp. 1-65.

³⁵ The mechanically scanned in Latin text, with inevitable errors, can be found at <http://www.ikp.uni-bonn.de/kant/agb-metaphysica/synopsis.html>. The on-going translation by Dr John Hymers, at the Catholic University of Leuven, of the whole of the *Metaphysica* into English can be found at: http://hymers.eu/dr_hymers/research_baumgarten.htm. This is a joint project with Courtney Fugate, who is concentrating on Meier’s translation. At the time of writing, Hymers had reached §350 (website last updated 15 May 2007). Recently, Meier’s German translation of the *Metaphysica* (in the 1783 edition published by Joh. Aug. Eberhard) has been reprinted as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (2004) *Metaphysik*, with an introduction, concordance and bibliography by Dagmar Mirbach, Jena, Dietrich Scheglmann Reprints. This version is relatively compressed, running to 743 sections, matched in the concordance against the 1000 sections of the 1779 edition, which is the one usually quoted by scholars.

³⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983).

³⁷ Listed in the bibliography of Hans Rudolf Schweizer *Op. Cit.* (1983) p. 101.

³⁸ Paul Guyer (1998a) ‘Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb’, in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, Oxford, OUP, (in 4 Volumes) (Vol. 1, pp; 227-8) p. 227 Col. 2.

³⁹ Apart from his first work, *Reflections on Poetry*, which has a much lighter touch, *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954).

⁴⁰ This is my translation of the title from the German: *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, of 1748, two years before the first volume of his teacher’s *Aesthetica* appeared. A literal translation would be *Rudiments of All the Fine Arts*. Despite its importance in the history of aesthetics, Meier’s book was out of print for over 200 years, though it was reprinted in 1976 in the series *Documenta linguistica, Deutsche Grammatiken des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts*, Hildesheim: Olms.

⁴¹ Paul Guyer (1998a) *Op. Cit.* p. 227, Col. 2.

⁴² *Loc. Cit.*

an extensive commentary⁴³, it was only in September 2007 that the full work became available in a dual language, Latin and German, edition⁴⁴.

This study of Baumgarten uses two primary sources, his *Reflections on Poetry*, and the 'Empirical Psychology' section of his *Metaphysics*, in its seventh printing of 1779. Together, these two sources offer a concise account that should enable us to infer his answers to our research questions, helped by occasional references to the *Aesthetica*.

4.4 The 'Aesthetic' in Baumgarten

Although *Reflections on Poetry* was published before the *Metaphysics*, it will be discussed after the *Metaphysics*, as it deals more directly with the arts. Sections 501-623 of the *Metaphysics* deal with 'empirical psychology', and will be studied to find out how Baumgarten viewed the role of the senses in cognition and the aesthetic. The full translation is given in Appendix D.

When Baumgarten coined the word 'aesthetic', it had a specific meaning, inherited from the ancients, referring to knowledge acquired through the bodily senses, as opposed to the operation of reason⁴⁵. Baumgarten's originality lay in seeing aesthetics, the science of the body's 'sensory knowledge', as the 'younger sister' of logical analysis⁴⁶, a partner that was vital to both the arts and the sciences (See Fig. 4, above).

Baumgarten's psychology places the word 'aesthetics' in a context where it is appears to be synonymous with the modern use of the word 'perception':

§502 Psychology comprises the first principles of theology, aesthetics, logic and the practical sciences . . .

⁴³ Hans Rudolf Schweizer (1973) *Ästhetik als Philosophie der Sinnlichen Erkenntnis: eine Interpretation der 'Aesthetica' A. G. Baumgartens mit Teilweiser Wiedergabe des lateinischen Textes und deutscher Übersetzung*, Basel, Schwabe. It was decided to concentrate on the basis of Baumgarten's aesthetics presented in the two early primary texts chosen for consideration.

⁴⁴ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1750; 1758; 2007).

⁴⁵ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) §116, p. 78 (See section 4.2, above).

⁴⁶ In the *Aesthetica* §13, Baumgarten writes that 'Our Aesthetics (§1), just like her older sister logic, is . . . comprised of theory, heuristics, method (lucid order); (*Aesthetica nostra (§1), sicuti logica, soror aetius natu maior, est . . .*) (My translation from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1750/58; 2007 Edn) p. 16.

The inclusion of theology in psychology shows that he is still carrying much of the baggage of 'rational psychology', later jettisoned by Kant in the 'Transcendental Dialectic'⁴⁷ of *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

In §511, however, Baumgarten also makes a break with rationalist orthodoxy. Rather than dismiss obscure perceptions as the mother of all errors, he writes:

There exist obscure perceptions in the mind (§510). All of these, [taken] as a complex, are called the FOUNDATION of the MIND⁴⁸.

These 'obscure perceptions', as a 'complex', making the 'foundation of the mind' would seem to anticipate John Searle's account of what he calls 'the Background' which shapes our concepts and expectations⁴⁹. Searle also proposed a neuro-physiological basis for the Background, which could, perhaps, be viewed as an updated account of Baumgarten's concept⁵⁰. Finally, Baumgarten's later account, in the *Aesthetica*, of how associations of obscure ideas can give rise to the 'artistic impetus', would seem, according to Mary J. Gregor, to anticipate Twentieth Century ideas of creativity emerging from the subconscious⁵¹.

For Wolff, obscure ideas had been 'simply a defect of vision', a 'darkness' of the soul⁵². By contrast, Baumgarten claimed that obscure ideas formed a 'complex', through association, which allowed obscure ideas both to coalesce together and to associate themselves to construct a greater clarity. Beginning, 'Reality is true knowledge', Baumgarten emphasises the cognitive achievements of the senses in §§515-517. Knowledge is either increased through the effects of more numerous 'qualities' or sensory stimulations, or reduced by fewer. After his definition of associations in §516, he compares confused perceptions with distinct ones:

§516 PERCEPTIONS which combine some partial elements with others to make totalities are called ASSOCIATIONS; such associations of the strongest perceptions RULE (are dominant in the mind).

⁴⁷ Immanuel Kant (1781/87; 1993 edn.) *Critique of Pure Reason*, revised and expanded translation based on Micklejohn, Edited by Vasilis Politis London, Everyman, A292/B348 – A470/B371, pp. 233-466.

⁴⁸ Hans Rudolf Schweizer *Op. Cit.* (1983) p. 4. From now on, no more quotations from, or allusions to, my translation will be referenced to Schweizer's book, as the paragraph numbers are identical in his reprint and in my Appendix.

⁴⁹ John Searle (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*, London, Penguin, especially pp. 127 ff.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁵¹ Mary J. Gregor discusses the link in the *Aesthetica* between obscure ideas and the 'aesthetic impetus', without, however, referring to Freud: *Op. Cit.* (1983) pp. 367-8. The relevant passages are in Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1750/58; 2007) Vol. 1, Section V, *Impetus Aestheticus* §§78-95, pp. 62-77.

⁵² Mary J. Gregor *Op. Cit.* (1983) p. 367. She quotes from Wolff's *Psychologia Empirica* §38.

§517 The more qualities⁵³ a perception comprises, the stronger it is (§23, 515). An obscure perception, comprising many qualities, is stronger than a clear perception, and a confused perception comprising many qualities is (also) stronger than a distinct perception. PERCEPTIONS which include many qualities are called PREGNANT . . .

This claim that a ‘con-fused’ perception could be stronger than a distinct perception is also a clear break with Leibnitz and Wolff, who, it appears⁵⁴, would have accorded a superior status to a distinct perception (See figures 3 and 4, in Section 4.2). Baumgarten is pointing out the *sensory impoverishment* that seems to accompany any increase in abstract analysis. In §531 he writes:

The CLARITY of clear qualities is more INTENSIVE, the multiplicity of [obscure⁵⁵] qualities, it could be said, is MORE EXTENSIVE. A clearer extensive perception is VIVID. The vividness of an IDEA and of an ORATION is its RADIANCE (splendour), and its opposite is ARIDITY (a thorny kind of thinking and speaking). Both kinds of clarity impart PERSPICUITY⁵⁶.

Here, the link in Baumgarten’s aesthetics between the persuasive ‘extensive’⁵⁷, sensuality of rhetoric, against the abstractions of ‘intensive’ logic, becomes clear. Later, in §531 he adds, ‘Sensory certainty is PERSUASION, intellectual [certainty is] CONVICTION’.

One of the most quoted paragraphs from the *Metaphysica* is his second definition of aesthetics:

§533 AESTHETICS is the science of sensorily knowing and proposing (the logical faculty of lower cognition, the philosophy of the graces and the muses, lower epistemology, the art of thinking beautifully, art as an analogy to reason).

Baumgarten’s first definition of ‘aesthetic’, in *Reflections on Poetry*, had less scope:

⁵³ The Latin word is *notas*, which Mary J. Gregor translates as ‘notes’, with an obvious link to the units of sensation which combine to make a tune. I have chosen to translate *notas* with the more general term, ‘qualities’, by way of alluding to *qualia*.

⁵⁴ This is an assumption which could be clarified by further research into Leibnitz and Wolff.

⁵⁵ The word *obscure* is absent, but the balanced nature of the sentences, and the overall sense, would seem to demand it.

⁵⁶ My translation.

⁵⁷ The term ‘intension’ refers to the meaning of a word, and ‘extension’ to the objects in the world which are referenced by that word, corresponding to the distinction between *connotation* and *denotation*. See A. W. Sparkes (1991) *Talking Philosophy: a wordbook*, London, Routledge, pp. 56-7.

Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or AESTHETIC⁵⁸.

There is not space here to explore the full implications of §533, but it is clear that by adding ‘proposing’, Baumgarten had emphasised the *active* side of aesthetics, as observed by Nicholas Davey, who finds in these words an indication of Baumgarten’s pioneering interest in semiotics⁵⁹. The reference to aesthetics as ‘the philosophy of the graces and the muses’ shows how he is now generalising the remit of aesthetics beyond poetry to include all the arts, and ‘lower epistemology’ asserts the validity of sensory perceptions as knowledge. Nicholas Davey⁶⁰, Kai Hammermeister⁶¹, and Steffen W. Gross⁶² all have very interesting and sometimes conflicting views on the full interpretation of ‘the art of thinking beautifully’, which is elaborated upon in the *Aesthetica*, but space does not permit further discussion here.

The expression, ‘art as an analogy of reason’ has a pedigree that will need to be considered here, however. Schweizer explains how Baumgarten developed, by adapting from Wolff’s empirical psychology, the idea that aesthetics provides the ‘lower cognitive faculty’ with an analogue to the role played by logic in the ‘higher cognitive faculty’. Wolff, in turn, derived the term ‘analogue for reason’ from Leibnitz, whose example was of a dog, which becomes frightened, as a human would, when threatened with a stick. Wolff also calls this capacity in the dog, ‘an analogue for reason⁶³’. For two dogmatic Rationalists, this thought seems surprisingly counter to the thinking of Descartes: a) the attribution of Mind to a mere animal, and b) the very comparison of animal capacities to the human. This anticipates the later chapters of this thesis, which consider the biology of the aesthetic. As Schweizer points out, Baumgarten puts to good account Leibnitz and Wolff’s concept of the ‘analogue for reason’ in the ‘lower cognitive faculty’. The way Baumgarten does this would possibly have surprised his intellectual mentors, because Baumgarten repeatedly claims a complementary parity

⁵⁸ Translation by Aschenbrenner and Holther; Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §116, p. 78. In the original this reads: *Sunt ergo νόητα cognoscenda facultate superiore obiectum logices, αἰσθητα ἐπιστημῆς αἰσθητικῆς siue AESTHETICAE* (facsimile p. 39).

⁵⁹ Nicholas Davey, *Op. Cit.* (1989).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Kai Hammermeister *Op. Cit.* (2002).

⁶² Steffen W. Gross *Op. Cit.* (2002).

⁶³ Hans Rudolf Schweizer *Op. Cit.* (1983) pp. XX and footnote 201, p.97. Kant also uses the same expression, in *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.), §90, Ak 464, footnote 30, p. 356.

between sensory and intellectual cognition⁶⁴. At the core of Baumgarten's argument is a continuity with Leibnitz and Wolff (and Socrates) that the senses are inherently 'confused', and the function of the intellect is, as it says in the *Republic*, to separate the 'soft' from the 'hard' as 'distinct' qualities⁶⁵. But Baumgarten turns this hitherto derogatory notion of 'confusion' into a positive 'con-fusion', or *joining together* of sensations into a *unified* aesthetic perception with all the 'extensive' richness of sensory experience, as compared to the relatively dry abstractions of 'intensive' concepts and definitions. As Baumgarten famously asked in the *Aesthetica* (§560):

What is abstraction, then, if not a loss? By a similar process, you cannot cut a sphere of marble from an irregular block, except by such a loss of material, to win the prized rotundity⁶⁶. (My translation)

As we have seen, this defence of the richness of sensory knowledge and expression, as compared to the parsimony of intellect, had already been extensively developed by Baumgarten in the *Reflections*⁶⁷ and the *Metaphysics*⁶⁸, and receives confirmation in the contrasting, and even competing, roles of the left and right hemispheres of the brain (See sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, above).

In the *Metaphysics*, Baumgarten had argued in §544 that 'in sensations which are also distinct there is always some admixture of confusion', concluding that:

EXPERIENCE is the knowledge of clear senses; AESTHETIC acquisition and experiential expression is called EMPIRICAL⁶⁹.

Again, he places the emphasis as much on 'experiential expression' as on 'aesthetic acquisition' (reception). Sensitive to possible criticism from sceptics over the reliability of the senses, Baumgarten writes, in §546 that 'internal and external sensations' perceive 'actualities': they are 'the greatest truths of the whole world (§184), and not one of them is a trick of the senses'. This does not rule out the possibility of errors from hasty judgment, or deliberate deception through sleight of hand (§§546-7). Then

⁶⁴ For example, *Metaphysica* §§531-2 (See Appendix D).

⁶⁵ Plato *Op. Cit.* (1993) Book 3, 410, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Op. Cit.* (1750/1758/2007) Vol. 1, §560, p. 538: *Quid enim est abstractio, si iactura non est? Pari ratione ex marmore irregularis figurae non efficias globum mormoreum, nisi cum tanto saltim materiae detrimento, quantum postulabit maius rotunditatis pretium.* My attention was drawn to this section of the *Aesthetica* by Kai Hammermeister *Op. Cit.* (2002) p. 10.

⁶⁷ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) §§15-55, pp. 42 –57.

⁶⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739/1983) §§515-533 pp. 6-16.

⁶⁹ *EXPERIENTIA sit cognitio sensu clara, AESTHETICA comparandae et proponendae experientiae est EMPIRICA; Ibid.* p. 22.

Baumgarten makes some very striking observations when he returns to the relativity of sensory perception⁷⁰:

§549 Accordingly, another stronger perception obscures a weaker (§529); for the same reason the weaker perception brightens [or acts as a foil to] the stronger (§531). Hence if a different, clearer, stronger perception succeeds upon the perception of a weaker object, that which is new, in the field of clear sensations, is perceived the more intensely⁷¹ (§529). Therefore, a clear, stronger, sensation, following upon other weaker ones, is highlighted by its very novelty (§542, 534). Hence weaker things in contrast with another thing illuminate it [or act as a foil to it] (§91, 531). Opposites when juxtaposed enhance each other.

This kind of knowledge is the ‘bread and butter’ of the artist, who knows that if the next colour applied to a painting is too dark or too intense in hue, it will make the rest of the painting look ‘washed out’, even though, before that blunder, the colours had operated well within a smaller scale of values. What is particularly striking about this paragraph, however, is that Baumgarten introduces a *temporal* dimension into perception, even visual perception, usually considered to be ‘visual-spatial’, as distinct from so-called ‘time-based’ forms, such as music and the literary arts. He shows the relevance of time to all forms of what he calls ‘experiential expression’. Novelty; originality; the new look, the new colour; *novelty* acknowledged as an ‘*aesthetic* property’. This provides an argument against those who claim that Duchamp’s readymades ‘prove’ that artworks can sometimes be ‘non-aesthetic’. There are arguments that can be advanced for novelty as an aesthetic property: a) novelty stimulates the senses and alerts the mind, in a way suggested by Kant’s term, the ‘*quicken*ing of both faculties (imagination and understanding)’⁷² (my Italics); b) the aesthetic is not restricted to artistic contexts, though it is actively deployed in them, including in rhetoric, where novelty can capture the attention and stimulate thought.

Novelty, however carries a risk. As Baumgarten writes:

§550 If a sensation . . . is made up of absolutely the same set of many complete perceptions immediately in succession, it shines, in the first instance, with the light of novelty (§549). This diminishes in part the following time . . . always reducing in this way, until it is very obscure (§529). Therefore sensations . . . become obscure just by the passage of time (§539).

⁷⁰ This theme was already mentioned, *Ibid.* §542,

⁷¹ *magis*, translated by Schweizer as ‘*stärke wahrgenommen*’, i.e. more strongly distinct.

⁷² Immanuel Kant (1790; 1952 edn) *The Critique of Judgement*, translated James Creed Meredith, Oxford, Clarendon Press, §9, Ak 219, p.60. Most of my quotations from CJ come from Pluhar, but I think this one is preferable.

Although all art might be at risk from the kind of over-familiarity that Baumgarten describes, the fewer rewards a work has to offer the subject, the greater its dependence on sheer novelty, the more the work will suffer over time, however sedulously we might try to recreate in our imaginations the historical circumstances of its original creation.

For the concluding five paragraphs of Section III on the senses, Baumgarten describes extreme states of consciousness, beginning, in §552, with ecstasy. He begins by stating that in a normal state of mind, a subject's 'individual sensations . . . have their accustomed level of clarity'. But:

If any of these sensations become so vivid that it noticeably obscures the others, HE IS ENRAPPED (forgets himself, is not with himself). The status of the internal senses snatched outside of a person is ECSTASY (vision, the mind moved, excess of mind).

This captures the intensity of response which occurs, perhaps not routinely, but frequently enough to keep art lovers, concert-goers, opera buffs, film-goers, novel readers, soap-opera fans and football supporters coming back for more, again and again, and why they are willing to continue risking disappointment as they once again adopt the aesthetic attitude towards whatever object is before them.

Now it is necessary to review our questions.

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

For Baumgarten, the aesthetic is closely related to the senses, supplying sensory knowledge that is different from, and complementary to, logic.

B1 Did 'the aesthetic' have a substantive meaning for Baumgarten? Did he consider 'the aesthetic' to exist?

Yes, to both parts of the question; the aesthetic was about sensory perception (knowledge) and about employing sensory means for communication: 'sensorily knowing and proposing'. It might be objected by a non-realist that the aesthetic could exist as 'a way of seeing the world', but 'without the aesthetic existing in the world'⁷³. In reply I would argue, first, that embodied subjects exist, with their evolved abilities to perceive colours and other secondary properties, which are widely accepted as 'real'. The non-realist's question concerns whether aesthetic properties, which are freighted with feelings, emotions and learned expectations are also 'real', although they do not share the same ontology of primary and secondary properties. Margolis' 'cultural

⁷³ I am grateful to my supervisor Andrew Edgar for pointing this out to me.

realism', is based upon their classification by Popper as 'World 3' properties. I would argue that, as Baumgarten's psychological approach to the aesthetic included 'affect' within the category of the 'poetic', treated as synonymous with 'artistic' and the recent use of the word 'aesthetic', his position would align with Margolis' view of aesthetic properties as Intentional and emergent. This position can also be seen, in terms of neuroscience, as the real 'embodiment', or in Ingold's terms, the 'incorporation' of the propensity for aesthetic response, and hence for its realism, when it occurs⁷⁴. This embodiment is instantiated in a) the evolved and b) the *learned* neural networks of organisms, as will be argued in chapters six and seven.

B2 Did Baumgarten identify any qualitative differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic states of mind?

Yes, the aesthetic was sensory, the intellectual, abstract. At its best:

A clearer extensive perception is VIVID. The vividness of an IDEA and of an ORATION is its RADIANCE (splendour), and its opposite is ARIDITY (a thorny kind of thinking and speaking)⁷⁵.

*SH3 The word 'aesthetic' connotes passive receptivity.

The firmest rebuff to that view comes from Baumgarten's definition of the aesthetic in the *Metaphysica*, as 'the science of sensorily knowing *and proposing*' (my Italics).

4.5 The Relationship of the Aesthetic to Art in Baumgarten

After looking at Baumgarten's more theoretical work in empirical psychology to see how he viewed the aesthetic, we now turn to his early masterpiece, his *Reflections on Poetry*. From the opening paragraphs, Baumgarten places the emphasis on the 'sensory'⁷⁶:

⁷⁴ Timothy Ingold's arguments for the 'incorporation' or embodiment of culture within neural, muscular and skeletal structures will be discussed in section 6.6, below.

⁷⁵ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983) §531 (My translation).

⁷⁶ Although Aschenbrenner and Holther chose the word 'sensate' to translate the Latin *sensitiva*, several other commentators use the more similar-sounding word, 'sensitive'. In this quotation, I have replaced 'sensate' with Paul Guyer's preferred word, 'sensory'. He says he avoids the word 'sensitive', because, '... in contemporary English that term might connote a special degree of refinement in discernment, [so] I have instead adopted the translation 'sensory' or 'sensorily,' which does not have that connotation.' See his *Op. Cit.* (2005) footnote p. 29. I have decided that Guyer made the right choice, as 'sensory' is more likely than 'sensate' to be understood by

§3 By **sensory representations** we mean representations received through the lower part of the cognitive faculty⁷⁷.

He points out that all discourse, however abstract, has to have recourse to some sensory element, and conversely, that all sensory discourse will inevitably have some intellectual content⁷⁸. The word 'sensory' (*sensitive* in Latin) seems to mean something like the ancient meaning of 'aesthetic', and a blend of the modern meanings of 'sensory', 'perceptual' and 'aesthetic':

§6 The various parts of sensory discourse are: (1) sensory representations, (2) their interrelationships, (3) the words, or the articulate sounds which are represented by the letters which symbolize the words, §4, §1.

§7 By **perfect sensory discourse** we mean discourse whose various parts are directed toward the apprehension of sensory representations, §5.

§8 A sensory discourse will be the more perfect the more its parts favor the awakening of sensory representations, §4, §7

The 'awakening of sensory representations' lies at the heart of 'perfect sensory discourse'; the more evocative of the senses, the more 'perfect'. He defines a poem as 'a perfect sensory discourse'⁷⁹, and contrasts it with the abstraction of logical argument. The word 'sensory' is now replaced in his definitions by the word 'poetic', which seems to be equivalent to the contemporary phrase, 'aesthetically satisfying'. When he comes to the *scholium* for §14, Baumgarten has some fun demonstrating the difference between a) verse which is clear and *confused* (i.e. poetry) which 'awakens sensory representations' and b) verse which is clear and *distinct*, evoking abstract ideas but without evoking the senses (i.e. doggerel). He states his theorem:

§14. Distinct representations, complete, adequate, profound through every degree, are not sensory, and, therefore, not poetic, §11⁸⁰.

He proceeds to give an example of verse, which, though clear, is distinct (abstract), rather than confused (sensory):

the reader as meaning 'through the senses'. Therefore, I have substituted 'sensory' for 'sensitive' whenever that word occurs in my quotations from Aschenbrenner and Holther's translation, and also used it in my translation from the *Metaphysica* in Appendix D.

⁷⁷ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* §4, pp. 38-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* §9, p. 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 42.

*Refutation is the proof that others err.
 No one refutes unless he proves thereby
 Another's fallacy. But if you want to prove
 Such things, it's clear you have to study logic.
 When you refute, you're sure to get it wrong
 If you're no logician- by verse one*⁸¹.

Baumgarten claims that the content of the verse is flawless, and the Latin verse impeccable. However, the failure of this mere 'verse' to rise to the level of 'poetry' serves to demonstrate that distinct abstract cognition is the province of logic, philosophy and science, rather than of poetry. Nevertheless, he will go on to make a strong claim for the cognitive value of sensory imagery. Not only poetry, but also science and even philosophy also depend upon sensory imagery to communicate their abstract ideas.

A picture is beginning to emerge of the way *confused* sensory representations aggregate quantitatively to produce an ever-increasing clarity. In the *scholium* to §16, Baumgarten again aligns his terminology with the established philosophical distinction between a word's *intension*, understood as its conceptual meaning, and its *extension*, understood as the things in the world to which the word refers. It is worth quoting §16 and its *scholium* in full:

When in representation A more is represented than in B, C, D, and so on, but all are confused, A will be said to be EXTENSIVELY CLEARER than the rest.

We have had to add this restriction so that we may distinguish these degrees of clarity from those, already sufficiently understood, which, through a discrimination of characteristics, plumb the depths of cognition and render one representation *intensively clearer* than another⁸².

The phrase, 'already sufficiently understood' shows that, at this point, Baumgarten is declaring his departure from Leibnitz and Wolff. While philosophy and science make meanings *intensively distinct*, his reply to them is that poetry plays its part in making meanings *extensively clear*: dense, rich and con-fused (fused together). Poetry here can be taken to represent 'sensory discourse' in general, for Baumgarten later included painting, in §§39-40⁸³. Meanwhile, Baumgarten develops this quantitative theme further. In §17, he states that extensively clearer representations contribute more to the perfection of a poem, and therefore are 'especially poetic⁸⁴'. In §18, he says that the more determinate the representations are, the more that is gathered into the confused

⁸¹ *Loc. Cit.* Gilbert and Kuhn offer a different translation of the same verse, *Op. Cit.* p. 292.

⁸² Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 43.

representations, the more extensive clarity is achieved; the more determined it is, the more poetic it is⁸⁵. As individuals are ‘determined in every respect’, their representations are, ‘in the highest degree poetic⁸⁶’. In the *scholium*, Baumgarten illustrates this with a reference to the story of Actaeon in the *Metamorphoses*, when Ovid gives details, by name and character, of many of the hounds ‘who rend their master to shreds⁸⁷’.

As the species is more specific than the genus, it is also more poetic⁸⁸. Hence, ‘Olympic dust’ is more poetic than ‘the dust of the games field’, and Baumgarten gives many more examples. Indeed, the word ‘example’ is his next *definiendum*, in §21:

By EXAMPLE we mean a representation of something more determined which is supplied to clarify the representation of something less determined⁸⁹.

His illustration comes from the classroom. When the algebra teacher replaces letters with numbers, the relationships immediately become clearer. The *scholium* then shows how figures of speech, which he calls ‘non-proper locutions’ make conceptual words more comprehensible, even in cases where science does not yet have a full rational explanation. One of Baumgarten’s examples of such a ‘non-proper’ definition is of the word ‘fever’ described as ‘the war instigated against disease by the powerful force of the spirit⁹⁰’. This demonstrates perfectly the way the use of the confused, sensory language of poetic imagery can bring clarity. Indeed, his point is that they bring more clarity to the understanding than can be gleaned from the ‘distinct’ (or abstract) representations they are used to exemplify. This is how he begins Theorem §22:

Examples confusedly represented are representations that are extensively clearer than those for whose clarification they are offered, §21; hence they are more poetic, §18⁹¹ . . .

These few paragraphs offer the first hint of what Kant was to call the ‘aesthetic idea⁹²’, which is perhaps the main borrowing by Kant from Baumgarten.

In the *scholium* to §22, Baumgarten quotes Leibnitz, who wrote that, ‘The chief object of history, as well as of poetry, should be to teach prudence and virtue through

⁸⁵ *Loc. Cit.*

⁸⁶ *Loc. Cit.* §19.

⁸⁷ Ovid (1921 Edition) *Metamorphoses*, London, Heinemann, Translated by Frank Justus Miller, Vol. 1, Book III, ll. 206-224, pp. 138-9.

⁸⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735/1954) §20, p. 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 45.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, §22 p. 46.

⁹² Discussed by Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790;1987 edn.) Comment I, Ak 342-4, pp. 214-7.

examples⁹³. Here Baumgarten's poetics stake their claim to a role in educational psychology, as well as in bodying forth abstract concepts with sensory exemplifications. Goodman has also been identified as a follower of Baumgarten, and these paragraphs could have been the starting point for some of his reflections on exemplification⁹⁴.

With §25, Baumgarten introduces a new theme, the place of affect in poetry⁹⁵. It is worth quoting the full theorem:

Since affects are rather marked degrees of pleasure or pain, their sense representations are given in the representing of something to oneself confusedly as good or bad. Therefore, they determine poetic representations, §24⁹⁶; and therefore, to arouse affects is poetic, §11⁹⁷.

In §26, he says that 'we represent more in those things which we represent as good or bad for us than if we do not so represent them', so they are extensively clearer, and therefore more poetic⁹⁸. The case of Patient S in chapter two comes to mind (section 2.4.4). Something was missing in her perception of sinister-looking faces because she did not experience the negative 'affects' usually experienced by people with functioning amygdalae. Baumgarten continues: stronger impressions are clearer than weaker ones, and are further strengthened if accompanied by affects: 'Therefore it is highly poetic to excite the most powerful affects⁹⁹'. This marks a difference between Baumgarten and Kant; the latter considered emotion to be inimical to judgments of beauty, though appropriate in judgments of the sublime¹⁰⁰.

With §28, Baumgarten begins a section on images, which he calls the 'reproduced representations of the senses'¹⁰¹, and, in §29, he re-emphasises the great importance of affect as a supplement, to re-enforce mental imagery:

[Mental¹⁰²] Images are less clear than sense impressions, therefore, less poetic, §17. Therefore, since aroused affects determine sense impressions, a poem

⁹³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 46.

⁹⁴ Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (1998a) p. 228.

⁹⁵ This could well have been from the influence of Dubos. Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (2005) gives a useful summary of Dubos's aesthetics (pp. 16-20).

⁹⁶ §24 states: 'By SENSE REPRESENTATIONS we mean representations of present changes in that which is to be represented, and these are sensory, §3, and thus far, poetic, §12'. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 47.

⁹⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ §27, *Op. Cit.* p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §13, Ak 226, p. 69: 'Any taste remains barbaric if its liking requires that *charms* and *emotion* be mingled in, let alone if it makes these the standard of its approval' . . . 'But sublimity (with which the feeling of emotion is connected) requires a different standard of judging from the one that taste uses as a basis' (§14, Ak. 226, p. 72).

¹⁰¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) *Scholium* to §28, p. 48.

which arouses affects is more perfect than one which is full of dead imagery, §8, §9, and it is more poetic to arouse affects than to produce other images¹⁰³.

The *scholium* begins with a quotation, which Aschenbrenner and Holther translate as:

*It is not enough for poems to be beautiful: they must also be charming and lead the mind of the listener where they please*¹⁰⁴.

They have somewhat weakened the effect by using two words, 'charming' and 'lead' for a single more forceful word in the Latin, the 3rd person plural imperative in the active voice: 'agunto', from *ago*, 'I do' or 'I act', a verb also employed for giving a rousing speech to a crowd or for driving cattle. I would suggest the following translation, which turns the linguistic clock back a little¹⁰⁵:

*Beauty is not enough! All poems shall,
Where're they will, the listener's soul compel!*

Later in the same *scholium* Baumgarten again re-emphasises the value of sensory images in making abstract concepts more comprehensible:

According to §22, when the poet performs, we develop a more universal notion from these specific instances and sharp determinations, as it were from examples. Certainly no other notion will be found under which these things can be classified except that of *imaged concepts*¹⁰⁶ (my Italics).

We can see, in Baumgarten's *imaged concepts*, another anticipation of Kant's *aesthetic ideas*¹⁰⁷.

Baumgarten then proceeds to give a detailed account of how figures of speech harness the sensory and affective resources of the body's senses to assist the mind's understanding, whether in rhetoric, poetry, or in 'clear and distinct' (i.e. scientific) prose. It is also possible to recognise the similarities between the recent findings of cognitive neuroscience and the anciently perceived difference between abstractly cognitive and sensorily emotive forms of cognition. In chapter two, these differences were considered to yield different states of mind, which have been broadly described (in 'short-hand') as 'left-' and 'right- brain' modes of functioning, however differently the functional

¹⁰² I have interjected the word 'mental' here, to show that the word 'images' in this context (*phantasmata*) does not refer to physical perceptions.

¹⁰³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 48

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 48-9; the facsimile (p. 14) reads: *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata - -*

Et quocunque volent, animum auditoris agunto.

¹⁰⁵ In my translation, I have tried to preserve the theme and rhyme as they occurred in the Latin.

¹⁰⁶ In the facsimile, the two Latin words translated here as 'imaged concepts' are *notio phantasmatum*, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) Facsimile, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ Discussed by Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790;1987) Comment I, Ak 342-4, pp. 214-7.

modules might in fact be located, anatomically, in individual people. These modules cannot all function simultaneously for very long at full intensity, because the blood-flow supplying the necessary oxygen and glucose would be insufficient¹⁰⁸. When individual brain modules increase their level of activity, or hormones are released into the bloodstream, they nuance the state of consciousness, engendering different levels of awareness of mind, body, environment, memory, concept or emotion.

As the ancient philosophers realised two and a half thousand years ago, and as Baumgarten realised two and a half centuries before fMRI scans were invented, our sensory and emotional intuitions are, in important ways, different from our abstract cognitions. However, it is possible, and often necessary, for both forms of cognition to collaborate, to help abstract concepts become more concrete and meaningful to us; only consider the use of metaphor in scientific and philosophical discourse. In chapter seven, this will be discussed in the context of cognitive neuroscience as ‘top-down’, ‘bottom-up’ and ‘re-entrant processing’¹⁰⁹.

In §§30-36, Baumgarten considers how to intensify sensory imagery. The first rhetorical or poetic technique¹¹⁰ for adding ‘clarity’ is to represent ‘the whole with a partial image’¹¹¹. It might at first seem paradoxical that a partial image could have a greater sensory impact than a full representation, but the imagination, stimulated by a partial disclosure, conjures up the whole mental image in a creative rush of ‘Aha!’ recognition. In the last chapter of the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* Arthur Danto tries to harness this form of rhetorical ellipsis to define art. He states his thesis thus:

... that works of art, in categorical contrast with mere representation, use the means of representation in a way that is not exhaustively specified when one has exhaustively specified what is being represented¹¹².

¹⁰⁸ See section 2.4.2, above. It appears that ‘flash-bulb’ memories are exceptional, in that most of the brain seems to have been imprinted with a memory, for example enabling people to remember exactly where they were, when they heard John Kennedy had been shot.

¹⁰⁹ See Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle (1994) *Images of Mind*, New York, Scientific American, pp. 99-103 and pp. 242-3.

¹¹⁰ Baumgarten regards rhetoric and poetry as forming a continuum, not a divide; *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) §117, pp. 78-9.

¹¹¹ He is, presumably, referring to synecdoche or metonymy; *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) §30 p. 51.

¹¹² Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981), p. 167. I am indebted for this insight to the third chapter, ‘Art as Rhetorical Ellipsis: Metaphor, Expression, Style’, in Michael G. Lafferty’s unpublished (2006) Ph.D. thesis, *Arthur Danto’s Philosophy of Art*, Warwick University, pp. 123-194.

This brings a work of art and a metaphor in very close alignment, and emphasises the need for interpretation in both, as we found in the quotation from Danto in chapter one, that ‘metaphors are minor works of art’¹¹³.

Next, in section b) (§§37-42), Baumgarten surveys other kinds of images including dreams (§37¹¹⁴). In §38, he states that,

The more clearly images are presented, the more they will be similar to sense impressions, so that they are often equivalent to rather weak sensations. Now, to represent images as clearly as possible is poetic, §17. Therefore, it is poetic to make them very similar to sensations¹¹⁵.

This description of mental images as, ‘equivalent to rather weak sensations’ is a remarkable anticipation of what has now been learned about brain function. If something is imagined in a sense modality, the same areas of the brain are activated that become active in the real-time processing of external sensory stimulation in that modality, only to a lesser degree¹¹⁶. In this qualitative difference, that which is ‘real’ is distinguished by its vividness from the ‘imaginary’, apart of course for a subject undergoing a hallucination, whose illness or drug causes an important mental barrier to be transgressed. The discussion of imagery leads Baumgarten directly to the question of painting, and the famous saying of Horace, *ut pictura poesis* (§§39¹¹⁷). Here is the whole of §39, together with the quotation, which begins the *scholium*:

It is the function of a picture to represent a composite, and that is poetic, §24; the representation of a picture is very similar to the sense idea to be depicted, and this is poetic, §38. Therefore, a poem and a picture are similar, §30.

*Poetry is like a picture*¹¹⁸.

This leads him, in §§40-1, to a more extended comparison between painting and poetry. The inclusion in a poem of different viewpoints and actions adds to the extensive clarity of the representation, but in the next paragraph Baumgarten denies that he is ‘trying to affirm a prerogative to a poem over a picture’. He explains that the ‘greater intensive clarity’ arising from the ‘symbolic clarity’ of words can contribute

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 189.

¹¹⁴ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954), pp. 51-2.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 52. The above is the full text for §38, which does not have a *scholium*.

¹¹⁶ Rita Carter (1998) *Mapping the Mind*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p. 125. The example given is the task of imagining one’s room in which the same regions of the brain become active, as would when looking at the room in reality.

¹¹⁷ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 52.

¹¹⁸ In footnote 49, the editors give the reference as Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, 361 ff.

‘nothing to *extensive* clarity, the only clarity that is poetic’. This is supported by another quotation from Horace:

Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ear, than by what can be seen through one's own trusty eyes – what one can see for oneself
119.

The key is either a) the directly sensuous, or b) the senses evoked. In poetry or prose, the way to do that is through figurative language, called in the classical way, ‘nonproper terms’ (*voce impropria*), in §79, putting us firmly back on the cognitivist agenda

Nonproper meaning lies in the nonproper word. Nonproper terms, since most of them are appropriate to sensory representations, are poetic figures, because (1) the representation which approaches a thing through a figure is sensory, hence poetic, §10, §11; and (2) these terms supply complex confused representations in abundance, §23¹²⁰.

Once more, in the next paragraph, Baumgarten relates figurative language to what is now thought of as ‘aesthetic ideas’, when he says, ‘. . . it is poetic to communicate non-sensory representations by means of nonproper terms¹²¹’, i.e. to communicate abstract ideas through figurative language. After commending clarity over obscurity¹²², Baumgarten explains and approves, as highly poetic: metaphors, synecdoches and allegory¹²³. Baumgarten then goes on to the poetic use of words themselves:

§91. Words, in the respect that they are articulate sounds, belong among audible things; hence they elicit sense perceptions¹²⁴.

In §105 he repeats the view already demonstrated so ably in §14, that, ‘Not every instance of verse is a poem¹²⁵’. What is lacking in a piece of verse that fails as a poem? Baumgarten explains as follows:

. . . there can be meter in a discourse in which there are no sensory representations, no lucid order, no purity, no elegance of arrangement, and so on; and there can even be verse from which [all] these things are missing¹²⁶.

¹¹⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) p. 53. In footnote 51, the editors refer to *Ars Poetica*, ll. 180-2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* §80, p. 68.

¹²² *Loc. Cit.*, §82.

¹²³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735;1954) §§83-5, pp. 68-9. These have already been discussed in relation to Danto, above.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 69.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* §105, p. 74.

¹²⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

Therefore, he says in the *scholium* to §105, ‘We distinguish with great care between poets and versewrights¹²⁷’.

In the penultimate paragraph of his *Reflections*, Baumgarten comes to his first justification for, and definition of, the new discipline of aesthetics:

The Greek philosophers and the Church fathers have already carefully distinguished between *things perceived* [αἰσθητά] and *things known* [νόητα]. It is entirely evident that they did not equate *things known* with things of sense, since they honoured with this name things also removed from sense (therefore, images). Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or AESTHETIC¹²⁸.

Mental imagery belongs, therefore, to the realm of psychology, allied to, though not identical with, sensory perception. In the final paragraph (§117), Baumgarten makes some further generalisations. First, he comments on the philosopher’s approach to ‘sensory discourse’. Unlike the poet, the philosopher:

... has no interest in terms, so far as they are articulate sounds, for as such they belong among the *things perceived*. But he who presents sensory subject matter is expected to take much greater account of terms¹²⁹.

In other words, of course, the *sounds* of words matter a great deal to a poet, but much less to the scientist or philosopher. Then Baumgarten seems to draw a distinction between two domains within aesthetics:

GENERAL RHETORIC may be defined as the science which treats generally of unperfected presentation of sensory representations, and GENERAL POETICS as the science which treats generally of the perfected presentation of sensory representations¹³⁰.

For example, the use of metaphor or other sensory resources for communication by scientists or philosophers (or politicians), though properly part of the aesthetic realm, would belong to ‘general rhetoric’; their use by poets and other artists would belong to ‘general poetics’. To rhetoricians, he assigns the task of defining genres. On the other hand:

The philosophers should be busy in general in drawing boundary lines and especially in defining accurate limits between poetry and ordinary eloquence. *The difference is, to be sure, only a matter of degree*; but in the relegation of

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) §116, p. 78.

¹²⁹ *Loc. Cit.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

things to one side or the other it requires, we think, no less capable a geometer than did the frontiers of the Phrygians and the Mysians (my Italics)¹³¹.

This view of Baumgarten's would seem to lend support to an ontology of art based on a continuum model. The difference between a) scientific prose and diagramming and b) art prose and fine art painting is indeed only a matter of *degree*, not of *kind*.

4.6 Discussion and Conclusion

It is now time to review the remaining issues raised at the beginning of this chapter.

RQ2 What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?

The aesthetic, according to Baumgarten is the means both of engaging with and producing works of art. This involves not only the bodily senses, but also the emotions, concepts and memories. There is a temporal dimension to art, and to aesthetic properties, in all the arts, affecting our responses to them, and this temporal dimension is a matter of both immediately preceding experience, longer term memory and knowledge of history (e.g. an awareness that blue in renaissance paintings is made from powdered lapis lazuli, a precious stone).

B3 Are there any clues in Baumgarten's writing for the existence of an 'aesthetic attitude'?

There is evidence for an aesthetic attitude in Baumgarten's comparison of poetry with doggerel, in §14 of the *Reflections on Poetry* (section 4.5, above). This can be compared to Elisio Vivas' example of reading a poem 'as history' rather than 'as poetry' discussed by Dickie (see chapter two, section 2.2.2.1, above). However, even stronger evidence comes from §552 in the *Metaphysics*, when he describes a state of ecstasy, when a sensation, perhaps a tune or set of harmonies, a painting, the interior of a church, or a fog at sea (Baumgarten is not specific) becomes so vivid it obscures other sensations, so that a person becomes 'enraptured (forgets himself, is not with himself)' so that, to borrow a phrase from Bullough, he is 'out of gear' with his ordinary life. In such circumstances, it seems reasonable to accept that someone has adopted, or been snatched up into, an 'aesthetic attitude'.

¹³¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) p. 79.

*SH5 The historical aspect of art ‘trumps’ the aesthetic.

As we have seen from §§549-50 of the *Metaphysica*, the temporal dimension is an integral part of aesthetic properties, not, as the deflationists would have it, extrinsic to aesthetic experience. Therefore, to give precedence to ‘history’ over the ‘aesthetic’ is to misunderstand the nature of the aesthetic and the impact of history on aesthetic properties (see the example given, above, to RQ2).

S Whether something is art is for respondents to determine according to the nature of their response, reflecting a set of attitudes which they take towards a work, not the name of an internal property of the work.

In the last paragraph of *Reflections on Poetry*, Baumgarten closes with the difficulty of drawing a line between ‘poetry and ordinary eloquence’, for which one could substitute, ‘art and non-art’. Both art and non-art use similar resources, the objects of sense used directly, whether awake or in dreams, or evoked indirectly through imagination, memory or language. Searle’s comment about the distinction between literature and non-literature seems to be congruent with Baumgarten’s position, when he says the dividing line between ‘poetry and ordinary eloquence . . . is, to be sure, *only a matter of degree*¹³², (my Italics).

Next, the thesis will bring to bear on to the research questions the wisdom of Kant’s ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgment’¹³³.

¹³² *Loc. Cit.*

¹³³ Kant’s ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgment’ forms Part I (§§1-60) of his *Critique of Judgment*. Part II is the ‘Critique of Teleological Judgment’, §§61-91; Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.)

Chapter Five: Aesthetic Ideas: Kant

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines Kant's account of aesthetic judgment, disinterestedness and the aesthetic idea. Some comparisons are made with Baumgarten's aesthetics. It is concluded that Kant's moral misgivings about the senses, low estimate of their cognitive potential and the requirements of his own philosophical system, led to inconsistencies in his account, and reinforced a formalist tendency already present in the tradition. However, these failings are compensated by his sensitive accounts of aesthetic experience, his understanding of disinterestedness, and despite his initial separation of the aesthetic from concepts, his eventual grasp of their interaction, expressed by him in such memorable phrases as 'the free play of the imagination and understanding' and 'aesthetic ideas'.

5.1 Introduction

The single most influential work in Western aesthetics is Kant's 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' (CAeJ)¹, Part I of the *Critique of Judgment* (CJ). After 200 years, it is still much discussed in both the Analytical and Continental schools. Though a difficult work to read, full of complexity and unresolved tensions, its status, for many, is almost scriptural. Paul Guyer confides that:

... it seems to me at least that the ... theory of Kant continues to offer greater enlightenment than any of its more single-minded successors, and provides a model of the kind of complexity, rather than simplicity, that ought to be the goal of any continued attempt to provide a philosophical account and theory of both artistic objects and aesthetic experience and judgment².

As the present thesis returns to questions raised by Kant, whose answers had broadly defined the ensuing debate, the CAeJ is an unavoidable philosophical mountain to be climbed, but the views afforded repay the effort involved.

5.1.1 The Place of this Chapter in the Argument

Having surveyed the arguments of aesthetic deflationists and sceptics, this thesis has turned for enlightenment to two of the founders of aesthetics, Baumgarten and Kant. Baumgarten's relationship to the aesthetic seems easy and unproblematic (see chapter four). However, he does not deal with all of the problems raised by the deflationists,

¹ Immanuel Kant (1790; 1987 edn.) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett. The 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' (CAeJ), forms Part I (§§1-60) of the *Critique of Judgment* (CJ). Part II is the 'Critique of Teleological Judgement', §§61-91 (CTJ).

² Paul Guyer: (1997) *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (2nd Edition), Cambridge, CUP, p. 366.

such as ‘disinterestedness’, or the formalists’ perceived chasm between aesthetic judgment and morality³. Therefore, this chapter looks at Kant, who did address disinterestedness, aesthetic judgment and also morality’s relationship to the aesthetic. After Kant, this thesis adds to the collection of empirical evidence for the aesthetic begun in chapter two, turning to evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience. In the final chapter, there will be a review of these arguments and a return to the three case studies mentioned in chapter one: 1) the art of the bowerbird 2) the nexus of art, power and crime and 3) sound sculpture.

5.1.2 The Structure of this Chapter

This chapter will consult Kant on the project’s two prime research questions:

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

RQ2 What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?

The first part of the chapter (5.2 to 5.4) will tackle RQ1: ‘What is the Aesthetic?’ This will involve first trying to sketch Kant’s aesthetics into the context of his philosophical system, and then considering how his accounts of beauty, the sublime, disinterestedness and ‘purposiveness without a purpose’ affect the following issues:

- *SH6 The term ‘aesthetic’ by definition excludes the cognitive, historical, or moral. (from section 1.3.1)
- *IIiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience? (from section 2.2.2.1)
- *IIiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’? (from section 2.2.2.1)
- IIiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?(from section 2.2.2.2)

Three of the above issues were discounted in chapter two, though further support for those conclusions will be sought here. The fourth issue, disinterestedness, received some support in chapter two from Hume and from the pedagogical evidence from

³ At least, he does not deal with these in the two primary texts I have studied.

cognitive neuroscience, though it was decided to carry the topic forward to the present chapter.

The second part of the chapter (5.5) tackles RQ2: ‘What is the relationship of the aesthetic to Art?’ This will also ask how to relate Kant’s accounts of Adherent Beauty, the Aesthetic Idea and Genius to the following issues:

SvD The ‘synchronic’ v ‘diachronic’ dialectic (from section 1.3.2)

AvC Appreciation and criticism are incompatible mental states.
(from section 2.2.2.2)

OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Response appropriate to art.
(from section 3.6)

The summary and conclusion will also test my definition of the ‘aesthetic attitude’⁴ against the findings of this chapter.

5.2 The Place of the Aesthetic in Kant’s Philosophy⁵

When he wrote the first *Critique*, Kant attacked Baumgarten, saying the term ‘aesthetic’ should be confined to ‘the science of the laws of sensibility’⁶. By 1790 he had come to accept Baumgarten’s application of the term to questions of taste, because he saw aesthetic⁷ and teleological⁸ judgments as the link he needed between the conceptual and the moral realms, or as he puts it in his second ‘Introduction’⁹, the link between the realms of ‘nature’ and ‘freedom’, governed respectively by ‘Understanding’ (in the

⁴ §14 ‘To adopt the **aesthetic attitude** is to take ‘time out’ from the flux of work-a-day practical necessities, and in a vigilant state of mind to scrutinise an object or cognition in order to focus on the full range of feelings and cognitions it engenders in the subject. This ‘time out’ factor is the origin of the term ‘**disinterestedness**’ in the context of aesthetics’ (see Appendix A, §14, or section 2.5, above). The final version, changed after discussion, is given in the Appendix.

⁵ I have found particularly useful Stephan Körner (1955) *Kant*, Harmondsworth, Penguin; Werner S. Pluhar “Translator’s Introduction” to his (1987) edition of CJ, Indianapolis, Hackett; Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (1997); Guyer’s masterly essay (1998c) “Kant, Immanuel 1724-1804” in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, (Ed. E. Graig) London, Routledge, (Vol. 5, pp. 177-200) and the same author’s (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP. Also useful has been Douglas Burnham (2000) *An Introduction to Kant’s Critique of Judgement*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

⁶ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1781/87; 1993 Edn.) footnote p.49.

⁷ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) §§1-60.

⁸ *Ibid.* §§61-91.

⁹ *Ibid.* Part I, Ak 171-4, pp. 9-12.

Critique of Pure Reason (CPR¹⁰) and ‘Reason’ (in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (CPrR¹¹)).

The aim, and the success, of Kant’s Critical Philosophy was to mediate between the claims of the Empiricists, mainly Locke and Hume, who could not account for such concepts as space and time from sensory experience alone, and the Rationalists, like Descartes and Leibnitz, whose arguments attempted to make rational claims about God, the soul and immortality which reached beyond the legitimate claims of empirical experience. Kant set out the new relationship between the elements of his system in a table at the end of the second “Introduction” to CJ¹², shown as Fig. 5, below, from which it is apparent that he drew hard distinctions between the cognitive powers dealing with the natural world and the moral realm (Understanding and Reason), rather than a continuum between the Lower and Higher Cognitive Faculties as we saw in Baumgarten.

All the Mental Powers	Cognitive Powers	A Priori Principles	Application to
cognitive power	understanding	lawfulness	nature
feeling of pleasure and displeasure	judgment	purposiveness	art
power of desire	reason	final purpose	freedom

Fig. 5. Table from second “Introduction” to CJ (Ak198)

The senses are confined to ‘lower sensibility’, whereas the ‘higher sensibility’ offers a priori concepts and ideas. These divisions show up in the structure he gives to the Faculty of Sensibility’ (See Fig. 6, overleaf).

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant (1781/87; 1993 edn.) *Critique of Pure Reason*, revised and expanded translation based on Micklejohn, Edited by Vasilis Politis London, Everyman.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant (1788; 1976 edn.) *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated and edited with an introduction by Lewis White Beck, New York, Garland.

¹² Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790;1987) A198, p. 38.

	<u>HIGHER</u> - Independent of world and body - 'prior' to natural laws	<u>LOWER</u> - Bound to world and body - Subject to 'laws' e.g. Psychology
<u>PASSIVE</u>	'Pure INTUITION' e.g. source of our <i>a priori</i> presentations of the <i>form</i> of space and time	'SENSATION' <i>content</i> e.g. colours, sounds, feelings of warmth.
<u>ACTIVE</u>	'Productive (or 'Free') IMAGINATION' Active and independent; <i>not</i> bound to previous sensations.	'Reproductive IMAGINATION' Ability to sense things no longer there and to form <i>associations</i> .

Fig. 6. Kant's 'Non-Legislative' faculty of Sensibility
(Table adapted from Douglas Burnham¹³.)

Whereas Baumgarten had accorded to the senses a considerable burden of cognition with their own richness and value, even if only *analogous* to logic, Kant relegated 'Sensation' to a level which Baumgarten would have called 'obscurity', in contact with 'matter', merely perceiving colours and so forth. 'Pure Intuition' seems somehow to be separated, on a higher level, from the more bodily senses, where, uniquely, it could perceive 'form'. This split is carried by Kant directly into his distinction between 'pure judgments of taste'¹⁴, based on beautiful forms, and 'impure judgments of sense'¹⁵, based on the gratifications of appetite.

Kant, however, is not consistent. He wished to hold on to a link between taste and cognition, because it was the way he was able to assert the universality of aesthetic judgments, as cognition is public and objective, when compared to the pure subjectivity of aesthetic judgments of the bodily senses (e.g. 'Canary wine is agreeable *to me*'¹⁶). Kant, therefore, does not completely reject Baumgarten's cognitivist account of the senses and art. In a clever move, he links the 'manifold of perception' to concepts *indirectly*, when he describes the experience of beauty as the '*free play* of

¹³ Douglas Burnham *Op. Cit.* (2000) p. 13.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987) §2, Ak 204-5, pp. 45-6 and §5, Ak 209-10, pp. 51-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* §3, Ak 205-7, pp. 47-8 and §5 pp. Ak 209-10, pp. 51-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* §7, Ak 212, p. 55.

Understanding and Imagination¹⁷, (my Italics). He therefore makes a kind of parity between Judgments of *Understanding* (i.e. concepts, which are *universal* and *determinate* because publicly accessible through the language of a community) and Judgments of *Taste* (Beauty), *subjective* and *indeterminate*, which cannot be proved by argument, but which *are*, nevertheless, related, in ‘free play’, to concepts, and can thereby still claim universality.

Kant had shown in the First *Critique* how the overweening power of Reason sometimes caused its claims to overshoot the empirical evidence, as it had led dogmatic rationalists to make the empty metaphysical claims which he scorned¹⁸. Later, we shall consider how Kant’s aesthetics may have somewhat fallen prey to his own Reason’s tendency towards over-ratiocination, when he overstates his claims for the systematicity of the aesthetic.

Having set Kant’s aesthetics in the context of his philosophical system, the next task is to tackle question RQ1: ‘What is the Aesthetic?’

5.3 Beauty, the Sublime and Brain Laterality

5.3.1 Beauty and Right-Brain Thinking.

In chapter two (above), evidence was produced, from the drawing class and from neuro-psychology, for a degree of modular separation within the brain for different perceptual and cognitive tasks (section 2.4.2). The experience of students learning to draw confirms that verbal/cognitive and visual/spatial forms of thought are in some kind of inverse ratio, not to say competition, where increased activity in one area diminishes available blood supply, and therefore activity, in the other¹⁹. When beginner students of drawing are trying to concentrate on their visual experience in order to draw something from sight, they find it helpful to suppress verbal and conceptual thought, which would otherwise superimpose its cognitive stereotypes in place of direct observation (see Plate 7b).

¹⁷ This expression, or something like it, crops up repeatedly in various permutations, as when Kant speaks of the “cognitive powers . . . in free play because no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition”, *Ibid.* §9, Ak 217, p.62.

¹⁸ In the ‘Transcendental Dialectic’, Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1781/87; 1993 edn.) A292/B348 – A470/B371, pp. 233-466.

¹⁹ The same principle underlies injunctions to refrain from speaking to the driver of a bus as Picasso is said to have replied to a more theoretically inclined Cubist, ‘Don’t speak to the driver!’

It is astonishing that Sperry's neurological discoveries and Betty Edwards' teaching methods should confirm so powerfully the ancient division between *aestheta* and *noeta*, the sensory and the cognitive. In their turn, both Baumgarten and Kant upheld this division, though with differing degrees of rigidity and sensory suppression. Kant opens the CAeJ with a clear statement in §1, that, 'A Judgment of Taste Is Aesthetic'; in other words, a judgment of taste refers to a sensory perception, not to the Understanding for subsumption under a determinate concept. A judgment of taste refers:

. . . to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Hence a judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment and so is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which we mean a judgment whose determining basis *cannot be other than subjective*²⁰.

Kant's rigidity on this point leads him to discount any cognitive content to the feelings of pleasure or displeasure experienced in a judgment of taste (§1), whereas Baumgarten had accepted cognition as an important part of the combined sensory, emotional and cognitive package which he took a work of art to be²¹. Recent evidence from cognitive neuroscience has come down on the side of Baumgarten rather than Kant on the question of the cognitive nature of emotional content, as is evinced from the case of Antonio Damasio's patient S (See Section 2.4.4, above). On the other hand, Kant's description of a 'pure' judgment of taste does undoubtedly describe a rapt state of visual absorption, or 'right-brain' state which reveals Kant's sensitivity to aesthetic experience, and his ability to analyse it, when he writes in §16 about 'free beauty', like flowers and birds of paradise, which 'belong to no object determined by concepts as to its purpose':

. . . thus designs *à la Grecque*, the foliage on borders or on wallpaper, etc., mean nothing on their own: they represent [*vorstellen*] nothing, no object under a determinate concept, and are free beauties. . .²²

. . . When we judge free beauty (according to mere form) then our judgment of taste is pure. Here we presuppose no concept of any purpose for which the manifold is to serve the given object, and hence no concept [as to] what the

²⁰ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) §1, Ak 203, p. 44. This, and all other quotations from CAeJ are from this translation by Werner S. Pluhar.

²¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735; 1954) *Reflections on Poetry*, reprinted in facsimile with an Introduction and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, §25, p. 47.

²² Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) §16, Ak 229, pp. 76-7.

object is [meant] to represent; our imagination is playing, as it were, while it contemplates the shape, and such a concept would only restrict its freedom²³.

This challenges Dickie with yet more testimonial evidence for the realism of aesthetic experience of an intense kind, distinct from matter-of-fact states of mind, answering negatively the following item (IIiB):

*IIiB Is Dickie correct in his claim that the ‘aesthetic attitude’ is a myth, because there is only ‘attending’ more or less ‘closely’?

Kant identifies the contemplation of lines and shapes without cognitive content as an exemplary case of aesthetic experience, a kind teachers of visual design aim to foster in their students. Kant’s account provides us with substantive evidence that to adopt an ‘aesthetic attitude’ is to enter a spell of contemplation, where experience is savoured for all the feelings it arouses in us, as the imagination ‘plays’ with the forms and with whatever concepts they might evoke. This is, in Kant’s famous expression the ‘free play’ of the Imagination and the Understanding²⁴, which he was able to introspect upon, but was able to explain only in the vaguest terms. Today, however, neuro-science helps us to understand it just a little better, so that we can see that it is a real, not a mythical, state of mind, different in kind from a purely cognitive or factual evaluation of an object of attention, as with the botanist’s scientific understanding of a flower²⁵.

5.3.2 The Sublime and Left-Brain Thinking

As we have just seen, for Kant, a pleasurable experience of beauty (i.e. a ‘Judgment of Taste’) results from the ‘free play’ of the Imagination and the Understanding. Then, for his second kind of aesthetic judgment, the Sublime, Kant postulates an analogous interaction between the Imagination and a different form of thinking, which he calls ‘Reason’ (in this case, analytical, mathematical thought), which Sperry would classify as ‘left-brain thinking’ (See Fig. 2, section 2.4.2). But Kant says the ‘likings’ of the two (beauty/the sublime) are ‘very different in kind’:

For the one liking ([that for] the beautiful) carries with it directly a feeling of life’s being furthered, and hence is compatible with charms and with an imagination at play. But the other liking (the feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly . . . and . . . it seems to be seriousness, rather than play,

²³ *Ibid.* §16, Ak 229, p. 77.

²⁴ This expression is introduced and discussed at length in, *Ibid.* §9, Ak 217-9, pp. 61-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.* §16, Ak 229, p. 76.

in the imagination's activity . . . the liking for the sublime contains not so much a positive pleasure as rather admiration and respect, and so should be called a negative pleasure²⁶.

Once again, the manifold of perception is being presented to the *subject*, not to the Understanding or Reason. In his description of the sublime Kant makes some of his most acute contrasts between aesthetic and rational thought:

. . . all logical estimation of magnitude is mathematical . . . [whereas] . . .

. . . all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is ultimately *aesthetic* (i.e., determined subjectively rather than objectively)²⁷ (my Italics).

In mathematical calculation, all sizes are relative, whereas in an *aesthetic* experience of the 'Mathematical Sublime', intuition senses 'absolute magnitude', which in itself is a failure to find determinate dimensions. However, according to Kant, this only serves to bring home to us the value of reason, through a feeling of self-respect, which we nevertheless (by a process of 'subreption') project on to a sublime object in nature. However, the respect belongs properly, not to the mountain or high waterfall, but to a 'respect for our own vocation' which makes:

. . . intuitable for us the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive powers over the greatest power of sensibility²⁸.

Thus we feel displeasure at 'the imagination's inadequacy, in an aesthetic estimation of magnitude²⁹', though this serves usefully to remind us of our 'supersensible vocation³⁰', through reason, to overcome the dominance of nature within us³¹. Kant's series of huge steps of arithmetical estimation in §26, beginning with the unit of a man's height, to the infinity of the universe, is a virtuosic display of Reason at work, and this suggests that a high level of education is needed to enjoy such trains of argument, and with them, the Sublime. He quotes the example of a peasant who calls 'anyone a fool who fancies glaciated mountains³²'. This clash of opinions between two rational human beings might have given Kant pause over the dogmatism of his assertions, driven, perhaps, by the over-systematic ordering of his philosophy by his own 'power of reason', to claim

²⁶ *Ibid.* §23, Ak 244-5, p. 98.

²⁷ *Ibid.* §26, Ak 251, p. 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.* §27, Ak 257, p. 114.

²⁹ *Ibid.* §27, Ak 257, pp. 114-5.

³⁰ *Ibid.* §27, Ak 257, p. 115.

³¹ *Ibid.* §28, Ak 260, p. 119.

³² *Ibid.* §29, Ak 265, p. 124, quoted by Kant from Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1779) *Voyages dans les Alpes*.

too much for the universality of his interpretation of aesthetic judgments. In fairness, he does admit that:

... what is called sublime by us, having been prepared through culture, comes across as merely repellent to a person uncultured and lacking in the development of moral ideas³³.

Although elsewhere he does qualify his position when he calls the sublime a 'mere appendix to our aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature'³⁴, he denies that the sublime was merely a cultural convention³⁵. However, the peasant's remark does not give him serious pause. Though he considers all human beings would have the same response to beauty, expecting their judgments to be shared by others, he does acknowledge that more cultivation is necessary to appreciate the sublime.

To the modern reader, Kant's interpretation of the sublime seems farfetched, i.e. that the sublime is a reminder of our freedom before nature to legislate for ourselves a moral law, resisting the blandishments of sense. Kant seems to be extending his arguments beyond the available evidence, in the manner of the dogmatic rationalists, bending them to fit the symmetry and desired coherence of his own philosophical system. However, his insightful distinction between the 'rational' calculation of sizes and the 'aesthetic' estimation of size seems perfectly valid, and consistent with current knowledge about brain laterality. However, the modern observer can imagine other explanations for the aesthetic experience of the sublime. It is undeniable that urban man does feel awe in the presence of the immensity of nature and its forces, akin to fear when exposed to physical danger, even though one might, in fact, be safe. A shared human make-up, the desire for self-preservation, the novelty of the grandeur witnessed, a sense of rebuke to human hubris, an awareness of death and a recently developed sense of environmental fragility, seem to be more than sufficient to account for our aesthetic responses to the sublime in nature.

Kant's contrast between the logical calculation and the subjective estimation of the immensity of a mountain or the universe corresponds with Sperry's research on brain laterality. The mental approach chosen determines the nature of the experience, rational or aesthetic. This therefore negates another of Dickie's claims:

*IIiA Is Dickie correct in his claim that differences in motivation result in no qualitative differences in attention or aesthetic experience?

³³ *Loc. Cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* §23, Ak 246, p. 100.

³⁵ *Ibid.* §29, Ak 265, p. 125.

5.4 Kant's Account of Disinterestedness

In chapter two, following a discussion of Dickie's attack on Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness (in section 2.2.2.2), an undertaking was made to consider Kant's 'disinterestedness'. The time has come to fulfil that promise. However, it might be helpful, first, to recall the context of this issue within the argument of the present thesis.

Stolnitz had declared disinterestedness to be an essential part of the aesthetic attitude. Dickie decided that, if he could disprove Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness, he would be able to declare the aesthetic attitude to be a 'myth'. Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness principally held a) that the aesthetic attitude should preclude consideration of the moral content of artworks, and b) that it should also preclude criticism. Dickie found arguments to defeat both these positions, and he claimed thereby to have demolished the case not only for disinterestedness, but also for the aesthetic attitude itself. However, a little historical research was able to establish that the version of disinterestedness espoused by Stolnitz was atypical, with little support to be found among eighteenth century philosophers, such as Hume³⁶. Therefore, Dickie's case against the aesthetic attitude was considered to have failed, as it had been 'achieved' only by demolishing a flawed account of disinterestedness. That raises the question of what an 'orthodox' version of disinterestedness might look like. That chapter found that Hume's analysis of aesthetic response required both criticism and moral values (section 2.3). Nevertheless, an undertaking was made to look at Kant's version of disinterestedness, because of his authority within aesthetics.

5.4.1 Form, Matter, Taste and Sense

Crucial to Kant's attempt to define the parameters of aesthetic judgment is his intricate account of disinterestedness, carved from the pillars of earlier aesthetic theories³⁷, elegantly thinned by a series of negatives: no sensory appeal (§3), no concept of the good (§4), no emotion (§§13-14), no determinate purpose (§15), no art collector's

³⁶ See section 2.3, above.

³⁷ Paul Guyer gives fascinating accounts of the archaeology in *Op. Cit.* (1997) and his (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, Cambridge, CUP.

cupidity (§43). A Platonic and Pietistic³⁸ denial of the flesh seems almost ubiquitous. For Kant, aesthetic judgments occur when the object is presented to the ‘subject’, who reflects on the feelings of pleasure or displeasure engendered thereby. A lowly ‘Aesthetic Judgment of Sense’ occurs when the senses are gratified by the physical pleasures of the Lower Sensibility (See Fig. 6, section 5.2, above), and Kant is contemptuous of anyone ‘who has no *feeling* for beautiful nature . . . and sticks to the enjoyments of mere sense that he gets from meals or the bottle³⁹’. It is perhaps comments like this which led Pierre Bourdieu, at the end of *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, to carry out his assault on ‘traditional philosophical or literary aesthetics’, with their advocacy of the ‘indivisibility of taste’: the ‘pure’ versus the ‘impure’ or the ‘coarse’⁴⁰.

The concept of disinterestedness among Kant’s Eighteenth Century Anglophone predecessors also betrayed a certain wariness towards the temptations of sense, not to mention possession and consumption⁴¹. However, Kant’s own version of disinterestedness is even more prohibitive than theirs. Very early in the text, Kant argues that, although the aesthetic gives rise to pleasure, it is not a question of enjoyment, which arises from ‘agreeableness’, or the gratification of the senses. In §4 he tries to secure a link between judgments of taste and the austere ethics of CPrR:

Agreeableness is enjoyment. But if our sole aim were enjoyment, it would be foolish to be scrupulous about the means for getting it . . . But reason can never be persuaded that there is any intrinsic value in the existence of a human being who lives merely for *enjoyment* . . . even if he served others, all likewise aiming only at enjoyment, as a most efficient means to it because he participated in their gratification by enjoying it through sympathy. Only by what he does without concern for enjoyment, in complete freedom and independently of whatever he could also receive passively from nature, does he give his existence an absolute value, as the existence of a person⁴².

³⁸ This is the usual Puritan variety of Pietism, compared to the apparently unique ‘sensual and emotional’ Pietism of the Halle of Baumgarten’s childhood. See Stefan Gross (2002) “The Neglected Programme of Aesthetics” *BJA* (Vol. 42) pp. 403-414.

³⁹ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) Ak 303, pp. 169-70.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu (1979) “Postscript: Towards a ‘Vulgar’ Critique of ‘Pure’ Critiques” in *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* trans. R. Nice (1984; 1986 edition used) London, Routledge, pp. 485-500.

⁴¹ Dabney Townsend (1992) “Shaftesbury, Lord” in Cooper, D. (Ed.) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 395-7 and Dabney Townsend (1998b) “Cooper, Anthony Ashley” in M. Kelly (Editor in Chief) *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, (Vol. 1, pp. 445-8).

⁴² Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) Ak 208-9, p. 50.

Kant, therefore, tries to draw an analogy between the ‘categorical imperative’⁴³, and judgments of taste. The categorical imperative universalises ethics on the basis of disinterested fairness (rather than the urgings of ‘inclination’) and Kant tries to secure an equivalence for judgments of taste (e.g. that the form of a flower is beautiful) by means of an equivalent demand that others concur. Judgements of taste, based on form, the manifolds of ‘Pure Intuition’⁴⁴, such as the shape of the flower, are independent of what Kant presumes to be the more variable ‘inclinations’ of sensory preference. Thus we might or might not find the flower’s violet colour or its heavy scent ‘agreeable’. By contrast, judgements of beauty, like morality, are expected to be universal. However, like moral judgment, this ‘universal’, based on ‘form’, is *subjective*, autonomously derived, and *a priori*, unlike logical judgments, which are valid objectively⁴⁵.

This argument by analogy from ethics to aesthetics is open to challenge on at least two counts. First, Kant is not comparing like with like: moral and perceptual judgments belong to different realms, and it is not valid to make such a direct transfer, even though Kant offers an ‘ordinary language’ argument, that the form in which we express a judgment of taste does indeed demand agreement from others⁴⁶. Secondly, his argument is made to depend on a questionable distinction between ‘form’ and ‘matter’, apparently corresponding to the division between ‘pure intuition’ and ‘sensation’ in the passive side of the Faculty of Sensibility (See Fig. 6, above). The emotions are condemned in judgments of taste as ‘matter’⁴⁷. For Kant, *Form* comprises measurable shapes⁴⁸, and *matter*⁴⁹ is colour in painting and tone in music, closely allied to base sensual pleasures. Kant himself wavers a little on this last point, when he considers a theory that light might comprise ‘vibrations’, as do musical notes⁵⁰. That would imply a mathematical description which might make them qualify as ‘forms’, too. In the end, he abandons both to the lowly status of ‘matter’. Composition, on the other hand, qualified

⁴³ Roger Crisp (1995) “Categorical Imperative” in Ted Honderich (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, p. 125.

⁴⁴ “Pure Intuition” is the “Higher” form of “Passive Sensibility”, part of Kant’s proposed “Faculty of Sensibility” (See Fig. 5, above).

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §8, Ak 215, p. 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* §8, Ak 214, p. 57.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* §14, Ak. 226, p. 72.

⁴⁸ “The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in [the object’s] being bounded.” (*Ibid.* §23, Ak 244, p. 98); ‘All form of objects on the senses (the outer senses, or indirectly the inner sense as well) is either *shape* or *play* . . .’ (*Ibid.* §14, Ak 224, p. 71).

⁴⁹ ‘. . . what is essential in all fine art is the form that is purposive for our observation and judging, rather than the matter of sensation (i.e. charm or emotion)’ (*Ibid.* §52, Ak 326, pp. 195-6).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* §14, Ak 224, p. 70. Pluhar tells us in footnote 39, that the theory of light as vibrations, eventually vindicated, was advanced by the Swiss Leopold Euler (1707-83).

as ‘form’⁵¹. Kant could have found support for this viewpoint in Vasari’s Florentine prejudice in favour of *design*, as opposed to the Venetians’ *colour*⁵². It seems likely that Kant also found his opinions confirmed by the widespread Renaissance and Eighteenth Century practice of disseminating artists’ compositions in monochrome engravings (the ‘form’ of the works, in *précis*), implying that colour would have had little to add. Kant’s error here is to overstate the divide between form and colour. Most of the major and obvious changes in the history of the visual arts have, indeed, been ones of form in Kant’s sense, rather than colour, but that does not mean that colour is not an important ‘formal’ element.

The germ of later formalism can be detected here. Ironically, there is some truth in what Kant says. The formal/spatial structure of an artwork is processed in the brain separately from colour, and, without ‘form’ in his sense, all art of the past (and any other visual perception) would be indecipherable, even the work of extreme colourists (See Plate 11). However, Kant is trying to put aesthetic judgments of ‘form’ on an equal ‘universal’ footing with his argument about moral judgment, egged on, possibly, by his own rejection of ‘impure’ sensuality. The net result is to place Kant at the synchronic end of the ‘Synchronic versus Diachronic’ dialectic (SvD):

SvD1 an a-historical, aestheticising, synchronic account of art.

It might be objected that, at this early stage in CJ, Kant is discussing judgments of beauty, rather than the nature of art, but this section (§14) is headed ‘Elucidation by examples’, and his conclusions begin,

In painting, in sculpture, indeed in all the visual arts, including architecture and horticulture insofar as they are fine arts, *design* is what is essential. (Kant’s Italics)⁵³

In his search for a universal standard, Kant fails to take account of the reality of art as it is practised and understood, in differing historical contexts and cultural traditions⁵⁴. As

⁵¹ *Ibid.* §14, Ak225, p. 72.

⁵² Giorgio Vasari (1568) *Lives of the Artists* (2nd Edition, translated by George Bull, 1965), London, Penguin. Vasari is constantly praising artists involved in the revival of classicising art, after the medieval period, for their drawing after nature and for their ‘design’. In his life of Titian, Vasari reports that Michelangelo’s praise of Titian’s “colouring and his style” had followed some mild criticism of Titian’s drawing, as reflecting the inferior way Venetian artists were trained (p. 455).

⁵³ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §14, Ak 225, p. 71.

⁵⁴ John Onians shows how descriptions of the impact of the environment on local cultures had been given by Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Wickelmann (1717-1768) in (2007) *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven, Yale University Press, pp. 67-78.

Baumgarten showed, time is integral to the aesthetic experience of even static art, in terms of preceding experience, affected by chronological proximity and such temporally related factors as familiarity or novelty. In other words, whereas Baumgarten saw aesthetic experience as broadly synonymous with sensory experience, Kant's philosophical system demanded the rigid separation of judgments of 'taste' from judgments of 'sense', with form as an absolute standard. The result was that he underestimated the importance and cognitive value, within aesthetic experience and expression, of the broader spectrum of the senses, which for Baumgarten included memory and emotion⁵⁵.

5.4.2 Purposiveness without a Purpose

Kant also proposes another kind of disinterestedness which is not affected by moral qualms over sensuality. This stems from a distinction he draws between two kinds of perceived purposiveness, the subjective and the objective⁵⁶. In Kant's table, reproduced in Fig. 5, he gives 'purposiveness' as the *a priori* principle applicable to judgment and to the 'feeling of pleasure and displeasure'. In §IV of the 2nd Introduction, Kant states:

Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal is given, the judgment is *determinative* . . . But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely *reflective*⁵⁷.

There are two stages to a determinative judgment. First, the manifold of sense data is gathered and unified by the Imagination, which presents it to the Understanding. Second, the Understanding 'subsumes' this under a *concept*. Kant calls this concept the object's *purpose*, and its 'harmony' with concepts is the '*purposiveness* of its form'⁵⁸. However, where no definitive concept awaits the presentation by the imagination (e.g. unfamiliar object, or unclear purpose), the process of reflective judgment still finds the *formal unity* of the object *purposive* because 'its presentation is connected with the feeling of pleasure'. Because this purposiveness is not based on a concept, the pleasure is attributed to the 'harmony of imagination with understanding' as they toy mentally with the object, which appears to lack either a definitive concept or a determinate purpose. In Kant's words, a *subjective* pleasure in purposiveness is:

⁵⁵ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) on affect, §§ 24-6, and memory (1739; 1983 edn.) *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, extracts from the *Metaphysica* and other texts, published with Introduction, Translation into German, and Notes by Hans Rudolf Schweizer Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, §§579-88 (see my translation in Appendix D, pp. 306-8).

⁵⁶ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) 2nd Introduction, §VII Ak 192-3, pp. 22-3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 2nd Introduction, §IV Ak 179, pp. 18-9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 2nd Introduction, §IV Ak 180, p. 20.

... the harmony of the form of the object ... prior to any concept ... with cognitive powers ... [this] kind of purposiveness rests on the pleasure we take directly in the form of the object when we reflect on it⁵⁹.

However, an *objective* pleasure in purposiveness:

... does not refer to the object's form in its apprehension, to the subject's cognitive powers, but instead to a determinate cognition of the object under a given concept, the presentation of this purposiveness has nothing to do with a feeling of pleasure in the thing but rather with the understanding in our judging of them⁶⁰.

Once again, Kant gives an almost uncanny description of the felt difference between cognitive and sensory thinking, by now familiar from the drawing classroom. The link with 'disinterestedness' is that, without a determinate concept, the imagination is free to 'play' with the perception, but, by contrast, the presence of a determinate concept imposes an interest, in the sense of some kind of pragmatic response to an object in the world. Without such a requirement, perception is free just to contemplate the forms of the object:

Hence we may regard *natural beauty* as the *exhibition* of the concept of formal (merely subjective) purposiveness, and may regard *natural purposes* as the exhibition of the concept of a real (objective) purposiveness, the first of which we judge by taste (aesthetically, by means of the feeling of pleasure), and the second by understanding and reason (logically, according to concepts)⁶¹.

This leads to his definition of Beauty in the explication at the end of the third Moment:

Beauty is an object's form of purposiveness insofar as it is perceived in the object *without the presentation of a purpose*⁶². (Kant's Italics)

Körner⁶³ identifies the third 'Moment' (Relation), with its *a priori* intuition of purposiveness, as the most important among of Kant's four 'Moments', set out in the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' (Book I of the CAeJ). This is because 'Purposiveness' is the most obvious concept uniting the faculty of Judgment with Understanding and Reason: we perceive the universe as purposive to our ability to understand its laws⁶⁴; we

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 2nd Introduction, §VII Ak 192, p. 32.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 2nd Introduction, §VII, Ak 192, pp. 32-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 2nd Introduction, §VII, Ak 193, p. 33.

⁶² *Ibid.* §17, Ak 236, p. 84.

⁶³ Stephan Körner *Op. Cit.* (1955) p. 184. The other *a priori* principles in the four moments are that an aesthetic judgment of taste is universally valid §37.

⁶⁴ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) 2nd Introduction §V, Ak 183, pp. 32-3.

perceive a paradoxical⁶⁵ mutual purposiveness between the parts and the whole of an organism, where the one seems to generate the other⁶⁶; and, we classify objects of perception definitively according to concepts conceived in terms of purposes. The drive for this comes from the imagination, which gathers up and unifies the manifolds of sense for them to be presented by Judgment for subsumption under a concept of the Understanding.

Kant, who seems to have had extraordinary powers of introspection, noticed that there was an inverse relation between conceptual thought and the perception of beauty:

If we judge objects merely in terms of concepts, we then lose all presentation of beauty⁶⁷.

Alternatively, he might have been simply reflecting the thinking of Baumgarten, for example in §14 of his *Reflections on Poetry*:

Distinct representations [i.e. concepts], complete, adequate, profound through every degree, are not sensory, and, therefore, not poetic, §11⁶⁸ (my interpolation in square brackets).

Kant uses his observation about the incompatibility of judgments of taste and cognition to emphasise that we cannot be persuaded that something is beautiful by logical argument alone. We need to submit the object to the test of our own eyes. Our pleasurable perception of ‘purposiveness without a purpose’ also enables Kant to claim that the ‘pure’ perception of beauty (i.e. a ‘pure’ judgment of Taste) has nothing to do with perfection, which he links to ideas of the determinate concept of the good (and the fit-for-purpose)⁶⁹. Also, ‘purposiveness without a purpose’ has nothing to do with ‘agreeableness’, whose purpose is, to him, only too obvious: the gratification of bodily desires through the pleasures of the senses (which he calls ‘Judgments of Sense’). This is the link between ‘purposiveness’ and ‘disinterestedness’, with which Kant begins the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’. By attributing judgments of Taste to ‘Pure Intuition’ as opposed to ‘Sensation’ (see Fig. 6), the agreeable (the ‘fleshly’) is eliminated, and also

⁶⁵ ‘Paradoxical’ because it is difficult to see how both could be true: the whole is the purpose of all the parts, and the parts are driven by purpose of the whole.

⁶⁶ Stephan Körner quotes from CTJ (Ak 376), on the subject of the Idea of purpose in nature: “An organised product of nature is that in which everything is reciprocally both means and ends”. *Op. Cit.* (1955) p. 205.

⁶⁷ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §8, Ak 215, p. 59.

⁶⁸ Alexander Gottlieb *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) p. 42 (my explanatory addition in square brackets).

⁶⁹ One of Kant’s challenges to rationalist aesthetics is over the beauty of regular geometrical figures. Kant claims that our pleasure in them is cognitive, not aesthetic, as we perceive that simple shapes would be easier to calculate their areas (*Op. Cit.* Ak 241. p. 92).

interest of ownership and possession, as mentioned in earlier accounts of ‘disinterestedness’ given by Hutcheson and Shaftesbury before him⁷⁰. At the end of the CAeJ, Kant compares most favourably the good-heartedness of a lover of natural beauty against the cupidity of the art collector’s *interest* in his objects⁷¹.

Enough has been said to be able to agree with Kant that ‘disinterestedness’ is an integral component to adopting the aesthetic attitude, enabling us to answer ‘Yes!’ to another of our questions arising from Dickie’s scepticism:

IliiB Is disinterestedness a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude?

Space does not permit any further discussion of Kant’s version of disinterestedness, though much more could be said, particularly on the relationship between the beautiful and the good. However, Kant’s exclusion of ‘the good’ from judgments of taste may have encouraged the ‘a-moral’ tendency in formalism among readers who did not fathom the central role of freedom and morality in Kant’s overall philosophical system. That is an argument that cannot be pursued here, for reasons of time and space, but it clearly contributed to the discounted item we have designated as Sceptical Hypothesis 6:

*SH6 The term ‘aesthetic’ by definition excludes the cognitive, historical, or moral.

This, in turn, contributed to the synchronic weighting which Kant added to in the ‘Synchronic versus Diachronic’ dialectic. As we shall see, Kant himself argued against the position represented by SH6.

The two components of Kant’s version of disinterestedness which have been examined here have been his exclusion, from ‘pure judgments of taste’, of a) much sensory content and b) concepts. Baumgarten had been happier to accept both of these into his aesthetics. For Kant, judgments of sense were cognition-free acts of sensory gratification, shared with ‘non-rational animals’⁷². By contrast, Baumgarten used the term ‘judgments of sense’ very differently in §92 of his *Reflections on Poetry*:

A confused judgment about perfection of sensations is called a JUDGMENT OF SENSE, and is ascribed to the sense organ affected by the sensation⁷³.

⁷⁰ Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (2005) quotes examples from both, on p. 9.

⁷¹ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §42, Ak 300, p. 167.

⁷² *Ibid.* §5, Ak 210, p. 52.

⁷³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) p. 69.

Baumgarten then gives examples of popular sayings in French, Hebrew, Latin and Italian which give an ordinary language argument for the cognitive burden carried by sensory perception⁷⁴. Even at the animal level, if a dog smells the presence of a hidden rat, the smell will evoke in his doggy mind some sort of, admittedly wordless, concept of a ‘rat’, unless of course, he lives in a hybrid animal/human community⁷⁵, as on a farm, when his familiarity with speech will be enough to start him barking excitedly when he hears the word ‘rats’, even in the absence, so far, of any tell-tale scent.

Kant does not reject the animal side of human nature entirely, it is only the embarrassingly hedonic ‘Lower Passive Sensibility’ which he rejects, but in his system the ‘Higher Passive Sensibility’ (Fig. 6) is indispensable to aesthetic experience:

For beauty and sublimity are aesthetic ways of presenting [things], and if we were nothing but pure intelligences (or for that matter in thought we put ourselves in the place of such [beings]), we would not present [things] in this way at all⁷⁶.

However, according to Kant, humans beings, ‘who are animal and yet rational’ are the only creatures able to appreciate beauty⁷⁷. This is a view that will be challenged.

5.5 Adherent Beauty, Imaged Concept and Aesthetic Idea

5.5.1 Beauty With or Without a Concept?

Given Kant’s opening strictures on beauty being ‘without a concept’, when he comes up with something called an ‘aesthetic idea’, it reads somewhat like an oxymoron. As mentioned by Guyer, Kant had husbanded so many arguments, that, reluctant to abandon any, he even reinstates some he had previously discarded⁷⁸. Because there are tensions between some of the viewpoints represented, he is unable to make them all fit together.

Up to and including §15, he has been belabouring the fact that Judgments of Taste are ‘without a concept’. Then suddenly, in §16, we are told that this stricture

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 70.

⁷⁵ I have borrowed this phrase from Tim Ingold, who was talking about chimpanzee language being the result, not of an “inbuilt capacity for language”, but a product of “chimpanzee-in-an-environment-of-humans”, i.e. “a hybrid animal/human community”; in Chapter 21 of his (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*, London, Routledge, p. 378.

⁷⁶ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) “General Comment” following §29, Ak 271, p. 131.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* §5, Ak 210, p. 52.

⁷⁸ Paul Guyer *Op. Cit.* (1997) Ch. 1 “Kant’s Early Views”, pp. 12-28.

applies only to 'Free' beauty, or 'Pure' judgments of taste. Concepts, which earlier were portrayed as the destroyers of beauty, now find a place as part of 'Adherent' beauty, or 'Impure' judgments of taste. In fact, a close reading shows that the change was not altogether unheralded. In §15, it seems that we can choose whether to submit an object to a conceptual or an aesthetic judgment:

In fact, as I have already pointed out, an aesthetic judgment is unique in kind and provides absolutely no cognition (not even a confused one) of the object; only a logical judgment does that. An aesthetic judgment refers the presentation, by which an object is given, solely to the subject; it brings to our notice no characteristic of the object, but only the purposive form in the [way] the presentational powers are determined in their engagement with the object⁷⁹.

Here we have another clear description of the phenomenology of the aesthetic attitude in deeply 'right-brain'⁸⁰ mode, as the subject blocks out conceptual thought as he or she concentrates fully on the sensory experience offered by the presenting object. Again, we are reminded of the drawing student turning the model image to be copied upside-down, to distance the mind from the 'left-brain-type' concepts attached to the shapes being isolated and studied in 'right-brain mode', so they can be seen and drawn as mere shapes (See section 2.4.2, above, and Plate 7). In the above quote, we can see, in Kant's use of the rationalist term 'confused', an indication that Kant is arguing with Baumgarten. In the next few sentences, he rejects Baumgarten's term, 'confused concepts', as a misnomer, insisting rather on a clean divide between sense and understanding. This then forces him in §16 to say that the beauty we might see in a man, woman, child, horse or church is merely an 'accessory' or 'adherent' beauty, because it is not based on a pure judgment of taste, but on a rational judgment, because it presupposes a concept, a purpose and hence a perfection⁸¹. In this instance, it does appear to me that Kant is again defending the structure of his philosophical system, with its separation of 'sense' from 'understanding' against contradictory evidence from ordinary experience. His uncertainty forces him into an inconsistency in coining the term '*adherent beauty*' (my Italics), because, according to his own argument, as a *rational judgment* it should *lose its beauty*. He had stated in §8:

⁷⁹ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) §15, Ak 228, p. 75.

⁸⁰ The term 'right-brain' is used as short-hand for a state of mind where attention is acutely focused on the sensory experience of the moment, and where the subject becomes more conscious of the activities of the sense-processing modules than is possible when thinking more cognitively, owing to limitations on blood supply. See section 2.4.1, above.

⁸¹ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §16, Ak 2230, p. 77.

If we judge objects *merely* in terms of concepts, we then lose all presentation of beauty⁸² (my Italics).

Then, by the end of §16, he explicitly allows the subject to choose between adopting a cognitive or an aesthetic attitude to an object:

A judgment of taste about an object that has a determinate intrinsic purpose would be pure only if the judging person had no concept of this purpose, *or if he abstracted from it in making his judgment*⁸³. (My Italics)

So, apparently, we can choose whether to judge something according to its concept and purpose, or we can choose to ‘abstract’ from both and just concentrate on the *form*. This would seem to confirm the twofold conflict observable in brain laterality: in responding to nature, between sensory pleasure and conceptual classification, and in responding to art, between ‘appreciation’ (sensory, aesthetic) and ‘criticism’ (cognitive, conceptual). This introduces one of our questions:

AvC Are appreciation and criticism incompatible mental states?

Kant believed that many differences in critical judgements are due to some people ‘judging an object as a free beauty’, and others as an ‘accessory’, ‘even though each is judging correctly in his own way’⁸⁴. On the other hand, one could add, some are able to (or have learned to, or choose to) allow their ‘imagination’ (perception) and their ‘understanding’ (concepts) to shift in ‘free play’ back and forth into ‘right-brain’ and ‘left-brain’ thinking, as Humphrey Ocean demonstrated in his account of his drawing process, while others, such as those who do not (or have not yet learned how to) make the shift (e.g. have not learned to draw from sight), might remain locked into ‘left-brain’, matter-of-fact thinking, and fail to enter a state of mind which puts them in contact with the earlier processing stages of vision, experienced in the visual arts as an aesthetic state of mind (sometimes called adopting the ‘aesthetic attitude’). So the answer to question AvC (above) has to be ‘Yes’ *and* ‘No’, because the answer depends on the cognitive and aesthetic development of the individual subject and the context, situation, level of preparedness, state of health and many other contingencies which might play a role in any particular encounter with a work of art.

Both Baumgarten and Kant were keen to establish the autonomy of aesthetic experience, and its place in epistemology, although ultimately their solutions differed.

⁸² *Ibid.* §8, Ak 215, p. 59.

⁸³ *Ibid.* §16, Ak 231, p. 78; a botanist could choose to respond to form or concept (§16, Ak 229, p. 76).

⁸⁴ *Loc. Cit.*

The first step was to argue for that autonomy. If, in the case of Kant, readers managed only the first 15 sections of CJ, they might gain an impression of total autonomy for the aesthetic from any concepts at all, including concepts of the good. Could such a curtailed ‘formalist’ reading have ever happened? I strongly suspect so.

The difference between Baumgarten and Kant here is that Baumgarten never doubted the cognitive capacities of the sensory, unlike Kant. For Baumgarten, the richer the sensory input, the more fully the idea is realised, in terms of vividness and radiance⁸⁵. Although abstract concepts were seen by Baumgarten as necessary for ‘distinct’ thought, particularly in logical and symbolic operations, as in science and algebra, he set out to defend the ‘clear and confused’ thinking of the arts and of scientific discourse which also uses aesthetic, sensory, *figurative* language.

In fact, Baumgarten argued that ‘non-proper’ language, i.e. imagery or figures of speech, were supremely useful in fleshing out abstract concepts, making them more tangible to the human mind, by clothing them in the *sensory* qualities lacking in ‘distinct’ (abstract) concepts themselves. As quoted earlier in this chapter, Baumgarten wrote in theorem 22 of his *Reflections*:

Examples confusedly represented are representations that are extensively clearer than those for whose clarification they are offered, §21; hence they are more poetic, §18⁸⁶.

Then, in the *scholium* to §29, he writes:

According to §22, when the poet performs, we develop a more universal notion from these specific instances and sharp determinations, as it were from examples. Certainly no other notion will be found under which these things can be classified except that of *imaged concepts*⁸⁷ (my Italics).

5.5.2 Kant’s Aesthetic Idea

The ability to produce aesthetic ideas is one of several features attributed to artistic genius as it is described by Kant in §§46-50 and in Comment I, following §57 in CJ. Here is his opening definition:

⁸⁵ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983 edn.) §531 (see my translation in Appendix D, pp. 297-8).

⁸⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954) §22, p. 46.

⁸⁷ In the facsimile, the two Latin words translated here as “imaged concepts” are *notio phantasmatum*, *Ibid.* p. 15.

Genius is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art⁸⁸.

The allusion to nature is meant literally, as we learn from the next sentence:

Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art⁸⁹.

Unlike scientists⁹⁰, artists cannot devise the rules of their practice logically⁹¹; hence their dependence on nature within them. However, they also have to learn their craft, without which they could realise nothing. But, as genius cannot be learned, its ‘foremost property must be originality’⁹². The products of a genius must be exemplary models to be emulated but not copied slavishly by others⁹³. The genius cannot, however, forsake taste, which is needed not only for judging beauty, but also for producing it⁹⁴. Kant now revives a word more associated with Baumgarten, ‘perfection’, as a work of art has a *purpose*:

And since the harmony of a thing’s manifold with an intrinsic determination of a thing, i.e. with its purpose, is the thing’s perfection, it follows that when we judge artistic beauty we shall have to assess the thing’s perfection as well, whereas perfection is not at all at issue when we judge natural beauty⁹⁵.

According to Kant, much art is merely ‘useful and mechanical’: beautiful presentations of things based on concepts and following the essential precepts of good taste, but with no spark of genius, and therefore unworthy to be called ‘fine art’⁹⁶. For ‘fine art’, an artist needs *spirit* (*Geist*), that quickens the soul, imparting to it ‘a purposeful momentum’, giving ‘the ability to exhibit *aesthetic ideas*’, defined by Kant as:

⁸⁸ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 Edn.) §46, Ak305, p. 174.

⁸⁹ This recalls Martin Heidegger’s description of art as the earth jutting into the world, in (1935/6) “The Origin of the Work of Art”, trans. Albert Hofstadter; extracts reprinted in Clive Cazeaux (2000) *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, London, Routledge, (pp. 80-101), e.g. p. 92.

⁹⁰ Kant compares the achievements of artistic genius unfavourably with the incremental learning possible in science, leading to greater achievements in the long run; *Ibid.* §47, Ak 309, p. 177. The Romantic idea of genius seems to be powerfully realised in certain great talents, but a Popperian would question Kant’s sharp division. Artists do learn from others, and ‘great’ scientists like Einstein emerge from time to time. Collaborative art forms, like cinema, do perhaps make greater achievements possible than by individual inspiration and effort.

⁹¹ This opinion is part of the Romantic reaction against the Rationalist procedures of the Academy, but Popper gives us a more logical account of how artists work, adopted by such art historians as Gombrich and Baxandall, which would have allayed Kant’s worries expressed in the previous footnote.

⁹² *Ibid.* §46, Ak 307, p. 175.

⁹³ *Ibid.* §47, Ak 309, p. 177. This passage is very evocative of Vasari’s roll-call of all the artists, including Raphael, whose art was raised to a new level by studying Michelangelo’s cartoon of the *Battle of Cascina* in Florence; Giorgio Vasari *Op. Cit.* p. 342.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* §48, Ak 311, p. 179.

⁹⁵ *Loc. Cit.*

⁹⁶ *Op. Cit.* §48, Ak 312-3, p. 180-1

... a presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] concept, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it

⁹⁷

He quickly adds that it is easy to see that this is the counterpart to his 'rational idea'. It is perhaps necessary to reconsider at this point the difference for Kant between a 'concept' and an 'idea'. There are two kinds of concept: a) a priori concepts, or the categories, which structure our experience of the world, and b) a posteriori or empirical concepts. Both arise in the Understanding. Empirical concepts are forged, by judgment and the faculty of sensibility working in harmony with the Understanding, from the unified 'presentations' gathered by the Imagination from the 'lower' sensations generated by our sensory experience of objects. These objects of perception and their representations may manifest *adherent* beauty. 'Rational Ideas', however, are quite other; they belong to Reason, not to the Understanding; they do not originate in the faculty of Sensibility, because, as noumenal entities, they cannot be experienced, as they are objects only of thought⁹⁸, unlike objects of sense (men, children, women, horses and churches). Ideas are generated by Reason to enable us to understand how we can function as free, autonomous persons, rather than as objects determined by natural laws. Although Baumgarten, on the other hand, distinguished between empirical and rational psychology⁹⁹, he does not make this hierarchical segregation between 'concepts' and 'ideas', but sees the sensory and the abstract as complementary modes of understanding and expression.

Kant is setting the bar very high for artists, in a way demanded by the symmetry of his philosophical system (*ideas* versus *concepts*) rather than accepting the sometimes more humdrum reality of art in people's lives. He evidently thought his description of the aesthetic idea would apply to only a tiny number of artists who have ever lived, the absolute pinnacle of achievement, which might be appropriate for the term 'genius', but is an unreasonably restricted cut-off point for qualification as 'fine art'. He is undoubtedly describing something of the mystery and inscrutability of art, its 'truth-telling' power in the sense of Heidegger's 'earth jutting into the world'¹⁰⁰, and its power

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* §49, Ak. 313, pp. 181-2.

⁹⁸ For a definition of the noumenon, see Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1781/87; 1993 edn.) B306, p. 211.

⁹⁹ In the *Metaphysics*, paragraphs on rational psychology follow those on empirical psychology. (See <http://www.ikp.uni-bonn.de/kant/agb-metaphysica/synopsis.html>)

¹⁰⁰ Martin Heidegger in (1935/6) "The Origin of the Work of Art", trans. Albert Hofstadter; extracts reprinted in C. Cazeaux (2000) *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, London, Routledge, (pp. 80-101), p. 92, p. 96 etc.

to hold our imaginations so that we return again and again for fresh insights, in a way which we feel we cannot pin down precisely. It seems to me that the problem with his account is that it is too ‘high flown’, and that Baumgarten’s more down-to-earth expression, ‘imaged concepts’ does the work of both prongs of Kant’s account of ‘aesthetic ideas’ and their disparaged cousins, the tasteful presentations of determinate concepts. Strangely, Kant’s own examples of ‘aesthetic ideas’ are rather prosaic, and are emblems familiar from iconography, rather than complete artworks¹⁰¹.

Baumgarten’s account is superior to Kant’s in having a much more general application to human expression and art practice, including our *penchant* for metaphor. Baumgarten is simply more in touch with the reality of how art is actually practised, whether within the hothouse of *Sturm und Drang*, or without.

If asked to classify some of the most significant images of the past 50 years, perhaps not always recognised as ‘works of art’, it would be an interesting exercise to see how many would qualify as ‘aesthetic ideas’ as opposed to ‘imaged concepts’. The famous image, ‘Earthrise’, taken by an unidentified astronaut on Apollo 8, despite its familiarity, has been one of the most powerful and influential images of the late twentieth century, the earth literally jutting its environmental truth of resource limitation into our complacent world (Plate 12a). The pictures of polar bears struggling for survival in the melting arctic ice (e.g., Plate 12b), have recently had a comparable impact, especially in short video clips on the global news. These deal with very real ‘determinate’ concepts, and *pace* Kant, but *with* Baumgarten, they are very *emotional* images, that ‘compel our souls’ in very definite directions. This adverse interpretation of the ‘aesthetic idea’ relative to ‘imaged concepts’ could, perhaps, be mitigated by considering these images as works of the sublime, rather than of taste, in which case it seems that Kant would approve of their emotional and cognitive burden¹⁰².

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, Kant’s account of the aesthetic (RQ1) was found to be more sharply split than Baumgarten’s between the ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ levels of sensory experience, with a greater separation between works of ‘genius’ dealing with the Ideas

¹⁰¹ ‘Thus Jupiter’s eagle with the lightning in its claws is a attribute of the mighty king of heaven, and the peacock is an attribute of heaven’s stately queen.’ Immanuel Kant *Op. Cit.* (1790; 1987 edn.) §49, Ak 315, p. 183.

¹⁰² See Kant’s ‘General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgment’, *Ibid.* Ak 272 (pp. 132-3).

of Reason, and works of merely Adherent Beauty, dealing on a level of craftsmanship with the Concepts of Understanding (RQ2).

No support was found for Dickie's contentions that differences in motivation had no effect on differences in aesthetic experience (*IliA), or for his claim that the 'aesthetic attitude' is a 'myth', there being only 'attending' more or less 'closely' (*IliB). Kant was found to have given a complex and credible account of 'disinterestedness' as a necessary condition for the aesthetic attitude (*IliiB), which helped to explain the aesthetic attitude in a way compatible with recent findings from cognitive neuroscience, also helping to explain the relationship of the aesthetic to art (RQ2). The descriptions of aesthetic judgment in the early section of CAeJ would seem to support the view that the term 'aesthetic' excludes by definition the cognitive, historical and the moral (*SH6), but for readers who persist beyond the opening sections, the fruits of Kant's later thoughts reveal that, as his ideas developed, he contradicted those opinions, making room in art and the aesthetic for concepts, the historical dimension and morality¹⁰³. Although evidence of the tensions between the sensory and the cognitive were found, it was argued that because the human brain is able to make rapid shifts in levels of engagement, there is no incompatibility between appreciation and criticism (AvC).

Although in section 5.4.1, above, Kant was placed at the 'synchronic' end of the synchronic/diachronic dialectic, his theory of genius and originality gives him a nudge back towards the diachronic end of the spectrum, because originality can only be gauged against a knowledge of historical precedent. We have, therefore, assembled all the ingredients for our model for the ontology of the artwork, adapted from Gregory Currie (see section 3.6, above):

OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Response appropriate to art.

The aesthetic is an integral part of the artwork, both in the 'sensory structure', and also in the sensory, aesthetic, response of receivers. Although we confirmed there are inbuilt tensions between the 'aesthetic' and the 'cognitive', which have their basis in separate brain structures and functions, the divisions are not insuperable, but are 'juggled' in consciousness and memory, in a process which, amazingly, Kant was able to introspect upon, and which he described memorably as the 'free play of Imagination

¹⁰³ Paul Guyer gives an account of the development and unresolved tensions in Kant's thought in the CJ in his *Op. Cit.* (1997).

and Understanding', which could be rephrased as the enjoyable interplay between the senses and concepts, or in Baumgarten's words: 'imaged concepts'.

Finally, this project's definition of the 'aesthetic attitude' needs to be reviewed in the light of the above arguments, to see if it needs revision:

§14 To adopt the **AESTHETIC ATTITUDE** is to take 'time out' from the flux of work-a-day practical necessities, and in a vigilant state of mind to scrutinise an object or cognition in order to focus on the full range of feelings and cognitions it engenders in the subject. This 'time out' factor is the origin of the term '**DISINTERESTEDNESS**' in the context of aesthetics.

In general, this definition seems to fit the arguments, though in line 3, the broader reference of 'thought' should replace 'cognition', and the following added after 'time out' factor: '(i.e. not immediately pragmatic)'. These modifications have been made to the version in Appendix A.

The ground has now been prepared to test these ideas against the empirical evidence now available from evolutionary science and cognitive neuroscience, which were for Baumgarten and Kant either unimaginable or matters of introspection.

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ABSTRACT

This chapter redescribes Kant's *sensus communis* in evolutionary terms, using arguments based on discoveries in biology unavailable to Kant. Based on Darwin's principle of continuity between nature and man, this chapter considers the gradual evolution of the sensory in Baumgarten's terms as aesthetic knowledge and aesthetic communication necessary for the competitive survival and reproduction of animal species. This approach follows Dennett's injunction to ground human qualities in their evolutionary context of descent with variation in a single 'design space'. Definitions of the aesthetic are offered which include both aesthetic reception and the use of aesthetic resources for active expression, the latter seen as the context for the emergence of 'Ur-Art', where aesthetic choices by females have shaped the course of evolution in many species, though there were other selective pressures that honed aesthetic sensitivity, such as the need to discriminate altruists from cheats.

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The Place of this Chapter in the Argument

This thesis asks 'What is the aesthetic?' and 'What is its relationship to art?' These questions seek to understand and challenge scepticism towards the aesthetic among some philosophers of art in the Anglo-American analytical tradition since the advent of twentieth century positivism. Chapters two and three analysed some sceptical accounts of the aesthetic. Doubts over the accuracy of some of their accounts of ideas originating in eighteenth century led to studies of Baumgarten and Kant in chapters four and five. The present chapter, on evolutionary theory, is the first of two dedicated entirely to examining empirical evidence for the aesthetic, an approach that began in section 2.4 on the pedagogy of drawing. The next chapter will look at cognitive neuroscience, and the final chapter will review the arguments of this thesis through the three case studies outlined in chapter one: bowerbird art, the nexus of art power and crime, and sound sculpture.

6.1.2 The Structure of this Chapter

The present chapter concentrates rather more than earlier chapters on the first of the project's research questions:

RQ1 What is the aesthetic?

In bringing this question to evolutionary science, this chapter follows the general direction of the whole project in defending Baumgarten's view of the aesthetic, a view which maximises its cognitive value, rather than Kant's view, which minimises it. Baumgarten saw the aesthetic as 'sensory knowledge', in a continuum stretching from 'obscure' sensations to abstract reasoning (See Fig. 4, section 4.2). This contrasts with Kant's model of human psychology, which separates the bodily senses, as far as possible, from the Understanding and from Judgments of Taste, as reflected in his distinction between 'Lower' and 'Higher' Sensibility (See Fig. 6, section 5.2).

This chapter follows Daniel C. Dennett in turning to evolutionary biology to gain new perspectives on aspects of human life that might seem to be species-specific, supposedly arising from human culture or having sprung from the human genome. Dennett warns that to lay claim to such 'human' achievements as altruism or the aesthetic, without first explaining how they arose in pre-human evolution, is to invoke them by means of 'skyhooks' (See section 6.3.1, below). He prefers to look for earth-bound 'cranes' as the builders of such wonders, in small Darwinian steps. No attempt will be made to justify Darwin's claims, as that argument lies outside the boundaries of this thesis. However, the evidence collected by Darwin and his successors provides a credible evolutionary context for the cognitive, sensory and emotional model of the aesthetic proposed by Baumgarten, and advanced in the present thesis.

This chapter concludes with the recent challenge to the 'New Synthesis' of neo-Darwinism, following the acceptance of Darwin's second theory of evolution, by sexual selection, which has been claimed to explain the evolution of art. However, rather than seeing sexual selection as the single explanation, it is grouped with other selective pressures prompting the evolution of aesthetic sensitivity, such as identifying good group members, punishing cheats, and, in the next chapter, my own suggestion: grooming.

Apart from asking 'What is the Aesthetic?' (RC1), this chapter will consider some of the definitions surrounding the concept of the 'aesthetic' given in Appendix A, and consider the following issues that arose in earlier chapters:

APC What is the reason for the nexus between Art, Power and Crime?

RPC Consider the often underestimated Role of Patron and Critic

UA Ur-Art is 'art' from the beginning (i.e. it is NOT 'non-art')

6.2 A Biological, not a Transcendental, *sensus communis*¹

For Kant, the *sensus communis* is a 'transcendental' *a priori* principle which justifies the expectation that others ought to share our subjective judgments of taste² (beauty). Also, for Kant, our ability to communicate our cognitive and our aesthetic judgments establishes the universality of both:

Cognitions and judgment, along with the conviction that accompanies them, must be universally communicable. For otherwise we could not attribute to them a harmony with the object, but they would one and all be a merely subjective play of the presentational powers, just as skepticism would have it³.

However, it must be questioned whether such communicability is indeed a necessary condition for aesthetic experience in general, rather than just its human manifestation. In this chapter it will be argued that the universal factor in aesthetic experience is the organism's *response*, in the form of the 'free play of the Imagination and Understanding', experienced as a feeling of pleasure or displeasure, arising from the sensory experience of an object or a performance, in harmony or dis-harmony with the organism's drive to understand the world and its place within it. This chapter argues that the 'free play of the Imagination and Understanding' can take place even in the absence of the *linguistic* expression of concepts, and hence in the absence of explicit inter-communicability. It will be further argued that, if current human aesthetic experience can be shown to derive from our pre-linguistic biology, this should revise our concept of the arts, and also allow for the experience of beauty, and even art, among non-human species, through an inter-species *sensus communis aestheticus*⁴.

Kant himself conceded that animals make aesthetic judgments, though he restricted them to judgments of *sense*, denying to animals reflective judgments of *taste*. He writes: 'Agreeableness holds for non-rational animals, too; beauty only for human

¹ As Ellen Dissanayake also takes a biological approach to art, it is necessary to put in a disclaimer, to explain why her arguments will not be discussed at length here. She orchestrates evidence from many disciplines to support an argument that the 'behaviour of art' co-evolved with the human species. However, her signature expression, 'making special', *assumes*, rather than establishes, the nature of the aesthetic, making her pioneering efforts rather tangential to the present argument. Ellen Dissanayake (1988) *What is Art For?* Seattle, University of Washington Press, and (1992; 1995 edn.) *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why?* Seattle, University of Washington Press and (2000) *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began*, Seattle, University of Washington Press.

² Immanuel Kant (1790; 1987 Edn.) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett. §§20-22, Ak 237-241, pp. 87-90, and §40, Ak 293-6, pp. 159-62.

³ *Ibid.* §21, Ak 238, pp. 87-8.

⁴ This is an expression coined by Kant: *Ibid.* §40, Ak 295, p. 162 (footnote 24).

beings, i.e., beings who are animal and yet rational⁵. Agreeableness, for Kant, exists for animals on the same basis as for humans, who also make ‘judgments of sense’ which are ‘aesthetic and singular’, for example when humans find the smell of a rose ‘agreeable⁶’. Building on Kant’s acceptance of aesthetic judgments of sense, this thesis argues in support of Baumgarten’s position that the *senses* constitute the aesthetic. The argument follows that it is the *senses* that are the basis of art, rather than the stipulative precondition laid down by Kant for *intercommunicability*, which was mainly needed to maintain his separation of judgments of *taste* from judgments of *sense*, a distinction required by the structure of Kant’s philosophical system, but not required by Baumgarten.

6.3 The Evolution of the Aesthetic

In this section, the search for the *sensus communis aestheticus* will be taken back to the origins of life. Just as scientists cannot pinpoint exactly where the boundary lies between life and non-life⁷, they cannot state, looking at the tree of life, exactly where sensation, perception or consciousness might have begun. However, there are clues that can be explored, and these suggest how pervasive the aesthetic might be in nature.

The definition of the aesthetic used here is based on Baumgarten’s definition of aesthetic in the *Metaphysica* (§533): *sensitive cognoscendi et proponendi*, ‘sensorily knowing and proposing⁸’, which incorporates both reception and transmission. This is reflected in the first three paragraphs defining the aesthetic in Appendix A:

- §1 The **AESTHETIC** is both an active and a passive resource for the flourishing of organisms.
- §2 The **PASSIVE AESTHETIC** comprises feelings and cognitions engendered by attention directed towards an external object or internal thought and/or feeling.

⁵ *Ibid.* §5, Ak 210, p. 52.

⁶ *Ibid.* §8, Ak 215, p. 59.

⁷ Peter L. Williams (Ed.) *et al.* (1995), *Grey’s Anatomy* (38th edition) Edinburgh etc., Churchill Livingstone, p. 3, Col. 2.

⁸ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1739; 1983 edn.) *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, extracts from the *Metaphysica* and other texts, published with Introduction, Translation into German, and Notes by Hans Rudolf Schweizer Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, p. 16. My full translation is: ‘AESTHETICS is the science of sensorily knowing and proposing (the logical faculty of lower cognition, the philosophy of the graces and the muses, lower epistemology, the art of thinking beautifully, art as an analogy to reason)’.

- §3 The **ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the presentation of a sensory profile by one organism to other organisms. The active aesthetic can be either tacit or expressive.

The ‘active aesthetic’ can be either the result of natural selection and contingencies, designated here as the ‘tacit active aesthetic’, or it can be the result of actions by an organism to impact upon the sensory systems of other organisms. This is designated here as the ‘expressive active aesthetic’:

- §4 The **TACIT ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the result of evolutionary selective processes, in which the action of organism A has changed the sensory profile of organism B, which can influence the behaviour of organisms A, B or C etc.

e.g. predation of light peppered moths in the industrial revolution increased the numbers of dark peppered moths (See Plate 13a).

- §5 The **EXPRESSIVE ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the sensory signalling of organism C which has the potential to influence the thoughts, feelings or behaviour of organism D or E or etc.

The shepherd or shepherdess (C) plays his or her harp for auto-delectation, quite apart from any effect his or her playing might have on the inner state of his or her sheep (D) or the eavesdropping lion (E). The expressive active aesthetic can be both:

- 1) a) unconscious or b) conscious
e.g. a) releasing pheromones or b) writing a letter
- and
- 2) c) intended or d) unintentional
e.g. c) saying “Hello!” or d) blushing.

As Baumgarten admitted, in §117 of the *Reflections on Poetry*, it is very difficult to put a boundary between the rhetorical and the poetic uses of language, and by extension between the *rhetorical* uses of all the other aesthetic forms of expression, and their *artistic* uses⁹; in other words, to tell ‘non-art’ from ‘art’. It will be argued here, on the basis of Lafferty’s claims for ‘a spectrum of artistic presence’¹⁰, that there is a

⁹ ‘The philosophers should be busy in general in drawing boundary lines and especially in defining accurate limits between poetry and ordinary eloquence. The difference is, to be sure, only a matter of degree; but in the relegation of things to one side or the other it requires, we think, no less capable a geometer than did the frontiers of the Phrygians and the Mysians’; Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1735) *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, reprinted in facsimile with an Introduction and Translation into English by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (1954) with Notes, as *Reflections on Poetry*, Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, §117, p. 79.

¹⁰ Michael G. Lafferty . (2006) *Arthur Danto’s Philosophy of Art*, Ph.D. thesis (unpublished) Warwick University, pp. 198-214.

continuum of the artistic, which begins with the expressive active aesthetic in nature, leading to statement UA:

UA Ur-Art is 'art' from the beginning.

The basis for this rests partly on what Daniel C. Dennett calls the existence of one shared 'design space', for human and non-human animals.

6.3.1 Sky hooks or Cranes in one 'Design Space'

Daniel C. Dennett is perhaps the pre-eminent philosopher to promote the relevance of evolutionary biology to some philosophical questions¹¹. His work on the naturalisation¹² of ethics can provide a model for a possible Darwinian naturalisation of aesthetics. In *Freedom Evolves*¹³, he confronts the paradox of a) our scientific acceptance of the universe as deterministic and b) our reluctance to abandon a belief in free will and individual moral responsibility. Challenging determinism, Dennett shows that Darwinism can supply us with a different narrative, showing that greater complexity evolves in small steps, locally, appearing, temporarily at least, to reverse the otherwise inevitable entropy predicated upon the second law of thermodynamics¹⁴. Thus, more highly evolved organisms gradually gain increasing amounts of what he calls 'wiggle-room' in the face of a pre-determined universe. In Dennett's words, 'Four billion years ago, there was no freedom on our planet, because there was no life'¹⁵. Adapting his words, the aesthetician might also claim, 'Four billion years ago, there was no art on our planet, because there was no life'. One might add, 'Nor rhetoric, nor the aesthetic'. Just as Dennett outlines the evolution of freedom, so this chapter attempts an admittedly much more compressed account of the evolution of the aesthetic. Dennett provides two main justifications for an evolutionary approach to philosophical questions. The first accounts for the process of adaptation, with 'cranes' rather than

¹¹ Daniel C. Dennett (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London, Penguin, and (2003) *Freedom Evolves*, London, Penguin.

¹² To naturalize any area of culture is to treat it as continuous with the study of the natural world, continuous with science, according to Alan Lacey, 'Naturalism' in Ted Honderich *Op. Cit.* (1995). In naturalisation, all explanations should be based on empirical evidence, on what Quine calls 'observational sentences', which derive their meaning in the same way that a child learns the meaning of words, from 'concurrent sensory stimulation'. See Willard Van Orman Quine. (1969) *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York, Columbia University Press, 'Epistemology Naturalised' (pp. 69-90) p. 85.

¹³ Daniel C. Dennett *Op. Cit.* (2003).

¹⁴ Daniel C. Dennett (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, London, Penguin, p. 69.

¹⁵ Daniel C. Dennett, *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 137.

‘skyhooks’. The second concerns the existence of only one ‘design space’, which is shared by all evolved creatures, humans included.

Dennett makes the distinction between ‘sky-hooks’ and ‘cranes’ in an attempt to explain the evolution of apparently unique human qualities or features. Dissanayake’s confident identification of ‘making special’ within her evolutionary explanation of art, appears to invoke one such ‘sky hook’, as ‘making special’ is presented to us with no explanation for the aesthetic sense which must underpin it¹⁶. Instead of ‘sky-hooks’, Dennett proposes ‘cranes’, according to a principle first proposed by James Mark Baldwin in 1896. The ‘Baldwin effect’ offers an alternative to Lamarckianism, the discredited theory that adaptive characteristics acquired by a living organism could be passed on directly to its offspring. By contrast, the concept of ‘cranes’ is compatible with the slow-working Darwinian algorithm of descent with variation, where the plasticity of a living organism allows it to come up with an innovative behaviour, a new ‘trick’, which is then adopted by conspecifics and subsequent generations, thereby creating a selective pressure for any future genetic mutations which work in favour of reinforcing the new ‘trick’. The result is the spread of various degrees of a characteristic, with the fully-fledged behaviour and its structures (e.g. winged flight) standing above lesser approximations, as shown the two diagrams of Fig. 7, below:

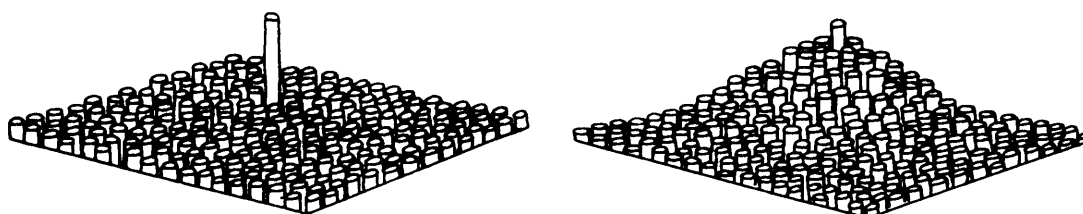


Fig. 7: The Baldwin Effect: from ‘Sky-hook’ (left) or ‘Crane’ (right).
(Figures 3.1 and 3.2 in Dennett’s *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*, pp. 78 and 79)

The second relevant evolutionary concept emphasised by Dennett is the existence of only one ‘design space’ within which these changes can occur. A good example of intellectual discovery within one ‘design space’ is the independent discovery of natural selection by both Darwin and Wallace. The same kind of convergence has led to many other innovators being acclaimed in different countries for the same achievements. In nature, this phenomenon is called ‘convergent evolution’. The characteristic structures of the Sabre-toothed Tiger evolved more than once from

¹⁶ Ellen Dissanayake *Op. Cit.* (1988) ch. 4, ‘Making Special: Towards a Behavior of Art’, pp. 74-131.

different lineages, with placental and marsupial versions¹⁷. They represent the same ‘design solutions’ to the same selective pressures. Dissanayake claims that art is a specifically *human* adaptation, ignoring the possibility of convergent evolution, dismissing the activities of bowerbirds, such as those shown in Plate 14, as merely ‘display’ and ‘not art’¹⁸. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that human art is not an isolated ‘skyhook’ rising from a featureless plain, but one manifestation of a larger cluster of aesthetic behaviours in a single design space shared by both humans and the other animals.

6.3.2 The evolution of perceptual knowledge

In order to avoid accepting ‘the aesthetic’ as if from a ‘skyhook’, some consideration will need to be given to the evolution of the senses, which are closely identified in this thesis with the aesthetic, in keeping with Baumgarten’s concept of ‘sensory knowledge’. When we think about Darwinian evolution we must remember the almost unimaginable periods of time with which we are dealing (Fig. 8).

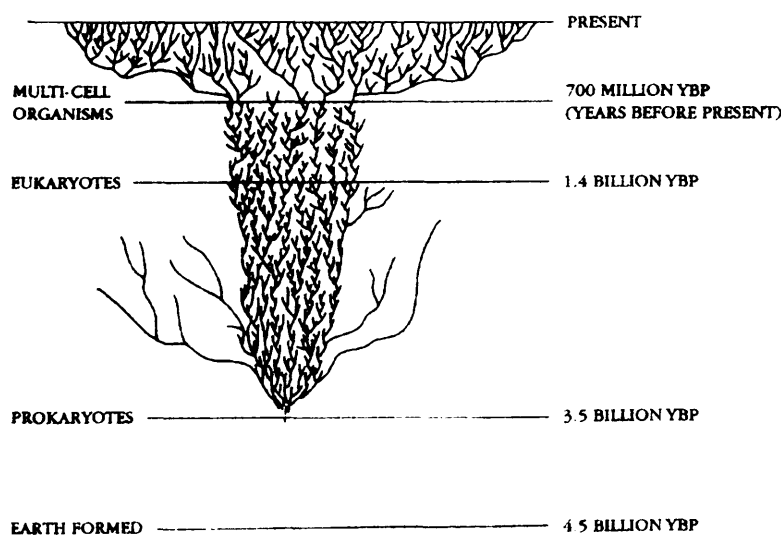


Fig. 8 Emergence and diversification of life on earth
(Figure 4.2 from Dennett (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, p. 88)

¹⁷ There are illustrations of Marsupial and Placental Sabretooths, which exemplify evolutionary convergence, on p. 453 of Mark Ridley's introductory text, *Evolution*, Blackwell Science Inc., Cambridge, Mass., 1993. There are numerous examples of ‘cranes’, including the eye, see http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/01/1/real/I_011_01.html.

¹⁸ Ellen Dissanayake *Op.Cit.* (1992; 1995edn.) pp. 64-6. She has two other reasons for dismissing the bowerbird's displays as art: 1) she says Darwin based his speculation on a Nineteenth Century identification of art with beauty, now believed to be ‘tangential’ to art, and 2) the females could be responding directly to fitness indicators, rather than to ‘beauty’.

For about the first billion years of earth's existence, there is no evidence of any life, and only after another 2 billion years did symbiotic co-operation between simpler life forms¹⁹ enable more complex unicellular animals, including the Protozoa, to evolve sensory systems. This enabled them to find places offering optimal conditions for their survival and reproduction (see Plate 15b).

At the beginning of *The Sense of Order*, Ernst Gombrich quotes a passage by Konrad Lorenz, describing the movement of a unicellular Protozoan viewed under the microscope:

Even the primitive way in which *paramaecium* (one of the *infusoria*) takes avoiding action when it collides with an obstacle by first reversing and then swimming forward in another direction determined by accident suggests that it 'knows' something about the external world which may literally be described as an 'objective' fact²⁰.

This seems to describe Baumgarten's 'sensory knowledge' (Plate 15a). Apart from being able to sense an obstacle and find its way around it, the *Paramaecium* is also light sensitive, and will move towards a light source²¹. The *Amoeba*, in contrast, has a 'negative photokinetic' reaction to light²². The presence of light motivates these relatively simple animals to move towards it or away. It may even be possible to speak of an 'attraction' or an 'aversion' to light, perhaps even of 'pleasure' or 'pain'. However one expresses it, they have 'sensory knowledge' which 'propels' them motivationally in one direction or the other.

6.3.3 The Aesthetic as an Evolutionary Driver

Once unicellular life forms like *Paramaecium* had evolved forms of sexual reproduction (See Plate 16a), the horizontal exchange of DNA between conspecifics accelerated the rate of evolutionary change, leading to the earliest multicellular organisms. This prepared the stage for the 'Cambrian explosion', 543 million years ago, when there emerged most of the groups of species still alive today, and many now

¹⁹ L. Margulis (1981) *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution: Life and its Environment on the Early Earth*, Oxford, Freeman.

²⁰ Ernst Gombrich's own translation (1979), in *The Sense of Order: a study in the psychology of decorative art*, (2nd Edition, 1984), London, Phaidon Press, p. 2.

²¹ www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html; note: this website has been closed down since I read this information on it.

²² *Loc. Cit.*

extinct²³, including the Trilobites, which evolved the first eyes known to science, thus 'introducing vision to life on earth'²⁴ (See Plate 16b). In the words of Andrew Parker:

Everything had to quickly adapt, and [this] caused an explosion in evolution . . .
.. So once a predator has an eye, then it's a strong pressure for the prey to have eyes as well²⁵.

New research techniques and a few unusually well-preserved fossils of skin reveal that animals in the Cambrian quickly evolved colours for all the reasons that they have colours today: signalling, camouflage, and so forth. Eyes evolved in most branches of the animal kingdom. By a remarkable process of convergent evolution, the eye of a large mollusc, the squid, is almost identical to the human eye, though better 'designed'²⁶.

Equally remarkable is the way aesthetic selective pressures shaped the appearance of different animals. Such characteristics can only occur by mutation, and then by natural selection, either because predators desist from attack for fear of unpleasant consequences, so that a species does not need camouflage (Plate 17a), or because they are left unharmed by predators which have been successfully duped by that fear (Plate 17b), or because the best mimics survive by becoming almost invisible (Plate 17c).

Such changes in the appearance of animals due to 'aesthetic' or 'perceptual' factors can take place quite quickly, as the famous case of the Peppered Moth in the United Kingdom, during and after the Industrial Revolution (See Plate 13a). The Heike crab, which looks like the head of a Samurai warrior, has over the centuries apparently evolved an increasing likeness, from the crab-fishermen's habit of throwing 'Samurai-

²³ <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/cambrian/camb.html>.

²⁴ The words of Andrew Parker, in BBC Radio 4 programme 'Material World' broadcast on 7th February 2008, in an item on colour in fossils. The discussion was between presenter Quentin Cooper, Professor Andrew Parker, Research Leader in Zoology at the Natural History Museum, London, and Dr. Phil Manning, Lecturer in Palaeontology at the School of Earth Sciences, Manchester University. The programme is still available on http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/thematerialworld_20080207.shtml.
The major difference between the light sensitivity of a *Paramaecium* and a *Trilobite* is the ability of an eye to produce an image.

²⁵ *Loc. Cit.* A short film about the evolution of a humanlike eye under selective pressure may be found on the internet at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/01/1/real/1_011_01.html.

²⁶ In the vertebrate eye, light for most of the retina has to pass through a layer of blood vessels, whereas for the squid, the image strikes the light-receptive cells directly.
http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://webvision.med.utah.edu/imageswv/Sagschem.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.pandasthumb.org/archives/2006/11/denton_vs_squid.html&h=480&w=726&sz=92&hl=en&start=14&um=1&tbnid=hp3Vn3YyU8V39M:&tbnh=93&tbnw=141&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsquid%252Beye%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26channel%3Ds%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official.

like' crabs back into the water (See Plate 13b). In 6.3, above I called such changes the result of the 'Tacit Active Aesthetic'.

The appearance of plants is also shaped by the perceptual responses of animals, at the flower stage offering a selective pressure in favour of species that attract pollinators (See Plate 18a), and, later in the season, those that attract seed dispersers by advertising their harvest of fruit through colour and pattern (See Plate 18b). The first point to highlight is the remarkably powerful selective pressure which the aesthetic, as perception, applies, in ways which alter both sides of an inter-species relationship: predator and prey adapt to each other, as do flowers and pollinators, as studied by Darwin in the co-evolution of orchids and their pollinators²⁷. The second point is to speculate on whether perhaps some of the elation of our ancestor species, in finding a tree loaded with colourful fruit, does not underlie our aesthetic pleasure in contemplating a similar abstract pattern in which we group forms by shape and colour²⁸.

However, the old Rationalist questioning of the epistemological value of the senses still survives. Gregory Currie describes *beliefs* as conceptual, but *perceptions* as *non-conceptual*, on the basis that for someone to hold a *belief*, they would have to 'hold the concepts necessary for a *description* of how that belief represents the world'²⁹. This seems to make human language necessary to cognition, and thereby, in the footsteps of Kant, to downgrade, or even to deny, the cognitive content of sensory perception. John Searle takes a view which seems to support Baumgarten against Kant and Currie:

Why is my dog barking up that tree? Because he *believes* that the cat is up the tree, and he wants to catch up to the cat. Why does he believe the cat is up the tree? Because he *saw* the cat run up the tree . . . *seeing and smelling is believing*³⁰ (his Italics).

This thesis accepts the view that perceptions are a form of cognition worthy of being called 'knowledge', taking the lead from Baumgarten's description of aesthetics as: *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*³¹ (the science of sensorily knowing) in which he

²⁷ Charles Darwin (1877) *The Various Contrivances by which Orchids are Fertilised by Insects* (2nd edn.), London, Murray.

²⁸ This idea will be pursued in chapter seven, which looks at psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

²⁹ Gregory Currie (2004a) *Arts and Minds*, Oxford, OUP, p. 77.

³⁰ Searle, J.R. (1994) 'Animal Minds', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XIX, 1994, pp. 206-19, reprinted in Searle, J.R. (2002) *Consciousness and Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (pp. 61-76) p. 68.

³¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1750/58; 2007 edn.) *Ästhetik*, reprinted in 2 Volumes (Vol. 1 §§1-613) and (Vol. 2 §§1-614-904) with Translation into German, an Introduction, Notes and a Glossary, by Dagmar Mirbach, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag; Vol. 1, §1, p. 10.

included perception, semiotics, hermeneutics and the arts³². However, as Baumgarten taught, the aesthetic also includes memory and the imagination³³, both of which, as we shall see confirmed in the next chapter, activate the same sense modules of the brain. Memory allows ‘re-runs’ of experience and perception, as part of the learning process. Imagination allows ‘pre-runs’, for planning new moves. Both processes play a role in storytelling, providing ‘imagined alternative strategies to meet difficulties³⁴’. This is the basis of the present claim: that the aesthetic is best understood as synonymous with perception, a resource to enable animals to survive and prosper, gaining motivational information about the world. The aesthetic provides a mobile organism with ‘sensory knowledge’ about its own inner state and about its environment, including any threat to it, or any potential benefit. The aesthetic also provides the means to send out signals to other organisms in order to influence their behaviour, which I called the ‘Expressive Active Aesthetic’ (§5, earlier in 6.3, above). Human speech could be interpreted as an extreme elaboration of something commonplace in nature: the use of sound waves for signalling to other organisms. However, once speech had evolved, it provided the medium for abstract reasoning. But the human species did not thereupon abandon all other forms of ‘sensory representation and expression³⁵’. The pre-linguistic channels of communication survived and thrived, as media to carry aesthetic expression multiplied with new technological innovations. A vast accumulated repertoire of aesthetic activities, quite apart from ‘the arts’, so thoroughly permeate our lives that we fail to see many of them as ‘aesthetic’: body decoration, dress, conversation, joke-telling, television, cuisine, disco-dancing, sport, hill-walking, going to the beach, gardening, interior decoration, digital photography and computer games, and so, endlessly, on. It would be the aim of an evolutionary account eventually to relate all these activities to ‘the arts’ in an integrated and inclusive account of the aesthetic.

6.4 Darwin: Continuity between the Natural and the Human

³² Nicholas Davey (1989) ‘Baumgarten’s aesthetics: a post-Gadamerian reflection’ in *BJA* (Vol. 29) pp.101-115.

³³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983 edn.) Section IV on the Imagination (§§557-571), Section VI on Memory (§§579-588) and Section VIII on Foresight (§§595-605).

³⁴ Denis Dutton (2003) ‘Aesthetics and Evolutionary Psychology’ in Levinson, J. (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook on Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 693-705) p. 698.

³⁵ This is a phrase used by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983 edn.) §533, pp. 16-17. My translation is given in Appendix D.

This section will look at the kind of evidence which Darwin presented for continuity between the animal kingdom and human beings, not only in the evolution of their bodies, but also of their minds. Darwin was, of course, a paramount observer and experimenter. His last book was devoted to every aspect of the earthworm, including its perceptual psychology³⁶. He found that, although a worm appears to be deaf and blind, it is very sensitive to touch and vibration:

When the pots containing two worms which had remained quite indifferent to the sound of a piano, were placed on this instrument, and the note C in the bass clef was struck, they . . . retreated³⁷.

Darwin observed that, 'The whole body of a worm is sensitive to contact. A slight puff of air from the mouth causes an instant retreat'³⁸. He had also observed that the worm's anterior end is sensitive to light, both in intensity and duration, though he rejected the idea that a worm retreats from light by a 'reflex action', insisting that it has attention, 'and attention implies the presence of a mind'³⁹:

Judging by their eagerness for certain kinds of food, they must enjoy the pleasure of eating . . . Their sexual passion is strong enough to overcome for a time their dread of light⁴⁰.

The two key concepts for Darwin are the continuity between all species and the very gradual nature of evolutionary change by tiny increments over vast tracts of time. Both of these speculations have been confirmed by studies of DNA, providing a guide to relatedness, and to the probable date of the last common ancestor⁴¹. Such tiny changes include not only physical but also mental capacities:

We must . . . admit that there is a much wider interval in mental power between one of the lowest fishes, as a lamprey or lancelet, and one of the higher apes, than between an ape and a man; yet this interval is filled up by numberless gradations.⁴²

³⁶ The main importance of this study was to reveal the ecological importance of the earthworm; Charles Darwin (1881) *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the action of Worms with observations of their habits*, London, John Murray.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 26.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 28.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 24.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁴¹ Steve Jones (1993) *The Language of the Genes: Biology, History and the Evolutionary Future*, London, Flamingo, pp. 127-32. He discusses degrees of relatedness between humans, apes and monkeys, based on percentages of shared DNA.

⁴² Charles Darwin, (1871; 2nd edn. 1883) *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* London, John Murray. p. 65.

This observation occurs in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, which contains Darwin's evolutionary aesthetics. Although the two sections of his book appear to address separate topics, they are both of great relevance to any project to naturalise aesthetics. First, *The Descent of Man* presents evidence for the continuity of humanity with the rest of nature. Then, *Selection in Relation To Sex* presents the perhaps surprising thesis that, just as the bird fancier can shape a bantam's plumage by selective breeding, so the mating preferences of females throughout much of the animal kingdom had been a major force in evolution, which had 'by a long selection of the more attractive males, added to their beauty or other attractive qualities'⁴³. We will return to sexual selection, first considering Darwin's observations on the continuity of man with nature.

In addition to pointing out anatomical and embryological similarities between men and the higher animals⁴⁴, especially the primates, Darwin writes:

All have the same senses, intuitions and sensations, similar passions, affections and emotions, even the more complex ones, such as jealousy, suspicion, emulation and gratitude, and magnanimity; they practise deceit and are revengeful; they are often susceptible to ridicule, and even have a sense of humour; they feel wonder and curiosity; they possess the same faculties of imitation, attention, deliberation, choice, memory, imagination, the association of ideas and reason, though in very different degrees⁴⁵.

In addition to Darwin's lifelong observation of animals, he added to his vast store of anecdotes through correspondence and reading, and many of the claims he made have been substantiated in the last fifty years by animal ethologists⁴⁶. Darwin is confident of the ability of animals to form concepts. He writes that one dog will view another distant dog, 'in the abstract' until getting close, when, 'his whole manner suddenly changes, if the other dog is a friend'⁴⁷. Darwin quotes a Mr. Leslie Stephens:

A dog frames a general concept of cats or sheep and knows the corresponding words as well as a philosopher. And the capacity to understand is as good a

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 211

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 11 and 15-17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 79. Darwin provides a great deal of evidence to support these claims, and much of this has been confirmed by recent experimental studies of sheep and cows: BBC News, report by Helen Briggs, 'Amazing Powers of Sheep' on Wednesday 7th November, 2001; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1641463.stm#TOP>; and Laura Spinney 'More than Meats the Eye' in *The Guardian*, 17th March 2005, in the 'Life' Section, pp. 4-6.

⁴⁶ For example, Frans de Wall (2001) *The Ape and the Sushi Master: cultural reflections by a primatologist*, London, Allen Lane and Robert M. Sapolsky (2002) *A Primate's Memoir: love death and Baboons in East Africa*, London, Vintage.

⁴⁷ Charles Darwin, *Op. Cit.* (1871; 2nd edn. 1883) p. 83.

proof of vocal intelligence, though in an inferior degree, as the capacity to speak⁴⁸.

Darwin compares the learning process of a young songbird to a child learning to speak. Young male birds have an apprenticeship; birds can learn the songs of other species, and have the equivalent to regional accents⁴⁹. In the field of ethics, he anticipates the findings of animal ethologists in several stories of altruistic animal behaviour⁵⁰. Then Darwin comes to what is perhaps his boldest claim: that animals have a 'Sense of Beauty', though he quickly qualifies it:

This sense has been declared to be peculiar to man. I refer here only to the pleasure given by certain colours, forms and sounds, and which may fairly be called a sense of the beautiful; with cultivated man such sensations are, however, intimately associated with complex ideas and trains of thought⁵¹.

Darwin has no doubt that this is a simpler form of the same sense of beauty which we as humans experience. The above quotation continues:

When we behold a male bird elaborately displaying his graceful plumes or splendid colours before the female, whilst other birds, not thus decorated, make no such display, it is impossible to doubt that she admires the beauty of her male partner. As women everywhere deck themselves with these plumes, the beauty of such ornaments cannot be disputed . . . and the playing passages of bower-birds are tastefully ornamented with gaily-coloured objects; and this shews that they must receive some pleasure from the sight of such things⁵².

Darwin understood a concept denied by biologists for most of the twentieth century⁵³, that many puzzling and extravagant characteristics of male animals are sexual in origin, whether weapons to defeat rivals in combat, or decorations to charm females⁵⁴:

When we behold two males fighting for the possession of the female, or several male birds displaying their gorgeous plumage, and performing strange antics before an assembled body of females, we cannot doubt that, though led by

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 89, quoted from Leslie Stephen (1873) *Essays on Free Thinking etc.*, p. 82.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 86.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 103. Similar acts of altruism against the dictates of 'selfish gene' expectations, are given in a) de Waal *Op. Cit.* pp. 78-81 of Binti, the female gorilla who rescued a three-year-old boy who fell in the gorilla pit in Chicago in 1996, and b) in Sapolsky *Op. Cit.* pp. 238-9, of Benjamin, a baboon who, against nature, risks his life to defend two unrelated youngsters from a lion.

⁵¹ Charles Darwin *Op. Cit.* (1871; 1883 edn.) p. 92.

⁵² *Loc. Cit.*

⁵³ The history of ridicule, attack and neglect which befell Darwin's theory of sexual selection is summarised by Geoffrey Miller in the second chapter of his (2001) *The Mating Mind*, Edition used (2001), London, Vintage, pp. 33-67.

⁵⁴ Charles Darwin *Op. Cit.* (1871; 1883 edn.) p. 211.

instinct, they know what they are about, and consciously exert their mental and bodily powers⁵⁵.

With few exceptions, throughout the animal kingdom, among birds, fish, reptiles and insects⁵⁶, there is both more variation among males and more active courtship. The greater variability of males offers females more choice of mates, and the outcomes of female aesthetic choices gradually accumulate to produce new subspecies and species.

The sexual preferences of females appear to be the only reasonable explanation for the great differences between the male and female hummingbirds, *Spathura underwoodi* (Plate 19a), or the enormous mandibles of the beetle *Chiasognathus Grantii* (See Plate 19b). Both are 'due to the selection by the females of the more beautiful males⁵⁷'. Of the male beetle with huge mandibles, (Plate 19b) Darwin observes that, though pugnacious, his mandibles have little bite⁵⁸. However, Darwin did not regard every case of colours and forms that appear as beautiful to our sensibilities to be the result of sexual selection⁵⁹, though he believed that in 'higher animals' changes in colour occurred either for camouflage or 'as an attraction between the sexes⁶⁰'.

Darwin noticed five very similar developments in both insects and birds, which today could be seen as examples of 'convergent evolution', i.e. the development of similar structures or behaviour in organisms with separate ancestry⁶¹. In both birds and insects, the male tended: 1) to be pugnacious, 2) to have special weapons, 3) to have organs for 'vocal' or 'instrumental' music, 4) to be ornamented (combs, horns, wattles etc.) and 5) to develop bright colours⁶². Despite his great regard for the mental powers of insects⁶³, Darwin declares that birds are, 'the most aesthetic of all animals, excepting of course man, and they have nearly the same taste for the beautiful as we have'⁶⁴.

⁵⁵ *Loc. Cit.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 221.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 387-9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 301.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 261.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 311.

⁶¹ Sabre-toothed tigers evolved independently in both marsupial and placental forms, in response to similar selective pressures. They are illustrated on p. 453 of Mark Ridley (1993) *Evolution*, Cambridge Mass., Blackwell Science Inc.

⁶² Charles Darwin *Op. Cit.* (1871; 1883 edn.) p. 359.

⁶³ Darwin wrote, *Ibid.* p. 54, that, comparing size and functionality, '... the brain of an ant is one of the most marvellous atoms of matter in the world, perhaps more so than the brain of a man'.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 359.

Birds, Darwin says, listen to each other's songs⁶⁵; they can be trapped, lured, perhaps by jealousy or rivalry, to listen to a hidden bird⁶⁶. Darwin also comments that birds and other animals also display an active aesthetic enjoyment of their activities, such as robins singing in the Autumn⁶⁷. The viewer of wild-life documentaries will doubtless picture innumerable shots of dolphins frolicking (See Plate 20).

The aim of this section was to advance the case, based on Darwin's evidence, that the foundations of 'sensory knowledge' or, in Baumgarten's terms, the 'aesthetic' were laid anciently and pervasively throughout the evolution of life on earth eons before the evolution of human beings. Aesthetic choices, perceptual choices made on the basis of pleasure, made by animals, have been crucial influences on the survival, behaviour, reproduction and evolution of both animals and plants. In particular, females' sexual choices appear to have been important factors in the evolution of new varieties and species, and optimising the survival and vigour of their offspring. There is an interesting link with the world of human art, item RPC:

RPC Consider the often underestimated Role of Patron and Critic.

In an era still under the spell of the Romantic 'hero-artist' and 'genius', it is only too easy to overlook the seminal role throughout history of the patron and critic. It continues today in the state salaried curator and the purchasing power of the private art collector, famously demonstrated in recent decades in the United Kingdom by Charles Saatchi, who has done more than any single artist or salaried curator to shape the development of British art over the same period. It is important not to forget the critic,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p 369: 'Mr. Weir has told me of the case of a bullfinch which had been taught to pipe a German waltz, and who was so good a performer that he cost ten guineas; when this bird was first introduced into a room where other birds were kept and he began to sing, all the others, consisting of about twenty linnets and canaries, ranged themselves on the nearest side of their cages, and listened with the greatest interest to the new performer.'

⁶⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

⁶⁷ Charles Darwin (1871; 1883 edn.) p 370: 'But nothing is more common than for animals to take pleasure in practising whatever instinct they follow at other times for real good. How often do we see birds which fly easily, gliding and sailing through the air obviously for pleasure? The cat plays with the captured mouse, the cormorant with the captured fish. The weaverbird (*Ploceus*), when confined in a cage, amuses itself by neatly weaving blades of grass between the wires of its cage. Birds which habitually fight during the breeding-season are generally ready to fight at all times; and the males of the capercaillie sometimes hold their *Balzen* or *leks* at the usual place of assemblage during the autumn. Hence it is not at all surprising that male birds should continue singing for their own amusement after the season for courtship is over.'

who can also wield great power, as in the case of Clement Greenberg⁶⁸. Dealers are also powerful figures, and this now raises another of our issues, item APC:

APC What is the reason for the nexus between Art, Power and Crime?

At this stage it seems that some explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the definition of the 'expressive active aesthetic' (§5 in the definitions listed in section 6.3, above). In the bid for dominance (in current jargon: 'Wall power') the rich and powerful build houses or even palaces with an emphasis on rhetoric, beauty and size, and acquire art for display. These issues will be discussed in the case study of 'The Nexus of Art, Power and Crime' in the final chapter (section 8.5.2).

6.5 Sexual Selection: the Beautiful and the Good.

This section will review the fate of Darwin's extensively defended hunch in favour of a link between sexual selection and beauty. It will consider the following concepts: fitness, the mode of inheritance, novelty, the handicap principle and some forms of altruism. It is not always possible to keep all these factors separate. Their combined effect on animal species has been a selective pressure for ever-increasing perceptual acuity, which, following Baumgarten, is viewed in this thesis as ever-increasing sensory knowledge.

6.5.1 Fitness

The key term in sexual selection, as with natural selection, is 'fitness'. This term denotes the reproductive potential afforded by the characteristics of an organism, according to its environment⁶⁹. It appears that perceptual systems evolved not only for finding food and escaping predators, but also for identifying suitable mates, i.e. those displaying the greatest 'fitness'. Thus recent evolutionary theory has linked the beautiful with the good in a way that echoes the shared meaning of the ancient Greek word, *kalos*, which could mean both 'beautiful' and 'good'. The acceptance of beauty as part of the evolutionary story is, however, a recent development in science, although Darwin had proposed it a century earlier.

⁶⁸ Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), critic and influential advocate of Modernism. A website that includes several of his key writings is <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/>, and a biographical sketch by Terry Fenton is at <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/thecritic.html>.

⁶⁹ Daniel C. Dennett *Op. Cit.* (1995) p. 343.

Although Darwin was convinced that sexual selection was a driving force in evolution, he could not explain how heredity worked, nor why females seemed predictably to choose either the most beautiful or the most heavily armed males. The existence of handicapping sexual ornaments, like the peacock's tail, and the altruism of the ant⁷⁰ both appeared to challenge the theory of evolution by natural selection. There is now a vast literature on both subjects, which has been surveyed by Helena Cronin in *The Ant and the Peacock*⁷¹ and summarised again by Geoffrey Miller in *The Mating Mind*⁷². Cronin recounts how Darwin's theory of sexual selection was rejected by his fellow-discoverer of natural selection, Alfred Russell Wallace, who wished to keep such apparent anomalies as the peacock's tail within the compass of natural selection, on the basis that the females were making choices of 'good sense' (e.g. vigour) rather than choices of 'good taste' (i.e. beauty)⁷³.

It took nearly 50 years from the first publication of *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* before female choice for beauty was successfully explained as an evolutionary adaptation, and another 50 years before a real change in biological thinking began to bring about an acceptance of Darwin's theory of sexual selection, and its integration within the broader workings of natural selection. Cronin tells us that in 1915 R.A. Fisher made the break-through that explained why the peahen chose the beautiful male with his long but impractical tail, rather than the less attractive male with the sensible short tail. This is where the inheritance process is important. As the females of the next generation were inheriting genes which gave them a preference for long, beautiful tails, the peahen herself would gain fewer grandsons if she produced short-tailed rather than long-tailed sons⁷⁴. It was the combination of the female's genes giving a preference for the ornamental tail, together with the male's genes for producing such a tail that led to a 'run-away' effect of rapid evolutionary change, producing such an extreme feature. Cronin confirms that the consensus now approves of Darwin's intuition that the female peacock is choosing the most beautiful male, and that female choice for

⁷⁰ Not that the altruism of the ant is related to sexual selection; it relates to kinship altruism.

⁷¹ Helena Cronin (1991) *The Ant and the Peacock*, Cambridge, CUP.

⁷² Geoffrey Miller *Op. Cit.* (2000;2001).

⁷³ Helena Cronin *Op. Cit.* (1991). Wallace also wished to reserve altruism and an aesthetic sense as part of the 'spiritual' side of human beings.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 201-3. Ramachandran and Hirstein, in their (1999) "The Science of Art: a neurological theory of aesthetic experience," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (Vol. 6; June/July) pp.17-21 describe the 'peak-shift' principle that offers an alternative explanation that would not require specific genetic encoding of the preference, which Ingold would consider unlikely. (See section 6.6).

beauty is at work in sexual selection⁷⁵. Symmetry has been shown to be important in mate selection, where it seems to betoken good genes, including resistance to parasites⁷⁶. Thornhill quotes several studies, including his own, which show female preferences for symmetry in their mates among scorpion flies, barn swallows, rock lizards and humans⁷⁷. There are several factors which the male thus places on display which cannot be perceived directly, but which have to be culled by the female in an act of 'radical interpretation'⁷⁸: good genes, good energy levels, resourceful food-finding, robust self-defence from rivals, good general health and freedom from parasites. Without powers of analysis, the female makes a choice based on a global aesthetic judgment of beauty, based on an impression of healthy size, vigour, good symmetry, glossy, well-groomed appearance, inventive singing and so forth, according to the species.

6.5.2 The Handicap Principle and Novelty

Symmetry and the other characteristics of beauty are expensive to maintain, and therein lies their value as good indicators of fitness, and the stakes are raised further by adding the handicap principle and an apparently universal bias in favour of novelty⁷⁹. The peacock's tail is not only beautiful, it is a dead weight which impedes escape from predators⁸⁰. The owner must be doubly fit, to be able to survive and compete for mates. The value of a fitness indicator seems to grow in direct proportion to its wasteful extravagance. The same holds for courtship gifts⁸¹. To understand these processes, theorists in evolutionary biology took a cue from the sociologist Thorstein Veblen's pioneering study of conspicuous consumption⁸². Fitness, in terms of power and wealth, is displayed in idle servants standing in attendance, palaces, banquets, artworks and hunting expeditions. The brute fact is that there is competition for mates, with winners

⁷⁵ Helena Cronin, *Op. Cit.* (1991) pp. 248-9.

⁷⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

⁷⁷ Randy Thornhill (2003) 'Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics', in E. Voland, and K. Grammer (Eds.) (2003) *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, Berlin, Springer, pp. 9-35, p. 18.

⁷⁸ This is a term associated with Quine concerning the problem of how meaning can be construed. Quine uses the example of a tribe which uses the word 'gavagai', which could mean many things including 'rabbit', 'rabbiteth' and 'undetached rabbit part' etc. W.V. Quine (1969) 'Speaking of Objects' and 'Ontological Relativity' in *Ontological Relativity & other essays*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 1-25 and pp. 26-68.

⁷⁹ Geoffrey Miller *Op. Cit.* (2000; 2001 edn.) pp. 411-416.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 149-51 and 327-30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 123-4.

⁸² Thorstein Veblen, (1899; 1925 edn.) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, especially ch. 3 on 'Conspicuous Leisure', pp. 35-67.

and losers, and courtship continues lifelong, albeit at a less hectic pace, in order to retain the pair-bond. It is here, in response to psychological preferences, that Miller sees the evolution of art in the human species:

novelty	vs.	boredom
grace	vs.	clumsiness
knowledge	vs.	ignorance
logic	vs.	inconsistency
kindness	vs.	meanness ⁸³

Some of these psychological preferences have been found in the animal kingdom, as in Nancy Burley's experiment with zebra finches. The females preferred to mate with males with white plumes glued to their heads, a feature hitherto unknown in that species⁸⁴. This provides evidence of the power of neo-philia in mate attraction⁸⁵. This leads to the evidence Miller presents that art among humans is an evolutionary adaptation, in that it is:

- 1 ubiquitous
- 2 pleasurable
- 3 costly (in effort)⁸⁶

He points out that art is fun and easy to learn⁸⁷; humans are good at producing it and judging it, and different styles and traditions have developed, like languages⁸⁸. He distinguishes a 'top-down' or a 'bottom-up' view of the evolution of art; 'top-down' referring to an approach starting with museum art, or his preferred approach, 'bottom-up', starting with the visual decoration that surrounds us in our everyday lives⁸⁹. He then takes the bowerbirds (Plate 14 and Appendix C) as 'an example of sexual selection for art in another species'⁹⁰. Miller says the bowers built by the 18 species of bowerbirds are obvious examples of female sexual selection, where small initial differences among rather crow-like birds have been subject to runaway selection,

⁸³ Geoffrey Miller, *Op. Cit.* (2000; 2001 edn.) p. 138.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 145.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 411-16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 259; referring to higher artistic achievements.

⁸⁷ This seems to contradict point 3, above; he is perhaps referring to young children's quick understanding of music, dance, drawing, make-believe and creative verbal play.

⁸⁸ *Loc. Cit.*

⁸⁹ Geoffrey Miller *Op. Cit.* (2000; 2001 edn.) p. 266. In this respect his approach is similar to that of Ellen Dissanayake *Op. Cit.* (1988), though she emphasises the benefits to the group rather than to the individual.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 267.

producing a characteristic sexual dimorphism⁹¹. Miller, unlike Dissanayake, accepts that the courtship behaviour of bowerbirds is art, for several reasons. Bowerbirds are the ‘only other animals [apart from humans] that spend significant time and energy constructing purely aesthetic displays beyond their own bodies . . . ’⁹² One could add that constructing, maintaining and then defending the bower from being vandalised by rivals is a demonstration of fitness in keeping with the handicap principle. It is also a demonstration of ‘good taste’ in the choice and arrangement of the treasures displayed. In the final chapter, there will be further discussion of the question of whether the bowerbird’s courtship display is indeed art. Next, however, another link between the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘good’ must be considered more closely: altruism, because of the selective pressure that it exerts for the fine calibration of perceptual sensitivity.

6.5.3 Altruism and the Aesthetic

The two usual explanations for altruism in nature are kinship and reciprocity. Some adults do not breed, but assist in the rearing of their kin, thereby ensuring the survival of shared genes⁹³. Also, observations of altruism among animals, which are not kin relations, indicate that the basis of their co-operation is reciprocity. Such animals include vampire bats, baboons, vervet monkeys, mongooses and sticklebacks⁹⁴. However, there is also evidence of altruism functioning as a fitness indicator, according to the handicap principle. As Miller puts it, the most ‘romantic’ engagement ring is bought at full price in Tiffany’s, not in a bargain basement⁹⁵. The most extravagant altruism in the natural world discovered so far is that of the Arabian babbler, a songbird which is found in Israel, and has been studied by Amotz and Avishag Zahavi⁹⁶. The birds, which weigh only three ounces, compete for the high-status, but risky, role of sentinel duty, which involves giving alarm calls and mobbing any intruder. They share food, and feed the offspring of others:

⁹¹ Only male bowerbirds build and display in bowers; the females build little cup-shaped nests and raise the young without any male assistance; see A. J. Marshall (1954) *Bower-birds: their displays and breeding cycles*, Oxford, Clarendon Press. The species vary widely in the degree of dimorphism in their plumage.

⁹² Geoffrey Miller *Op. Cit.* (2000; 2001 edn.) p. 267.

⁹³ Helena Cronin *Op. Cit.* (1991) p. 255.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 259.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey Miller *Op. Cit.* (2000; 2001 edn.) pp. 329-30.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 313-4.

Only the birds in the best condition with the highest fitness can afford to act altruistically. Individuals seeking a mate can find good genes by finding a good altruist⁹⁷.

All these activities require acute powers of perception and visual recall to recognise individuals, to keep track of benefactors and debtors. Dennett points out that when animals began to co-operate, it became necessary for them to punish cheats and free-loaders, if co-operators were not to be exploited and ultimately overwhelmed by 'defectors'. 'Push-overs' who were soft with cheats also needed to be punished. Dennett reports on theories and research that identify this need to regulate co-operation as the source for the evolution of the emotions, by which the genuineness of a co-operator, or the fake emotion of the cheat, will be transparent to all⁹⁸. Thus the identification of cheats becomes yet another selective pressure for developing ever finer sensory, aesthetic, discrimination: to see the blush, the nervous body language, the ring of sincerity in the voice, a sensitivity which can feed into the making and evaluation of art.

The 'honest signals' of costly fitness indicators, such as symmetry, do much to explain the link between high cost and beauty⁹⁹. However, the prestige is not confined to the creator of an artwork, who has often been forgotten, but extends to the commissioner or owner, whether that is an individual, a group, a city or a state.

Eckart Voland points out the high costs of scarification and genital mutilation undergone by the young to acquire adult status and marriage rights through the initiation rites of some tribal societies. The suffering involves doubly costly signalling: a) making a lifelong commitment to the tribal group, and b) providing fitness evidence in the form of good immunological resistance to injury and probable infection¹⁰⁰. The revival of quasi-ceremonial self-mutilation and suffering by performance artists such as Hermann Nitsch¹⁰¹ echoes those initiation rites, this time signalling a costly 'romantic' commitment to art. Dennett identifies a similar high cost, high value signalling at work in 'high tension' religious cults and sects¹⁰², perhaps providing a useful model for

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 314.

⁹⁸ Daniel C. Dennett *Op. Cit.* (2003) pp. 193-205.

⁹⁹ Eckart Voland (2003) 'Aesthetic Preferences in the world of Artifacts – Adaptations for the Evaluation of 'Honest Signals'?' pp. 239-60, in E. Voland, and K. Grammer (Eds.) *Op. Cit.*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 249.

¹⁰¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Nitsch.

¹⁰² Daniel C. Dennett (2006) *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, London, Allen Lane, pp. 193-5.

understanding the inner workings of pioneering art movements, and their push to artistic 'extremism', often renouncing their expensively acquired, academic, artistic skills¹⁰³.

Voland, however, overstates his case when he collapses beauty without remainder on to costliness. Certainly, there is abundant evidence that cash value is a factor in the market, which influences the thinking of many connoisseurs and collectors, in ways manifested in the existence of huge price differentials which could not be justified on grounds of discernible differences alone, for example between diamonds and glass 'costume' jewellery, original oil paintings and exact copies, signed and unsigned (though otherwise authentic) Picasso prints, and so forth. The counter-examples to these might be cases where the highest auction prices are paid for major masterpieces rather than minor works, where it is aesthetic quality that makes the difference¹⁰⁴.

6.6 Criticisms of Neo-Darwinism, Neuroscience and the Nature/Nurture Divide

This section will examine some criticisms of current orthodoxies in the 'New Synthesis' of Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, coupled with cognitive neuroscience, and what might be called the standard biological approach to the 'nature/nurture' divide. I have encountered this critique in the writings and editorial activities of Tim Ingold¹⁰⁵.

Ingold is a cultural anthropologist who makes two criticisms relevant here from the perspective of Ecological Psychology¹⁰⁶ and 'Developmental Systems Theory

¹⁰³ Picasso and Willem de Kooning come to mind.

¹⁰⁴ There must be a little room for doubt, however, as the term 'major masterpiece' is likely to imply 'bigger', and therefore more time and effort by the artist, a bigger initial purchase price, a more prestigious first owner, and so forth.

¹⁰⁵ I should like to express my appreciation to Tim Ingold for his most helpful email correspondence following his paper delivered to the Cardiff conference of 11 September 2007. This led me to: Tim Ingold (1988; 1994a Edn.) 'Introduction' to T. Ingold (Ed.) *What is an Animal?* London, Routledge, pp. 1-16; Tim Ingold (1988; 1994b Edn.) 'The animal in the study of humanity' in *Ibid.* pp. 84-99; Tim Ingold (Unpublished, 1999, by personal contact) 'Three in One: on dissolving the distinctions between body, mind and culture'; Tim Ingold (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*, London, Routledge; Tim Ingold (2008) 'When biology goes underground: genes and the spectre of race' in *Genomics, Society and Policy*, (Vol. 4, no. 1) pp. 23-37; Stephen R. L. Clark (1988; 1994 Edn.) 'Is humanity a natural kind?' in T. Ingold (Ed.) *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1994 Edn.) pp. 17-34; Edward S. Reed (1988; 1994 Edn.) 'The affordances of the animate environment: social science from the ecological point of view' in T. Ingold (Ed.) *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1994 Edn.) pp. 110-126.

¹⁰⁶ He makes frequent reference to J.J. Gibson (1979) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin. I have not listed this in my bibliography, as I have not consulted it, yet.

(DST)¹⁰⁷. The first criticism is of the Neo-Darwinian account of evolution, based on context-independent genetics leading to a ‘hard-wired’ model of cognitive neuroscience, extended into culture by Richard Dawkins’ supposed science of ‘memetics’. Together, according to Ingold, these explanations fail to give an adequate account of the development (ontogenesis) of individual organisms, causing an exaggerated split between ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’. The second criticism concerns the still persistent scientific view of animals as Cartesian automata, leading culture to be treated as if it were unique to humans. We begin with the nature/nurture controversy.

6.6.1 Walking/Cycling; Talking/Writing

The two pairs of activities in the title of this section could be thought to mark a boundary between evolution (walking and talking) and history (cycling and writing), or the boundary could be said to divide the ‘genetically determined’ from the ‘culturally acquired’, or even to separate ‘nature’ from ‘culture’¹⁰⁸. However, Ingold points out that no human infant is born walking or talking, any more than cycling or writing. He questions the existence of a ‘Language Acquisition Device’ (Chomsky’s LAD), asking if there is also a ‘Walking Acquisition Device’, or a ‘Cycling Acquisition Device’. All are behaviours learned quite slowly under the careful tutelage of supportive and competent members of the community. Although certain genetic endowments clearly make the learning of these skills possible, or easier (e.g. primate foot modification for human walking), the learning process is effected only by the kind of practical activity and engagement that enables bones to grow and synapses to form in active bodies and to be re-configured by changing use. In other words, all these skills are greatly under-determined by the surprisingly low figure of 20,000 human genes discovered by the much vaunted ‘human genome project’¹⁰⁹. Instead of being ‘written in our genes’, these skills are literally ‘incorporated’ into our flesh and bone, by the learning and the *doing* of them, as our individual anatomies are modified by the skills we learn, rather than solely genetically predetermined. In this sense of ‘incorporation’, the skills usually

¹⁰⁷ Again, he frequently references S. Oyama (1985) *The Ontogeny of Information: Developmental Systems and their Evolution*, Cambridge, CUP; again not in my bibliography, because not yet consulted.

¹⁰⁸ Tim Ingold uses both these examples in *Op. Cit.* (1999) and in ‘People Like Us: the concept of the anatomically modern human’ in *Op. Cit.* (2000), (pp. 373-91) pp. 374-9.

¹⁰⁹ Ingold pours scorn on the outcome of this ‘billion dollar’ project, which laboured only to yield mouse of an insight that ‘the environment plays a decisive role in shaping human nature’ *Op. Cit.* (2008) p. 34.

attributed to ‘culture’ are fully ‘biological’¹¹⁰, despite their absence from our DNA. The same pattern applies to many animal behaviours.

Ingold says that ‘Developmental Systems Theory’ (DST) offers an alternative perspective that allows for the importance of *ontogenesis*, or how the individual organism develops, within a support system. A baby’s genes do not come naked into the world, but in a nucleus, in a fertilised egg, in a womb, in a woman, in a family, in a society. According to Ingold, cognitive science tends to follow genetics, in erring towards ‘context-independence’ in building the architecture of the human mind, attributed vaguely to ‘genetics and natural selection’¹¹¹, while other theorists have tried to reduce culture to rules or units which can be ‘transmitted’ by a mental equivalent to genes, dubbed by Richard Dawkins, as ‘memes’¹¹².

The present thesis can take comfort that the example given in chapter two (sections 2.4.2- 2.4.3) of learning to draw is congruent with Ingold’s alternative model of apprenticeship learning, in a context, under the guidance of a more skilled member of the community, resulting in heightened perceptual and craft skills, incorporated into the student’s anatomy, even if only at the microscopic scale of new dendritic growth and strengthened synapses. Ingold quotes Kandel and Hawkins, who wrote in *Scientific American* in 1992, that ‘our brains are constantly changing anatomically’ even as we learn¹¹³.

The existence of ‘one design space’ inhabited by all organisms, presented by Dennett (section 6.3.1), would also fit with Ingold’s developmental account of evolution, with the plasticity and creativity of individual organisms finding new ‘tricks’, leading eventually to ‘cranes’ which can hoist into position new behaviours, perhaps even new bodily structures where mutations support the new developments. This is how we can view the evolution of our own species. This contrasts with the ‘standard model’, which treats organisms as the ‘site’ of their evolution, rather than as the ‘agents’ of it¹¹⁴. In asking whether ‘Humanity’ is a ‘natural kind’, Stephen R. L. Clark suggests:

. . . [as] we are individual organisms having unpredictable similarities with or differences from other creatures . . . we cannot take it for granted that all

¹¹⁰ Tim Ingold *Op. Cit.* (2000) p. 390.

¹¹¹ Tim Ingold *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 3-5. Apart from the quotation, my wording here is a close summary of Ingold’s own words.

¹¹² Richard Dawkins (1976) *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford, OUP; Ingold questions the originality of the ‘meme’ idea, in footnote 19, of *Op. Cit.* (2008).

¹¹³ Tim Ingold *Op. Cit.* (2000) p. 376, ref. p. 444. to Kandel, E. R. and R. D. Hawkins (1992) ‘The biological basis of learning and individuality’ in *Scientific American*, 267, pp. 53-60.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 384.

toolmakers or all artists will also have other familiar ‘human’ or ‘personal’ characteristics . . . ¹¹⁵.

This argument can be used to support the case for the bowerbird as an artist¹¹⁶. As Ingold says, if we define ‘human’ as ‘language user’, how would we classify chimpanzees or whales if in future they developed ‘symbolic and linguistic competences’? The converse is also true, as Clark quotes K. Thomas; are humans lacking in ‘symbolic and linguistic competences’ sub-human or semi-animal¹¹⁷?

These considerations lead Clark to suggest that ‘humankind’ should be defined according to a breeding population, rather than by the possession of a common nature¹¹⁸. This also forces us to question the status we accord to animals, and their ontology as either Cartesian automata or as ‘persons’ with intentionality and agency.

6.6.2 Animacy and Agency

Tim Ingold has studied, as an anthropologist, the relationships between tribal peoples and animals, and he deplores the Western tradition’s attitude to animals:

Every attribute that is claimed we uniquely have, the animal is consequently supposed to lack; thus, the generic concept of ‘animal’ is negatively constituted by the sum of those deficiencies¹¹⁹.

In his preface to the paperback edition of *What is an Animal?* Ingold says:

Every living being . . . arises as an undivided centre of awareness and agency . . . Animals are not just *like* persons, they *are* persons. As organism-persons and fellow participants in the life-process, human beings and non-human animals are ontologically equivalent. It follows that it is no more anthropomorphic to liken the animal to the human than it is zoomorphic to liken the human to the animal.¹²⁰

Edward S. Reed’s essay in *What is an Animal?* asserts the ‘ecological reality of the animate’¹²¹, drawing two distinctions between a) the animate vs the inanimate and b) the social vs the non-social. According to Reed, these are *real* distinctions in the

¹¹⁵ Stephen R. L. Clark (1988; 1994 Edn.) ‘Is humanity an natural kind?’ in T. Ingold (Ed.) *What is an Animal?* London, Routledge (pp. 17-34.) p. 17.

¹¹⁶ An answer to question BB: Is the bowerbird’s bower *art*?

¹¹⁷ K. Thomas (1983) *Man and the Natural World*, London, Allen Lane, p. 41, quoted by Stephen R. L. Clark *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1994 Edn.) p. 26 (As this quote is taken from a secondary sources, Thomas does not appear in my bibliography).

¹¹⁸ Stephen R. L. Clark *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1994 Edn.) p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Tim Ingold *Op. Cit.* (1988;1994a) p. 3.

¹²⁰ Tim Ingold *Ibid.* p. xxiv.

¹²¹ Edward S. Reed *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1993 Edn.) pp. 110-12.

environment affecting all animals, i.e. the difference between a bare rock, and a rock with a panther sitting on it. This is a real distinction, not merely a human ‘cultural’ distinction¹²². Adopting the perspective of J. J. Gibson’s ‘Ecological Psychology’, Reed summarises the ‘meaningful environment’, which makes up ‘the habitation of animate creatures’. The principal distinction between the animate and the inanimate is the power of the animate to ‘move spontaneously’, with non-repetitive movements that are seen to be both their own causes and effects, and to which we and other animals react¹²³. Both we and they are very sensitive to the perception of this goal-directed activity, with breaks in mechanical rhythm, yielding a perception of ‘animacy’, related to the perception of causality¹²⁴. The animate world, therefore, is as ‘real’ as the physical world; neither the physical nor the animate world is ‘socially’ constructed, but both are based on a shared environment, containing ‘friend and foe, predator and prey, mate and child’¹²⁵:

In other words, subjects are not private, but public and shared – even in the kind of wordless sociality that is found in birds and mammals, and certainly in human social relationships¹²⁶.

Even perception is public; we see the same things, follow gazes, listen to warning calls, interpret movements. To be socialised, according to Reed, is to be aware of what I can afford to you, and what the environment can afford to both of us. This is common, Reed says, to mammals, birds and humans, thereby challenging:

... the time-worn concepts of modern social science, concepts that divide subject from object, observer from the environment, individual from group, and nature from culture¹²⁷.

Earlier in this chapter, we saw, in the selections made by females, that:

... organisms figure not as the passive products of a mechanism – variation under natural selection – that stands outside of time and change, but as active and creative agents, producers as well as products of their own evolution¹²⁸.

¹²² *Ibid.* pp. 112-3.

¹²³ *Ibid.* pp. 114-5. Reed refers to Michotte, who had researched the visual perception of causality, termed ‘self-amplified movement’. Reed writes: ‘Because other animals are *aware* of their surroundings (including us) and because they *act* on those surroundings (including us), we perceive them and act with regard to them in ways very different from our perceptions of and actions towards inanimate objects’ (p. 116).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 117-8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 119.

¹²⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

¹²⁷ Edward S. Reed *Op. Cit.* (1988; 1993 Edn.) p. 122.

¹²⁸ This is a summary by Tim Ingold in *Op. Cit.* (2000) pp. 384-5, from M-W Ho (1991) ‘The role of action in evolution: evolution by process and the ecological approach to perception’ *Cultural*

The perception of *agency*, therefore, is more primitive than the ‘abstract’ analysis of cause and effect. It is part of the pre-linguistic perception of animacy. A scent-mark is understood to represent another animal, and as an act indicating its territory; footprints and broken twigs betray the presence, the agency, of a passing animal. I would argue that such perceptions of indirect agency, requiring interpretation, approximate to the ontology of artworks, within the single design space occupied by human beings and other animals.

6.7 Summary and Conclusion

The most important message of evolutionary theory in answering our Research Question 1 (‘What is the Aesthetic?’) is an explanation of how perception developed in Darwinian steps, eventually forming human perceptual ability and aesthetic experience through a Baldwin effect: a ‘crane’, and not a ‘sky-hook’ (See Fig. 7, section 6.3.1, above). The implication of gradual change is that human perception, which is understood in Baumgarten’s sense of the aesthetic, is not unique to the human world, but is continuous with similar developments in other species, which have been subjected to similar selective pressures. By tiny increments, these animals became increasingly finely tuned to detecting subtle changes in their surroundings, but also to subtle differences between conspecifics, scrutinised for mate selection and for reading their behaviours, emotions and motivations, in sum for their ‘moral’ qualities as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ members of the group.

The competitive character of human artistic activity reflects the intense competition for breeding opportunities in nature, although the process is much more complex in human society. Breeding opportunities are linked to status in many species, and the display of skill, including both artistic skill and connoisseurship, is one route to high status. The patron who commissions or purchases art, can also acquire high status, through the display of wealth and good taste. The handicap principle and the selective pressure for novelty confer greater prestige for works at the extremes of size, rare materials, skill, recondite knowledge, rarity and originality, helping to explain a) the

Dynamics, (Vol. 4, no. 3, pp; 336-54) p. 338. As this is taken from a secondary source, the original is not in my bibliography.

links between art, money power and crime (APC¹²⁹), and b) the importance of patronage and criticism, powers which shaped the history of art in a way comparable to the way the aesthetic choices of the females of many species shaped the course of evolution (RPC¹³⁰). As Baumgarten pointed out, it is difficult to draw a line between ordinary rhetoric and poetry, and the same problem affects the 'active aesthetic expression' of non-human species. This thesis argues that there is no difference in principle between non-human 'active aesthetic expression' and human art, resulting in position UA: Ur-Art is 'art' from the beginning (i.e. it is NOT 'non-art').

Both the rewards of pleasure and the punishment of pain or boredom direct animals in directions optimal for their survival and reproduction. The perception of beauty or ugliness (which Hume refers to as 'deformity') is closely tied into the same reward system. In the animal aesthetics of sexual selection, beauty seems to originate in a 'global' response to several factors that lie below the threshold of analytical comprehension: vigour, symmetry, 'good genes', good health, resistance to parasites, and the condition and size of sexual ornaments and altruism. At an instinctual level, these factors still affect human sexual attraction, even if some are not decisive in the choice of a long-term mate. However, this is still an incomplete account of the aesthetic in general, and of beauty in particular, topics to be further pursued in the context of cognitive neuroscience, in chapter seven.

Dennis Dutton points out that, in the middle of the Twentieth Century, aesthetics was dominated by 'the blank slate', a general-learning model of psychology, which played down human nature in favour of a historically and culturally determined account of artistic value¹³¹. Such was the context of Dickie's attack on the aesthetic in 1964 (chapter two, above). This survey of evolutionary theory has argued that the balance of evidence now points towards a universal, biological, *sensus communis*, which, it will be argued, can also adequately accommodate, in the human domain, the social and historical perspectives favoured by mid-century 'institutional' and 'historical' philosophies of art.

Chapter Seven will address the philosophical reservations expressed about the contribution of cognitive neuroscience to aesthetics. In his recent survey of the field, Gregory Currie is rather dismissive, saying the findings 'do little to illuminate our

¹²⁹ APC What is the reason for the nexus between Art, Power and Crime?

¹³⁰ RPC Consider the often underestimated Role of Patron and Critic.

¹³¹ Denis Dutton *Op. Cit.* (2003) pp. 694-5.

aesthetic judgments about particular works, traditions, styles or genres¹³². The concerns of Jennifer McMahon about the failure to distinguish the ‘beautiful’ from the ‘agreeable’¹³³, will be examined, together with the concerns of William P. Seeley¹³⁴, in an attempt to harness the value of those perspectives to an understanding of art and the aesthetic.

¹³² Gregory Currie (2003) ‘Aesthetics and Cognitive Science’, in Levinson, J. (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook on Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 706-721, p. 708.

¹³³ Jennifer Ann McMahon (2000) ‘Perceptual Principles as the Basis for Genuine Judgments of Beauty’ *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 7, no. 8-9) pp. 29-35, and (2001) “Beauty” in, B. Gaut and D. Lopez, Mcl. L. (Eds.) (2001) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London, Routledge, pp. 227-38.

¹³⁴ William P. Seeley (2006) ‘Naturalising aesthetics: art and the cognitive neuroscience of vision’ *Journal of Visual Art Practice* (Vol. 5, no. 3) pp. 195-213, and (2007) ‘Can Neuroaesthetics Earn Its Keep?’ (Conference Paper; with permission).

Chapter Seven: Cognitive Neuroscience and the Aesthetic

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the criticism, concerns and hopes of some philosophers about the contributions of evolutionary psychology and cognitive neuroscience to aesthetics. Although few instances of insightful criticism of particular works have resulted until now, these have begun to be written, and their relative scarcity is compensated for by the other insights into the aesthetic that these disciplines have contributed. These include insights into the origins, realism and character of the aesthetic attitude, the experience of beauty in sensory processing combined with cognitive feedback, and some idea of the evolution of aesthetic practices in diverse activities, including courtship and procreation, food gathering and mutual grooming.

7.1 Introduction.

This is the second of two chapters to bring empirical evidence to bear upon the project's two research questions, which ask 1) 'What is the aesthetic?' and 2) 'What is the relationship of the aesthetic to art?'

Having tested many sceptical viewpoints against the eighteenth century aesthetics of Baumgarten and Kant, the findings of biological science are now being consulted to try to learn more about what the aesthetic itself is, to assist our understanding of how the aesthetic works its magic for us in the world of the arts. Chapter six examined evolutionary science, which confirmed Baumgarten's close association of the aesthetic with perceptual knowledge and the emotions. That chapter also examined some of the selective pressures that fostered the evolution of perceptual knowledge linked to the emotions.

Now the present chapter will look at neuro-scientific attempts to explain aspects of how the aesthetic is realised in the brain. This approach follows Baumgarten in treating the aesthetic as more or less synonymous with his expanded concept of perception, which he treated as equivalent to the aesthetic broadly conceived, combining sensory stimulation, cognition, the emotions, imagination and memory. This chapter necessarily impinges on several hotly contested areas of the philosophy of mind, and to try to argue fully for the position adopted in this thesis against competing positions would change the subject of this thesis. Having given some thought to the subject, but without the space to argue for this position against its many rivals, I adopt

the realist, biological, position of John R. Searle, that consciousness is something the brain does, as the stomach does digestion¹. I hold therefore that empirical research concerning the physical processes, even if below the threshold of consciousness, whether in digestion or aesthetic awareness, have a place in our search for understanding.

This chapter considers the following criticisms, worries and ideas about the value of cognitive neuroscience to aesthetics. The four statements have been abstracted from the work of philosophers Gregory Currie², Jennifer Anne McMahon³ and William P. Seeley⁴. The concerns expressed will be cross-checked against complementary arguments presented by Currie, McMahon and Seeley, and also cross-checked against the positions adopted by art historian and cultural theorist Ernst Gombrich⁵, the two neuroscientists Semir Zeki⁶ and Vilayanur S. Ramachandran⁷ and the psychologist Robert L. Solso⁸. The following are the ‘Cognitive Neuro-Science’ issues in the order they will be examined in the rest of this chapter:

CNS1 The findings of cognitive neuroscience tend to be banal or operative at the subpersonal level, hence failing to illuminate aesthetic judgments.

CNS2 Perception does not involve hypothesis-testing as this would be too slow to work

¹ John R. Searle (1997; 1998 Edn.) *The Mystery of Consciousness*, London, Granta, p. 6.

² Gregory Currie (2003) “Aesthetics and Cognitive Science”, in Levinson, J. (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook on Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 706-721.p. 708; (2004a) *Arts and Minds*, Oxford, OUP.

³ Jennifer Ann McMahon (2000) ‘Perceptual Principles as the Basis for Genuine Judgments of Beauty’ *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 7, no. 8-9) pp. 29-35, and (2001) “Beauty” in, B. Gaut and D. Lopez, Mcl. L. (Eds.) (2001) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London, Routledge, pp. 227-38.

⁴ William P. Seeley (2006) “Naturalising aesthetics: art and the cognitive neuroscience of vision” *Journal of Visual Art Practice* (Vol. 5, no. 3) pp. 195-213; William P. Seeley (2007) “Can Neuroaesthetics Earn Its Keep?” (Conference Paper; with permission).

⁵ Ernst Gombrich (1979) *The Sense of Order: A Study in the psychology of decorative art* (consulted: 2nd edition, 1984) London, Phaidon.

⁶ Semir Zeki (1999a) *Inner Vision: an exploration of Art and the Brain*, Oxford, OUP. p. 84; Semir Zeki (1999b) ‘Art and the Brain’ *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 7, nos. 8-9) pp. 76- 96;

⁷ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran. and William Hirstein (1999) “The Science of Art: a neurological theory of aesthetic experience,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (Vol. 6; June/July) pp. 15-51; Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (2000) “Response to Gombrich” in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (Vol. 7, August/September, pp. 17-20; Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (2001) ‘Sharpening up “The Science of Art”: an interview with Anthony Freeman’ *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (Vol. 8; no.1) pp. 9-29; Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (2003) ‘The Emerging Mind’, a series of five Reith Lectures for the BBC (Broadcast weekly from 2nd April to 7th May). Still available on line as sound recordings: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lectures.shtml>; Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (contributor; undated) Transcript of ‘Derek tastes of earwax’, *Horizon*, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/derek_trans.shtml.

⁸ Robert L. Solso (2003) *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, M.I.T. Press.

CNS3 Cognitive neuroscience in aesthetics fails to acknowledge Kant's distinction between judgments of 'Taste' and 'Sense'.

CNS4 The concept of beauty can at least be partly explained by the influences of 'formal primitives' and 'top-down' (conceptual) effects on perception.

7.2 The 'Unproven' Value of Neuroscience to Aesthetics

In Gregory Currie's wide-ranging survey, called 'Aesthetics and Cognitive Science', he gives a valuable and detailed account of several different areas of empirical research that make claims about, or may be applied to, aesthetics⁹. First, he points to the widely accepted studies of 'the relation between the visual arts and . . . geometric optics or colour theory'¹⁰, that are useful to viewers and practitioners alike. Also, he acknowledges that aesthetics may sometimes need to acknowledge faults in some literary portrayals of human nature, if empirical research tells a different story¹¹. He gives well-informed and astute critiques of the dialogue between social science research and philosophy over creativity, perception and the imagination, and is especially receptive to the findings of child psychology. However, his hackles seem to rise at the application to aesthetics of cognitive neuroscience operating at the 'subpersonal' level, 'as when theorists of vision speak of the information that may be unavailable to the subject herself'¹². Currie continues:

Some philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein reject the idea of subpersonal psychology altogether, arguing that it is an extension of language beyond the domain for which it makes sense¹³.

He is rather contemptuous of philosophically unsophisticated claims, such as the neurologist Zeki's claim, that the functions of the brain and visual art are the same¹⁴, and he clearly finds it banal that Zeki should observe that the enjoyment of colour pictures requires 'a functioning mechanism for the analysis of colour'¹⁵. Currie concludes that cognitive neuroscience does 'little to illuminate our aesthetic judgments

⁹ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 706.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 707.

¹² *Loc. Cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.* Currie references Kenny (1984) 'The Homunculus Fallacy' in his *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*, Oxford, Blackwell, and Hyman (1989) *The Imitation of Nature*, Oxford, Blackwell, chapter 3. Neither reference is in my bibliography, as I have not consulted these works.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 707; Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999a) pp. 9-10.

¹⁵ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 707.

about particular works, traditions, styles or genres¹⁶. Both Currie and ‘Donnya Wheelwell’ ((*Sic*) pen-name) also criticise a landmark article by Ramachandran and Hirstein’s in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*¹⁷; Currie for their ‘apparent identification of aesthetic value with capacity to stimulate limbic areas of the brain¹⁸’, and Donnya Wheelwell says she is ‘Against the Reduction of Art to Galvanic Skin Response¹⁹’. These various points are here combined to give us this statement (CNS1):

CNS1 The findings of cognitive neuroscience tend to be banal or operative at the subpersonal level, hence failing to illuminate aesthetic judgments.

Clearly it is necessary, in the context of this project, to respond to such misgivings. First, there is Zeki’s claim for an equivalence of function between the brain and art, without attempting to define his use of either term. According to Zeki, the brain’s primary function is cognitive, extracting unchanging facts from fleeting sensory impressions, thereby helping an organism make sense of the world²⁰. Zeki hoped, because a painter employs his visual brain when working in a visual medium, that neurobiology might be able to contribute some understanding to art. I would defend Zeki’s naively expressed claim that art and the brain have the same function, to this extent: both the brain and the visual arts are, very broadly, about *making sense of the world*, finding order and meaning.

Zeki’s second point, about the loss of colour vision from brain trauma, was about damage to one of the 30-odd visual-processing units. He says the resulting deficiency is circumscribed; vision and visual pleasure survive in the other units, unless the damage destroys the primary visual cortex²¹, in which case full blindness results²². Despite Currie’s claim to the contrary, I find that Zeki’s explanations of how the visual areas function and interrelate are illuminating about particular artworks, as in his example of Alexander Calder restricting the number of colours in his mobiles to maximise the viewer’s perception of movement²³, and thus, contrary to Currie’s

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 708.

¹⁷ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein *Op. Cit.* (1999).

¹⁸ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 707.

¹⁹ Donnya Wheelwell (2000) ‘Against the reduction of art to Galvanic Skin Response’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 7, nos. 8-9) pp. 37- 42. Improbable as it may seem, the above is the correct spelling of the author’s pen name.

²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

²¹ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 84.

²² Apart from the strange phenomenon of ‘blind sight’, which he describes: *Ibid.* pp. 78-9, and Fig. 8.3.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 153-7.

misgivings, Zeki's findings can enhance the awareness of viewers and the competence of practitioners, in a way which extends the information available from earlier guides to art and visual perception.

William B. Seeley also rejects Currie's criticism that cognitive neuroscience has given few insights into the aesthetic interpretation of individual artworks²⁴, drawing attention to the growing number of studies informed by neuroscience which analyse 'artistic value' in individual works, most notably Margaret Livingstone's study of the Mona Lisa's smile, and the way peripheral vision, which is relatively insensitive to sharply defined edges, allows Leonardo's 'sfumato' effect to be more telling when the focus of 'foveal' vision is not the smile itself, but elsewhere, for example on her eyes²⁵.

Currie clearly was looking to cognitive neuroscience to supply critical insights into particular artworks and genres, in which regard he expressed his disappointment, so far²⁶. He wonders what the aims of the 'neurocognitive investigations of perception' and the 'psychological investigations of imagination' were:

Is it intended merely to discover the underpinnings of responses we can describe and evaluate in the familiar language of criticism and connoisseurship? Or is the aim to interpolate unfamiliar concepts into the domain of aesthetics itself, leading perhaps to a revised understanding of aesthetic values? The second aim is much the more interesting one, but adopting it will require a great deal of argument that is itself philosophical in nature²⁷.

In the context of this thesis, which is defending the claims to realism of the aesthetic against the claims of deflationary aesthetics, the first of these two aims is surely sufficient justification for the present resort to empirical evidence. Currie himself unwittingly reveals this kind of interest in quoting the evidence that Fodor's encapsulation of the senses is permeable to concepts²⁸, provided by the finding he quotes that music students enrich their experience of hearing music when they learn to recognise a diminished fifth, rather than simply hear it. Similarly, Currie seems unaware that he is subscribing to Ramachandran's criticised emphasis on the limbic system when he reports that 'There appears to be an emotional component in face recognition'²⁹.

²⁴ William P. Seeley *Op. Cit.* (2007).

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 13-16. Seeley gives the following references: Margaret Livingstone (2000) 'Is It Warm?, Is It Real? Or Just Low Spatial Frequency?' *Science*, November 17, 290, p. 1299, and (2002) *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc.), pp. 68 - 73.

²⁶ Gregory Currie *Op. cit.* (2003) p. 207 and p. 718.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 718.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 711.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 710.

Ramachandran also developed the parallels made by Zeki between the cognitive activities of the brain and the activities of the artist, as exemplifying the sensory search for knowledge about the world. However, to Currie's displeasure, as we have seen, Ramachandran places rather more emphasis than Zeki on the emotions, with his frequent references to the limbic system. Ramachandran stated in his first Reith Lecture that an emotional response to vision [read: all perception] was essential to survival, and this fact would help to explain why so much art is emotional. He stresses repeatedly the strong links that connect all sensory processing modules with the limbic system, which instantly gauges each experience, judging through our feelings, or 'affects' as Baumgarten would say, if something is 'good or bad for us'³⁰, an opportunity or a threat, producing a pleasurable reward or an unpleasant 'jolt'. This constant monitoring of the 'temperature' of the world around us, sometimes responding to apparently innate 'templates', referred to as 'form primitives'³¹, extends to our encounters with artworks, sometimes helping to explain some of our responses to them.

Ramachandran insists that the way 'form primitives' work is suggestive of the immense inter-connectivity in the brain, which assists the mind in the major function of the senses, namely the detection of objects, a process greatly assisted by their classification. These functions involve the constant search for similarities and differences, particularly the similarities between disparate objects. In the eighteenth century, Baumgarten described such processes as 'wit' (finding similarities) and 'perspicuity' (finding differences)³². Ramachandran and Hirstein ask why visual puns, metaphors and allegories are so aesthetically pleasing. Their explanation is that the discovery of similarities linking superficially dissimilar events triggers a reward of pleasure from the ever-vigilant limbic system. Thus Currie's complaint about Ramachandran's emphasis on the limbic system seems misplaced, as aesthetic judgments have long been acknowledged to be based on pleasure or displeasure, and the limbic system is the main means of delivering those feelings to the mind. It seems

³⁰ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §26, p. 47. Think of patient 'S' in section 2.4.3, above.

³¹ The classic instance of a 'form primitive' is Tinbergen's discovery of a 'superstimulus' he designed to encourage gull chick feeding behaviour. Ramachandran says there is no predicting how we might be 'wired up' for 'peak shifts'. Tinbergen found a big stick with three red spots on it activated much more vigorous feeding behaviour than the much smaller beak, with only one red spot, of a real adult gull. He suggests that, in a gull's art gallery, such as stick with red spots on would 'qualify as a great work of art' because it would stimulate so vigorously the cells responsive to that form primitive; in Vilayanur S. Ramachandran *Op. Cit.* (1999), p. 19.

³² Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Metaphysica* §§572-3 (See Appendix D).

reasonable to conclude that designed objects intended to provoke feelings of pleasure, displeasure, fear, hope, love and so forth can be evaluated, to some extent at least, according to how intensely they stimulate the limbic system. If it doesn't 'grab you', it will 'lose you'.

7.3 Neuroscience, Perception, Knowledge and Belief

We now turn to Currie's criticism of Gregory and Gombrich's hypothesis-testing theory of perception³³:

CNS2 Perception does not involve hypothesis-testing as this would be too slow to work.

In Gombrich's introductory chapter to *The Sense of Order*, he says his approach to questions of the mind is evolutionist, based on Karl Popper's 'searchlight theory' of perception, which rejects passive empiricism³⁴. Gombrich worked closely with Richard L. Gregory³⁵, whose work could be seen as a contemporary extension of Kant's theories of the innate capacities of the human mind³⁶, as opposed to Locke's *tabula rasa*. However, Gombrich says that Kant's preoccupation with 'pure reason' meant that he 'never asked how other organisms got on in this world', saying that, for Kant, animals:

... were largely conceived as mechanisms driven by 'instincts', but whatever may have been meant by this vague term, it should have been clear from the outset that an animal must seek its goal in a complex and flexible way, avoiding dangers, seeking food, shelter and mates³⁷.

Gombrich describes an animal's external perceptual problems as: 'what?' (cognitive) and 'where?' (spatial)³⁸: what objects exist in its environment, 'whether any are to be classified as potential sources of nourishment or of danger', and where they

³³ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 710.

³⁴ Ernst Gombrich *Op. Cit.* (1979; 2nd Edn. 1984) p. 1.

³⁵ Richard Gregory, Ernst Gombrich (Eds.) (1973) *Illusion in Nature and Art*, London, Duckworth.

³⁶ Richard L. Gregory (1971) *The Intelligent Eye*, Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, London.

³⁷ Ernst Gombrich *Op. Cit.* (1979; 2nd Edn. 1984) p.1

³⁸ *Ibid.* Also, see Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle (1994) *Images of Mind*, New York, Scientific American, p. 15 for a diagram of the brain, showing the 'where?' and 'what' paths. After initial processing in the primary visual cortex, all signals are analysed for depth perception. Then the two paths diverge, the 'where?' path up into the parietal lobes, the 'what?' path down along the temporal lobes.

are located, indicating any subsequent action to be taken. Gombrich saw these two problems to be ones of 'meaning' and 'order'³⁹.

The principle focus of 'searchlight' perception, for Gombrich, is the junction between order and chaos, achieved by the brain's 'break spotter' and the 'extrapolator'⁴⁰. Experiments to record eye fixations indicate that our attention is drawn to breaks in continuity. The very narrow point of clear foveal vision is directed to where there is a change, or a break, in the visual array, i.e. to junctions (Plate 22a), as shown in this architectural textbook diagram of a column which has been compressed vertically (to avoid wasting paper). It is clear from Plate 22a that there have been relatively few eye fixations on the shaft of the column, where there is unbroken continuity, where the 'extrapolator' requires only confirmation of continuity. Thus, where the 'extrapolator' sees no break, it can be fooled, as with the 'Devil's tuning-fork' (Plate 22b). In a wildlife context, the 'extrapolator' in the brain of a predator or prey animal might lead it to assume that there were no breaks in the undergrowth, whereas, in fact, a meal or a deadly danger might be lurking there, but camouflaged. Such concealment is all too easily broken by an unexplained movement, or a noise, as the 'break spotter' is also alert to sound.

Gombrich follows Gestalt theory in which perception prefers the simplest solution, for example, in Plate 22ci, by grouping separately (by similarity) the circles and triangles, even when they are in a random arrangement. In a similar design, there is enough structured order in an apple tree laden with fruit (Plate 18b) to tell a frugivore, from a pattern not dissimilar to Plate 22ci, no doubt accompanied by a mental, if not vocalised, 'Aha!' exclamation, that a particular tree in its vicinity is now in fruit.

Thus, cognitive neuroscience is coming out in support of Baumgarten rather than with Kant over the relationship of the senses to knowledge. Whereas Kant put a clear divide between the Imagination and Understanding, assigning to the senses a largely non-cognitive role (See Fig. 6 in Section 5.2, above), Baumgarten elevates the senses to a role comparable to, though different from, logical reasoning. He postulates a continuum of sensory cognition from uncomprehending bodily sensations (darkness and obscurity) through to clarity and distinctness, with the senses falling away as cognition

³⁹ Ernst Gombrich *Op. Cit.* (1979; 2nd Edn. 1984) pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ These correspond to contrasting functions of, respectively, the right and left parietal lobes. See Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994) and Ramachandran *Reith Lectures* (2003) on vigilance and neglect, though neither source uses Gombrich's terms, 'break detector' and 'extrapolator', as such.

is refined into symbolic abstract reasoning, as in logic or in science expressed mathematically (see Fig. 4, in Section 4.2 above).

According to Zeki, our 'Understanding', or interpretation of our visual experience is divided between, and integral to, each of the separate visual modules⁴¹. The evidence for this comes from pathology. If V4⁴² is destroyed, for example by a stroke, a patient suffers 'cerebral achromatopsia'; the retina and all other visual modules can be perfectly healthy, and functioning normally, but 'the patient is no longer able to see the world in colour but describes it in terms of "dirty" shades of grey instead'⁴³. Nor can these patients even remember or imagine colour⁴⁴, somewhat like patient S, whom we encountered in chapter two (section 2.4.4), who, without functioning amygdalae, seemed to have lost the concept of fear. In a similar way, patients with prosopagnosia have suffered damage to a specific area of the fusiform gyrus, which means they cannot recognise previously familiar faces⁴⁵. However, in this case, only this one aspect is affected; they can still recognise facial expressions and describe a person's features accurately.

Zeki conceives of vision as comprising many 'micro-conscious events'⁴⁶. Certainly, some functions are narrowly focused on one module, such as facial recognition, but *understanding* is widely distributed in the visual cortex, meaning that visual agnosia, or inability to recognise objects, is almost always partial and variable⁴⁷. Zeki describes how the perception of form begins in V1⁴⁸, where there are many cells specialised in analysing edges and angles in the objects of perception. This is a piecemeal analysis, and 'downstream' from V1 binding begins to occur, and greater integration of the information, by a process yet to be explained. However, our understanding of the world is not carried out separately from the separate modules in which we generate our composite sense of sight, but a measure of understanding is

⁴¹ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) p.77.

⁴² The first few vision modules are numbered 'upwards' from V1, which is the first fully 'mapped' area to combine the signals from both eyes, located in each occipital lobe at the back of the left and right hemispheres. V4, also divided between both hemispheres, collates and processes the complex signals from many sources needed for colour vision. An excellent diagram showing the paths of signals from the retinas to V1 is on p. 1088 of Peter L. Williams, *et al.* (1995) *Gray's Anatomy: the Anatomical Basis of Medicine and Surgery* (38th Edition), Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone, and a map of the thirty-odd visual processing modules of the monkey brain, assumed to match the human, is on p. 72 of Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994).

⁴³ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 81.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 83.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 74-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 73.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 75.

⁴⁸ See footnote 30, above.

generated *within* the modules that do the processing⁴⁹. But there is also two-way traffic between all the modules and working memory, usually called ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ processing. ‘Bottom-up’ processing refers to percepts arising from direct stimulation of the sense organs, and ‘top-down’ refers to internally generated imagery, as in visualisation and dreaming⁵⁰. There are also ‘lateral’ connections linking all the sensory modules to each other⁵¹. Plate 23a shows a painting I saw in 2005 on the evening of my arrival in the German town of Rheinfelden, on the Swiss-German border. I did not like the ‘crude’ way the artist had painted the water⁵². The next morning, I saw the turbulent state of the river Rhine, after heavy rains, from the same vantage point (Plate 23b). After that, the artist’s handling of the paint ‘made sense’, and ‘looked right’, after all⁵³.

Zeki’s theory of multiple ‘micro-consciousnesses’ includes both understanding and aesthetic pleasure. With so many different modules processing so many different aspects of vision, he proposes that we have many different ‘aesthetic senses’:

I am empowering them [i.e. the vision modules] not only with ‘understanding’, but of contributing directly to the aesthetic effects produced by the attribute for which they are specialised⁵⁴. . .

He is not, however, claiming that the individual modules are *solely* responsible for aesthetic pleasure, but only that people can and do enjoy aesthetic pleasure arising directly from the activity of those of their modules which are functioning normally, even if other modules have failed.

Currie’s criticism of Gombrich’s hypothesis-testing theory of perception is, therefore, rather outdated⁵⁵, as it is based on a narrow view of ‘encapsulation’, on Fodor’s model from the early 80’s. More recent research on the brain emphasises the amount of cognitive processing at every level of visual processing, which would support Gombrich and Gregory against Currie and Fodor⁵⁶. Currie’s view that linguistic formulation is a necessary condition of belief is also unsustainable. Certainly, as

⁴⁹ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 71.

⁵⁰ Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994) p. 84.

⁵¹ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 65-6.

⁵² This is a case of ‘bottom up’ clashing with ‘top down’ expectations.

⁵³ Here the ‘top down’ concepts affected the way the ‘bottom up’ signals were interpreted.

⁵⁴ Semir Zeki *Op. Cit.* (1999) pp. 87-8.

⁵⁵ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 710.

⁵⁶ Fodor’s theory assumes that all cognitive input would have to stem from the frontal lobes, adding 200 milliseconds to the processing time, a view now rejected; Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994; 1997), pp. 144-5 and pp. 242-3.

Wittgenstein pointed out, language is necessary for certain kinds of belief that may, for example, be unavailable, to dogs⁵⁷. But Currie's scepticism over conceptual input into such perceptual tasks as steering a motorbike on rough ground at speed seems to be based on his insistence on linguistic representation for conceptual thought to take place⁵⁸, whereas evidence to the contrary comes from the vast area of visual processing in the monkey brain, an animal that operates with concepts, but unsupported by language⁵⁹. The two-way ('re-entrant') interchange between the fore- and mid-brains and the areas for sensory processing are now well established in both the monkey and the human brain. This shows, that '*higher level thought involves the same neural areas used for sensory-specific computations*'⁶⁰, (my Italics). In other words, Baumgarten's intuition was correct in awarding cognitive content to sensory experience, and the hypotheses of Kant, Carroll, Danto, Currie and other 'linguistic' philosophers seem now to have been disproved by empirical evidence.

Currie's case against the conceptual nature of perception is based on its rough-grained, rapid and error-prone character, as opposed to the greater time requirement of hypothesis testing leading to a belief. His view can be challenged in two ways. First, perception is only rapid when it needs to be, for example in an emergency, triggered because a crude level of object identification begins extremely early in visual processing, particularly for fast-moving objects, possibly as early as in the retina itself, which, after all, is an extension of the brain⁶¹. When quick-fire false alarms occur, these can be tolerated for the sake of those occasions when the danger is real. Secondly, an unclear, possibly threatening stimulus will raise the alarm, and hence the brain's level of arousal, leading to closer scrutiny, that is still a part of perception, rather than entirely a reasoning or conceptual process. In pre-linguistic animals, a linguistic process is ruled out, even though it is both a perceptual and a conceptual process. Solso gives a very good description of how the darting foveal gaze builds up a stable image⁶².

⁵⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* (2nd Edition, 1958), Oxford, Blackwell, p. 174e: 'A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after to-morrow?'

⁵⁸ Gregory Currie *Op. Cit.* (2003) p. 712.

⁵⁹ Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994; 1997), p. 144. It is possible that this discussion may hinge on how 'conceptual' is defined: demanding verbal articulation in one account (Currie's), and not in another (Searle's). I follow Searle, as quoted in section 6.3.3, above.

⁶⁰ *Loc. Cit.*

⁶¹ Peter L. Williams, *et al. Op. Cit.* (1995) p. 1335.

⁶² Robert L. Solso, *Op. Cit.* (2003) pp. 89-93.

7.4 Are there Really Judgments of Both Taste and Sense?

In her response to Ramachandran and Hirstein's 1999 paper, Jennifer Anne McMahon objected that they had failed to allow for Kant's distinction between the 'agreeable' (shared with animals) and the 'beautiful' (unique to humans)⁶³. This issue will be taken to include McMahon's account of 'disinterestedness'. This gives us our third issue:

CNS3 Cognitive neuroscience in aesthetics fails to acknowledge Kant's distinction between judgments of 'Taste' and 'Sense'.

In her response to Ramachandran, McMahon rehearses Mary Mothersill's revival of Kant's antinomy of taste⁶⁴. In Mothersill's version, judgments of beauty are rational because based on real features of the object, but these cannot be turned into 'principles' because necessary and sufficient conditions cannot be logically adduced for them⁶⁵ (e.g. 'unity'). McMahon reports that Mothersill holds out the hope that neuroscience might offer a way out, if it could show that these principles derive from the 'architecture' of the mind, and this would explain why the qualities are 'ineffable'. This discussion will be continued in the next section, on 'beauty'. Meanwhile, although McMahon feels that Ramachandran and Hirstein's approach is the most promising yet, she feels that it fails in the important regard of failing to maintain Kant's distinction between the 'agreeable' and the 'beautiful'.

Ramachandran and Hirstein introduce eight⁶⁶ 'laws', or 'rules of thumb' which they say artists commonly apply in their work. Most, like grouping, are already familiar from Gestalt psychology. The most provocative, in the way Ramachandran presented it, is his 'law' of the 'peak shift principle', which he identifies with the Sanskrit art manual concept, *rasa*, translated by him, roughly, as: 'Capturing the very essence of something in order to evoke a specific emotion or mood in the viewer's brain'⁶⁷. The examples he chooses for demonstrating *rasa* are works of Indian erotic sculpture (See Plate 21a). In Ramachandran's analysis of *rasa*, the artist applies the law by identifying those features

⁶³ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2000).

⁶⁴ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2000) pp. 29-30.

⁶⁵ Popper would object that Mothersill, here, is trying to apply the inappropriate standards of physical science to a 'World 3' concept. See the discussion of Gombrich in section 3.5.1, above.

⁶⁶ Ramachandran had added two more by the 2003 Reith Lectures, which are still available to "listen again": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lectures.shtml>.

⁶⁷ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 11.

in which the female body differs from the male, and emphasising them. The three principles of his methodology could be applied as follows: 1) the rule at work is peak shift; 2) his evolutionary explanation: sexual attraction results in successful reproduction, and 3) his (so far speculative) account of the 'neural hardware' involved is as follows:

There may be neurons in the brain that represent sensuous, rotund feminine form as opposed to angular masculine form and the artist has chosen to amplify the 'very essence' (the *rasa*) of being feminine by moving the image even further along toward the feminine end of the female/male spectrum (Plate 4 [here, Plate 21a]. The result of these amplifications is a 'super stimulus' in the domain of male/female differences⁶⁸.

This leads McMahon to the perhaps all-too-predictable puritanical objection to the erotic Indian sculpture of the 'Celestial Nymph'. She calls this classical Indian work 'sexually titillating'⁶⁹, as she presents a partial summary of Ramachandran and Hirstein's article, failing to mention much else from quite an extended paper. In fact, there is ample room in their account for McMahon's preferred description of beauty as a pleasure comparable to the satisfaction of problem-solving. It occurs, for example, in their description of the 'Aha!' moments of progressively discovering the dog in a chaos of black marks (Plate 24c).

I would argue that there is no reason to bracket off a special place for the experience of beauty, separate from the rest of perception, because beauty, ugliness and indifference permeate all perception, including the mathematical and scientific. McMahon is correct in saying that beauty may also be found in scientific formulae, and her invocation of 'top-down' or 're-entrant' mental processes is convincing and very relevant in this context⁷⁰. However, although all beauties are clearly not equivalent, it is a puritanical prejudice to dismiss the body's pleasures, even if they consist of chocolate or cheesecake, as somehow beneath contempt or aesthetic consideration. Epicurus, if correctly reflected in Lucretius, used an analysis of bodily pleasures for scientific theorising⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 18.

⁶⁹ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2000) p. 30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 31.

⁷¹ 'Moreover, the liquids of honey and of milk have a pleasant taste as they are moved about in the mouth; but contrariwise the loathsome nature of wormwood and of harsh centaury twists up the mouth with a noisome flavour; so that you may readily recognize that those bodies which can touch our senses pleasantly are made of smooth and round atoms, but contrariwise all that seem to be bitter and rough are held in connexion by atoms more hooked, and are therefore accustomed to tear open their way into our senses and to break the texture by their intrusion'; Lucretius (1924; 1987

The main reason to challenge the continual resurrection of this pet distinction from Kant⁷² is because it is a philosophical fossil repeatedly resuscitated, even though its basis rests only on Kant's obsolete psychological division between 'Pure Intuition' and 'Sensation' in the faculty of Sensibility (see Fig. 6, in section 5.2, above). From what we now know about the interconnectedness of all areas of the brain, it is impossible even to separate the senses from each other⁷³, let alone to separate the senses from interpretation and cognition. Baumgarten's continuum, with the senses mediating a spectrum of cognition (see Fig. 4 in section 4.2, above) fits better with recent findings in cognitive neuroscience than does Kant's account.

Apparently, the aesthetic value of eating cheesecake needs defending. Although the capacity of cuisine to carry complex meanings is limited, neither is it nil⁷⁴. After all, the central rite of Christianity is the ceremonial breaking of bread and drinking of wine. More broadly, cuisine is inscribed into cultures and therefore into personal and national psyches. Even cheesecake can carry messages of cultural value. There was a wedding in South Wales a few years ago between a British bride and a German groom. His father brought wines from their home region and his mother prepared cheesecakes and other gateaux for the wedding breakfast (Plate 25). Were all the smiling guests misusing the English language when they talked about the 'beautiful sparkling wine', and the 'beautiful cheesecake'? To dismiss this as the 'trivialising of beauty'⁷⁵ (a phrase used by McMahon in an equivalent context) seems to reveal a failure to understand the meaning of the aesthetic as a resource for human communication and self-definition, or in Dissanayake's terms, for 'making special'. Just as the bread and wine of the communion table stood metaphorically for the body and blood of Christ, so did the wedding wine and cheesecake of Rheinland-Pfalz represent the German family and their cultural heritage in a foreign land.

edn.) *De Rerum Natura*, with a translation by W. H. D. Rouse, revised by Martin Ferguson Smith, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2. 398-407, p. 127.

⁷² Which, unfortunately, I also defended in my (2004) review of *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, edited by Voland and Grammer in the *BJA* (Vol. 44, no. 4) pp. 444-5.

⁷³ David Moore, on the Radio 4 programme *In Our Time* edition on 'Perception and the Senses' broadcast on 28th April 2005, described the McGurk effect of phonemes perceived differently depending on whether the speaker's lips are visible, and Richard Gregory, a few moments later in the conversation emphasised the importance of touch to vision. At the time of writing, this programme is still available under the 'Listen Again' service on the BBC Radio 4 website via <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/>.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Telfer (1995) "Food as Art" in A. N. Neill and A. Ridley (1995b; 2002 edn.) *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, London, Routledge, pp. 9-27.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 235.

Paradoxically, McMahon's rather puritanical version of 'beauty' is undermined by her own theory, explained in more detail in her longer essay on beauty in the *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*⁷⁶, to be considered in the next section.

7.5 Beauty, Formal Primitives and Top-Down Effects.

In this separate paper by McMahon⁷⁷, she offers a fresh approach to the application of cognitive neuroscience to the concept of beauty, in a way that begins to explain Kant's sensitive introspections, expressed by him as the 'harmony' or 'free play' of the Imagination and Understanding⁷⁸. McMahon invokes the joint influence of sensory templates at the level of mental processing below the level of language, already referred to in this chapter as 'formal primitives'. These 'bottom-up' perceptual experiences are taken as equivalent to the workings of the 'Imagination' in Kant. Then, she invokes the 'top-down' influence on sensory processing of culturally freighted ideas, taken as equivalent to the 'Understanding' in Kant. In an experience of 'beauty' these two aspects of mental experience inter-act and inter-play, as the subject holds them in their attention, now one more strongly, now the other. This mirrors the interplay of the verbal and the non-verbal in the mind of an accomplished draughtsman, like Humphrey Ocean (see chapter two, section 2.4.2). This gives us our fourth issue:

CNS4 The concept of beauty can be at least partly explained by the influences on perception of 'formal primitives' and 'top-down' (conceptual) effects on perception.

Because the initial stages of sensory processing are below the level of linguistic semantics, the experience is often described as 'ineffable', and why it is at least potentially universal among human beings. Because aesthetic experiences do not immediately appear to be 'universal' across cultures, McMahon proposes what she calls a 'dynamic intellectual component'⁷⁹ of beauty that requires background knowledge, helping to explain both different cultural conceptions of beauty and also the beauty of intellectual ideas. This is an important part of the 'top-down' effect in our interpretative responses to aesthetic experiences, whether in any particular instance these happen to be principally 'bottom-up' or 'top-down'. This fits well with descriptions in neuroscience

⁷⁶ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2001) pp. 227-38.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ This expression is introduced and discussed in Immanuel Kant (1790; 1987 edn.) *Critique of Judgment*, translated and edited by W.S. Pluhar Indianapolis, Hackett §9, Ak 217-9, pp. 61-4.

⁷⁹ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 236.

of ‘re-entrant’ processing⁸⁰, the two-way traffic between semantic, long-term memory and the sense-processing areas of the brain, to which Ramachandran attributes the quasi-synaesthetic character of concept formation and metaphor⁸¹. These ideas fit with McMahon’s observation that the experience of beauty occurs when our attention is drawn to the *processes* of perception⁸².

These insights are productive uses of cognitive neuroscience in aesthetics. McMahon also uses these observations to revive the concept of disinterestedness. However, her model of ‘disinterestedness’ unfortunately revives the old abhorrence of ‘biological pleasures’ expressed by ‘The Greek philosophers and the church fathers’, whom Baumgarten had blamed for the long neglect of the senses⁸³. McMahon rejects the model of ‘distancing’ in favour of the juridical model of disinterestedness as eschewing personal interest or gratification⁸⁴, thus joining the puritans in ‘clamping down’ again on the sensory in art. This is a hangover of old moral anxieties; it is unhelpful and misleading in the context of aesthetics, by running counter to the acceptance of the sensory dimension.

An alternative version of disinterestedness in keeping with the findings of evolutionary science and cognitive neuroscience would keep more closely to Kant’s definition of beauty, as ‘the free play of the Imagination and the Understanding’, rather than his spurious distinction between judgments of ‘Taste’ and ‘Sense’. Beauty in Kant’s terms is the interplay between concepts and a heightened awareness of the senses, and on this model, ‘disinterestedness’ is the mind’s state of contemplation necessary to hold the concepts and sensations in balance while sustaining the aesthetic attitude. Although our sensory systems are biased in favour of sight, there seems to be no reason why this cognitive and sensory interplay should not apply at times to the other

⁸⁰ Michael I. Poser and Marcus E. Raichle, M.E. (1994) *Images of Mind*, New York, Scientific American,, pp. 144-5 and 242-3.

⁸¹ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (2003) *Reith Lecture*, no. 4; sound recording on BBC Radio 4 website, via <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/>.

⁸² Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2001) p. 236.

⁸³ *Ibid.* pp. 232-3, where McMahon quotes Tertullian’s elision of beauty and evil. For a balancing view, see Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §116: ‘The Greek philosophers and the Church fathers have already carefully distinguished between *things perceived* [αἰσθητά] and *things known* [νόητα]. It is entirely evident that they did not equate *things known* with things of sense, since they honored with this name things also removed from sense (therefore images). Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or **aesthetic**’ (translation by Aschenbrenner and Holter; their Italics), p. 78.

⁸⁴ Jennifer Anne McMahon *Op. Cit.* (2001) pp. 223-5.

senses, including taste, the word which provided an early metaphor to describe aesthetic response, and therefore also to the tastes of wine and cheesecake.

Evidence for this can again be found in cognitive neuroscience, from the attention and vigilance circuitry of the brain. When we scrutinise something, attention and vigilance come into play, which activates the right parietal and frontal lobes⁸⁵. In this state of mind, sensitivity to sensory input is raised. At such a moment, we are not engaged in doing anything practical, but are 'on the lookout'. The distinction between this and an engaged, 'everyday', state of mind is described by Roger Fry, and this is the model of disinterestedness which I am recommending over-against the 'juridical' model. This model of disinterestedness is based in Fry's distinction between 'the actual life' and 'the imaginative life'⁸⁶. The first is life as 'lived', and the second is removed from the need to take action. Writing in 1909, Fry contrasts the revelatory cinematic projection of a train arriving at a station, which feeds the 'imaginative life', compared to the bustle of one's own presence on a platform, where the need for action displaces the luxury of contemplation⁸⁷. Looking at the street in a mirror offers a similar contrast to leaning out of the window, and seeing a neighbour one knows, immediately becoming engaged, wondering 'why he looks so dejected this morning' whereas, 'in the mirror it is easier to abstract ourselves completely'⁸⁸. When in the 'actual life' mode, we simply recognise objects by their 'labels', and it is this habit of mind which makes for difficulties for beginner students of drawing, as discussed in chapter two (above). When in 'actual life' mode, the semantic areas of the brain need barely consult the sensory areas, and this had been observed by Baumgarten: we lose awareness of long-standing sensory stimuli⁸⁹. This is how Fry describes it:

The needs of our actual life are so imperative, that the sense of vision becomes highly specialized in their service. With an admirable economy we learn to see only so much as is needful for our purposes; but this is in fact very little, just enough to recognize and identify each object or person; that done, they go into an entry in our mental catalogue and are no more really seen. In actual life the normal person really only reads the labels as it were on the objects around him and troubles no further. Almost all the things which are useful in any way put on more or less this cap of invisibility. It is only when an object exists in our life for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it, as for instance at a

⁸⁵ Michael I. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994; 1997), pp. 166-79.

⁸⁶ Roger Fry (1909; reprinted 1959) "An Essay in Aesthetics" in *Vision and Design*, Harmondsworth, Penguin (pp. 22-39) p. 24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 24-4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 25.

⁸⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1739; 1983 edn.) §550, pp. 24-6 (See my translation in Appendix D).

china ornament or a precious stone, and towards such even the most normal person adopts to some extent the artistic attitude of pure vision abstracted from necessity⁹⁰.

This would help to explain the heightened sensory awareness with which we scrutinise new objects in our environment, a normal pattern of curiosity about the new that is common to animals, especially domestic cats. New objects, or people, have not yet been covered with the 'cap of invisibility', but they are scrutinised with a heightened level of sensory awareness appropriate to the 'imaginative life', with its implicit cognitive dimension⁹¹. The difference between the two modes ('real life' or 'imaginative life') in the case of cheesecake, would be 1) 'real life': its hasty consumption to relieve hunger 2) 'imaginative life': lingering over the flavour, appreciating the skills of the cook and cultural background of the cuisine.

It was a paper by William P. Seeley that drew my attention to this link with Roger Fry⁹². He begins with what is called the 'inverse problem', or the role of prior knowledge in perception. Vision consists of patches of light falling on an effectively 2D surface, the retina, and yet from this incomplete information, we construct a 3D picture of the world. The process can be observed in a simple experiment. In a line drawing, an isolated ellipse in a box is seen differently from the same ellipse when it represents a plate drawn in perspective on a table-top⁹³. Test subjects, including trained draughtsmen, regularly see the ellipse representing the 'plate' to be somewhat 'fatter' than it really is, because they 'know' it's a round plate. This is an aspect of the 'top-down' effect, already discussed. Artists, according to this 'constructivist' hypothesis, harness 'the formal structure of an artwork . . . to generate the depictive content of paintings . . . by triggering the influence of semantic knowledge in perception'⁹⁴. Seeley sees this as compatible with Baumgarten's concept of aesthetics. However, Seeley does not believe that this explains 'the *aesthetic* dimension of art and aesthetic experience'⁹⁵ (his *Italics*). He believes that an *aesthetic* theory should be able to differentiate

⁹⁰ Roger Fry *Op. Cit.* (1909; reprinted 1959) p. 29.

⁹¹ It must be said, however, that in "The Artist's Vision", perhaps influenced by Clive Bell, Roger Fry seems to overstate his case in favour of formalism, when he distances the experience of beauty from cognition, in his distinction between 'curios', where provenance is important, and 'works of art' where he says it is irrelevant, except in questions of authenticity and price. Roger Fry (1919; reprinted 1959) "The Artist's Vision", in *Vision and Design*, Harmondsworth, Penguin (pp. 45-51) pp.47-8.

⁹² William P. Seeley *Op. Cit.* (2006) p. 198.

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp. 197-9.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 200.

⁹⁵ *Loc. Cit.*

‘artworks and aesthetic experiences from their ordinary counterparts’⁹⁶. Seeley points out that the centrality accorded by cognitive neuroscience to interpretation in artistic perception challenges Carroll and Danto’s deflationary account of the role of perception in art appreciation. Their account emphasises the way artworks are placed in an historical context, a process which comprises ‘non-perceptual interpretive events that determine [an artwork’s] meaning’⁹⁷. Instead, Seeley turns to Kendall Walton’s account of ‘imaginative perception’ to show that mental events include ‘modality specific perceptual properties’, and this has been confirmed by cognitive neuroscience. Stephen Kosslyn’s model for mental imagery uses hypothesis testing in ordinary vision, and Walton extends this to ‘imaginative’ seeing in our perceptual interactions with paintings⁹⁸. Seeley claims that the barrier erected by Carroll and Danto against aesthetic theories of art are thus invalidated. Interpretation cannot be separated from aesthetic response⁹⁹. Seeley demonstrates this by an analysis of a Cubist painting in neurocognitivist terms, so that we see that . . .

. . . the act of categorising the work as a Cubist painting, an act of interpretation on Carroll and Danto’s account, functions to guide attention and shape the way viewers perceive the painting¹⁰⁰.

Seeley’s conclusion is that viewers’ knowledge has a decisive influence on how they see artworks, as has been shown with the example of the painting of the Rhine at Rheinfelden (See Plate 23a). However, Seeley remains concerned that cognitive science does not explain what is special about *aesthetic* interest in artworks, as the mechanisms it describes are also at work in ‘ordinary’ vision. I would argue that the difference is only a matter of degree, as Baumgarten had explained, when writing about ‘ordinary rhetoric’ and ‘poetry’:

The philosopher should be busy in general in drawing the boundary lines and especially in defining accurate limits between poetry and ordinary eloquence. The difference is, to be sure, only a matter of degree; but in the relegation of things to one side or the other it requires, we think, no less capable a geometer than did the frontiers of the Phrygians and the Mysians¹⁰¹.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ William P. Seeley *Op. Cit.* (2006) p. 207.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 208.

⁹⁹ *Loc. Cit.*

¹⁰⁰ William P. Seeley *Op. Cit.* (2006) p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten *Op. Cit.* (1735; 1954 edn.) §117, p. 79.

7.6 A Speculation on the Ur-Aesthetic: Grooming

In this section, I am going to try to apply the evolutionary and cognitive science of these two chapters to speculate a little on how the aesthetic evolved as it has in human beings, and why it works as it does.

Ramachandran does not refer to a 'break spotter' in the same way as Gombrich does (See section 7.3). For Gombrich, only the 'breaks' are significant, and unbroken areas are ignored, even though he does refer to an 'extrapolator'. Ramachandran, on the other hand, helps us to understand the relationship between Gombrich's 'break detector' and his 'extrapolator' when construed in terms of brain anatomy, as they correspond to the left and right parietal lobes, located just behind the frontal lobes. The parietal lobes are active in 'break spotting', the one positively, the other negatively. The left parietal lobe smoothes over discrepancies to such an extent that there are cases where loss of function in the right parietal lobe will lead a patient with an untrammelled left parietal lobe to deny their own paralysis¹⁰². The right parietal lobe, on the other hand, is highly sensitive to discrepancies, as confirmed by brain imaging¹⁰³. This right parietal lobe is very active in states of vigilance, when the brain is on the alert for sensory stimuli, as when on sentry duty, or when in the 'aesthetic attitude'. This is where my speculation begins.

Although the right parietal lobe gains satisfaction from spotting a discrepancy, that very discovery probably discomforts the left parietal lobe, which prefers to put a positive gloss on everything. However, the balance is reversed if there are no 'blots on the horizon'. In that case, the right parietal lobe might become bored (as with Gombrich's regular paving stones Plate 22b). The reason I am advancing this development of Gombrich's 'break spotter' and 'extrapolator', is that both parietal lobes seem to play a major role in aesthetic response, and their evolutionary origins are therefore important to a Darwinian account of the aesthetic and of art.

The most general application of the break detector and the extrapolator has already been clearly identified with the vital task of spotting breaks in camouflage, whether for attack or defence. However, the second arena which I propose for this interplay between the parietal lobes is in grooming, a behaviour which has been honed through millions of years of evolution. Birds and mammals take great care in grooming

¹⁰² Vilayanur S. Ramachandran, BBC Reith Lecture no. 2, (2003) 'What we see and how we see it', (Broadcast 9th April). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lectures.shtml>.

¹⁰³ *Loc. Cit.*

themselves, or in establishing grooming partnerships¹⁰⁴. Grooming involves redressing disarray (feathers), finding and removing parasites (on feathers or fur), and removing dirt particles. The senses put to work in these tasks are both sight and touch, and for the primates, fine prehensile manual skills, providing an additional selective pressure for increasing acuity and sensitivity in all these domains.

At the outset of a spell of grooming, the break detector becomes active and is probably grimly satisfied with its discoveries; at the end of the process, the extrapolator can look with satisfaction at the clean, well-ordered result. The first state could be described as an aesthetic experience of disorder, or even ugliness, and the second, an aesthetic experience of beauty, as reflected in such expressions as, 'beautifully clean', or it might be experienced as 'perfection', both in the sense of being blemish free, but also in the sense of a task requiring aesthetic discrimination carried out successfully.

The same perceptual/aesthetic abilities and manual skills would seem to feed directly into tool-making and the other crafts which require skilful hand-eye co-ordination. Other non-human species have taken the first steps in this direction, including female and juvenile chimpanzees fashioning spears, sharpened with their teeth, to hunt bushbabies¹⁰⁵.

Finally, I should like to add further to Ramachandran's account of the limbic system's rewards for detecting something camouflaged, with an 'Aha!' moment at each stage to motivate continued searching¹⁰⁶. Above, I proposed extending this pattern of rewards to the satisfactions of grooming, to provide a model of the 'Ur-aesthetic', and by extension to a model of the satisfactions of craftsmanship, which were to become so highly developed in the human species. As hinted already, in the discussion about 'grouping', and the picture of apples on the bough (see Plate 18b), food gathering and hunting must be considered as candidates for the evolutionary basis of much of aesthetic experience. The findings of cognitive neuroscience about the brain's systems for attention and vigilance show a heightening of awareness to sensory stimulation, exactly what is needed to see the berries, or other prey¹⁰⁷. The pile of berries or nuts, heaped up

¹⁰⁴ This is well-known among primates from wild life films; however, they also exist among other socially aware animals, including cows and horses, as reported by Spinney *Op. Cit.* (2005).

¹⁰⁵ Rowan Hooper (2007) "Savannah chimps get armed and dangerous" in *New Scientist*, 3rd March 2007, p. 16. Other examples of tool use, if not tool fashioning, are given by Robin McKie, (2000) *Ape Man: The Story of Human Evolution*, BBC Worldwide, London, otters p. 18 and chimpanzees pp. 130-131.

¹⁰⁶ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein *Op. Cit.* (1999) p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ The neural circuitry for visual orienting is described in Michael J. Posner and Marcus E. Raichle *Op. Cit.* (1994) pp. 166-8, and the heightened activity of the right parietal and frontal lobes in states

at base camp, after a few hours of foraging, would have been the first still life objects of contemplation. Imagine the ‘Aha!’ satisfaction to a bird finding a nice fat caterpillar. Studies have been made of birds choosing nesting materials for their nests, and choosing particular kinds of insect for feeding¹⁰⁸. The wild pig, smelling a truffle, digging and eating it, experiences a similar sensory and emotional cycle, to the hominid grubbing for roots with a digging stick. Thirsty, both would share a parallel search for water, finding the glint of light on the surface of a stream, and enjoying the quenching of thirst. Courtship and parenting would have provided other Ur-aesthetic experiences of beauty. A new-born is still the focus of intense scrutiny, lasting for hours over many days, as the new parents and other relatives study the child’s face with the insatiable gaze of lovers, when some kind of deep imprinting seems to be taking place. The same kind of cherishing of the newborn can be seen in wild-life films of many species, including apes and elephants. Also, to the ‘Ur-aesthetic’, I believe one can add the Ur-sublime: fear of pain, predation or attack by enemies, and the *agon* of the hunt .

7.7 Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter is that, far from being tangential, cognitive neuroscience is very useful in explaining many aspects of the aesthetic, and helping us to adjudicate issues over which such figures as Baumgarten and Kant did not agree, while confirming, with the help of empirical evidence, many of their other insights.

The aesthetic is not merely optional in art, it is the means of art’s embodiment and the focus for our responses to it. In the diagram in Fig. 1, the right hand option has been shown to have more basis than the left. Furthermore, no longer can a principled distinction be made between the ‘agreeable’ and the ‘beautiful’, but all experience can be harnessed by the imagination to express or recover meaning.

of vigilance is described, with the integration of the different brain circuits involved, might help to explain binding (pp. 174-7).

¹⁰⁸ Helena Cronin (1991) *The Ant and the Peacock*, Cambridge, CUP, p. 245.

Chapter Eight: Review and Concluding Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

This final chapter will review the main arguments and conclusions of this enquiry into the nature of the aesthetic and its relationship to art. First, the project's two-chapter study of sceptical and deflationary accounts of the aesthetic and its relationship with art are reviewed. Then two chapters on eighteenth century aesthetics are reviewed; Baumgarten's expression 'imaged concepts' and Kant's description of 'the free play of the Imagination and Understanding' are celebrated for their insights into the artistic process, subsequently supported in the following two chapters by corroborative evidence from empirical science: evolutionary theory and cognitive neuroscience. Three key concepts had set the framework for this project, and these are re-examined in the light of the foregoing arguments, all of which are finally evaluated by attempting to apply them to the three case studies proposed in chapter one.

8.1 Introduction¹

This chapter will review the principal arguments presented in this thesis, which has attempted to answer the two research questions:

- 1) 'What is the Aesthetic?' and
- 2) 'What is the relationship of the Aesthetic to Art?'

Both questions were prompted by dissatisfaction with deflationary accounts of the aesthetic in recent Anglo-American analytic philosophy of art. In attempting to resist and redress deflationary aesthetics, this thesis offered: a) a critical reading of sceptical and deflationary arguments, b) an investigation into the modern use of the word 'aesthetic', originally in Baumgarten and in its early maturity in Kant, and c) a search for the empirical evidence about the aesthetic that has emerged in recent decades, with the revival of Darwin's theory of sexual selection and advances in cognitive neuroscience. Finally, the arguments developed in this thesis will be evaluated by applying them to the three case studies proposed in chapter one: 1) bowerbird art, 2) the nexus of art, power and crime and 3) sound sculpture.

¹ As this chapter is a summary and discussion, only new material will be referenced.

8.2 Sceptical and Deflationary Accounts of the Aesthetic

Chapters two and three were dedicated to an analysis of deflationary and sceptical accounts of the aesthetic. The famous paper by George Dickie on the 'Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude' provided a starting point.

8.2.1 Dickie's 'Myth'

A close analysis of 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude' revealed that Dickie harboured a residual belief in the phenomenon he was nominally denouncing. This is manifested not only in some 'slips of the pen', but also in his overt acceptance of one version of the aesthetic attitude: 'attending (closely)', which he dismissed as 'vacuous'. However, 'attending (closely)', though incomplete as an account of the aesthetic attitude, was found in chapter seven to reflect the origins of the aesthetic attitude in a vigilant brain state.

Thus Dickie's paper was found to be incoherent. His position required him, for the sake of a superficial consistency with the title of his paper, to ignore the *phenomenology* of aesthetic experience, which is explained, in chapter three, in terms of the general reluctance among some philosophers, in the wake of positivism and behaviourism, to address questions involving mental experience. Thus Dickie ignored testimonial evidence, quoted in his own paper, of qualitative differences in mental state, insisting, instead, that there was only 'attention' or 'inattention'. Noel Carroll explained Dickie's denial of the aesthetic as a preparatory to introducing the Institutional Theory.

The real quarry of Dickie's 1964 paper, as with the later Institutional Theory, was the formalism espoused by Jerome Stolnitz. Formalism allowed only limited relevance to 'extrinsic' facts about artworks, it argued that appreciation and criticism of artworks were incompatible, and it denied the relevance of moral judgments in criticism. Dickie refuted Stolnitz on those points, which, taken together, comprised Stolnitz's version of 'disinterestedness'. Dickie assumed Stolnitz had provided a definitive account of disinterestedness, which was supposedly a 'necessary condition' for the aesthetic attitude. Believing he had undermined the concept 'disinterestedness', Dickie felt entitled to claim he had disproved the existence of the aesthetic attitude itself. However, one look at eighteenth century philosopher David Hume was enough to show that Stolnitz's version of disinterestedness was not at all authoritative, and

therefore that Dickie's argument had failed to quash either the well established concept of disinterestedness or the reality of the aesthetic attitude.

8.2.2 Further Sceptical and Deflationary Accounts

Chapter three then broadened the enquiry into deflationary aesthetics, looking at other forms of aesthetic scepticism and non-realism. The influence of physicalist thinking on aesthetics can be detected in Dickie's later attempts to define art by external conventions, an approach emulated by Levinson and Carroll, who use history as the 'extrinsic' factor, while minimising the 'intrinsic' role of the aesthetic. Their historical accounts founder on the problem of 'Ur-Art', which requires them to fall back on the *aesthetic* as the 'prime mover', to be discounted once the artworld had supposedly 'gelled'. The nub of the problem was identified in Stephen Davies' distinction between two kinds of value: 'functional' (aesthetic) and 'procedural' (institutional). One of the main conclusions of chapter three was that this distinction is unsustainable, because aesthetic properties themselves are inherently spatially and temporally *relational*, dissolving any principled functional/procedural distinction.

Chapter three also considered the surprising scepticism of Gombrich towards the aesthetic, and Danto's shift, in the last chapter of the *Transfiguration*, from deflationism to a form of aesthetic Realism, as was identified by Margolis, who had long laboured to free Anglo-American analytical aesthetics from the bonds of physicalism.

Gombrich's scepticism did not extend to the values of individual artworks, but affected the possibility of critical comparisons between periods, styles and cultures. Sheldon Richmond interpolated replies to Gombrich's doubts in the 'voice' of Popper, which showed how such debate is indeed possible, while pointing out the inapplicability of bi-valent values, which might be appropriate to logic and the physical sciences, but not to the realms of intentionality and culture. Any expectation of 'absolute' values, and unanimity at all times, is inappropriate to 'World 3', and should be replaced with the lesser, but still valuable, expectation of cogent, perhaps multivalent, debate about aesthetic values.

Danto's realisation of the role of enthymeme and metaphor in art acknowledged the *aesthetic*, because the respondent is affected by the *way* the content is presented,

which can transcend convention and institutional pre-determination. As we shall learn from Baumgarten, our response to imagery is imaginative and sensory, in other words ineluctably *aesthetic*, rather than ‘institutional’ or pre-determined by history.

8.2.3 Fodor

In chapter two, the use of empirical evidence in understanding the process of learning to draw was introduced by outlining Fodor’s modularity of mind. However, it became clear, as this project as a whole unfolded, that Fodor’s account of encapsulation had had to be modified in recent years to allow for more interaction (‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’) between the ‘transducers’ (e.g. eyes), ‘input systems’ (e.g. vision-processing modules) and ‘central systems’ (thought enablers). For example, the retina is now understood to be an extension of the brain, and some broad-textured processing is carried out there already, allowing early warnings to be sent to the amygdalae before processing in the visual cortex. Fodor’s doubts about the acquisition of access to early-stage sensory-processing modules have been invalidated by autism studies, and by pedagogical processes, such as the teaching of drawing. The brain is not ‘hard-wired’ to quite the same extent as cognitive neuroscientists had once assumed, but it is configured uniquely in each individual in ways that depend on the learning demanded of it.

The ‘isotropic’ nature of the brain (where anything known can be put to work) seems to be more pervasive than Fodor’s account at first allowed, limiting inter-communication largely to the ‘central systems’, whereas now it seems apparent that all perceptual and cognitive modules of the brain are to some extent interlinked, providing the basis for concept formation, involving noticing similarities among disparate objects, and therefore setting the stage for the creativity of metaphor.

To counter Dickie’s denial of differences in aesthetic states of mind, chapter two looked at the process of learning to draw, and the perception of ‘bad character’ in portrait photographs, both of which provided empirical evidence that different qualities of consciousness depend upon which modules of the brain are activated in any mental task. Evidence, from the process of learning to draw, demonstrated the existence of competition between verbal/cognitive (‘left-brain’) and visual/spatial (‘right-brain’) modes of thinking, suggesting that ‘aesthetic’ states of mind entail increased attention to early-stage (non-verbal) processing of sensory information.

By way of a final comment on this topic, it could be added that, whereas Danto emphasised the importance of enthymeme and metaphor in art, it is important also to acknowledge the role of another form of ellipsis, metonymy, where something closely associated with an object stands for it. This figure of speech, in Jakobson's theory, includes synecdoche (part for whole)². There seems to be a case for saying that all perception could be classed as metonymic: we recognise objects from partial views, a person from their voice, a bird by its song, and so forth. This is a perceptual capacity that is shared by humans and animals, and is possible because of the evolved ability to recognise objects even when the image is only partial or degraded, and the same ability is available to both humans and animals to exploit in rhetoric and art. This ability is at least one aspect of the perceptual power that enables us to see a painting of a horse as a horse, and not as some coloured smudges on a surface.

8.2.4 Defining the Aesthetic, Rhetoric and Art

Also, in this project, an attempt was made, in the face of deflationary and sceptical accounts, to define the aesthetic, beginning in chapter two, and continuing in chapter three. The resulting definitions attempt to combine Baumgarten's axiomatic style, his concept that the 'aesthetic' approximates to perception, and his emphasis on the *active* role of the aesthetic. Also the definitions take an evolutionary perspective, combined with insights from cognitive neuroscience and other disciplines, such as anthropology. The definitions have been framed in such a way that they would apply to also to non-human organisms, as a resource for their survival, both in providing them with the means of perception, but also attempting to include the way species can modify each other through their interactive co-evolution, and the way they influence each other through their signalling. In this way, the aesthetic is seen as central to an animal's agency³ and way of being in the world.

² David Lodge compares and contrasts metaphor and metonymy according to Roman Jakobson's theory in his (1977) *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, London, Arnold, esp. Part Two, pp. 72-124. The comment which follows, on the metonymic character of all perception, is my own suggestion, presented here as part of the conclusions of the thesis.

³ An awareness of 'agency' can be taken as primitive, or endowed to animals by evolution, and could therefore be characterised as instinctual. It is fully present in a newborn baby who, for example, 'will turn in the direction of a voice from a loudspeaker behind a curtain, orienting not only the head and ears but the eyes as well, as if searching to see the person who calls'; see Colwyn Trevarthen (1987) 'Infancy, Mind in', in Richard L. Gregory (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, Oxford, OUP (pp. 362-8) p. 364.

There has been no attempt in these definitions to avoid what is normally considered to be a ‘cardinal sin’: circularity. These definitions are not structured according to the usual combination of ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’. Dickie, in my opinion correctly, following criticism that his definitions of art were ‘circular’, took to calling art an ‘inflected concept’, where the terms in the definition ‘bend in on each other’ and give mutual support⁴. Emulating Baumgarten’s axiomatic method inevitably entails circularity, as later definitions are built upon earlier ones (See section 2.5.1, above). The full set of these biologically-influenced definitions appears in Appendix A.

At the outset of this project, it was not intended to go beyond attempting a definition of the aesthetic attitude, but as the project advanced, a ‘symbiotic’ definition of rhetoric and art just seemed to emerge from the earlier definitions. Here they are:

§17 **RHETORIC** is the premeditated or spontaneous deployment of the active aesthetic (§3), whether tacit (§4) or expressive (§5) to embody, perform or construct an aesthetic object (§16) with persuasive intent towards another organism’s behaviour. Rhetorical display is competitive. When successful, it assists pragmatic aims. Among social organisms, success in rhetorical display enhances status.

§18 **ART** is the premeditated or spontaneous deployment of the active aesthetic (§3), whether tacit (§4) or expressive (§5) to embody, perform or construct an aesthetic object (§16) whether beautiful (§8) or sublime (§9) to bring insight to another organism without necessarily intending or achieving a pragmatic effect. The difference between rhetoric (§17) and art is a matter of degree, with a lesser emphasis on the pragmatic in art than in rhetoric, though the classification of any particular aesthetic object to either category will be open to interpretation, and therefore, debate. Artistic display is social and competitive, and success enhances an organism’s status.

This near elision of art with rhetoric follows Baumgarten’s declaration in the final section of his *Reflections on Poetry*, that the difference between ‘poetry and ordinary eloquence’ [read: ‘art’ and ‘rhetoric’] is only a matter of degree (See the last pages of section 4.5, above).

8.2.5 A working Ontology of Art: Currie, Searle, Danto and Margolis

Another strategy adopted for countering deflationary aesthetics was to consider the place of the aesthetic within the ontology of art. In chapter three, Gregory Currie’s ontology of art was compressed to its essentials:

⁴ George Dickie (2001) *Art and Value*, Oxford, Blackwell, p. 62.

Artwork = sensory structure + heuristic.

This was combined with the adaptation of Searle's description of literature, to cover art in general, to produce the following two formulations:

- OA Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Art-appropriate Response.
- S Whether something is art is for respondents to determine according to the nature of their response, reflecting a set of attitudes that they take towards a work, not the name of an internal property of the work.

Both these ontological statements about art have been endorsed by the findings of later chapters. The artwork is seen as the result of agency, an action, to be interpreted. The link between rhetoric and art is very intimate. Both use the same resources of the aesthetic: perceptions loaded with meaning and emotion. Television wild-life films often show proto-rhetoric at work: a toad, menaced by a fox, stands on the points of its toes and arches its back as high as possible, to make itself look too big for the fox to swallow. The toad's genetic endowment and life experiences have given it the means to learn about its own bite size, and to grasp the significance of relative size when adversaries confront each other. Such observations militate against aesthetic properties being dependent on either history or the prior identification of something as an artwork. A similar message is delivered by instances of trans-species sensitivity to aesthetic properties. One example involved some problematically aggressive male White Rhinos in a conservation project. These became calm when a recording of Beethoven's '*Moonlight Sonata*⁵' was played to them. This seems to confirm that aesthetic response is possible without understanding, but we saw, in section 3.5.2, that an adequate critical response requires knowledge of the 'heuristic' to be understood, in Currie's terms, or, in Danto's terms, summarised by Lafferty, it requires an understanding of the rhetorical nature of art:

- 1) Artworks cannot be paraphrased.
- 2) Artworks are not 'basic objects in the world', but are interacted with in a two-way process of interpretation, as in metaphor (i.e. a cognitive process).

⁵ From the voice-over of a programme called *Extinct* Broadcast on ITV1 on 9th December 2006.

- 3) Artworks are contextual: historical knowledge is needed to understand the metaphors and close the enthymematic gaps⁶.

In Margolis' terms, works of art are real objects with 'emergent' Intentional properties, that have sufficient realism for debate, but are not reducible to bi-valent logic. Margolis saw these features as those belonging to 'uniquely languaged', 'second natured' human agents. But it is argued here that, if non-human animals have intentionality by virtue of their perceptual systems, they also have the potential for intentionality, in the sense of constructing aesthetic objects and performances for interpretation, which are ontologically equivalent to the 'Intentional utterances' of human artforms, and at least some of which, therefore, might also be ontologically and epistemically classifiable as artworks.

Furthermore, philosophy could play a constructive role in questioning the present obsession with the 'original' which afflicts the visual arts, particularly in the West. The argument would be that a good copy gives the same aesthetic experience, because further 'indiscernible' instances of the sensuous object can be made (i.e. further 'instances' of Currie's 'sensory structures') and the heuristic for these is equally accessible and the same, apart from the last, comparatively trivial, copying stage. When Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* was too fragile to travel to London, a full-scale copy was shown, with no detriment at all to the gallery-goer's experience⁷.

8.3 Baumgarten and Kant

Chapters four and five developed one of the main strategies of this thesis, to compare the claims of deflationary aesthetics with the claims of the foundational

⁶ My compressed summary of Michael Lafferty's account of Danto in his (2006), *Arthur Danto's Philosophy of Art*, Ph.D. thesis (unpublished) Warwick University, pp. 154-7. Lafferty says Danto identifies a fourth factor in the interpretation of art: the intention of the artist, key to the interpretation of art, as also with rhetoric and metaphor (pp. 156-7).

⁷ The exhibition, 'Constable to Delacroix: British art and the French Romantics' was open from 5 February to 11 May 2003. <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/constabletodelacroix/room2.htm>. There are numerous other instances, including the substitution of a photograph in place of an original work, before the end of the National Gallery's El Greco show of 11th February to 23rd May 2004. The icon, *The Dormition of the Virgin*, El Greco's earliest known painting, was removed from the show because it was required for the customary Easter procession at the Church in Syros, Crete, which had originally commissioned the work. The excellent full-scale photograph that replaced the work was glued to a panel and was so detailed that one scarcely noticed it was not an original painting; only a specialist in icons of the period could have had real cause for disappointment. My thanks to Rovianne Matovu of the National Gallery for supplying me with the dates of the exhibition and the title of the work.

aesthetics of the eighteenth century. The process had begun in chapter two, with Hume, and now it progressed to Baumgarten and Kant.

8.3.1 Baumgarten

Baumgarten's relevance to the argument of this thesis lies in his acceptance of the senses for their epistemological and aesthetic value, which marked a break from the Rationalist tradition of his philosophical training, but was in keeping with the Epicurean-influenced sensual and emotional Pietism of his upbringing. Baumgarten seems to draw little distinction between perception and the aesthetic; for him, the more 'notes' or units of sensory stimulation, the more 'poetic' or 'aesthetic' the result becomes⁸. He demonstrates that perfectly scanned verse expressing the abstract ideas of logical analysis results not in poetry, but doggerel; poetry requires more: the evocation of the senses and emotions. His answer to our first research question, 'What is the Aesthetic?' would be that it is 'sensory knowledge', different from, but complementary to, logical knowledge. Baumgarten envisaged an epistemological spectrum with minimal quantities of 'obscure' bodily stimulation at one extreme, moving up a scale of increasing 'clarity' arising from increasing quantities of sensory 'notes' which are gradually replaced by abstract ideas at the other end of the spectrum, comprising logic and mathematics (See Fig . 4, section 4.2). This foreshadows the 'left-brain/right-brain' polarity described by Sperry, the clash between the visual/spatial and the verbal/cognitive modes of thinking for students learning to draw (See sections 2.4.2-2.4.3), and the inter-connectedness of long-term memory with sense-processing modules of the brain (See chapter seven).

Baumgarten sees the aesthetic as relevant, not only to the way we perceive and understand the world, but also because it provides the *means* for expression. The aesthetic comprises 'sensorily knowing *and proposing*'. Words themselves are *sensory* objects, their *sounds* important to the poet more than to the philosopher. However, in the use of figurative language, the aesthetic is manifested in both the arts and sciences, combining the *senses* with *cognition*, as in Baumgarten's coinage: '*imaged concepts*',

⁸ It needs to be said that this detail of Baumgarten's argument is not necessarily correct, as reducing the range of colours in painting or drawing, or reducing the resources used in other art forms, as with a single guitar verses a full symphony orchestra, does not necessarily result in an impoverishment of the aesthetic experience, but could bring out other qualities, such as increased poignancy.

where the senses make abstract concepts more tangible and thus comprehensible. By evoking the senses and stirring up emotions, the aesthetic has the power to lift the mind to ecstasy, making both rhetoric and art more lively, inscribing their messages more deeply on the imagination. Thus, for Baumgarten, poetry (art) and ordinary eloquence (rhetoric and non-art aesthetic production) differ from each other only *in degree*.

For Baumgarten, aesthetic contrasts are not only spatial, but temporal, such as novelty, a short-lived quality. His awareness of the way time and memory affect aesthetic properties would assign to historical perspectives a role in the evaluation and interpretation of art, rather than its classification.

There is, of course, a question of whether the term ‘imaged concepts’ applies to all forms of art. Much art lacks a definable underlying concept. Abstract music and abstract painting and sculpture may have no explicit ‘message’, but hold the attention, engage us bodily in our exploration of them, and as they induce the kind of ‘ecstatic’ state described by Baumgarten, though ‘without a concept’, as Kant might say, they become significant presences in our lives, generating their own cryptic meanings as they enter the storerooms of our imaginations. Aesthetic experiences are difficult to write about, but they are greatly valued and sought after, even in the absence of overtly ‘determinate’ meanings. Even works with ‘determinate’ meanings leave room for new metaphorical interpretations. The word ‘imaged’ as used by Baumgarten refers to the sensory component of a work, and the ‘concept’ may be very simple, or very complex, a matter for the ‘free play’ of aesthetic response, rather than necessarily a concept that can be pinned down.

8.3.2 Kant

Kant’s account of aesthetic judgment is immensely complex, and internally inconsistent in places, as described already in chapter five. In this context there is room only to pick out a few points, including: a) Kant’s sensitivity to the interplay between the senses and concepts, b) the question of ‘disinterestedness’, and c) a comparison of Baumgarten’s ‘imaged concepts’ with Kant’s ‘aesthetic ideas’.

In his descriptions of ‘free beauty’ Kant gives vivid word pictures of the phenomenology of ‘right-brain’ states of mind, and describes their incompatibility with concepts in terms that are congruent with Sperry’s discoveries about brain laterality, as described in the teaching of drawing, in chapter two. In Kant’s descriptions of the

sublime, he also distinguishes between the ‘aesthetic’ estimation of nature’s immensity and its calculation by reason, which also corresponds to Sperry’s ‘right-’ and ‘left-brain’ thinking. Kant retains an indirect link between the aesthetic and concepts, in the ‘free play of the Imagination and Understanding’, to establish the claim of aesthetic judgments to the universality afforded by shared cognitions. Except for Kant’s stipulation of the universality of aesthetic judgments deriving from the role of indeterminate concepts, this accords with other discoveries in cognitive neuroscience, discussed in chapter seven, with ‘top-down’ (conceptual) and ‘bottom-up’ (sensory) interactions when the brain is in a state of vigilance when trying to identify an unfamiliar object, which might look ‘purposive’, but whose ‘purpose’ (concept) is not yet established. This matches one of Kant’s accounts of ‘disinterestedness’, where a form pleases, ‘without a purpose’. Kant also gives another account of disinterestedness that reflects the ancient moral nervousness about the senses and sensuality: a Puritanical view that a judgment of taste (beauty) shall have no sensual appeal, no concept of the good, no emotion, no determinate purpose, no ‘art collector’s cupidity’. This may be where the formalist’s separation of the aesthetic from morality and concepts originated.

After separating cognition from the perception of beauty in ‘pure’ judgments of taste, Kant later re-introduces cognition in what appears to be a reversion to Baumgarten’s aesthetics, where the representation of something ‘with a concept’ (purpose) is displayed to perfection, which Kant called a work of ‘adherent beauty’. This, however, requiring only taste and skill, did not, for Kant, count as ‘Fine Art’, unlike works of ‘Genius’ that represented no determinate concept, but, instead, an Idea of Reason, which has no ‘extension’ in the world, thus requiring Imagination to body forth as something entirely original: an ‘*Aesthetic Idea*’. This thesis concluded that Kant’s distinction between works of ‘adherent beauty’ and ‘aesthetic ideas’ was not sustainable, nor his distinction between ‘form’ and ‘matter’. They were only required by Kant’s untenable distinction between ‘Understanding’ and ‘Reason’. In all respects, Baumgarten’s formulations were simpler: ‘imaged concepts’ for both works of ‘adherent beauty’ and ‘aesthetic ideas’, and his unified continuum of perception from the ‘obscure’ to the ‘abstract’ in place of the separation of ‘Understanding’ and ‘Reason’. Nevertheless, Kant’s system illuminates many subtle distinctions within the aesthetic, provided one replaces the absolute distinctions demanded by his philosophical system with Baumgarten’s continua, with differences that are not absolute, but only ‘matters of degree’.

8.4 The Biology of the Aesthetic

Chapters six and seven added to the empirical evidence already brought to the discussions in chapter two, first by introducing arguments from evolutionary science in chapter six, and then expanding on the second chapter's accounts of a) learning to draw, using the methods of Betty Edwards, and b) the perception of fear in Antonio Damasio's case study of patient S.

8.4.1 Evolutionary Science

Chapter six examined evolutionary science, which emphasises the continuity of the human and animal worlds. The chapter looked at the evolutionary pressures which gave rise to the proliferation of perceptual systems, particularly vision. It also considered how the process of speciation seems often to have been driven by the aesthetic choices, by females, of the most beautiful and symmetrical males, which by a process of 'radical translation' is read to indicate good health, low parasitism and good genes. Other selective pressures for ever-increasing acuity of perception in many species include the need to detect breaks in camouflage, possibly betraying the presence of predator or prey, and, among social animals, to monitor the behaviour of conspecifics for altruistic or selfish behaviour, in order to meet out appropriate rewards and punishments. I have postulated grooming as an aesthetic activity involving vigilance, yielding a cycle of 'aha!' moments and an experience of 'making beautiful', a proto-craftsmanship that might have led to other forms of aesthetic production, including art.

Human beings share a common 'animacy' with other animals. There are good reasons for thinking that the higher animals are conscious of their own powers of agency, and those of the other animals, including the conspecifics around them, and that they are sensitive to the traces of agency left by the actions of others in the environment, signs which need to be interpreted, providing a model for artworks and other symbols. Ingold has criticised the attribution of 'culture' to human beings, and 'nature' (entirely genetically determined behaviour) to animals, who, according to the dominant scientific model, are supposed to have no 'culture'. Ingold has described how the process of

walking, seen as culturally freighted since the work of Mauss⁹, cannot be classified entirely as ‘natural’, merely attributed to human ‘evolution’, with bicycling classified entirely under ‘history’ as a ‘cultural’ activity. *Both* are *biological*, as is the rest of human culture, in the sense that the body has to learn skills and modify its structure, even if only subtly, for a person to become a proficient member of the cultural group. Young male birds learn their birdsong through apprenticeship, and this is thereby also both a ‘cultural’ and a ‘biological’ activity.

8.4.2 Cognitive Neuroscience

The evidence from the process of learning to draw and the absence of fear in Damasio’s patient S in chapter two had strongly countered Dickie’s account of a single unvarying ‘attention’ for all purposes, in favour of the realism of the ‘aesthetic attitude’. This evidence has shown that, in order to learn to draw from observation, adult beginners have to learn to engage consciously with their visual/spatial processing systems, which normally work at relatively unconscious (‘subpersonal’) levels. Students need to bring the contents of this sensory processing more fully into their awareness, in order to isolate elements of the visual field for analysis and retention in short-term memory. There is independent confirmation that this is what is happening, from cases like Nadia, the autistic child who drew precociously in infancy (See Plate 21b). Ramachandran and Hirstein quote the theory of Snyder and Thomas that such *savants* are able to ‘directly access’ the outputs of their early vision-processing modules, because they are less ‘concept driven’ than people with normal development¹⁰. Looking at an artwork in ‘right-brain’ mode will similarly activate and focus attention on the output of the same brain modules, the resultant qualia being an important element in aesthetic experience (See the Fra Angelico in plate 8).

Evidence from several sources was found in both chapters six and seven for the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ interactions between the senses and concepts in aesthetic experience suggested so beautifully by Baumgarten’s coinage, ‘imaged concepts’ and Kant’s expression ‘the free play of Imagination and Understanding’. There is abundant

⁹ Tim Ingold says walking and talking are, in the words of M. Mauss, ‘techniques of the body’, in his (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*, London, Routledge, p. 379, referring to M. Mauss (1979; 1934) *Sociology and Psychology: essays*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

¹⁰ Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein (1999) “The Science of Art: a neurological theory of aesthetic experience,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, (Vol. 6; June/July) p. 25.

evidence that prelinguistic animals nevertheless employ concepts, and, in making sense of the world, that they employ similar ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ exchanges during vigilant states of mind, involving conceptual thought and fine sensory monitoring, which this thesis has interpreted as the model upon which the aesthetic attitude is based. It was concluded, therefore, that Kant’s requirement of a linguistically mediated *sensus communis* cannot legitimately be claimed as a necessary condition for aesthetic experience, a step which would unjustifiably exclude animals from the realm of the aesthetic. On the contrary, this thesis supports Darwin’s claim that the aesthetic is available to many animals, and the argument presented here is that many ‘higher’ animals perceive and understand the world using basically the same ‘image/concept’ neurological processes as ourselves, minus language. Dennett’s argument against positing isolated human achievements installed by ‘skyhooks’, and his insistence there is only one ‘design space’ inhabited by all creatures, means there can be no principled objection to non-human animals co-evolving aesthetic sensibilities and deploying them actively to influence their own moods and the behaviour of others through processes that are ontologically equivalent to human art-making.

8.5 The Three Case Studies

Chapter one promised that the arguments presented in this thesis would be evaluated by testing them against the following case studies of issues relevant to the contemporary understanding of art and its praxis: 1) ‘bowerbird art’, 2) the ‘nexus of art, power and crime’, and 3) ‘sound sculpture’.

8.5.1 Bowerbird Art

8.5.1.1 The Nature of Bowerbird Art

There are 18 species of bowerbird distributed across Australia and New Guinea, which used to be joined as a single landmass¹¹. Bowerbirds appear to be unique in the non-human animal kingdom in constructing complex aesthetic objects from found materials: plant forms, pebbles, bones, shells, and coloured or metallic rubbish or items

¹¹ The classic study of bowerbirds is by A.J. Marshall (1954) *Bower-birds: their displays and breeding cycles*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

stolen from inside and around human habitations. These constructions play a role in courtship rituals. In Appendix C are a number of stills, numbered C1, C2, etc., taken from a David Attenborough film called, 'Bower Birds – the Art of Seduction'¹². The film has that title because the bowers are built by polygamous male bowerbirds to attract females. Four species of bowerbird are featured in Appendix C, ranging from the maker of the simplest bower, the Stagemaker, (C2 –3)¹³, to the most elaborate bowers, built by the Brown Gardener, or Vogelkop, bowerbird (C8-18).

Some features of their behaviour need to be pointed out. Still C1 shows a male Western Bowerbird adjusting the display of his collection of curiously shaped pebbles, bones and shells, all of which are white, a colour that flecks his plumage. The Satin bowerbird is iridescent blue, and collects blue objects, in addition to yellow flowers and 'sculpturally' interesting shapes, like a shrew's skull-bone. The males of several bowerbird species pick up such objects, and display them to females in ritualised mock-aggressive displays. A. J. Marshall, who wrote the classic study of bowerbirds, speculated that the males seem to be addressing 'metaphorical' male rivals who are somehow represented by the objects in their displays when these are the focus of courtship dances¹⁴. In another sense, the whole display could be seen as a metaphor for the male, standing in place of him, representing him to the female. In several species, such as the Stagemaker in C3, the courtship ritual begins with the male playing 'hide and seek', which is a way of attracting a female's interest. Attenborough's film shows the same first move in the MacGregor bowerbird's routine (C4-7). If a female shows enough interest to descend on to the 'run-way' of his bower, the male begins the visual display of his dance, first glimpsed after a build-up of peek-a-boo, round and round his maypole. The male's crest is normally folded down, hidden beneath brown feathers. But at the climax of his display, from C6, the fiery dance of his crest contrasts brilliantly with the sombre colours of the rainforest floor.

With all the bowerbird species, the females scrutinise the displays and performances intently. The film shows the males also scrutinising their own constructions and displays. Before females arrive, they often make fine adjustments or add embellishments. They have to spend as much time as possible tending their displays, in case a female might chance by, but also to guard their displays from rival

¹² A BBC *Natural World* programme first broadcast on 17th December 2000.

¹³ See also Plate 14b in Appendix E.

¹⁴ A.J. Marshall *Op. Cit.* (1954) p. 64.

males, who seize any opportunity to steal the most prized items, and to dismantle hours of construction work in minutes. These birds do not only have material ‘property’, they have ‘crime’, as the raids on each other’s territory are furtive and nervous, lest the owner return to catch them in their acts of ‘vandalism’.

It is after a guided tour of the MacGregor bowerbird’s bower, and some clips of his flame-coloured dance, that Attenborough is ready to ask the ‘art question’. The film returns to clips of the male bowerbird scrutinising his maypole, adding decoration and a twig or two, as the film is inter-cut with sequences of land artist Andy Goldsworthy making a sculpture at the foot of an oak tree from its fallen branches and twigs. Then Attenborough points to the maypole and asks, “If Goldsworthy’s work is widely accepted as art, and it is, then why not this?”

Speaking to camera, he expands his argument in these terms:

We know that the females tour all the bowers in the neighbourhood, assessing them and presumably making a choice between them. And there must be 15 or 20 within a mile of where I’m sitting, now. So, on what basis do they choose? Well, they aren’t judging as to whether the bird is going to be a good father in the sense of helping at the nest, because these male bowerbirds play no part in either building the nest or feeding the young. So the females presumably are judging on the way this bower has been built, how it’s been decorated and how he dances within it. And that means that the females must have some *aesthetic* sense, *artistic* sense¹⁵.

8.5.1.2 The Ontology of Bowerbird Art

The bower of the Brown Gardener, or Vogelkop bowerbird is the most spectacular, and is called by Attenborough, “one of the wonders of the natural world” (C8-18). It provokes our bowerbird question (BB):

BB Is the bowerbird’s bower *art* ?

What is apparent in the film, and seems to challenge the straightforward response, ‘Well, it’s just instinct, innit?’ is the wide variation between the three Vogelkop bowers. Though built in close proximity, each male has a very distinctive ‘personal’ style in the choice of treasures and the manner of their display. At this point, we could try to apply our adaptation of Currie’s ontology of art:

AO Artwork = Sensory structure + Heuristic + Response appropriate to art

¹⁵ David Attenborough (2000) “Bower Birds – the Art of Seduction”, in the BBC Television Series, ‘The Natural World’, first broadcast 17th December.

We have 1) the sensory structure; 2) the heuristic of the bird searching out choice display items individually arranged; and, perhaps most tellingly, 3) in the female's critical gaze we have a 'Response appropriate to art'. Also, in our *own* response, we, too, have a 'Response appropriate to art'. But the question still needs to be asked, whether the female is seeing 'art' or 'beauty', or merely 'good genes'? This question has already been answered. The female, by an evolved process of 'radical interpretation' can detect signs of good genetic quality and good health, just as humans are attracted by beautiful and talented members of the opposite sex, for the same kind of reasons. The choosing female is excited by and desires a particular bird on the basis of his beauty, his beautiful performance and the beauty of his display.

Since the advent of installation art and land art, in the terms of Levinson and Carroll's 'historical' definitions, human art seems to have 'caught up' with the bowerbirds, so that we can now better appreciate their bowers as *art*. Currie's ontology is based on action theory, and the bowerbird is an agent, acting in an analogous space to human artists, using the same resources of design, colour, contrast, grouping, decoration, pattern, and so forth. Bowerbirds use ellipsis, the corner-stone of Danto's art theory: when they begin their display, hiding and then partly revealing themselves, or imitating the songs of up to 26 other species, each mock-song a masterpiece of *mimesis*, but also metonymy, as the song 'represents' an absent bird, which demands the hearer to recognise and 'complete' the representation in the imagination. The entire bower is an act of metaphor: 'See this display, see ME!' The 'treasures' on display are rare and curious, triggering in the respondent 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' searchings to identify, and admire the forms. The use of 'readymade' objects displaced from their context and given a new meaning anticipates Duchamp by possibly millions of years.

The question of whether the female sees 'beauty' or just 'good genes' was Russell Wallace's challenge to Darwin (expressed as 'good sense' versus 'beauty') and biologists now side with Darwin (See Cronin's comments in 6.5.1). Miller, as we saw in 6.5.2, accepts the bowerbird as an artist, on the basis that it alone in the animal kingdom spends 'significant time and energy constructing purely aesthetic displays beyond their own bodies'¹⁶. He seems to have forgotten all the songbirds, whalesongs, courtship displays and dances of a myriad other species.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Miller (2000; 2001 edn.) *The Mating Mind*, London, Vintage, p. 267.

There is another argument that can be advanced against the sceptical dismissal of animal art as ‘merely instinctual’. Tim Ingold has argued that the split between ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ in neo-Darwinism is now gradually being replaced by a developmental model of individual animals, including each of us. We are the authors, as well as the sites, of our own evolution, as we learn and adapt our learning to new problems, a process shared with other animals. The interpretation of DNA as a ‘book of life’ which pre-determines all aspects of an animal’s phenotype, including behaviour, has been shown to be inadequate, as it ignores the ontogenesis of each organism. Thus, the search for origins, like ‘Ur-Art’, to mark a boundary between nature and culture is wrong-headed, as there never has been a sharp boundary, as animals have continuously been discovering ‘new tricks’, and these are then sometimes further consolidated by genetic mutations. The process is still going on, as our culture is continually reinvented, biologically but not genetically, as through learning it is built into our nerves, flesh and bones. And so for the bowerbird.

In our definitions, rhetoric was distinguished from art by its greater engagement with persuasion towards pragmatic ends, and the male bowerbird is a polygamous seducer. Does that make his bower ‘rhetoric’ and not ‘art’? If anything has come through this study, it is the Popperian and Margolisian message that cultural matters are not the subject of bi-valent answers, but are a matter for debate and possible consensus. Darwin was convinced that robins enjoy singing, observing that they do so in the autumn, outside the mating season. Marshall reported the equivalent occurs with some bowerbirds. For them, at least, the activity seems to have become an end in itself. Art, rather than rhetoric.

Another parallel with the system of human art is the role of the female as a critic, connoisseur and patron. It is clear from the films how closely both the male and the female scrutinise the bower, and how he has practised every move in a long apprenticeship, and how closely she attends to his repertoire of artistic performances. The females’ choices over millions of years, combined with dispersals and habitat change, have generated the diversity of species and bowers that exist today. This account also allows a space for individual males to deploy their skills, sensibility and creativity to ‘set out their stall’ in their own way, to catch a female’s eye.

Finally, our question BB, ‘Is a bowerbird’s bower *art*?’ needs to be answered. If bowerbird art is ontologically *equivalent* to human art, as I am arguing, it should be accepted as *art*. However, as a means of sensory expression, bowerbird art is also open

to interpretation as mere rhetoric. Also, all art is vulnerable to being conscripted or ‘high-jacked’ into a game of competitive rhetoric.

8.5.2 The Nexus of Art, Power and Crime

8.5.2.1 The Dark Side of the Canvas

That there is a ‘dark side of the canvas’ seems indisputable. Consider the extremely high prices paid at auction for certain paintings which are then hidden in bank vaults, or the clamour for ancient artefacts from no-matter-where, which is stimulating the world-wide looting of archaeological sites. On 22nd February 2001, the BBC carried a news story by Jeremy McDermott, under the headline, “Ancient Mayan cities looted”. He was reporting on the damage being inflicted on the 4000 or so unexcavated sites in the Central American jungle. The raiders’ motivations were clear:

Mayan Jade figurines fetch tens of thousands of dollars on the international art market – a huge fortune in a country where the minimum wage is less than \$300¹⁷.

Torn from their contexts, these objects become little more than expensive trinkets, as archaeologists are wont to lament¹⁸. These objects are Currie’s ‘sensory structures’, stripped of much of their ‘heuristic’ component, without which it is impossible to appreciate or evaluate them adequately. A lost heuristic is possibly more damaging to an artwork than a lost head is to a statuette. However, it is a testament to the power of the aesthetic itself, that the desire even for such cognitively truncated objects is so intense that it fuels a crime racket which bears many similarities to the drug trade where in some ways the aesthetic exerts the power of a narcotic. We tend to dismiss such problems, as having ‘nothing to do with art *as such*’, for example: art and power, art and money, art and addiction, art and delusion, art and theft, art and environmental degradation¹⁹ and even art and *murder*. There is good forensic evidence that, as a part of a forgery, a 20- or 21-year old Iranian woman was murdered to provide the body of a

¹⁷ [//news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1184233.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1184233.stm)

¹⁸ Colin Renfrew (2003) *Figuring It Out: What are we? Where do we come from? The parallel visions of artists and archaeologists*, London, Thames & Hudson, discusses these issues, pp. 55-8.

¹⁹ One theory about Easter Island suggests that the culture of carving and setting up the vast heads was instrumental in the disastrous environmental decline on the island; Adam Hart-Davis (Editorial Consultant) *et al.* (2007) *History: The Definitive Visual Guide, from the Dawn of Civilisation to the Present Day*, London, Dorling Kindersley, p. 217.

supposedly “mummified” 2600-year-old Persian princess in a gilded casket which was on the black market for \$11million in 2001²⁰.

The most notorious artist and art-lover in history was probably the emperor Nero, who was accused of burning down the centre of Rome to clear space for his great palace, the Golden House. He stole sculptures from Greece to embellish both his palace and gardens. However, his infatuation with art went further than any other prince, although there are many lesser equivalents²¹. Nero sought personal and political fame and popularity, both through providing innovatory public entertainments and by putting himself before the public as an artist, variously lyre player, singer, actor, impresario and competitor in the games²². His dying words, as he committed suicide at the age of thirty, were, reportedly: “*Qualis artifex pereo!*” This is usually translated as “What an artist dies in me!”²³. An adequate account of art should explain the close association of art with power, and crime²⁴ (APC) and the vast prices achieved at auction²⁵. The issue can be expressed as a question:

APC What is the reason for the nexus between Art, Power and Crime?

Although this is an uncomfortable issue for art lovers, the question (APC) needs to be addressed by an adequate and inclusive account of art.

8.5.2.2 Art as Social Marker

²⁰ <http://www.archaeology.org/0101/etc/persia.html>. Because of the vast sums traded on the art market, it has attracted gangsters who sometimes threaten violence to upgrade connoisseurs’ opinions.

²¹ The Royal Academy exhibition from 12 November 2005 to 17 April 2006 demonstrated the state role of art in the Manchu dynasty’s adoption and promotion of Chinese culture, including the scholarly/artistic practice of calligraphy by the Emperors themselves; Frances Wood (2005) *China: The Three Emperors 1662-1795 (An Introduction to the Exhibition for Teachers and Students)* London, Royal Academy of Arts, available as a pdf from the Royal Academy website, on their “Past Exhibitions” page: <http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/events/exhibitions/china-the-three-emperors-16621795,116.EV.html?type=past>.

²² Edward Champlin (2003) *Nero*, Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press. Champlin attributes much of Nero’s extravagant and monstrous behaviour to his desire for fame and popularity, aligning his personal myth with the gods Apollo and Hercules on the one hand and with Mark Anthony and Augustus Caesar on the other. According to Champlin, the Golden House was not exclusively a private palace, but part of his programme to bring aristocratic pleasures to the common people of Rome.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 49. He also had his male lover aesthetically castrated, to increase his likeness to Poppea, the wife he had murdered.

²⁴ The extensive writings are surveyed by Nan Stalnaker (2001) ‘Fakes and Forgeries’ in Berys Gaut and Dominic McI. Lopes (Eds.) (2001) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London, Routledge, pp. 395-407.

²⁵ On 6th May 2004, Picasso’s rose period painting *Boy with a Pipe* (1905) sold for £58 million pounds, including commission, making it the world’s most expensive painting, Picasso’s fourth in the top ten (van Gogh 3, Rubens, Renoir and Cezanne, one each). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/3682127.stm>

There is a non-realist strand of reductionist scepticism towards the aesthetic that believes it has the answer. This comes from moralising, sociological and Marxian approaches, which view the aesthetic as a set of conventions designed to reinforce power structures. Larry Shiner's *The Invention of Art: a Cultural History*²⁶ is an exercise in deflationary aesthetics, encyclopaedic in its range of reference. Like Dickie's 1964 paper, it also marches beneath a misleading banner headline. A more accurate title would have been, *The Invention of 'Fine' Art*. The book complements a number of other works, most famously Tolstoy's *What is Art?*²⁷, and sociological studies, such as those by Veblen²⁸, and Bourdieu²⁹, which describe patterns of consumption which do indeed show how the aesthetic has been (and still can be) used as a class barrier. Their arguments are undoubtedly relevant to this case study. However those studies fail to offer an argument that collapses power relations into the aesthetic, reducing it entirely, or even principally, to marks of social distinction, because they fail to demonstrate the non-realism of the aesthetic itself. Like Dickie, Shiner quickly abandons his 'headline' claim for something more nuanced. He begins to refer to both the 'old system of art' and the 'new system of art'³⁰, thus admitting to the existence of art before its supposed 'invention' in the eighteenth century. Although Bourdieu found statistics that suggest that the appreciation of fine art is in a direct relationship to formal education, money and class, this does not explain the many artists who emerge from all classes, or the existence of many middle and upper class philistines. Shiner's historical account, designed to show the 'invention' (read 'confidence trick') of fine art, could equally well be used to demonstrate 1) the imperfect, but reasonably successful, *democratisation* since the Enlightenment of many hitherto *exclusively courtly* cultural forms, and 2) the encouragement of new genres and new kinds of artistic achievement resulting from a spreading understanding of the aesthetic among the general populace; nor can they prove that artworks fail to perform valuable roles in enriching individual lives and societies in virtue of their aesthetic properties, rather than as mere variations on the theme of snobbery.

²⁶ Larry Shiner (2001) *The Invention of Art: a Cultural History*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

²⁷ Leo Tolstoy (1898) *What is Art?* (trans. Aylmer Maude; reprinted in 1930 with other essays in *World Classics* edition) Oxford, OUP.

²⁸ T. Veblen, (1899; 1925 edn.) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu (1979) *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* trans. R. Nice (1984; 1986 edition used) London, Routledge.

³⁰ Larry Shiner *Op. Cit.* (2001) pp. 146-7.

Nevertheless, there is clearly a serious problem here for the aesthetic realist, and it is not dissimilar to the internalist versus externalist argument about belief in the philosophy of mind³¹, and clearly reflects the divide between deflationist, institutionalist models of art, compared to aestheticising, realist accounts. In September 2008, the ‘emperor’s cloak’ argument re-emerged over Damien Hirst, attacked by Robert Hughes, and simultaneously over the Mark Rothko retrospective at Tate Modern, that has brought out opposing ranks of ‘believers’ and ‘sceptics’, including Ian Hislop on the BBC’s *Newsnight* programme³². The externalist position is exemplified by rich collectors who are persuaded by their dealer or ‘art adviser’ that having a Damien Hirst, Francis Bacon or Mark Rothko on their walls will mark them out as serious collectors, with high-brow taste, and money. It is worth the investment, not only for its prestige, but as an investment which is likely to appreciate faster than the stock market, even if the work itself is intensely disliked aesthetically, and not at all understood, by the wealthy buyer. Such deals are the triumphs of the Institutional Theory, and of the Bourdieu, Veblen and the Tolstoy denunciations, but also the death of art as art. Further distortions occur when a new category of the super-rich hit the market, such as the Russians in London³³.

8.5.2.3 Possible Philosophical and Pragmatic Solutions

When considering the ugly side of the art trade, one has to remember that the aesthetic has indeed long been used as a status marker, even if that is not its only, or its most important, role. In this respect it is equivalent to the evolutionary use of the aesthetic to signal strength, beauty, or size, such as the deep croak of a big bullfrog. Art is still conspicuously used as an instrument of state policy, as shown by the activities of the British Council³⁴ and the post-devolution entry of Wales to the Venice Biennale,

³¹ Samuel Guttenplan (1994; 1995 Edn.) ‘Externalism/Internalism’ in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, Ed. Samuel Guttenplan, Oxford, Blackwell, pp 289-90, and ‘An Essay on Mind’ *Ibid.*, section 1.2.3, pp. 36-45.

³² Review discussion with Kirsty Young on Friday evening, 26th September 2008.

³³ The advance programme information for ‘The Great Art Invasion’, the title of the second programme in Channel 4’s ‘Art and Money’ season, broadcast on Sunday 28th September, reads: ‘London is home to around 1,000 Russian multimillionaires, some of whom have turned their attention to the acquisition of fine art. With access to the notoriously private world of Russia’s super-rich, Marcel Theroux investigates the enormous impact they are having on the art establishment. He finds that in Russia art and politics are seemingly inseparable. So are these art collectors buying up everything from Picasso to Freud purely for a love of art or for political motives?’ From *Radio Times* for 27 September to 3rd October 2008, p. 61.

³⁴ The 2008 British Council’s *Action Plan For the Arts*, summarises the policies for five categories of country; 1 ‘Countries closed and in stagnation . . . e.g. Burma’; 2. ‘Broken trust with UK and the West . . . e.g. Syria’; 3) ‘Economies in exponential growth . . . e.g. China’; 4) ‘Poor, open and

beginning in 2003³⁵. Royal and state patronage is not confined to the visual arts, but they are the most durable and conspicuous - and the word 'conspicuous' suggests the word 'consumption' and Veblen's study of cultural displays of wealth and power, and art has an ugly record of sycophancy, probably brutally enforced for most of history, and hence, perhaps, pardonable.

Even bowerbird bowers are vulnerable to vandalism and the theft of prize exhibits, and this is the risk to which the visual arts are prone, especially those using precious materials. Margolis observes that the arts must have some physical instantiation to be publicly accessible and numerically identifiable³⁶, what Heidegger calls a 'thingly character', imagining Beethoven *Quartets* scores stored like sacks of potatoes³⁷. But this reification overlooks the spontaneous artistic displays of story-telling, song and dance that leave no trace except in living memory. Ingold has commented on how reification of 'language' into a system of rules and lexis, was a result of print culture³⁸. Goodman's account of music exemplifies this point; for him an instance of a work occurs only when *all* the 'dots' in the score are played correctly, regardless of tempo³⁹.

I would argue that a similar reification of the visual arts, images painted on walls or carved in stone, made them paradigmatic for aesthetic expression. The visual arts are particularly vulnerable to reification, as collectors' pieces and large prestige projects are closely associated with bids for status, and hence objects of desire for the rich, powerful and sometimes criminal⁴⁰. Also, the obsession with owning the 'original' creates the

developing countries . . . e.g. Kenya'; 5) 'Open developed countries in strong contact with the UK . . . e.g. France'. The full report is posted on the British Council website, and the quotations come from Annexe A. http://www.britishcouncil.org/action_plan_for_the_arts-2.pdf

³⁵ See the website: <http://www.walesvenicebiennale.org.uk/biennaleinfo.asp?currentbiennaleid=3>

³⁶ Joseph Margolis (2001) *Selves and Other Texts: The Case for Cultural Realism*, University Park, Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 16: reason for physical instantiation, so they can be, 'suitably stable and determinate for the purposes of description, interpretation, criticism and explanation.'

³⁷ Martin Heidegger (1971) 'The Origin of the Work of Art', trans. Albert Hofstadter, which I read in the shortened version edited by Clive Cazeaux (2000) *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, London, Routledge (pp. 80-101), p. 81.

³⁸ Tim Ingold (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*, London, Routledge, chapter 22, 'Speech, writing and the modern origins of "language origins"', pp. 392-405.

³⁹ 'Since complete compliance with the score is the only requirement for a genuine instance of a work, the most miserable performance without actual mistakes does count as such an instance, while the most brilliant performance with a single wrong note does not.' Nelson Goodman (1976) *Languages of Art: an Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (2nd Edition) Indianapolis, Hackett, p. 186.

⁴⁰ Tod Volpe, a corrupt art dealer to Hollywood stars who went to prison has written his memoirs: (2002) *Framed: Tales of the Art Underworld*, Edinburgh, Cutting Edge Press.

market pressure for high prices, transmutable into crime, and making it easy for forgers to pass off their garden shed efforts in supposedly respectable salesrooms. Recently, Robert Hughes, in his programme about what he perceived to be the increasing corruption of art by money and celebrity, observed that the art market was the last market to be entirely unregulated⁴¹. Volpe's memoirs give a frightening picture of seemingly unaccountable wheeler-dealing with the money of the super rich, who sink their savings into art, knowing little about it, but depending on dealer/advisors to buy and sell work for them⁴². Such figures are seen at work at an art fair in Robert Hughes' recent film, and the celebrity-struck collectors whom he interviews struggle to explain why they have paid so much at auction, often in the hope of having their collections exhibited, even if only temporarily, in a prestige museum or public art gallery, which they perceived as the ultimate accolade and route to immortality.

It might be possible that a change in philosophical emphasis could drain some of the heat out of the market, possibly by arguing that the 'original' by a painter is much more closely analogous to the manuscript for a novel than is presently believed. Current cultural practices are not *necessary*; they are open to challenge and change. There is a deficit of critical debate, in a press that often seems ready to print out laudatory press releases, verbatim. Whereas many areas of the arts enjoy/suffer serious criticism, the visual arts seem to be relatively vulnerable to promotion by vested interests⁴³.

Some good could come from the failure of public galleries to afford the prices of the few very great 'original' works entering the market. A new possibility opens up. Museums could become famous for their new commissions of faithful copies, like the Otsuka Museum in Japan⁴⁴. This could also have environmental benefits, in reducing the effects of long-haul mass tourism. The current emphasis on the physical relic associated with a supposedly unique artwork encourages fetishism for 'originals', rather than a) pointing to the work's 'heuristic', encouraging an openness to the creativity of the artist, accessible through an explanation of a work's historical context and b) encouraging sensitivity to the *aesthetic properties* of the artwork, denied or denigrated by the deflationists, but *real* and *accessible directly* through faithful copies.

⁴¹ 'The Mona Lisa Curse', the first in a season of documentaries in the 'Art and Money' season, broadcast on Channel 4 on 21st September 2008.

⁴² Tod Volpe *Op. Cit.* (2002).

⁴³ For example, the much criticised involvement of art dealers in the Turner Prize process.

⁴⁴ This includes 1000 works from 170 museums from 26 countries, including a Sistine Chapel built to full size, showing the ceiling and *Last Judgment*, in situ, in damp- and light-resistant photographic ceramic tiles. See <http://www.o-museum.or.jp/english/index.html>

8.5.3 Sound Sculpture

Although ‘sound sculpture’ is now a well-established cultural sub-species, one feels at first a little nervous about describing it as a full member of the genus *visual arts*. Trying to explain *why* seems to take us into philosophical territory. I will begin with the puzzle that helped to set me on the trail of this research. Then I will describe two other sound sculptures of contrasting character, the conceptual artist Bruce Nauman’s sound installation in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in 2004, and Janet Cardiff’s *Forty-part Motet: Version One (British Edition)* using a 2001 recording by Salisbury Cathedral choir, that toured the Liverpool Tate and the New Art Gallery, Walsall.

8.5.3.1 Three Indiscernible Sound Works

The term *musique concrète*⁴⁵ was once in current use, denoting a sequence of non-musical sounds that had been recorded from the environment, and subsequently replayed as *music*. In 1984, BBC Radio Three presented a ‘play’ with no speech, only a sequence of sound effects, which the listener was invited to hear as a narrative⁴⁶. Finally, in the Lift Gallery, London, in October 1998, I encountered an artwork which also comprised a sequence of pre-recorded sounds from the environment; this was a ‘sound sculpture’⁴⁷. Now, imagine that all three had used the same pre-recorded sequence of sounds. The question is this: in what way would it be meaningful, and not just facetious, to call the one ‘music’, the next a ‘play’, and the third a ‘sculpture’⁴⁸? Making the Popperian⁴⁹ assumption that the people involved are rational, there must be an explanation.

⁴⁵ The term originates with Pierre Schaeffer in 1948; See *Oxford Dictionary of Music* (1994 edn,) Ed. Michael Kennedy, Oxford, OUP, p. 606.

⁴⁶ An enquiry to the Drama & Literature Dept. of the National Sound Archive revealed that in 1984 Mark Farrar, the compiler of the BBC’s first sound effects CD Rom, won an in-house competition for a “play” of no more than five minutes, which had to make the ‘widest possible use’ of that CD Rom (personal communication).

⁴⁷ The auditory sequences were interlaced with video pieces, each selectable from a touch-screen in a darkened gallery. I learned the term “Sound Sculpture” in conversation with an M.A. Fine Art tutor, artist Melanie Jackson, on a London field trip in October 1998. The December 1999 issue of *Artist’s Newsletter* reported a new degree course in “Phonic Art” at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside, p. 24.

⁴⁸ I am indebted to the Aesthetics lecturer on my M.A. Fine Art course, Dr. Martin Gaughan, for referring me to Danto, when I put this conundrum to him after leaving the Lift Gallery, on the same field trip as described in the above footnote. It was after this that I read Danto’s thought experiment of the Manhattan Telephone Directory instantiating various *avant-garde* works, including a musical score, a novel, a suite of prints, and so forth; Arthur C. Danto *Op. Cit.* (1981) p. 136.

⁴⁹ I picked up this aspect of Popper’s social theory from Sheldon Richmond (1994) *Aesthetic Criteria: Gombrich and the Philosophies of Science of Popper and Polanyi*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, p. 9. Richmond references Karl Popper (1957) *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

This question, therefore, arises:

SS1 What is the justification for calling the Lift Gallery works ‘sound sculpture’, or their indiscernibles ‘music’ or ‘drama’ ?

First of all, different art forms have traditionally been divided according to the dominant ‘sense’ involved in their reception, e.g. music/hearing, or their dominant characteristic, e.g. dance/movement, and so forth. Just as print technology has encouraged the reification of language, so has sound-recording technology re-enforced the view that music is entirely about *sound*. However, live performances of music contain much visual information that enhances the aural experience, in seeing the melodies dancing between players and the sight of musicians struggling to achieve perfection, which is almost entirely subtracted from a pure sound recording, and cannot be captured in the glimpses chosen by somebody else which might be available on film. We now know how the senses are cross-linked, with several sense modalities engaged as a work unfolds. A poem will stimulate not only the language modules, but those for vision and touch. In the case of the Lift Gallery puzzle, a sound track received as ‘music’ would encourage a search for patterns of sound, whereas a reception of the sounds as ‘drama’ would engage modules listening for actions in a story. When addressed as ‘sculpture’, the respondents would listen for a stereophonic perception of space, moving around the room, and possibly making imaginative extrapolations from sound to shape and texture. In other words, the genre of each work could be determined by which brain modules were most active when the percipient experiences the work, and an unsatisfactory encounter, such as Matthew Kieran’s confessed failure to appreciate Poussin⁵⁰, might be explicable through a failure, so far, to learn ‘how to look’ at it, and how to engage the modules which the work stimulates in a more receptive subject.

8.5.3.2 Bruce Naumann: *Raw Materials*

The next ‘sound sculpture’ puzzle concerns *Raw Materials*, by the world-renowned sculptor and conceptual artist Bruce Nauman. This work was commissioned by Tate Modern for the Turbine Hall, where it was open to the public between 12th October 2004 and 2nd May 2005. There are still some pages about this work on the Tate website⁵¹, including a textually presented interview with the artist, quoted and

⁵⁰ Matthew Kieran (2005) *Revealing Art*, Abingdon, Routledge, p. 24.

⁵¹ <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/nauman/about.shtm>

referenced, below. Nauman tells us that, when he was approached by Tate Modern, he had to make up his mind quickly. To prepare his proposal, he flew in and looked at the space, and partly because of time pressure, he decided to re-use some of his old 'raw material' recordings of speech from the past 30 to 40 years. That would allow a quick response, and would also give the work a retrospective character, as language has long been an important element of his work, and Adrian Searle's review explains how this practice is consistent with Nauman's approach to his work as perpetually 'unfinished'⁵².

The Turbine Hall is 20 x 150 meters in plan. It is an alienating space, and Bruce Nauman's sound installation did little to relieve that austerity, with its 44 haranguing loudspeakers fixed, in facing pairs, down the length of the hall. Assistant curator Ben Borthwick describes the recordings:

There are statements that explore sentence construction, single words repeated over and over, stories that feed back into themselves and go nowhere. Throughout, the tone of voice, the inflection, and variations in rhythms dramatically shift meanings, from diplomatic to psychotic, pleading to bullying, anxiety to mockery⁵³.

Borthwick points out Nauman's preference for the chance effects advocated by John Cage, who influenced Nauman's early work. Borthwick also points out a similarity between some of the tapes and the rhythmic patterns of minimalist composers. Despite this talk of musical effects, it was a tough, unapproachable work.

Nauman told an interviewer, Robert Storr, that he realised the space presented a serious challenge, and he chose narrowly directional speakers facing each other across the hall to create wave after wave of new sounds to draw the listener down the ramp and on to the lower level, and then up to the end wall⁵⁴. Sometimes both loud speakers in a pair utter the same words in the same way, sometimes the same words in different ways, and sometimes each speaker says different words. Interviewed in his home studio, this is how Nauman described how the work was being planned:

What I'm doing is saying: "Okay, forget what the original intention was, just use this stuff as sound that is available and arrange it in some way that makes another kind of sense." We'll have all the texts, we'll have the space and we'll have enough speakers, and we'll be able to begin the process. I've made a programme of the way I think I want it to work – this one goes with that one,

⁵² Adrian Searle (2005) 'Inside the mind of Bruce Nauman', from the Guardian of 13th May, p. 2 of 3 of version posted on 'Guardian Unlimited' website:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/critic/feature/0,1169,1325197,00.html>

⁵³ http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/nauman/about_raw.shtm

⁵⁴ <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue2/soundwaves.htm>

this is the next one – but it may be totally inappropriate when I finally start to walk through it and hear it. I can change things around, maybe delete some and add others. There's no other way to do it, except in that space. I can guess in pairs here in the studio, but I can't make the ensemble⁵⁵.

He is clearly describing an intuitive working process, using trial and error, a cousin of Gombrich's 'making and matching'⁵⁶. He might have intellectual preconceptions, but ultimately the work will have to be felt 'on the pulse', as these exchanges confirm:

ROBERT STORR *You talked about the sequential progression of sounds. Are you also thinking about sequencing the tapes in terms of their logical or emotional content in a way that they might be construed as a cumulative proposition or statement?*

BRUCE NAUMAN Up to this point I've tried to go from short intense pieces to longer, quieter ones, so it modulates all the way down the length of the hall, but until I actually install them, I won't know if that's the best way to do it.

ROBERT STORR *But are you considering using these disparate texts to summarise an idea? Are you working with that possibility, or just ignoring it?*

BRUCE NAUMAN Well, ignoring it – because of the way the space is set up.

Here we have the artist choosing his texts and deciding how to place one relative to another on intuitive, 'aesthetic' principles, which are not driven by any overall 'scheme' or rational argument. He calls the work a 'collage of sounds'.

There are two questions which will be asked of both the Bruce Nauman and the Janet Cardiff sound sculptures:

SS2 How well do these artworks succeed, as far as one can assess on the evidence available?

SS3 Does this medium have the potential to make 'great art'?

Strangely, it seems that sound sculpture shares a similarity with dance, which is characterised by the performer's movement. It seems that sculpture is characterised, to an important extent, by the respondent's movement. In viewing sculpture, we approach and retreat, move to the left, right and around, as we watch the profiles shift shape⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (no pagination)

⁵⁶ 'Making and Matching' is one of the main themes throughout Ernst Gombrich (1960) *Art and Illusion: a study in the psychology of pictorial representation* (consulted: 1963 reset of 2nd Edition, 1962), London, Phaidon.

⁵⁷ Robert Hopkins rather dismisses Hilderbrandt's emphasis on the role of the changing silhouettes revealed by moving around a sculpture. See his (2003) 'Sculpture' in Jerrold Levinson (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford, OUP, pp. 572-82.

Esther Thelen, quoted by Ingold, asks what movement is, 'but a form or perception, a way of knowing the world as well as acting on it?'⁵⁸

Respondents explored the Naumann, tenaciously, like climbers in a gale of antipathetic speech. Like a glaciated mountain, it was an experience of the Kantian sublime: beauty had little or no part in it, and struggle as one might, there was no way to grasp the work as a unity. Experiencing it presented an immense challenge, from which one emerged exhausted, but with some altered perceptions. Adrian Searle's review confirmed his own classification of the work as sculpture, his acceptance of its success and status as great art:

Raw Materials is as much sculpture as anything else. It makes you, too, totally aware of the volume of the space and where you are in it. I became intensely conscious of my own body and its orientation – whether I was standing a little to the left or right, closer to or further from one speaker or another, tracking the advance and retreat of different voices as I walked. I found myself looking down much of the time, and walking slowly, like a man who had dropped a coin or lost a beloved.

8.5.3.3 Janet Cardiff: *Spem in Alium*

The same questions as above, SS2 and SS3, will be asked of the sound sculpture which concludes our case studies, Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet*⁵⁹

Her work bears some formal resemblance to *Raw Materials*. There are 40 loudspeakers in eight clusters of five spaced equally around a large room. In this case, however, the sound from each loudspeaker had been pre-determined by a composer over 400 years earlier, as each played the single voice of a singer performing one of the 40 parts in Thomas Tallis's *Spem in Alium*. The motet, first performed in 1568 or 1569, was:

. . . commissioned by Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, as a rival to Alessandro Striggio's 40-part motet *Ecce beatam lucem* (1561) . . . The Duke is said to have taken gold chain from his neck and placed it round Tallis's in honour of achievement⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Tim Ingold (Unpublished, 1999, by personal communication) "Three in One: on dissolving the distinctions between body, mind and culture", p. 13, where he quotes Esther Thelen's (1995) 'Motor Development: A New Synthesis', *American Psychologist*, Vol. 50, pp. 79-95. Ingold adds that walking is a way of, 'getting to know the environment, primarily by way of contact through the feet, but also thanks to the sights and sounds that the movement affords'.

⁵⁹ This was the 'British Edition' of the work, recorded by Salisbury Cathedral choir in 2001. A description of the work can be found at <http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/janetcardiff/>

⁶⁰ Michael Kennedy (Ed) (1994) "Spem in Alium nunquam habui" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, Oxford, OUP, p. 833. Like the sequence of Davids, this was another 'dialogue of objects' (See section 1.2.3, above and Plate 2).

A radio programme about this piece of music was broadcast on 29th January 2008, in the Radio 4 series 'Soul Music', and it included a description of Janet Cardiff's work among other reflections on the piece by Tallis. My transcription of the first 20 minutes of the programme is included as Appendix B, and the voices speaking about the motet give remarkable testimony to the power of the aesthetic, and the significance of artworks in people's lives, both as audience and performers. Here are the words of one visitor who experienced Janet Cardiff's sound installation:

– Well, I came up to the main gallery on the 3rd floor – it's quite a large room, brightly lit – there are a lot of windows- and there were these 40 speakers – I went into the room on my own, thinking, "What's this trying to say?" I looked at the notice saying what it was all about, and *Spem in Alium* started up – and the 40 speakers were individual voices, and so I thought, "Where are you supposed to stand?" – so I stood in the middle, and when the waves of music came over me, I don't think I've ever been so moved in all my life – I stood in the middle of the room – I was in tears at the end, listening to it! It was amazing! I went back about five times . . . because if you stand in the middle you hear the whole choir, and then I discovered you can walk round and listen to each individual voice, or stand in one corner and listen to one five-part choir. And this sound sculpture just came to life for me!

The speaker's words describe his exploration of the sculptural and musical space of the work, an ever-changing exploration of groups, of different single voices and of the full ensemble that would not be possible in a standard live performance or a normal recording of the work. Question SS2 asks of sound sculpture:

SS2 How well do these artworks succeed, as far as one can assess on the evidence available?

This sound sculpture was experienced as an object of great beauty inducing a state of ecstasy in respondents, as were performances of the music that were experienced without any attendant visual experience, for example through earphones.

Question SS3 asks of sound sculpture:

SS3 Does this medium have the potential to make 'great art'?

The answer has to be 'Yes!' In this case, the musical work being performed was not composed by Janet Cardiff, nor did she sing a word of it, as far as I know. The art lies in the imaginative production of the work, and this medium has the same potential to be 'great art' as has the art of directing a great play or opera.

8.6 Back to the Research Questions

This thesis was driven by dissatisfaction with sceptical and deflationary accounts of the aesthetic and art. The drive behind this thesis had two further motivations: 1) a desire to see how sceptical and deflationary aesthetics could be squared with Baumgarten and Kant, and 2) puzzlement and curiosity over some general and specific aspects of the aesthetic and the arts: a) interest in the possible biological roots of human artistic activity and its relationship to the aesthetic in the natural kingdom b) the nexus of art, power and crime, and c) *avant-garde* art forms like ‘sound sculpture’. The project’s research question was divided in two, and each will now be given a final review.

8.6.1 What is the Aesthetic?

The conclusion of this thesis is that the aesthetic is rooted in our biology, and connected to our interpretation of the world around us, including the world of human culture. The sceptical view expressed by Noel Carroll, also expressed recently by Stephen Davies⁶¹, is that the aesthetic is contingent rather than necessary to art. This is the view which this thesis has striven to refute, though it acknowledges that in World3 there are no definitive arguments, and no ‘scientific’ tests for our hypotheses, only open debate and discussion, where the course of history can overtake received opinions, and where rational antagonists can survey the same evidence and arrive at divergent conclusions.

Nevertheless, evidence has been collected which I believe challenges sceptical and deflationary accounts. There is empirical evidence of aesthetic experience involving ‘right-brain’ states of mind in which ‘everyday’ states of mind, pragmatically focused, are replaced by states of mind where the subject tunes into earlier-stage sensory processing modules, with switching to ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ searches for concepts to aid interpretation of the phenomenon and the resulting qualia being attended to. That is the thumbnail sketch of the aesthetic mindset, and the aesthetic attitude is the adoption of the aesthetic mindset towards an object or performance, thought or internal state of mind or body, either by conscious choice, or spontaneously.

⁶¹ Stephen Davies (2006) *The Philosophy of Art*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 66-7, e.g. ‘Some conceptual artworks, such as the self-explanatory *All that I once knew but cannot now remember* (to use a rapidly growing work of my invention), present no aesthetic (or other) properties to perception.’ (p. 66); ‘On the face of it, the traditional account of aesthetic properties does not include purely narrative artforms within its ambit.’ (p. 66); ‘... it is an error to maintain that our concept of art originated in and continues to reflect theories that have promoted the centrality of the aesthetic’ (p. 67).

8.6.2 What is the Relationship of the Aesthetic to Art?

The aesthetic is necessary to art, and not contingent, as claimed by the sceptics and deflationists. As Kant argued long ago, aesthetic judgments differ from rational judgments in that they are ‘felt’ as pleasure or displeasure, or as ‘respect’ in the case of the sublime, rather than concluded by reason. This is where the deflationary interpretation of Duchamp is in error. *Fountain* is indeed experienced as an aesthetic object, because it provokes a felt response, as when it was first pushed into the faces of the hanging committee who were so disgusted that they hid it from the public, despite their democratic agreement to show all submitted works. Those emotions were ‘affects’, in Baumgarten’s terms, and they are the stimuli to the limbic system, the importance of which Currie accused Ramachandran of exaggerating.

As Baumgarten pointed out, the aesthetic is also vital to science, in providing empirical evidence and providing the means of articulating abstract ideas through imagery, as in metaphor. Aesthetic qualities and affect also motivate research, and guide the scientist by the lure of ‘elegant solutions’. However, the difference between art and science is that for scientists and philosophers the ‘aesthetic qualities’ of their use of language or other media, and the ‘aesthetic qualities’ of their solutions or their emotional responses towards their discoveries and ideas are only rewarding by-products. By contrast, they are the very point of the artist’s labours. Though for the artist rational considerations come into play, these occur in a process of ‘switching’ in and out of ‘right-brain’ states, as ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ processes interact in a way that Kant described as the ‘free play of Imagination and Understanding’, and that process is the *purpose* of art in a way that it is *not* for *science*, where the ultimate purpose is the *rational conclusion* reached.

Artists harness this interplay of the senses with concepts, to produce artworks that combine sensory structures and concepts, by a heuristic process: ‘imaged concepts’, in the words of Baumgarten. The creativity involved is common to artistic and scientific discourse, to both art and rhetoric, the divergence between them being a matter of varying emphasis, either rhetoric affecting pragmatic, rational, ‘everyday’ considerations, or, art, stimulating insight through untrammelled enjoyment or pathos. But, as Baumgarten observed, to draw a line between rhetoric and art sometimes demands the wisdom of ‘no less capable a geometer than did the frontiers of the Phrygians and the Mysians’.

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Abbreviations:

BJA British Journal of Aesthetics

JAAC Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism

OUP Oxford University Press

CUP Cambridge University Press

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Media references:

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"Babytalk", Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd., Ref. No. E362/06A.

BBC Radio 4

Andrew Cunningham's history of medicine, broadcast from 5 February 2007 for 30 fifteen-minute episodes; summaries on: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/medicine>.

In Our Time "Perception and the Senses" with Melvyn Bragg, Richard Gregory, David Moore and Gemma Calvert (still available to "listen again")
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20050428.shtml.

Material World programmes available on 'listen again': Fossil colourisation, and Cambrian explosion of species with vision
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/thematerialworld_20080207.shtml.

The Reith Lectures 2003 "The Emerging Mind" by Vilayanur S. Ramachandran
 Still available to "listen again": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003/lectures.shtml>.

"Soul Music": episode about *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis, broadcast on Tuesday 29th January 2008. The programme was for a while available on 'Listen again', but has now been withdrawn.

BBC Television

Horizon: (undated, probably 2004) "Derek tastes of earwax"; a transcript is still available at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/derek_trans.shtml

The Natural World, programme by David Attenborough (2000) “Bower Birds – the Art of Seduction”, first broadcast on 17th December 2000 (see Appendix C).

Channel 4

‘The Mona Lisa Curse’, documentary by Robert Hughes, broadcast on 21 September 2008, the first in a series of three programmes on Art and Money, on Channel 4.

‘The Great Russian Art Invasion’, documentary by Marcel Theroux, broadcast on 28 September 2008, the second in a series of three programmes on Art and Money, on Channel 4.

Evolutionary Science

Cambrian era: Trilobite picture

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/cambrian/camb.html>

Evolution of eye:

1) Evolution of the Eye

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/cambrian/camb.html> (crane, not skyhook)

2) http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/01/1/real/1_011_01.html

Closed webpage on eye:

3) [www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html)

[resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html)

4) Squid eye superior to vertebrate (and human) eye

http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://webvision.med.utah.edu/imageswv/Saagschem.jpeg&imgrefurl=http://www.pandasthumb.org/archives/2006/11/denton_vs_squid.html&h=480&w=726&sz=92&hl=en&start=14&um=1&tbnid=hp3Vn3YyU8V39M:&tbnh=93&tbnw=141&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsquid%252Beye%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26channel%3Ds%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official

Light sensitivity of Paramecium and Amoeba

1) [www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html)

[resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/lifesci/optometry/resources/modules/stage1/pvp1/Evolution.html)

(these web pages now deleted)

2) Paramecium (the Biology Web, Clinton Community College)

http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://faculty.clintoncc.suny.edu/faculty/michael.gregory/files/Bio%2520102/Bio%2520102%2520lectures/protists/paramecium_conjugating.jpg&imgrefurl=http://faculty.clintoncc.suny.edu/faculty/michael.gregory/files/Bio%2520102/Bio%2520102%2520lectures/Protists/protists.htm&h=480&w=640&sz=107&hl=en&start=5&um=1&tbnid=b6h_s2eGgYn3FM:&tbnh=103&tbnw=137&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dparamecium%252Beukaryotic%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official%26sa%3DN

Paramecium (note spelling variation)

‘Googled’ for ‘images’ will lead to images of sexual conjugation of Paramecium and a detailed explanation of the lifecycle on the website of Clinton Community College, New York.

Tate

Bruce Nauman

1) Turbine Hall Installation, Tate Modern

<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/nauman/about.shtm>

2) Interview with Robert Storr

<http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue2/soundwaves.htm>

3) Bruce Nauman essay by Ben Borthwick

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/nauman/about_raw.shtm

Copy, not original, of Géricault

Raft of the Medusa shown in 'Constable to Delacroix' show at Tate Britain, 5 February to 11th May 2003:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/constabletodelacroix/room2.htm>

Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet*

<http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/janetcardiff/>

Julian Opie: wall-mounted sculpture called *H* (Ch. 1 fn 47)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=20363&searchid=9613>

Mike Bidlo *Not Andy Warhol* image

http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue3/consume_image3.htm

World Wide Web

'Amazing Powers of Sheep': to recognise faces (report by Helen Briggs)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1641463.stm#TOP>

Baumgarten:

1) Metaphysica English translation: Dr John Hymers:

http://hymers.eu/dr_hymers/research_baumgarten_translation.htm

http://hymers.eu/dr_hymers/research_baumgarten.htm

2) Metaphysica: Latin text

<http://www.ikp.uni-bonn.de/kant/agb-metaphysica/synopsis.html>

British Council

The 2008 report of its public consultation, *Action Plan for the Arts*

http://www.britishcouncil.org/action_plan_for_the_arts-2.pdf

Bruce Nauman review by Adrian Searle

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/critic/feature/0,1169,1325197,00.html>

Buckminsterfullerene

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allotropes_of_carbon#Buckminsterfullerenes

Buddhas of Bamiyan

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1664713.stm>

Drawing research

a) Eye movements:

1) National Gallery 'Telling Time' experiment:

http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/esri/applied-vision/projects/national_gallery/index.htm

2) Comparative eye movements of portrait artist Humphrey Ocean and novice artists

http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/drawing_cognition/portrait.htm

b) Comparative fMRI scans on Humphrey Ocean and a novice artist

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/leonardo/v034/34.1solso.html#fig02>

Duchamp

1) 'Bicycle Wheel'

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rozai001/1017/images/duchamp2.jpg>

2) 'Green Box'

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=66623&searchid=9637>

3) 'In advance of the broken Arm'

http://www.marcelduchamp.net/images/In_Advance_of_the_Broken_Arm.jpg

Einstein tram

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/ideas/2311_einstein.html

Greenberg

<http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/>, with a biographical sketch by Terry Fenton at

<http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/thecritic.html>

Murdered woman as fraudulent mummy of Persian princess:

<http://www.archaeology.org/0101/etc/persia.html>

Museum of Copies: Otsuka Museum in Japan

shows 1000 masterpieces from 26 countries

<http://www.o-museum.or.jp/english/index.html>

Performance artist Hans Nitsch

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Nitsch

Picasso auction price 2004

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/3682127.stm>

Royal Academy, London:

1) Past exhibitions:

<http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/events/past-exhibitions/>

2) including 'China: the Three Emperors':

<http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/events/exhibitions/china-the-three-emperors-16621795,116,EV.html?type=past>

Synaesthesia at San Diego (Ramachandran *et al.*)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4375977.stm>

Thefts from Central American archeological sites
[//news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1184233.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1184233.stm)

Thought Experiments
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/thought-experiment/>

Wales at the Venice Biennale
<http://www.walesvenicebiennale.org.uk/biennaleinfo.asp?currentbiennaleid=3>

APPENDIX ‘A’

Definitions of the Aesthetic

- §1 The **AESTHETIC** is both an active and a passive resource for the flourishing of organisms.
- §2 The **PASSIVE AESTHETIC** comprises feelings and cognitions engendered by attention directed towards an external object or internal thought and/or feeling.
- §3 The **ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the presentation of a sensory profile by one organism to other organisms. The active aesthetic can be either tacit or expressive.
- §4 The **TACIT ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the result of evolutionary selective processes, in which the action of organism A has changed the sensory profile of organism B, which can influence the behaviour of organisms A, B or C etc.
e.g. predation of light peppered moths in the industrial revolution increased the numbers of dark peppered moths (See Plate 13a).
- §5 The **EXPRESSIVE ACTIVE AESTHETIC** is the sensory signalling of organism C which has the potential to influence the thoughts, feelings or behaviour of organisms D or E or etc.
The shepherd C plays his or her harp for auto-delectation, quite apart from any effect his or her playing might have on the inner state of the sheep, D, or the lion, E. The expressive active aesthetic can be both:
1) a) unconscious or b) conscious
e.g. a) releasing pheromones or b) writing a letter
and
2) c) intended or d) unintentional
e.g. c) saying “Hello!” or d) blushing.
- §6 **FEELINGS** comprise qualia, pleasure, unpleasant sensations, indifference and emotions, all occasioned by perceptions, thoughts or cognitions.
- §7 The word **QUALIA** is used here to denote the sensations generated by early-stage processing of sensory stimulation, whether pleasurable or unpleasant. To qualify as qualia, the stimulation must at least to a minimal degree enter the organism’s awareness.
- §8 **PLEASURE** is the source of **BEAUTY** and takes several forms:
1) the experience of pleasant qualia (§7). These have been selected by evolution for any specific organism, but are also subject to learning, as with ‘acquired tastes’, like fine wines. Some are due to chance effects on the nervous system e.g. the effect of alcohol on the brain.

- 2) the rewards of positive feelings delivered to consciousness via stimuli to the limbic system and to pleasure centres following experiences viewed as favourable to the organism and its interests. These include the simple cognitive identification of external objects and implicit agency; identifying a well-loved face or voice; play activities; approval of actions; accomplishment of tasks; solving problems and seeing relationships, whether between features of externally perceived objects or internally generated cognitions or finding order and meaning (Aha! moments). The experience of beauty can also arise when there is consonance between a sensory experience (real or imagined) and a cognition.
- 3) the release of hormones and neurotransmitters following experiences generally viewed as favourable to the organism or its interests

§9 **UNPLEASANT SENSATION** is the source of the **SUBLIME**, and also takes several forms:

- 1) the experience of unpleasant qualia (§7). These are selected for specific organisms by evolution, but are also subject to learning, as when the image of somebody beautiful can come to be hated. Alternatively, it can be a chance unpleasant effect on the nervous system (e.g. a bad 'trip' on LSD).
- 2) the punishing negative feelings delivered to consciousness via stimuli to the limbic system and to pain centres following experiences damaging to the organism or its interests. These include frustrations such as the failure correctly to identify external objects or agency; disappointment; failure to accomplish tasks or participate in play activities; disapproval of actions; failure to solve problems or discern relationships, whether between features of externally perceived objects or between internal cognitions, or failure to find order and meaning.
- 3) the release of hormones and neurotransmitters following an experience unfavourable to the organism or its interests.

§10 **INDIFFERENCE** is a feeling experienced when there are no marked pleasant or unpleasant sensations, and no motivation to take action. However, as the mind is constantly scanning for stimulus and meaning, if the organism is frustrated, the mood can change to boredom, which is experienced as an unpleasant sensation (§9).

§11 **EMOTIONS** are the feelings engendered by external stimulation or internal thoughts or cognitions that cause the release of neurotransmitters and hormones which evolved to cause an organism to respond appropriately to situations. Emotions can well up, even when an active response is not required, permitted or practicable.

- §12 **DIRECTED ATTENTION** occurs when the nervous system focuses consciously on external sources of sensory stimulation or on internal thoughts and cognitions. This distinguishes directed attention from
- 1) the majority of sensory stimulation which is processed unconsciously, such as sensory information from the inner ear concerning balance or the usually un-noticed pressure from body contact with support surfaces.
 - 2) stable background features which, though being monitored, are ignored unless a sudden alteration occurs, such as the clock stopping.

§13 **THOUGHT** is the conscious planning and problem-solving activity of an organism, a process assisted by conscious learning or by the unconscious consolidation of learning, whether in sleep or automatically during the acquisition of practical skills.

§14 To adopt the **AESTHETIC ATTITUDE** is to take ‘time out’ from the flux of work-a-day practical necessities and, in a highly vigilant state of mind, to scrutinise an object or thought in order to focus on the full range of feelings and thoughts it engenders in the subject. This ‘time out’ factor (i.e. not immediately pragmatic) is the origin of the term **DISINTERESTEDNESS** in the context of aesthetics.

§15 **AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE** is the heightened state of awareness following the adoption of the aesthetic attitude (§14). It involves a relative suppression of verbal and cognitive reasoning in favour of increased attention to the brain’s sensory processing modules. The attention is focused on:

- 1) the qualia (§7),
- 2) the positive or negative feelings resulting from positive or negative messages sent by the organism’s perceptual and cognitive systems to its limbic system, affecting mood and the emotions;
- 3) the search for meaning, so that the sensations, feelings and emotions engendered are related to cognitions stored in memory, or invoked by the aesthetic experience. A positive aesthetic experience will cause the attention to linger, finding the object interesting or even beautiful (§8). A negative aesthetic experience is most likely to result from boredom caused by a lack of resonance between the perceived object and the organism’s cognitions. Given cognitive resonance in a mind prepared for the experience, ugly or even disgusting objects can yield positive aesthetic experiences, as in the case of the sublime (§9).

§16 An **AESTHETIC OBJECT** is the focus of the aesthetic attitude (§14) and is the cause of aesthetic experience (§15) engendered in an organism equipped with the appropriate sense-processing organs and prior learning. An aesthetic object can be a natural form or environment, a crafted object or

environment, a time-based performance, a linguistic construction, a feeling, thought or concept, or any combination of these.

§17 **RHETORIC** is the premeditated or spontaneous deployment of the active aesthetic (§3), whether tacit (§4) or expressive (§5) to embody, perform or construct an aesthetic object (§16) with persuasive intent towards another organism's behaviour. Rhetorical display is competitive. When successful, it assists pragmatic aims. Among social organisms, success in rhetorical display enhances status.

§18 **ART** is the premeditated or spontaneous deployment of the active aesthetic (§3), whether tacit (§4) or expressive (§5) to embody, perform or construct an aesthetic object (§16) whether beautiful (§8) or sublime (§9) to bring insight to another organism without necessarily intending or achieving a pragmatic effect. The difference between rhetoric (§17) and art is a matter of degree, with a lesser emphasis on the pragmatic in art than in rhetoric, though the classification of any particular aesthetic object to either category will be open to interpretation, and therefore, debate. Artistic display is social and competitive, and success enhances an organism's status.

APPENDIX B.

A Partial Transcript
comprising about 20 minutes of the total
of

“Soul Music”

A Radio 4 programme
(broadcast on Tuesday 29th January 2008)

about

Spem in Alium

by

Thomas Tallis
(1505-85)

A number of male speakers, difficult to tell apart, are interleaved as the music fades in and out.

My name is Graham Fife - I used to sing when I was living in Norfolk in the University of East Anglia choir and I joined the Aldbrough Festival Singers . . . so the deal was that we'd meet at Blythburgh church in the Suffolk countryside – it is a magical place – there's heathland and marshland – it's quite stark – the sky is huge, and Blythburgh church almost standing there on its own, reaching up into the firmament – I'm choaking up just remembering what it was like! . . . We stood there with our scores round the font – so we stood in a great big circle And there is that moment of silence – total silence - and when that first voice came in, it really was like an enchantment . . . It is like a dawn - first ray of light coming – even the first twittering of the birds in the stillness . . .

(change of voice)

There are certain bits of music that tug on heartstrings, and *Spem in Alium* is just one of those pieces of music that touches your soul there's a piece somewhere in my chest near my heart that just suddenly starts sort of coming up . . . and catches in my throat - this piece of music puts you in a different world altogether . . .

(Graham Fife)

. . . and the music began to move – and then the other voices came in – then I joined, and gradually, gradually the whole thing built and built and built and the church filled with the music

(Change of voice)

Sometimes, music like this challenges the way we live, in a big way, and makes you want to just stop and listen There's something bigger and something more important going on, and we need to just stop and register it every now and then . . .

(Graham Fife)

and then slowly the whole piece begins to open up – (pause) – so that in the end we really are swept up – and I mean swept up into the great blooming of sound . . .

My name's Simon Halsey. . . I'm the chorus director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra . . . *Spem in Alium* is a motet, which means it's a piece of choral music with sacred words. It's about 10 minutes long. So far, there's nothing exceptional about it . . . What is completely exceptional about it is that it's for 40 voices – It's the largest scale piece ever attempted by any composer and no-one did anything else on a similar scale for hundreds of years afterwards. It's a fantastic one-off crazy thing–

(Change of voice)

This is Thomas Tallis taking on an immense work of creation . . . if you like paralleling the complexity of ruling a kingdom, creating the universe – I mean, this is not too highfallutin' – this is what music was for – It is praise, it is the most wonderful burst of joy and awe . . .

(Change of voice)

(*He starts off in Latin, then translates*) “I have never put my hope in any other but you, O God of Israel, who will be angry and yet will become again gracious, and who forgives all the sins of suffering men. Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, look upon our lowliness” . . . I mean, for somebody who was a giant of music in the church at the time and pretty high up in the court to come out with a piece like that . . . “Look upon our lowliness!” . . . you know, and yet to come out with a piece that is so majestic . . . expressing his feelings before God . . . is just incredible to me . . .

(Change of voice)

Thomas Tallis is very important in our musical history because of the time that he lived. There have been various times in musical history where Britain was one of the top nations. One of those times was in the Tudor period. We had two *overwhelmingly* famous and successful composers, Thomas Tallis and William Bird Between them they spanned a period from *about* 1500 to *about* 1625. They knew each other and worked with each other, though Tallis was a good deal older than Bird. And they were not only great composers, they were great politicians, in that they managed to live through the constant period of flux between being Catholic, being Protestant, going back to being Catholic again, returning to being Protestant, and our Royal patrons in the Tudor time – you have to remember that *finally* there was *comparative* peace, that the Tudor Kings were beginning to be able to be patrons of the arts, that there was a little more time to hunt, to play music, to cook, to enjoy plays, to go out safely in the street rather than simply scrapping over who owned what and marching on each other So, with this prosperity and comparative safety comes of course the end of building castles and the beginning of building great houses, comes the beginning of florid and glorious gardens, come the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and music somehow relaxes

(Simon Halsey again?)

It's constructed for 8 separate choirs – each choir has 5 voices – so 8 time 5 gives you 40 – each choir has a soprano, an alto, a tenor, a baritone and a bass in it. If you go to a performance of it, the audience is often in the middle, with the choir in a huge circle around them, and that's the best way to experience it, because you see the music pass from left to right, great walls and blocks of sound - you then see it start from the right and go to the left and then go in both directions It's like being at a funfair – one of those wonderful machines that throws you one way and then brings you back the other way

I'm Clive Stafford Smith, and I'm the Director of the British legal charity, Reprieve, and we help people who are on death row and we also represent a bunch of folk in Guantanamo, in the American secret prisons. Every time I tried a death penalty case in America, I always had a song that I would have for that trial, because it's late at night, you know, you come back from court at 8 o'clock at night, and work 'till very late preparing for the next day, and I'd just like *one* piece of music that I have on the headphones and I'm working . . . you want the music not to interfere with your thought processes – you want nothing to interfere with it, which why I listened to the same piece of music over and over. It was *Spem in Alium*, which had just struck me which I adopted then, for the trial I was having in Alabama – a guy called Otis Grimsley – It was an immensely difficult experience (all of them are difficult) . . . in Alabama - in the heart of darkness of racial discrimination. This guy was being tried in Henry County where

no Afro-American person had not been sentenced to death on a capital charge – And when we started the trial I was frankly terrified. It was hugely confrontational, and everyone in the courthouse was white apart from Otis, and the prosecutor was trying to get rid of all the black people! And I remember, they kicked 17 black people off the jury in a row – I had a calculator, and told the judge that the chances against the prosecutors doing this by chance were 37 billion to 1, and the judge later told me, no, it isn't, it's 1 in 1 – it always happens! Which I thought somewhat missed the point We were having this racist battle, and eventually the courtroom was filling up with black people, on our side of it, so there was hope! I worked from 8am to 8pm, and had an hour's drive to a motel, as it was a rinky-dink town with no motel – Well this time I chose *Spem in Alium* and I'd stay up listening to it – I sat with my computer and head-phones, and listen to it 5 times an hour – I'd listen to it over and over again – so I'd listen to it, you know, 20 or 25 times – at the end of the night I would have a last few listens for the emotional transportation – there can be nothing more different than sweating in a motel in Alabama dealing with life and death, and being transported somehow into this idyllic world of choral voices . . . it's just an out of body, out of mind experience and literally takes you away from the fear that otherwise could be quite paralysing, if you're thinking, "Oh, goodness, if I screw this up, this guy is going to die a horrible death!" Then it's really good to get transported away from that. . . There's no way you can represent someone for their life without believing in them . . . or starting a trial without believing we were going to win . . . You have to have that belief, you have to have that hope! There's no way you can represent someone for the life without *liking* them, and becoming emotionally close to them. We beat them quite soundly in the trial – there's no emotional experience like that – it was just this thing of the town coming together and it was fantastic and Otis was the first person *not* to be sentenced to death, indeed, he was not convicted of capital murder, I'm glad to say, and to have the inspiration of *this* helped me immensely.

I'm John Davies. I've worked in Walsall for 30-odd years as an Anglican priest, and was a trustee of Walsall Art Gallery. Like most people, some of the modern art you see, you just think, "What's that for?", and "What's it trying to say?" – but I like being challenged by it, and having my thoughts provoked by it – I think that's what art's *there* for – and some of it, if you take the time to look at it, and listen, can just knock you over . . . One of the exhibitions that came up included Janet Cardiff's "sound sculpture". I thought, "That sounds interesting! What's that?" and I expected a wet finger squeaking on a glass, and the old saw played with a violin bow, that sort of thing . . . Dr. Who-type music from the electronic workshop – Well, I came up to the main gallery on the 3rd floor – it's quite a large room, brightly lit – there are a lot of windows- and there were these 40 speakers – I went into the room on my own, thinking, "What's this trying to say?" . . . I looked at the notice saying what it was all about, and *Spem in Alium* started up – and the 40 speakers were individual voices, and so I thought, "Where are you supposed to stand?" – so I stood in the middle, and when the waves of music came over me, I don't think I've ever been so moved in all my life – I stood in the middle of the room – I was in tears at the end, listening to it! It was amazing! I went back about five times . . . because if you stand in the middle you hear the whole choir, and then I discovered you can walk round and listen to each individual voice, or stand in one corner and listen to one five-part choir. And this sound sculpture just came to life for me! It affected many people in different ways, you know . . . In pastoral terms, I think you could have used it as a counselling aid, and put counsellors in there to talk to people as they came out, in tears – because it had that effect on people *Spem in Alium*

is on my ipod and I sometimes sit down and just plug in and listen to that – and ponder the day or ponder what’s gone on before. There have been periods in my life when I’ve had my ups and downs, and there are times when I need to remind myself that the world is not an easy place, and it’s difficult, and I’ve been a bit low, at times of bereavement, which I’ve had, times of change and difficulty. I’ve got a son with learning difficulties and he’s got his own house now – and when he went, I didn’t know what to do, because it’s very difficult to let somebody go, you know, and grow up and be themselves. It difficult when *anybody* goes away from home, but if they’ve got *special needs* . . . and I found that really difficult and this piece at that period made me think, you know, he’s an adult, and I’ve always trusted God with him . . . God’s there to be with us, and that piece expresses that more powerfully than most other pieces I’ve ever come across

APPENDIX 'C'

Pictures and a transcript excerpt
from
“Bower Birds -The Art of Seduction”

written and presented by

David Attenborough

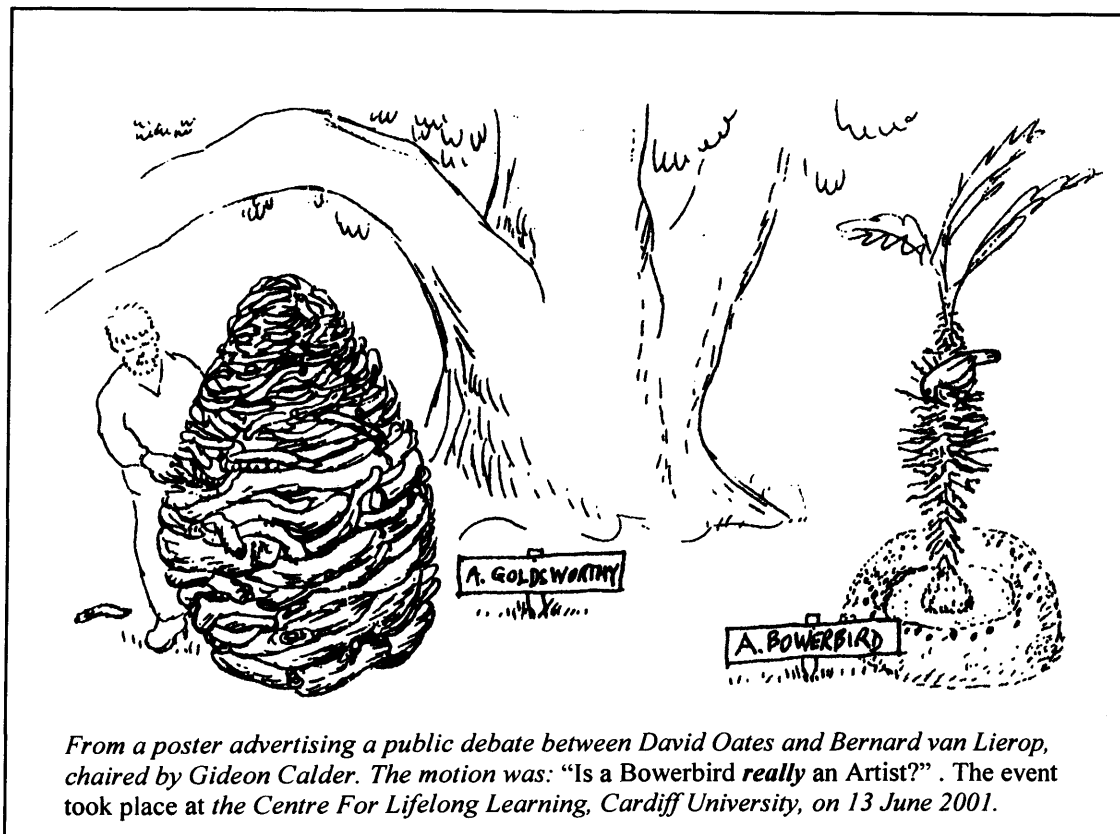


Illustration B.v.L.

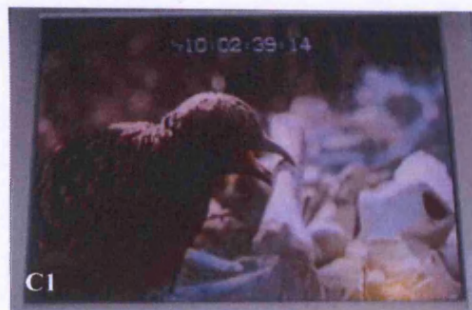
a BBC Natural World programme

Broadcast on

17th December 2000

Notes are supplied in brackets, and Attenborough's words, later, have been put into inverted commas:

(The male of the Western Bowerbird *Chlamydera maculata guttata* arranging its treasures; Australia)



(The bower of the Stagemaker Bowerbird, *Scenopoeetes dentirostris*, with a female, in the top left-hand corner, showing interest; N. E. Queensland, Australia)



(The Stagemaker bowerbird's courtship ritual begins, as with most of the 18 species of bowerbird, with the male hiding and reappearing to attract the female's interest.)



(This is a male Yellow-crested Gardener or MacGregor bowerbird, *Amblyornis macgregoriae*, in New Guinea. He has a brilliant yellow-orange crest which is kept folded down, making him look a plain brown, when not performing his courtship display. He performs only when a female has descended on to the 'runway' of his 'maypole-style' bower. In this picture, one of his collection of small decorative lumps of a rare black fungus has fallen down on to the 'runway', and he is returning it to where it belongs, on the top surface of the boundary wall)



(This view shows the whole boundary wall, the 'runway', and the lower 20% of the central 'maypole', which is a young tree fern. The twigs do not belong to the tree fern, but have been collected and attached to it by the male, and hung decoratively with amber-coloured caterpillar droppings. The top of the tree fern is growing freely, forming an umbrella-shaped canopy to the whole ensemble)



(This shows the beginning of the rarely witnessed climax to the male's courtship dance. After a bout of the group's usual 'hide and seek' routine, he begins to allow the female flashing glimpses of the brilliant crest which is normally folded down, totally hidden from view)



(This shows the McGregor bowerbird at the peak of its display. It whirs around, its golden crest flashing like flames on the forest floor. After a display which has reached such a crescendo, the birds are now likely to mate somewhere in the forest, nearby. At this point in the film, Attenborough speculates on the female's 'aesthetic sense . . . artistic sense', a passage transcribed in the main text, in Chapter Eight. Then, footage of the bird adding twigs to its maypole was wittily inter-cut with a sequence of environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy building a 7-foot high sculpture from fallen branches and twigs, under an oak tree. "If Goldsworthy's work is widely accepted as art, and it is," asks Attenborough, "why not the MacGregor bowerbird's?")

(Next, Attenborough shows three different bowers built within a small area of the New Guinea rainforest by three different males of the Brown Gardener (or 'Vogelkop') bowerbird species, *Amblyornis inornatus*. Looking at the first one, he exclaims . . .)

"What an astonishment it is! Surely one of the wonders of the natural world! The bower has been completely roofed over, thatched with these stems of orchids. It's been built around the base of a sapling. It has a stout pillar in the middle and two smaller pillars at the side to support it.

"The whole of the 'treasury' is 5 or 6 yards across, and what a treasury it contains, or what a variety of treasures it contains! On the far side there are the black stems of tree ferns. Here is the lawn neatly planted with moss . . .

" . . . and on it the shiny wing covers of beetles . . . there's orange fruit there . . .

" . . . [and] there are these glowing orange dead leaves. . .

" . . . These are the acorns of the oak trees, the tropical oaks which are common around here . . .



“ . . . Behind me are black fruits . .



“ . . . This individual behind me, nearby, however, has completely different taste . . .



“ . . . His bower is just as large and as splendidly thatched, but he has taken advantage of a bush coming into bloom . . .



“ . . . and has decided to try to impress the touring females with floral decorations [soundtrack plays department store *musak*, as the camera pans over the blossoms on display]. . .



“ [whereas] This individual is experimenting with browns. . .



“ . . . and a black mushroom . . .”



APPENDIX 'D'

English Translation by Bernard van Lierop

from the Latin of

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's

***Metaphysica* (§§501-623)**

Working from the Latin text, edited and translated into German, by

Hans Rudolf Schweizer

in

Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik

(Texts Towards Laying the Foundations of Aesthetics)

Published in 1983, in Hamburg by Felix Meiner Verlag

METAPHYSICS Part III

PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

- §501 PSYCHOLOGY is the science of the mind's general predicates.
- §502 Psychology comprises the first principles of theology, aesthetics, logic and the practical sciences; it is, therefore, with reason (§501), relevant (§2) to metaphysics (§1).
- §503 It is asserted that PSYCHOLOGY is 1) empirical, based on immediate experience, i.e. EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY and 2) rational, deduced from the idea of the mind's lengthy sequence of ratiocinations, i.e. RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

CHAPTER I: EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Section I: The Existence of Mind

- §504 If within an entity there is an x, which can be aware of something else, that x is MIND. In me there exists (§55) something which can be aware of something else (§57). Therefore, mind exists in me (I exist as a mind)¹.
- §505 I think; my state of mind is altered (§125, 504). Therefore, thoughts are the happenings of my mind (§210); for at least some of these happenings my mind supplies the sufficient reason (§21). Therefore, my mind is a power² (§197).
- §506 Thoughts are representations. Therefore my mind is a representational power (§505).
- §507 My mind thinks of at least parts of this universe, albeit only partially (§354). Therefore my mind is a force representative of its universe, at least partly (§155).
- §508 I think of certain bodies in the universe, and of their changes: of this body, a few (changes); of that body, more; and of one body, the most. This last body is a part of me (§155). Hence MY BODY is the one whose many changes are in my thoughts, more than those of any other body.
- §509 My body has, in this world, a determinate position (§85), locus, age (§281) and situation (§284).
- §510 I think of certain things distinctly, of others confusedly. The confused thinking about something does not differentiate its qualities³; nevertheless, the confused thinking does yield a representation or perception. Now, if the qualities, thus

¹ Baumgarten does not use "x", but in English a run of "somethings" and "anythings" is less clear.

² *Vis*, also translatable as "force".

³ *Notas*, also translatable as "notes".

confusedly represented, were to make distinctions, which are confusedly represented, the result would [nevertheless] be distinct thought; if the qualities were not perceived at all, absolutely confused thought results; those confusedly perceived qualities provide no power to distinguish one thing from another. Therefore, he who thinks confusedly represents something, [but] obscurely.⁴

- §511 There exist obscure perceptions in the mind (§510). All of these, [taken] as a complex, are called the FOUNDATION of the MIND.
- §512 From the position of my body in this universe it can be known why I might perceive this more obscurely, that more clearly and the other more distinctly (§306, 509); i.e. I REPRESENT [the world] ACCORDING to the POSITION of my BODY in this universe.
- §513 My mind is a power (§505) which represents (§506) the universe (§507) according to the position of my own body (§512).
- §514 The sum of all the representations in the mind is TOTAL PERCEPTION, whose parts are PARTIAL PERCEPTION and the complex of obscure representations is the FIELD OF OBSCURITY (of darkness), which is the foundation of the mind, the complex of clear representations is the FIELD OF CLARITY (of light) comprising the representational FIELDS OF THE CONFUSED, THE DISTINCT, THE ADEQUATE, etc.
- §515 Reality is true knowledge (§12, 36), whose opposite is non-existent or deficient knowledge; IGNORANCE and seeming knowledge or ERROR are negations [of true knowledge]. (§81. 36) Minimal knowledge is the smallest truth about the least, single object (§161). Therefore, the more numerous [the facts], the more intense⁵ (§160) and the truer the object shall be, the more clearly defined, until it achieves the greatest truth [comprised of] the most numerous and most intense [qualities⁶]. There is a scale of KNOWLEDGE. Where many things are known, there is PLENITUDE (copiousness, extension, wealth, vastness); where fewer things are known, there is NARROWNESS; where more truths are known, there is DIGNITY (nobility, greatness, gravity, majesty); where less is known, there is WANT (meagreness, short measure). Where there is more truth, knowledge is conjoined with greater order; that which is the truer (§184) is the more intense; the truly established KNOWLEDGE is EXACT (accurately hewn out); less truth-revealing knowledge is [only] ROUGH-HEWN. The more orderly the cognition, or METHOD, the greater the resulting METHODICAL KNOWLEDGE (didactic, disciplined); the less orderly results in a TUMULTUOUS MUDDLE. Knowledge and its representations in my mind are either less or more intense (§214); these representations, where they are reasons, or

⁴ *Obsure*, also translatable as “dark” or “darkly”.

⁵ *maior*, “greater” can mean louder, for a voice, hence my choice of “more intense”. It is translated by Schweizer as “*bedeutender*”, or more distinct, significant or meaningful.

⁶ Elsewhere, I use the word “qualities” to translate *notas*, which Mary J. Gregor (*Op. Cit.* 1983) refers to as “notes”, or items of sensory experience. Here, in the Latin, there is no substantive, only something understood, whereas the English requires one, which I have attempted to supply.

EVIDENCE IN THE BROADER SENSE, are thereby given force and power (§197). There is no knowledge that is totally sterile (§23); however, knowledge is more effective if MORE VIGOROUS and STRONGER; if faint, it is WEAK, HELPLESS (feeble, ineffectual). Comparatively feeble representations alter a state of mind to a lesser degree; more powerful representations alter a state of mind to a greater degree (§208,214).

§516 PERCEPTIONS which combine with other partial elements to form a totality are called ASSOCIATIONS; the strongest one of which is the ruling one.

§517 The more qualities a perception comprises, the stronger it is (§23, 515). An obscure perception, comprising many qualities, is stronger than a clear perception, and a confused perception comprising many qualities is (also) stronger than a distinct perception. PERCEPTIONS which include many qualities are called PREGNANT. Therefore such pregnant perceptions are the stronger sort. For this reason, such ideas have great strength (§148). Pregnant concepts are EMPHATIC [concepts] (emphases). The science of these is EMPHASEOLOGY⁷. The power of proper nouns is not small.

§518 The state of mind, in which the dominant perceptions are obscure, is the REIGN OF DARKNESS; the state of mind in which clear perceptions rule is the REIGN OF LIGHT.

Section II: The Lower Cognitive Faculty.

§519 My mind knows something (§506). Therefore it has a COGNITIVE FACULTY, i.e. the ability to know something (§57, 216) (intellect in the broader sense, cf. §402).

§520 My mind knows some things obscurely, and other things confusedly (§510). Now, other things being equal, when something is perceived as different from other things, more is perceived than when perceiving something, but not distinguishing it from other things (§57). Therefore, other things being equal, clear knowledge is greater than obscure knowledge (§515). Hence there is a scale of knowledge: obscurity is lower on this scale of knowledge and clarity is higher (§160, 246). By the same reasoning, the confused is also lesser or lower, and the distinct greater or higher. Therefore, the obscure and confused or indistinct FACULTY, in knowing anything, is the LOWER COGNITIVE faculty. Therefore my mind has a lower cognitive faculty (§57, 216).

§521 Any REPRESENTATION which is not distinct is called SENSORY. Therefore, the power of my mind represents, through its lower faculty, sensory perceptions (§520, 513).

⁷ EMPHASEOLOGIA

- §522 I represent certain things to myself thus: some of their qualities⁸ are clear, others obscure. In a perception of this kind, the clear qualities are distinct, and the obscure qualities are sensory (§521). Therefore, that perception is clear which has some added obscure and confused elements, and this one is sensory, in which some clarity is inherent. This is in accordance with the lower faculty of cognition (§520).
- §523 The qualities of any representation are either mediated or immediate (§67, 27). The latter, in any perception, are to be respected as clear judgments.
- §524 The qualities of any perception are either sufficient or insufficient (§21, 67), either absolutely necessary (§106, 107), or in themselves contingent (§108), either absolutely immutable and constant (§132), or variable or mutable (§133); the first mentioned of these qualities are sometimes called unique, owing to their prominence.
- §525 The qualities of a representation are either negative or real (§135). The former indicate a NEGATIVE PERCEPTION, and the latter is called a POSTIVE PERCEPTION. Negative perceptions are either TOTALLY [negative], such that their individual qualities are negative, so that nothing is perceptible (§136), or they are PARTIALLY so, such that some qualities are negative, either truly or apparently (§12).
- §526 Of such qualities, some are more fruitful and more pregnant⁹ than others (§166), both of which can be said to be sufficient compared to the insufficient ones¹⁰ (§169, 524).
- §527 We call EASY that which few forces may achieve; that which requires more, is called DIFFICULT. Hence, something is EASY for a CERTAIN SUBJECT able to achieve something while engaging a small part of the powers which lend him strength. Something is DIFFICULT for a CERTAIN SUBJECT, which requires a large part of the powers which make up a substantial part of their strength. Therefore, there is a scale of easiness and difficulty (§246).
- §528 A perception is minimally clear whose qualities are just sufficient to distinguish one thing from a very different other thing with the greatest difficulty (§161). Therefore, the more plentiful and the more the same [the qualities] are, the more easily I can distinguish my perception from the more plentiful and the more similar qualites, the clearer my perception is for me (§160), until, that is the clearest which, from everything else which is most similar to it, I am the most easily able to make distinctions (§161). Minimally obscure is that representation, whose qualities are just insufficient to distinguish something from another very similar thing (§161). Therefore, the more plentiful [the qualities], the greater the diversity, the greater force

⁸ Here once more Baumgarten uses the word *notae*. The same word, or word stem, begins §523-6.

⁹ *gravis*, “heavy”, can mean “pregnant”. See §517.

¹⁰ In the Latin, the second half of this section comprises only three words: *utrumque sufficientes insufficientibus*. My translation of these three words (both . . . insufficient) has been influenced by Schweizer, who puts “beides gilt für die hinreichenden im Vergleich zu den nicht hinreichenden”.

applied, if the perception is nevertheless unable to make a distinction, this intensity is its own obscurity, to the point that that is most obscure to me, which can distinguish nothing from anything else, however diverse, despite summoning all my powers to the task (§161).

§529 I ATTEND to that which I perceive clearly; that which is more obscure than others I AM DIVERTED FROM IT. Therefore I have the faculty of giving my attention to something and withdrawing it (§216), but within limits (§354), up to a certain extent, not to any ultimate degree (§248). The more that is taken away from a finite quantity, the less will be the residue. Therefore, the more I attend to one thing, the less can I attend to another: therefore, either a stronger perception will be darkened if a weaker one seizes one's attention, or one can withdraw one's attention from a weaker perception¹¹ (§528, 515).

§530 A PERCEPTION may contain additional qualities, which are less clear than those qualities to which I give most of my attention. Such a perception is COMPLEX. In any COMPLEX IDEA, the complex of qualities I attend to most constitutes a PRIMARY PERCEPTION, and the complex of less clear qualities is called an ADHERENT (secondary) PERCEPTION. Hence a complex perception is the total of primary and adherent perceptions (§155).

§531 Take two clear ideas with three qualities, but in the one case let these be clear, and obscure in the other; the first idea is the clearer. Therefore, the clarity of the ideas increases with the clarity of the qualities, for distinctness, adequacy etc. Take two clear ideas whose qualities are equally clear, of which there are three qualities in one and six in the other; the latter will be the clearer of the two (§528). Therefore, a multiplicity of qualities increases the clarity (§162). The CLARITY of clear qualities is more INTENSIVE, the multiplicity of [obscure¹²] qualities, it could be said, is MORE EXTENSIVE. A clearer extensive perception is VIVID. The vividness of an IDEA and of an ORATION is its RADIANCE (splendour), and its opposite is ARIDITY (a thorny kind of thinking and speaking). Both kinds of clarity impart PERSPICUITY. Hence perspicuity is either vivid or intellectual, or both. A PERCEPTION, [is that] whose power is exerted in order that the truth of a different perception should be known, and ITS POWER is PROVING things, whose power is to make something else clear, and ITS POWER is EXPLICATING (declaring), whose power is to make something else vivid, and ITS POWER is ILLUSTRATING (painting), which makes something distinct, and ITS POWER is RESOLVING things (evolving them). The knowledge of truth is CERTITUDE (seen subjectively cf. §93). Sensory certainty is PERSUASION, intellectual [certainty is] CONVICTION. He who thinks a) of a thing and b) of its truth, other things being equal, knows more than he who thinks of only a) the thing. Hence, THOUGHTS and COGNITIONS which are certain, other things being equal, are more meaningful¹³ than UNCERTAIN ones, which are not certain (§515). A deservedly uncertain cognition is SUPERFICIAL whereas a certain one,

¹¹ My translation of the conclusion is heavily dependent on Schweizer's German translation.

¹² The word *obscure* is absent, but the balanced nature of the sentences, and the overall sense, would seem to demand it.

¹³ *maior*, translated by Schweizer as *bedeutend*.

[thoroughly] investigated, is SOLID. The clearer, the more vivid, the more distinct, a cognition is, the more meaningful it is. A PERCEPTION which has another truth as a corollary, has power either to PERSUADE or to CONVINCe. Transparent certainty is EVIDENCE¹⁴.

§532 Both extensively clear and intensively clear [representations] can be sensory (§522, 531), and then the more vivid is more perfect than the less vivid. The more vivid [representation] (§185) can be more powerful than the intensively clearer, even when the latter is a distinct perception (§517).

§533 AESTHETICS is the science of sensorily knowing and proposing (the logical faculty of lower cognition, the philosophy of the graces and the muses, lower epistemology, the art of thinking beautifully, art as an analogy to reason).

Section III: Sense

§534 I think [of] my present state. Therefore I represent my present state, i.e. I SENSE. The representations of my present state or SENSATIONS (appearances) are representations of the present state of the world (§369). Therefore my sensation is caused [both] by the representational power of the mind and according to the position of my body (§513).

§535 I have a sentient faculty (§216), i.e. SENSE. SENSE represents either the Internal state of my mind, or the EXTERNAL state of my body. Hence SENSATION is either INTERNAL (§508) through the internal sense (consciousness, strictly speaking) or EXTERNAL, actuated by the external sense (§534).

§536 Those parts of the body sensitive to contact with external passing objects are called AESTHETERIA (sense organs). Through them I have the faculty of sensing 1) whatever comes into contact with my body, [the sense of] TOUCH, 2) light, [the sense of] SIGHT, 3) sound [the sense of] HEARING, 4) the flux [of particles] from bodies which ascends into the nose [the sense of] SMELL, 5) the salts which dissolve in the inner part of the mouth, [the sense of] TASTE.

§537 The greater the impact on the sense organ, the stronger, the clearer is the sensation; the less [impact it has], the weaker and the more obscure is the external sensation (§513, 512). The place in which a stimulus can most affect the organ, in order to sense clearly, is the SPHERE of SENSATION. In the sphere of sensation is located the most responsive POINT of SENSATION.

§538 The smaller the stimuli are, the more remote from the point of sensation, the more obscure, the weaker they are in their sensation. The stronger [they are], the clearer, the closer [they are] to the point of sensation, the greater the stimuli are (§537, 288).

¹⁴ *Certa perpicuitas est EVIDENTIA.*

- §539 The least meaningful¹⁵ sensation would be a single thing experienced at maximum proximity and with greatest impact, but represented at the lowest level of truth, light and certitude (§531, 538). Hence the more plural, the smaller, the more remote the object making the least impact on the sense organ, [while] the greater the truth, clarity and certainty of its representation, the more meaningful¹⁶ it is (§219, 535)..
- §540 A more meaningful SENSE [impression] is called ACUTE, a less meaningful is called BLUNT. The more fitting the stimulus shall be to the workings of the sense organs, or the more fitting it is adapted to be, the sharper is the external sense, or the more it is sharpened up. The more inept it is, or the more inappropriately delivered to the sensory organ, the blunter is the sensation, or the blunter is the external sense (§537, 539)..
- §541 The law of sensation is thus: in so far as the state of the world and of my own state march in step, their representations will in turn follow each other, in the present (§534). Hence the rule of inner sensation, [which states that] insofar as my inner sensations follow my states of mind, so will their representations in the present. The rule of external sensation [states] that, insofar as my external sensations follow the [changing] state of my body, their representations will follow in turn, in the present.
- §542 A powerful sensation, compared to other single perceptions, is paramount¹⁷ (§512, 517). Hence [such] sensations obscure other individual [sensations] (§529). However some other weaker [sensations] experienced together simultaneously can become even stronger [than a powerful one]. Either one sensation or the other can become stronger by weakening the other and making it obscure. A very great sensation can be obscured by another stronger [one], or by many other weaker ones experienced together simultaneously thereby becoming the stronger [sensation] (§529, 517).
- §543 An external sensation is achieved more easily [with] 1) well prepared [sense] organs (§536), 2) spheres of sensation, [and] assuredly 3) the greatest proximity of [the body] to the point of sensation¹⁸ (§537); 4) if the body excites the sense organ in the appropriate manner regarding quality (§536), and 5) quantity (§538), and 6) if [there is inhibition of] not only strong, heterogeneous sensations, but also 7) of weaker sensations, not just singly but on the other hand in greater numbers, [so that] assuredly 8) other heterogeneous perceptions are fully suppressed (§542). An external sensation is inhibited if 1) the sensory organ is impeded so it cannot be stimulated in the usual way, 2) the less [a sense organ] is stimulated, the less it will respond (§537); 3) if the perceived object is distant, 4) diminished in impact, 5) [or even] absolutely impeded such that it is rendered absent, 6) or if another [even] stronger sensation were to be excited 7) by many sensations or 8) by

¹⁵ *minimus* “the smallest”, translated by Schweizer as *geringste*, “most insignificant”.

¹⁶ *maior*, which Schweizer translates as *bedeutender*.

¹⁷ *robur*, meaning literally oak or hardwood, but figuratively: strength, hardness, vigour, best part, elite, flower (Collings Gem Latin Dictionary)

¹⁸ I am dependent here on Schweizer’s translation owing to problems with the Latin.

many other perceptions dispersing the attention, so that although weaker singly, nevertheless when taken together, these will obscure the sensation which is thus impeded (§542, 221).

§544¹⁹ So, the senses represent the individual things in the world, and hence all kinds of specific things (§535, 148); however, such things are represented by interwoven universals. This interweaving cannot be represented without connections between particulars and universals (§14, 37). In every sensation things connected to the senses or therefore, being sensed, are represented as particulars, but therefore are not clear; they are mostly, for the most part²⁰, obscure. Therefore in all sensations there are some obscure elements, hence in sensations which are also distinct there is always some admixture of confusion. From this [it follows that] every sensation is a sensory perception formed by the faculty of lower cognition (§522). In conclusion, EXPERIENCE is the knowledge of clear senses; AESTHETIC acquisition and experiential expression is called EMPIRICAL²¹.

§545 TRICKS of the SENSES are false representations dependent on the senses, which either as sensations themselves or as ratiocinations whose premise is a sensation, or as perceptions which, in error, are secretly smuggled [in and mistaken for true] perceptions (§30, 35).

§546 While sensations themselves represent the present state of the body or mind or of both (§535), as the internal and external sensations perceive internal as much as external actualities (§205, 208); hence they can also discern possibilities (§57) and the things of this world (§377), so they are in fact the greatest truths of the whole world (§184), and not one of them is a trick of the senses. But if therefore a trick of the senses should be a rational deduction, its error lies either in that form or as a premise. If on the other hand it is based on a different perception which in turn is based on an undetected error, then it becomes a case of a double error born of overhasty judgment, which nevertheless can easily be recouped on a second occasion (§545).

§547 ILLUSIONS [or sleights of hand] are artifices of sensory deception; if tricks of the senses arise from them, they are EFFECTIVE; if not, they are INEFFECTIVE. Now, the more someone suffers from prejudices, having ordinary responses to sensations, the less he will be on his guard against a surreptitious deception; with such a person many illusions will be effective (§545). Any person free from all prejudices and immune to all surreptitious deceptions would be immune to the effects of illusions [or sleights of hand] (§546).

§548 Propositions [such as] “Whatever I do not experience or sense clearly (§544), does not exist” (the THOMIST PREJUDICE), or “is impossible”; or, “That representation which is (partly) the same as another, is itself that same perception”, or, “Those things which co-exist or which succeed each other alternately, flow together into another single reality”, or the sophism,

¹⁹ I am not sure I have understood the first half of this correctly (contrasting particulars and universals).

²⁰ The redundancy is in the Latin: *maximam partem plerumque*.

²¹ The final clause reads: *AESTHETICA comparandae et proponendae experientiae est EMPIRICA*.

“following that, therefore caused by that”. These are major first premises joined by tricks of the senses (§546), hence also by effective illusions (§547).

- §549 Accordingly, another stronger perception obscures a weaker (§529); for the same reason the weaker perception brightens [or acts as a foil to] the stronger (§531). Hence if a different, clearer, stronger perception succeeds upon the perception of a weaker object, that which is new, in the field of clear sensations, is perceived the more intensely²²(§529). Therefore, a clear, stronger, sensation, following upon other weaker ones, is highlighted by its very novelty (§542, 534). Hence weaker things in contrast with another thing illuminate it [or act as a foil to it] (§81, 531). Opposites when juxtaposed enhance each other.
- §550 If a sensation, in as much as it can be observed, is made up of absolutely the same set of many complete perceptions immediately in succession, it shines, in the first instance, with the light of novelty (§549). This diminishes in part the following time, and the more so in the third instance, and so forth. Hence, unless illuminated from some other quarter, it becomes less clear in the second total perception, becoming yet again less clear in the third, always reducing in this way, until it is very obscure (§529). Therefore sensations, which might, as far as one can observe them, themselves remain unchanged for a long time, nevertheless they do become obscure just by the passage of time (§539).
- §551 Sensations do not remain equally strong (§550). Therefore, if they were as powerful as it is possible to be, they abate (§247).
- §552 I AM AWAKE, as long as I sense the outside; when I begin to sense in this way, I become WIDE AWAKE. If individual sensations in a healthy person have their accustomed level of clarity, he is said to be COMPOS [in control]. If any of these sensations become so vivid that it noticeably obscures the others, HE IS ENRAPTURED (forgets himself, is not with himself). The status of the internal senses snatched outside of a person is ECSTASY (vision, the mind moved, excess of mind).
- §553 Mental ecstasy is natural to the mind, and will itself be actuated by nature (§552, 470); if not itself actuated by nature, it will be preternatural (474), the which if not actuated by the natural universe will be supernatural (§474). Miraculous ecstasies are possible (§474, 552), even if hypothetical (§482-500).
- §554 If the level of clarity in the sensations of somebody who is awake abates on account of vapours rising to the brain from drink, he is INEBRIATED, or becomes DRUNK. If the same happens because of illness, that condition is called VERTIGO, either simple, or dark or deranged.
- §555 If clear external sensations come to an end, provided vital movements of the body, as much as they may be observed, remain almost the same, and I am

²² *magis*, translated by Schweizer as “stärke wahrgenommen”, i.e. more strongly distinct.

DROWSY (I fall asleep), or at least the sensations more perceptibly abate, I SUFFER a LOSS of CONSCIOUSNESS.

- §556 The state of obscure external sensations, in which the vital movements of the body, as far as they can be observed, remain almost the same as they are in the waking state, is SLEEP; anyone in this state IS SLEEPING; [the state] in which these sensations are noticeably reduced is LOSS OF MIND (breakdown, failing life strength, collapse); in which everything ceases absolutely, there will be DEATH. Therefore sleep, coma and death are very similar to each other (§265).

Section IV: Imagination

- §557 I am conscious of my state, hence also of the earlier state of the world (§369). The representation of the earlier state of the world, hence of my own past state, is a VISUALISATION²³ (imagination, vision, apparition). Therefore I imagine, or, through the representative power of the mind, I form images of the universe according to the position of my body (§513).
- §558 I have the faculty of imagining or IMAGINATION (§557, 216). And since my imaginings are perceptions of things which were once present (§557, 298), though now absent, when they are imagined by me, [the mental images] are of the senses (§223).
- §559 A PERCEPTION is PRODUCED (is developed), which reduces the darkness in the mind; [any perception] which increases the darkness, is VEILED; a perception which is now veiled but was once exposed, is reproduced (it recurs). Now, sense is produced by the imagination (§558), hence once explicit (§542), it is afterwards veiled (§551). Therefore, the imagination reproduces perceptions, and nothing is in the imagination which was not beforehand in the senses (§534).
- §560 The movements of the brain, which occur at the same time as the successive representations of the mind, are called MATERIAL IDEAS²⁴. Hence, material ideas are [a matter] of sensing in the body and of imagining in the mind (§508).
- §561 The imagination and the senses are separate (§539, 534); for this reason they are in general constituted as tied to each other. Whence comes the law of the imagination: when an idea [or image or representation] is partially perceived, it is recalled in its totality (§306, 514). Even now this proposition is called the association of ideas²⁵.
- §562 While [my mental] representation, and hence [my mental] imagery (§557), [depends on] the position of my body (§512), that which I sense externally,

²³ PHANTASMA

²⁴ IDEAE MATERIALES.

²⁵ Schweizer refers in footnote 121 to "J. Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) 2, 33".

will be nearer to my body than that which I imagine (§535, 558); it is exposed²⁶, which is the reason why the latter [sensations] might be clearer and stronger (§538). Assuredly, while [physical] sensations and [mental] imagery coexist, the former will obscure the latter (§542); nothing is conceived more powerfully than that which I sense; thus however, the level of clarity in the imagination depends on the level of clarity in sensation (§561).

- §563 That which I sense repeatedly, I also reproduce frequently; these form a greater part of the total number of all my ideas than [do] rarer [instances] (§514). Therefore mental imagery of the former kind are more tightly secured (§561) to any perceptual qualities than are the latter (§530). Hence, the former are more extensively clear or more vivid (§531). That which I sense more rarely, I reproduce more rarely; and when it is experienced, according to the law of contrasts (§81), the effect is heightened by the light of novelty, compared to a more frequent experience (§549). Therefore, rare sensory experiences and their recall are, other things being equal, more vivid than commonplace experiences and their recall (§531).
- §564 Just as sensation obscures imagination, so accordingly the same more recent and stronger [mental] imagery will obscure older, weaker [mental] imagery (§562); hence, taking equally clear sensations, there being no other impediment, the more recent sensation will be imagined the more clearly.
- §565 A minimal mental image would be that which is a single, very strong sensation (§562), very often reproduced (§563) and most recently (§564) with maximal feebleness, with the most possible earlier instances, [and which is now] accompanied by many different perceptions (§529), represented, however, most obscurely. Therefore [by contrast], the more numerous and the more feeble any [concurrent] sensation is, the more rarely instanced [a mental image may be], the longer the preceding time lapse, the stronger the accompanying and preceding perceptions, the truer, clearer and more certain in recall, the stronger it is (§219).
- §566 The blunter or sharper a sensation is, by which sensation I experience an object, the obscurer or clearer may be my mental image of the object (§562, 540).
- §567 I distinguish mental images from sensory experiences by 1) the level of clarity (§562), and 2) the extent to which earlier and current mental images are incompatible with sensory experiences (§298). Hence if stronger mental images and weaker sensations occur together, as far as can be observed, with equal clarity, there remains at least one alternative way to discriminate between them, [namely their] differing circumstantial settings (§323). Against these factors it is apparent that [although there are two perceptions] they are not both sensory experiences; in the one I have a sensory experience in which

²⁶ *patet*, from *pateo*, intransitive verb: “be open, accessible, exposed, extend; be evident, known” (*Gem Latin Dictionary*). The choice of “exposed” for direct sense experience would accord with his use of “veiled” for recalled mental images (§559).

there is maximal interconnectedness and ties to associated sensations and to mental imagery, especially immediately preceding, and also those expected in the immediate future; by these perceptions I see clearly (§544). Therefore I know clearly that the other is not a sensation (§38, 67).

- §568 A mental image is made more easily (§527) 1) if the object imagined has been more clearly experienced by the senses (§562), 2) and repeatedly reproduced (§563), 3) [even if it is,] by intervals, increasingly feebly represented, provided that it always enjoys the [renewing] light of novelty (§549); 4) and that [the mental image of the object is] not from too long ago (§564); 5) and that it is followed by other more feeble mental images 6) which are combined with heterogeneous perceptions (§516, 549), themselves accompanied either by nothing or by not very clear heterogeneous sensations (562), 7) followed in turn by combined representations, which group of mental images recur repeatedly (§561).
- §569²⁷ A mental image is impeded 1) if the [bodily] sensation of the object is only a little inhibited or absolutely not inhibited, according to §543; this will 2) especially inhibit the recalling of the mental image, above all if the mental image is 3) interrupted by weaker perceptions, when it had already been obscured through extended continuance (§550); 4) the same hindrance of recall permits very lively thinking (§564) when 5) these follow stronger perceptions or 6) there are gathered such combined heterogeneous sensations or mental images or perceptions, whether singly or bound together (§542), and when these 7) are never or only rarely in a small degree, or absolutely not bound together with the object of the mental image (§561, 221).
- §570 As in all sensations there will be some obscure elements (§544), and the mental image will always be less clear than the sensation itself (§562); even in distinct mental images there will be confusion, and all mental images are sensory (§522), being formed by the lower cognitive faculty (§520). The science of imaginative thinking and the [outward] presentation of such thinking is the AESTHETIC of the IMAGINATION.
- §571 If in my imagination I represent what I have [previously] perceived through my senses, that which I visualise appears to be the truth (§546, 38), not VAIN FANTASY or false imaginings, even though they [the mental image and the sensory perception] are not both perceived with totally the same clarity (§558, 562). The habit of conjuring up vain phantasms is UNBRIDLED FANTASY, a COMPULSION contrary to the practice of truthful imagining.

Section V: Insight

²⁷ Schweizer makes this section more explicit by filling out the text with material from the other referenced sections, and in most places I have followed his lead here.

- §572 I perceive [both] the samenesses²⁸ and the diversity of things. Therefore I have a faculty for perceiving the samenesses and diversities of things (§216). The first faculty is minimal, if it is enough to visualise a single tiny sameness between two very strong and maximally identical perceptions against a background of very weak preceding perceptions and very feeble heterogeneous representations. Therefore, from the more numerous, from the least familiar, from the most diverse, from the more numerous, and the greater the sameness, hence the greater the congruity, equality, therefore also the greater the equality of ratios, or PROPORTIONS (similitudes)²⁹, the stronger the interconnected, antecedent and heterogeneous perceptions, and the more clearly perceived, the more meaningful [or distinct] [a perception] is (§219). The habit of observing the samenesses of things is WIT in the NARROWER SENSE³⁰.
- §573 The faculty perceiving the diversity of things will be minimal, if from among two of the strongest possible, maximally diverse perceptions it is able to perceive a single minimal [point of] diversity from among maximally weak antecedent, heterogeneous, interconnected and repeated perceptions. Therefore, the more numerous, the less familiar, the most similar, the greater the diversity, and hence the greater the incongruity, inequality, that is the inequality in ratios or DISPROPORTIONALITY (dissimilarity), the more strongly [the faculty of diversity] represents, and the more meaningful [or distinct] the representation is (§219). The habit of observing the diversity of things is ACUMEN. Acuteness of mind³¹ is PERSPICACIOUSNESS³².
- §574 This is the law of the faculty of penetrating perception of the samenesses of things, and hence of genius (§572): If a quality represented in object A is also present in object B, A and B correspond³³ (§38). This is the law of the faculty of perceiving the diversities of things, hence of acumen (§573). In a quality represented in A, but are inconsistent with B, A and B are perceived to be diverse (§38).
- §575 I perceive the correspondences and the diversities of things; either I perceive distinctly, or sensorily (§521). Hence the faculties of perceiving correspondences or diversities, and indeed of wit, acumen and perspicacity (§572,573); they are either sensory or intellectual (§402). The AESTHETICS

²⁸ *Identitates*, translated by Schweizer as *Übereinstimmungen*, or corresponsences. Baumgarten does not use the available, but weaker noun, *similitudo* (similarity). I chose “samenesses”, because *identitates* seems to come from the stem *idem*, meaning “same”.

²⁹ I have added the parentheses, as the word *similitudines* is left hanging between commas, after PROPORTIONES.

³⁰ *Habitus identitates rerum observandi est INGENIUM STRICTIUS DICTUM*.

³¹ The word used here is *ingenium*, earlier translated by Schweizer as *Witze* (“wit”), the meaning also given by Mirbach for the word in §576. However, in this paragraph Schweizer translates it as *Geist* (mind, intellect, spirit).

³² Schweizer paraphrases *PERSPICACIA* as “penetrating insight” (*du durchdringender Einsicht*)

³³ *Eadem*, “are the same”, does not fit, so I agree with Schweizer here in using “correspond”. Perhaps in this translation all instances of “sameness” should be replaced with “correspondence”.

of PERSPICACITY is the part of aesthetics concerning witty and acute thinking and proposing³⁴.

- §576 As all things in this world are in part the same, in part different (§265, 269), representations of correspondences and differences in them, hence also the PLAY of WIT (creativity), i.e. thought dependent on wit, and SUBTLETIES, thought dependent on acumen, sharpened by the power of mental representations of the universe (§513). The play of false WIT is called ILLUSION and false subtlety is called INANE ARGUMENTATION.
- §577 Now, the highest level of the mental faculties are skills³⁵ (§219) and the frequent repetition of homogeneous actions or, in view of specific differences, similar actions, is PRACTICE; the habits³⁶ of the mind are enriched through practice (§162). Those HABITS of the mind which do not depend upon practice are however INNATE (natural dispositions): those which are dependent upon practice are called ACQUIRED SKILLS, supernatural ones are called INSPIRATIONS, and those arising from the cognitive faculty are called THEORETICAL SKILLS.
- §578 Acumen and wit in the strict sense, and hence perspicacity³⁷ (§572, 573, are theoretical skills (§577, 519); the more pronounced these are as innate qualities, the easier they are to develop through practice (§577, 527). The same holds for the skills of [bodily] sensing and imagining (§535, 558). Anyone notably lacking in wit, STUPID (of dull spirit), or in acumen, is BLUNT HEADED³⁸. Anyone who is even more defective on either account, is a SILLY MAN³⁹. Since every error treats the false as the same as the true (§515) is an illusion⁴⁰ of the faculty of correspondences in [the way] it perceives things (§576, 572), [thus] impeding acumen (§573, 221). Hence errors are opportunities for astute thinking (§576, 323).

Section VI: Memory

- §579 I can perceive in a reproduced⁴¹ representation, that which was once produced [for the first time as a sensory experience] (§572, 559], i.e. I recognise it (recall it). Therefore I have the faculty of recognising reproduced perceptions, or MEMORY (§216) and memory can be either sensory or intellectual (§575).
- §580 The law of memory states: when many consecutive representations are recalled in the present, and indeed some part of the preceding and following

³⁴ *ingeniose* and *proponendo* both seem to require stronger English equivalents than “ingenious” and “proposing”. “Of Genius”, or “Sensory Expression” might have conveyed the meaning better, if rather grandiloquently.

³⁵ *habitus*, translated by Schweizer as *Fertigkeiten*, in English, “skills”.

³⁶ *habitus*, again.

³⁷ *perspicacia*, translated by Schweizer as *durchdringend Einsicht*, in English, “piercing insight”.

³⁸ *obtusum caput*

³⁹ *Homo Bliteus*

⁴⁰ *illusio*, (“irony” in the Gem Latin dictionary) translated by Schwiezer as *ein Versagen*, in English, a failure.

⁴¹ *Reproductam*, translated by Schweizer as *erneuerten*, in English, “renewed”.

(§572) representations share some of the same content, then indeed, memory is triggered through the power of the mind to represent the universe (§557, 576).

- §581 I ENTRUST to MEMORY these things being thus perceived, so they can be easily recognised one day. Henceforth these are reproduced repeatedly and more clearly, according to §557, 558, 549, 568 by attending to the correspondences and differences of the individual perceptions, deeply inscribed in memory.
- §582 If a perception recurs, I am able either to recognise it clearly, then it is said to HOLD its MEMORY, or I cannot (§10) and I forget that object. Hence inability to recall a copy of a perception is OBLIVION. In order to remember something I have forgotten, it CALLS to me SOMEWHAT IN MEMORY. [It is] through associated ideas that I somehow recall to myself a memory, i.e. I RECOLLECT. Therefore I have the faculty of recollecting, or [the power of] REMINISCENCE (§216).
- §583 [The power of] reminiscence is memory (§582, 579), following this pattern: I remember through recollections⁴² which are mediated by ideas associated with perceptions (§580, 516). Recollection through ideas associated with place is LOCATION MEMORY and by ideas associated with time is SYNCHRONISM.
- §584 A minimal memory would be when a single very small, very intense, very often repeated, very recently reproduced, very feeble memory is recognised. [Other factors causing a memory to be minimal include when it occurs] between very frequently repeated preceding and accompanying heterogeneous perceptions. Therefore, a more intensely recognised memory occurs when it is stronger, has more numerous [qualities], is more powerful, more frequent, and is more rarely reproduced⁴³. [Other intensifying factors] which make a memory more significant [include] a longer period having elapsed of heterogeneous and very powerfully transacted perceptions (§564), stronger ties between antecedent, contemporaneous and heterogeneous perceptions (§219).
- §585 A stronger⁴⁴ memory is called GOOD and HAPPY, and in so far as it can recognise many great things, it is called DIFFUSE (rich, vast) and in so far as it frequently is reproduced satisfactorily between strong antecedent and contemporaneous representations; FIRM, in so far as it can be satisfactorily recognised after a longer interval busy with very strong and heterogeneous perceptions; TENACIOUS, in so far as it is more rarely reproduced; CAPABLE, in so far as it is able to recognise the memory with greater

⁴² *Reproductae*, which elsewhere has been translated as reproductions or copies.

⁴³ Schwiezer add *schwächer*, or “more weakly”, but there is no equivalent in the Latin, and it would be inconsistent with the tenor of the section. This section comprises two very long sentences, both of which have been broken into two.

⁴⁴ *maior*, “greater” or “bigger”, does not seem to work in this context.

intensity; LIVELY, in so far as it requires little work to be recalled, as it is said, EASY.

- §586 FORGETFULNESS is a sure sign of a defective memory. An error dependent on memory is called a MEMORY LAPSE. Now, memory can place an earlier perception at the same level as a later perception which is not, however, the same [at all]. Therefore memory is LABILE, i.e. of it, lapses are possible. Memory which is not very labile is FAITHFUL. Genius is not characterised by very reliable memory (§576) but acumen adds to its fidelity (§573).
- §587 The complex of rules for perfecting the memory is the MNEMONIC ART. The mnemonic [art] of sensitive memories (§579) is the part of aesthetics (§533) prescribing the rules of how to extend, confirm, conserve, excite, and increase the fidelity and truth of memory-recall (§586, 585).
- §588 If an earlier mental image⁴⁵ and a later sensation or perception treated as if at the same level, when they are not the same, a vain fantasy can arise (§571) through a lapse of memory (§586), from the fount of errors (§578); if for the same reason (§586, 578) this is taken for a perception (§548), there arises a false sensory experience (§546, 545)

Section VII: Creativity

- §589 I AM CREATIVE, combining and DIVIDING mental images i.e. to the extent that I attend to a part of several perceptions. Therefore I have a capacity of inventing (§216) POETRY⁴⁶. Thus I combine many representations into a single unity, hence the faculty renders perceptible the correspondences between things (§572, 155); the imaginative faculty instantiates the representation of the universe (§557, 576), through the power of the mind.
- §590 This is the law of the creative faculty: parts of mental images are perceived as a single unity (§589). The perception thus engendered is a FICTION (a figment); the false ones are called CHIMERAS, empty fantasies (§571).
- §591⁴⁷ Consider the case where something which is disunited (§589) becomes combined together, or that case where through creative invention, this [united] thing becomes separated, [and] through its destruction, the imagination is elevated, e.g. characteristics, and even being itself (§63), [and its] attributes (§64). Alternatively, consider that, from the created object, all chance compositions and relationships, or some of them, become separated, unless

⁴⁵ *phantasma*

⁴⁶ *POETICAM*, by implication, other art forms, too.

⁴⁷ In this section I have found both the Latin and the German rather impenetrable. The section comprises a single very long sentence in both the Latin original and the German translation. The German translation includes interpolations from the earlier sections of the *Metaphysica*, also quoted in the footnotes of Schweizer's translation, though they are absent from the Latin original for this section. Thus the German is perhaps less Delphic, and so I have decided to concentrate only on the German for the more opaque first section (up to the reference to §54, 148). Thereafter, the Latin is just about comprehensible, and I work from that.

other necessary compositions and relationships which make up an actual and individual thing (§54, 148) take their places, and that, nevertheless, the object of the creative activity will be presented as something unique and real (54, 148). In all these cases chimeras (§590) will arise each time, in fact, through the failure of the faculty of recognising the correspondences of things (§576, 578). So also will empty phantasms arise (§590), which can be further strengthened (§588, 515) through a lapse of memory following upon an illusion.

- §592 The poetic faculty will be at its least, when two minimal yet very strong mental images are loosely bound together, or if just one tiny part of a very strong mental image should be very slightly split off (§530, 589). Therefore, the more numerous, the greater, the less strongly combined, the more numerous, the greater, the more numerous and the smaller the parts of the mental images, and the more strongly split up, whichever one achieves the highest level of intensity, that is the more significant (§219, 590)⁴⁸. A great poetic faculty is FERTILE (fecund), with an UNBRIDLED (extravagant, rhapsodic) tendency towards chimeras, and the defence against that could be called the ARCHITECHTONIC tendency. The MYTHIC AESTHETIC is the part of aesthetics for the thinking out and presentation of creative fictions.
- §593 [When] sleeping, if I imagine clear mental images, I DREAM. The imaginings of a sleeping [person] are DREAMS SUBJECTIVELY TAKEN UP⁴⁹ (§91), either true (§571), or false (§588, 591), or engendered through the nature of the mind according to §561, 574, 580, 583, 590, naturally, (§470), or [else] by unnatural mental processes, which are themselves preternatural. If not engendered by the natural universe, these will be supernatural (§474).
- §594 [When] sleeping, fantasies are extremely unrestrained (§571) and the creative imagination is much more unbridled than when wide awake (§592). Dreams produce more vivid imagery and fictions which are not obscured by the very strong [impact of direct] sensory experience (§549). Those, who are accustomed for their dreams to be accompanied by observable movements of the external body, accompanying external sensations similar to the waking state, are SLEEPWALKERS. Therefore, those who experience imaginings while awake instead of sensations, are FANTASISTS (visionaries, the inspired). Those who absolutely confuse [their visions] for sensations, are INSANE, such that INSANITY is the state of wakeful mental imaginings in place of sensations, having the habitual confusion of sensations with imaginings.

Section VIII: Foresight

- §595 I am conscious of my state, hence of the future state of the world (§369). This representation and the state of the world and of my own future state is

⁴⁸ I am not at all sure I have understood this paragraph. This is a tentative offering of a translation.

⁴⁹ *sumpta*, neuter plural past participle of *sumo*, I take, take up, assume, arrogate, undertake, put on, exact (Collins *Gem Latin Dictionary*)

FORESIGHT. I foresee, hence I have the faculty of foreseeing (§216)⁵⁰ instantiated by the representative power of the mind [to show] the universe according to the position of my body (§513).

- §596 The law of foresight is: when a sensation and a mental image are perceived, the common parts of the sensation and of the mental image produce a total perception of the future state of affairs, in which the diverse parts [contributed by] sensation and imagination are conjoined: i.e. the future is born from the present impregnated by the past.
- §597 Whenever I represent [a state of affairs], and hence foresee [another state of affairs] according to the position of my body (§512), it is true that that which I sense externally is nearer to my body than that which I can foresee, some day at last to be sensed (§535). This is why I can experience the present state of affairs more clearly and powerfully [than that which I can merely foresee] (§529). While present physical sensations co-exist with the [the predictions of foresight], the former still obscure the latter (§542); I can foresee nothing as clearly as I can sense it, but accordingly however, the level of clarity of foresight depends upon the level of clarity of future sensation (§596).
- §598 That which I sense frequently, that I have often imagined, that will I foresee more clearly than that which I have more rarely seen and imagined (§563, 596). The mental images of something just sensed are the strongest (§542, 558). Hence, they are even stronger than the visions of the future, which have not yet been sensed strongly (§597) but rather are obscured by more energetic sensory experiences (§529). However, a foresight of an instance in the near future might be clearer than the foresight of an instance in the remote future (§597). In that case, furthermore, the nearer vision of the future will obscure the remoter vision, and the darkness of the remoter vision will [by contrast] illuminate the nearer vision of the future (§549). Therefore, of two equally clear [future] experiences, I can foresee the nearer instant more clearly than the remoter one (§549).
- §599 The least ability to foresee the future is when a single very powerful and very proximal sensation (§597, 598), very frequently sensed and reproduced in the imagination, with maximal feebleness between associated and preceding heterogeneous perceptions is nevertheless very weakly imagined (§595). Therefore, the weaker the sensations, the more remote and the rarer the recall of either their sensory experience or their imagining, the stronger both previous and associated perceptions are, the stronger [the ties] between previous and associated perceptions, and the more strongly it is represented, the greater is the faculty of foresight (§219).
- §600 The blunter or sharper the senses are, so accordingly, in part, I already foresee sensorily; the weaker or stronger are the mental images with which I foresee (§565), the more obscure or the clearer will be the foresight (§596).

⁵⁰ This number appears to be a misprint as this clause does not appear to relate to the theme of §216 in Dr. John Hymers' English translation:
http://hymers.eu/dr_hymers/research_baumgarten_translation.htm

- §601 I distinguish foresight from sensation and imagination because of 1) the level of clarity, which [in foresight] is inferior to both sensation and imagination (§597, 598), and 2) the impossibility of the coexistence of the past state of affairs and the present. But if foresight were stronger, and imagination or even sensation were weaker, so that, as far as could be observed, [foresight were of] equal [strength to the others], they could however be distinguished according to their characteristics (§67). Furthermore, if I know the circumstances, those which are not sensations according to §567, that which is not clear I know to be a mental image (§38), that integrated with previous and following mental images, furthermore intermeshed with interconnected sensations (§557, 357) and which could not simultaneously be sensed (§377).
- §602 Foresight is facilitated (§527) if the instance of it 1) is more clearly sensed (§597), 2) if it is for the most part already sensed 3) and recalled in the imagination (§598), 4) when it is something already often foreseen (§563) and if it 5) becomes feeble by intervals, unless always enjoying the light of novelty (§549), 6) not so very long after being actually experienced (§598), 7) having feeble previous and associated heterogeneous perceptions, hence [if the foresight follows] feeble or nonexistent or not at all clear sensations and mental images, 8) but on the contrary if the foresight is followed and accompanied by stronger mental images just like sensations, whose partial perceptions are shared with the [acts of] foresight (§596, 597).
- §603 Foresight is impeded, if 1) a future sensation should impede [an instance of] foresight §543, 2) a powerful present sensation [should occur] partly with an [instance of] foresight, 3) if mental images, following §569, 4) [cause instances of] foresight to be primarily impeded especially if 5) interrupted by weaker perceptions which are themselves continually obscured (§550), 6) [with] procrastination of the foresight (§598), 7) having stronger previous and associated heterogeneous mental images and sensations, 8) but on the other hand, it becomes more feeble, when [the act of] foresight shares common perceptions (§602, 221).
- §604 Since in all sensations (§544) and imagination there is something of the obscure (§570) and foresight is less clear than the same thing [as a] sensation or [as an] imagined mental image (§597, 598), so [instances of] foresight even though distinct are very mixed together with confusion and obscurity. All my foresight is sensory (§522), realised by the faculty of lower cognition (§520), whose thoughts and propositions guide soothsaying (§350), [which] is a part of aesthetics (§533).
- §605 If foresight should [happen to] agree with sensation, [such] instances of foresight are truthful, or PRE-SENSATIONS. They are not of the same, nor do they offer equally clear perceptions as sensations do. If a pre-sensation were [actually] to be sensed, [it would be] a FULFILLED FORESIGHT. An unfulfilled foresight is FALSE, a fountain of practical errors (§578).

Section IX: Judgment.

- §606 I perceive the perfection and imperfection of things, i.e. I JUDGE⁵¹. Therefore I have the faculty of judgment⁵² (§216). The least judgment would be a unique minimally strong perception of a unique minimally perfect or imperfect object, maximally feeble among previous heterogeneous perceptions and loosely associated representations. Therefore, the more numerous, the more perfect or imperfect, the more strongly associated with previous heterogeneous perceptions, the more strongly the faculty of judgment is represented and the more significant it is (§219). The practice of making judgments is: DISCERNMENT; that of foresight is called PRACTICE, that of others is called THEORY, and in so far as perceptions are still obscure, [judgment] does however reveal many perfections and imperfections; it is PENETRATING.
- §607 The law of the faculty of judgment is: by perceiving the variety of things or their congruence or their disharmony, we can perceive either their perfection or their imperfection (§94, 121). As these may be achieved either distinctly or indistinctly, the faculty of judgment, and hence also discernment, is either sensory or intellectual (§402, 521). Sensory discernment is TASTE in the WIDER SENSE (taste, palate, nose). CRITICISM BROADLY SPEAKING is the art of discriminating. Hence the art of developing [good] taste or sensory discernment and of expounding one's judgment is AESTHETIC CRITICISM (§533). He who enjoys intellectual judgment is a CRITIC in the WIDER SENSE, whence CRITICISM in the GENERAL SENSE is the science of the rules of perfection or imperfection in judging distinctly.
- §608 Taste in the broad sense of SENSUALITY, i.e. that which is sensed, is the JUDGMENT OF THE SENSES, and to that sense organ is assigned the means by which a judgment is to be sensed. From this are given the judgments of the eyes, the ears etc. Just as all these faculties of judgment are actuated by the power of the mind in representing the universe (§513), so everything in this world is in part perfect and in part imperfect (§250, 354). False judgments are ECLIPSED JUDGMENTS. Faculties of judgment prone to eclipsed judgments are called HASTY JUDGMENTS. Such is CORRUPT TASTE. The practice of caution against eclipsed JUDGMENT is one's MATURITY. Such taste is UNCOMMON REFINEMENT (purer, more erudite); only a minority, however, can detect congruence or disharmony in making discriminations both perspicacious and DELICATE. Eclipsed judgments of sense are fallacious ones (§545)
- §609 The higher the innate quality of the following are, the more easily can they be developed through practice (§577, 606): memory (§579), ease of reminiscence (§582), creativity (§589), and the skill of foresight (§595).

⁵¹ *diuidico*, the meaning of which, however, is given in the Collings Latin Gem Dictionary as “decide, discriminate”; the Latin for “to judge” is given as *iudicare*.

⁵² *diuicandi*, perhaps more accurately translated as “discriminating”, see note 43, above.

Section X: Foreboding

- §610 He who has a foresight contemporaneously with a perception, has a FORBODING of something, therefore he has the faculty of foreboding or of FORBODING in the BROAD SENSE. Perceptions activated through such forebodings are PREDICTING BROADLY SPEAKING, either sensory or intellectual (§402, 521). PREDICTIONS STRICTLY SPEAKING and FOREBODING are more exclusively⁵³ sensory. Sensory forebodings are instances of aesthetic soothsaying (§604).
- §611 The law of foreboding is this: If in a series of successive perceptions, a present perception is represented [with qualities] partially in common with earlier perceptions, this shared partial representation forms the content of the former and latter perceptions (§572). Therefore, granted that one has memory and imagination: so will one have foreboding and foresight (§579).
- §612 Sensitive foreboding is the EXPECTATION of SIMILAR CAUSES, of which this is the rule: either I sense or I imagine or I foresee A, which has much in common with the other foresight B; hence B represents the same future as A. He whose mind has a foreboding [engendered by] previous associated ideas, when earlier he had no foreboding, now ANTICIPATES, hence he has the faculty of anticipation (§216), which it owes to foreboding as it does to reminiscence and memory (§582, 610).
- §613 The faculty of anticipation is foreknowledge whose rule is the following: The mind foreknows what is foreseen by the mediation of associated perceived ideas.
- §614 A minimal instance of foreboding would be, when a unique, minimal, very strong, very frequently and recently foreseen [object] with maximal feebleness is at least perceived, between previous and associated heterogeneous and loosely connected perceptions (§610, 161).
- §615 The more numerous, the greater, the rarer, the more weakly seen previously, the longer the time which has elapsed, completed with other very powerful perceptions (§564), the more powerfully it is enmeshed with previous and associated heterogeneous [perceptions], the stronger the perceived foreknowledge, the greater this is (§219), and the less work is required by [the faculty of] anticipation.
- §616 A notable skill of foreknowledge is the FACULTY OF DIVINING, whether natural or innate or acquired or inspired (§577). The last is the GIFT OF PROPHECY. Foreknowledge from the gift of divining is DIVINATION; this from the gift of prophecy is SOOTHSAYING⁵⁴ (prophesying).
- §617 Errors flowing from soothsaying are VAIN FOREKNOWLEDGE, false foresights with illusory truthfulness, the faculty of perceiving congruences confusedly (§578, 605). If anything is foreknown to me, the expectations are

⁵³ *tantum*, “to such an extent”; Schweizer translates this as “im engeren Sinne”, in a narrower sense.

⁵⁴ *VATICINIUM*, related to *vates*, “prophet” and *vaticinio*, “prophesying”.

caused by similarities (§612), anticipations (§613), activated through the force of mind [by which] I have made my representation of the universe (§595, 576).

- §618 If an instance of foresight with some other preceding sensation or mental image or some other piece of foresight taken to be of the same consequence, which it is not, there arises an instance of deceptive foresight (§605) through empty foreknowledge (§617, 576).

Section XI: The Faculty of Sign Use.

- §619 I perceive [as] one the sign and the signified; therefore I have the faculty of representing the sign and the signified [as] conjoined, which could be called the FACULTY OF SIGN USE (§216). However, there is in this world a nexus of signification (§358); the perceptions of this faculty of sign use are activated by the power of the mind to represent the universe (§513). The nexus of signification may be known either distinctly, or indistinctly, hence the faculty of sign use will be either sensory (§512) or intellectual (§402).
- §620 If the sign and the signed are perceived [as] conjoined and I perceive the sign as more significant than the signified, the COGNITION could be called SYMBOLIC; if the signed is represented as more significant than the sign, the COGNITION will be REVEALING⁵⁵ (looked at). In both forms of the semiotic capacity, this is the law: among interconnected perceptions, the one form becomes the medium for knowing the existence of the other (§347).
- §621 Suppose that, through a trick of the faculty of the correspondences of things, I take for a sign, that which is not [a sign], and for the signified [also,] that which is not (§576). There thus arises a false symbolic and revealed cognition. Suppose in the same way I take for a prognostication that which is not such, there will be born false seeming foresights, forebodings and anticipations, multiply corroborated (§605, 515).
- §622 The faculty of sign use will be least, when a single, minimal sign is very loosely associated with a single minimal signified, maximally feeble and amongst previous and associated heterogeneous perceptions. Therefore, the more numerous [the qualities], the stronger the signified, the more numerous and more significant the signified [objects] are, the more strongly enmeshed among previous and heterogeneous perceptions, the more strongly it conjoins the capacity to use signs, [and hence] the more significant⁵⁶ it is (§219). The science of sensorily knowing concerned with such propositions is the AESTHETICS of SIGN USE, as much heuristics as hermeneutics (§349). The sign use of oratory is PHILOLOGY (grammar, broadly speaking), which, when teaching what many individual languages have in common, is

⁵⁵ *INTUITIVA*, which Schweizer translates as *anschauend*, which might be translated as “visualised” or “contemplated”. *Intuitiva* derives from *intueor*, past participle *intuitus*: “look at, watch, contemplate, consider, admire”. Mirbach (*Op. Cit.*) (2007) translates *cognitio intuitus* as *ein anschauendes Erkenntnis*: “an examined cognition” (p. 1128).

⁵⁶ Once more I follow Schweizer in translating *maior* as significant (*bedeutend*).

GENERAL⁵⁷ philology. The general rules for teaching philology are 1) observing the vocabulary used in all orations, a part of which 1) is ORTHOGRAPHY BROADLY SPEAKING, 2) modulation, is ETYMOLOGY (analogy), 3) cohesion or construction is SYNTAX, 4) quantity⁵⁸, PROSODY. The [means of] binding together of these disciplines is GRAMMAR (strictly speaking). 5) [The study] of meanings, is LEXIS (lexicography), 6) of writing, is LETTERING⁵⁹. II) The special [rules for teaching philology] are e.g. ELOQUENCE or perfection in sensory speech, namely, 1) as generally considered, ORATORY⁶⁰, 2) and, more specially [considered], [would be] either the loose [form] of RHETORIC, or [the] restricted [form] of POETRY. These disciplines, with their individual daughters, as far as they demonstrate the many rules common to particular languages, are UNIVERSAL.

- §623 As the external sensations of the sleeping person are not clear (§556), sleep furthermore will be of feebler mental images more suitable to sensorily seeing into the future than the waking state (§598, 539). The network of rules for extracting, from dreams, visions of the future and foreknowledge, is the ART of INTERPRETING DREAMS⁶¹

⁵⁷ *UNIVERSALIS*, translated by Schweizer as *der allgeeinen Philologie*, a formula which I have followed.

⁵⁸ i.e. length of syllables for scansion

⁵⁹ *GRAPHICE*, which Schweizer translates as *die Graphik*.

⁶⁰ *ORATORIA*, which Schweizer translates as *Redenkunst*, “the art of [public] speaking”.

⁶¹ *ONIROCRITICA*. I have relied on context and Schweizer, who translates this as *die Kunst der Traumdeutung*.

APPENDIX ‘E’

PLATES

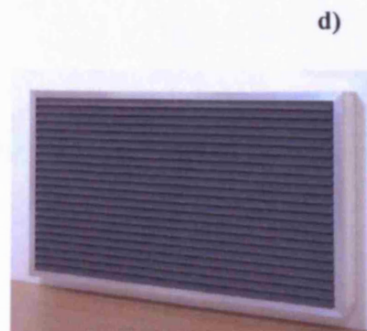
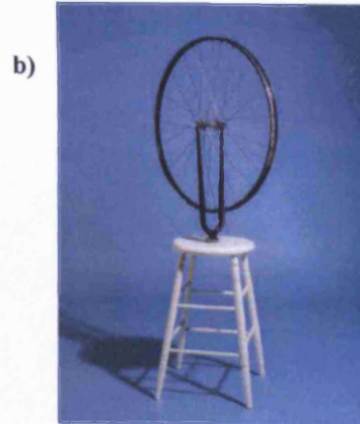


Plate 1 Artworks that tease the viewer.

- a) Marcel Duchamp *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even (The Green Box)* (1934)
Felt covered cardboard box containing one colour plate and ninety-four paper elements.
([http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?
cgroupid=999999961&workid=66623&searchid=9637](http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=66623&searchid=9637))
- b) Marcel Duchamp *Bicycle Wheel* (1913)
This is a replica of the first 'readymade'
(<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rozai001/1017/images/duchamp2.jpg>)
- c) Signed: "from Marcel Duchamp" *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915)
This is a replica of the first American 'readymade'
(http://www.marcel Duchamp.net/images/In_Advance_of_the_Broken_Arm.jpg)
- d) Julian Opie *H* (1987)
This looks like a wall heater, and plays on the gallery-goer's 'ontological' problem of addressing their 'aesthetic attitudes' only to artworks, to avoid the embarrassment of being seen bestowing the same level of loving attention to fixtures and fittings. Too cautious a visitor would overlook this sculpture completely.
([http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?
cgroupid=999999961&workid=20363&searchid=9613](http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=20363&searchid=9613))

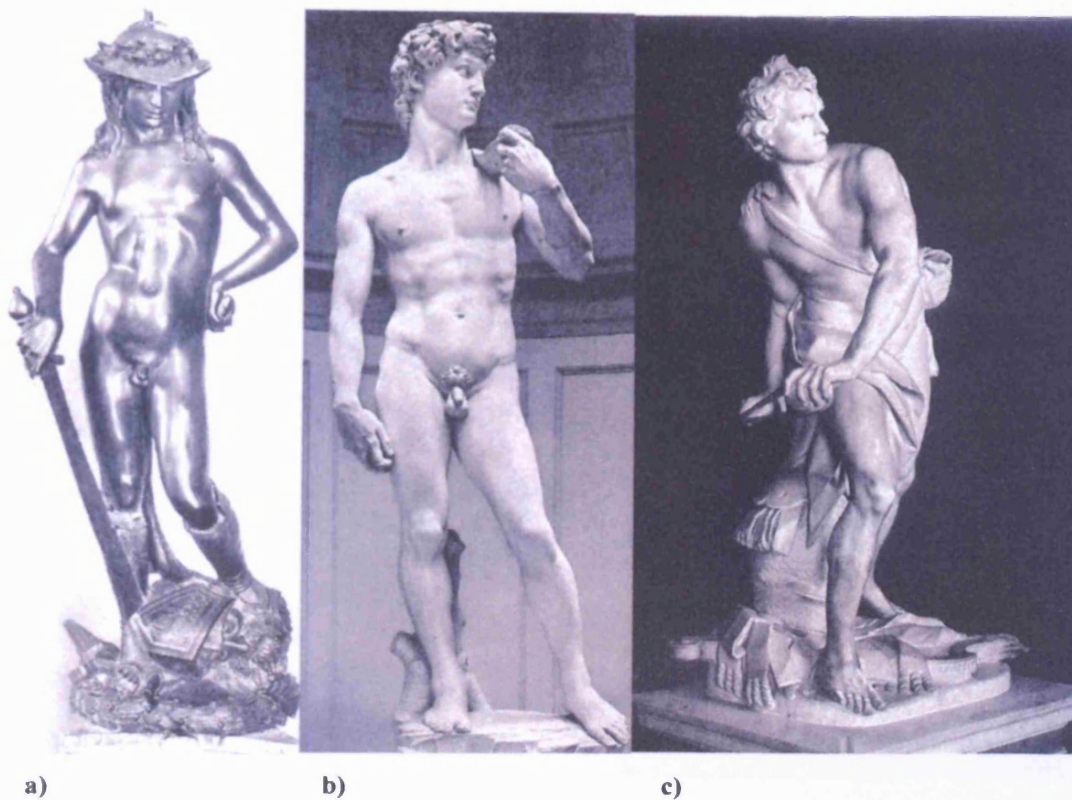


Plate 2 A 200-year dialogue of objects

- a) Donatello *David* (1430-32) National Museum, Florence.
(H. W. Janson (1962) *A History of Art*, London, Thames and Hudson, fig. 481, p. 312)
- b) Michelangelo *David* (1501-4) Academy, Florence.
(Same source as a), fig. 534, p. 357)
- c) Bernini *David* (1623) Marble, Borghese Gallery, Rome.
(Same source as a) and b), fig. 609, p. 408)



Plate 3 Baby aged 3 weeks enraptured by the visual array of her “baby gym”.

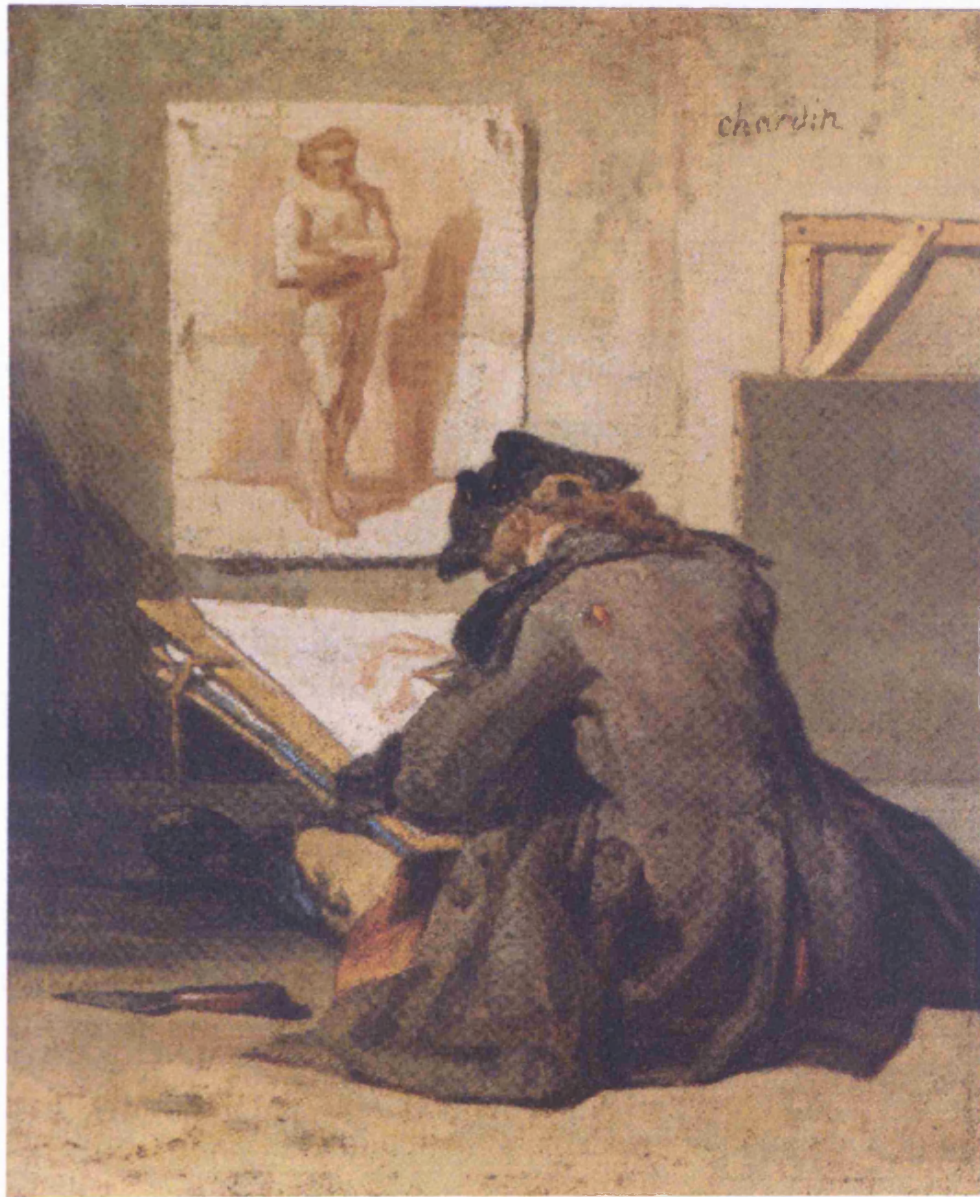


Plate 5 Chardin *The Draughtsman* (ca. 1734)

Oil on wood

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

(From (2000) *Chardin* catalogue, Royal Academy, London, pl. 37, p. 198)

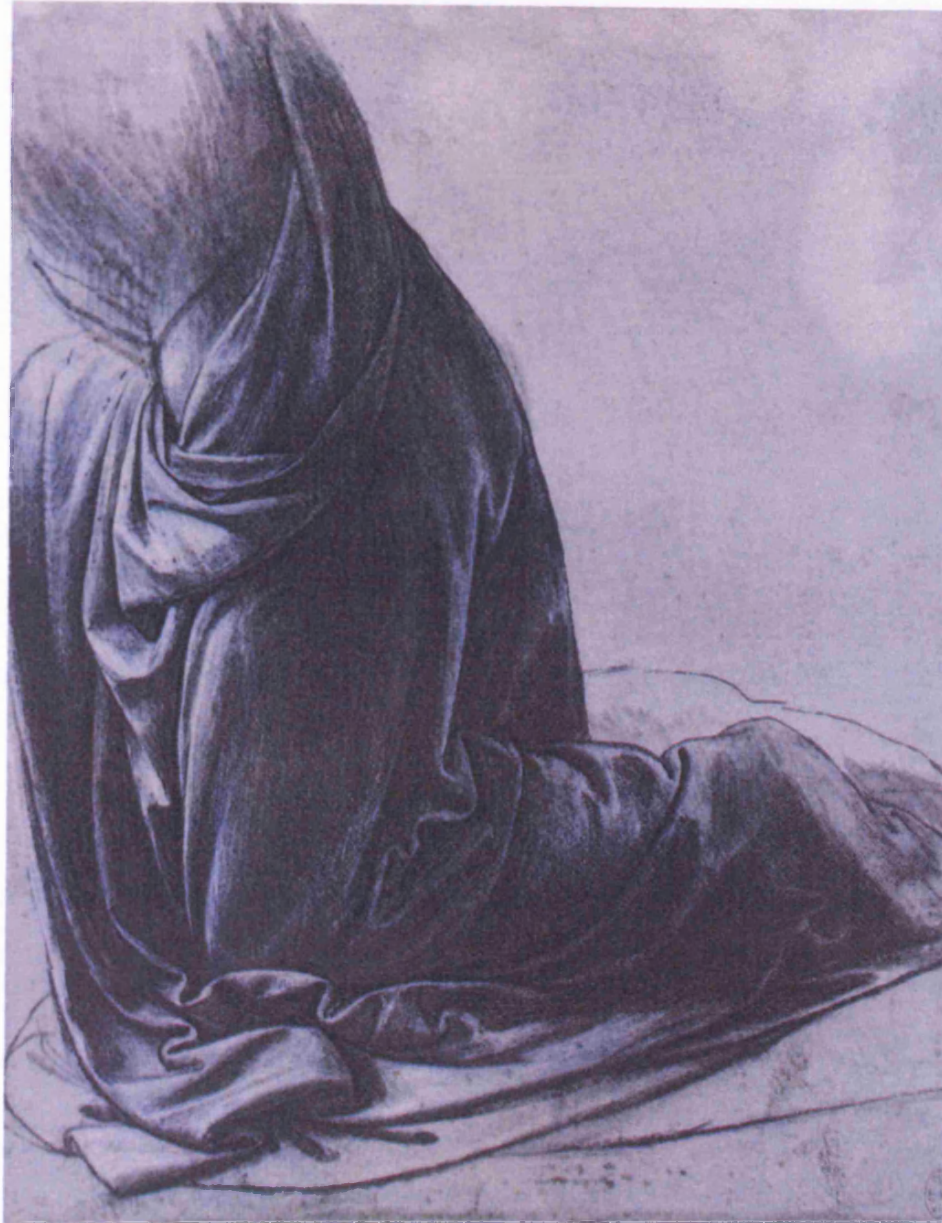


Plate 6 Leonardo da Vinci, *Drapery Study*, Windsor, Royal Library.

According to Cecil Gould, this is a study for the angel in the London version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, from the 1490's.

(From Cecil Gould (1975) *Leonardo: the Artist and the Non-Artist*, London, Weidenfield and Nicholson, Plate V.)

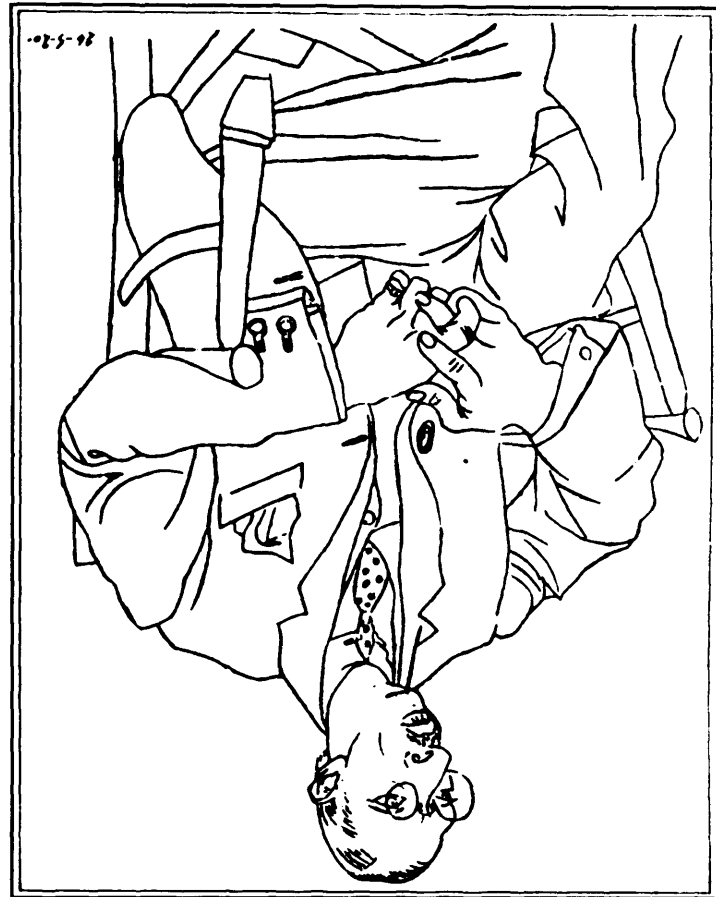


Plate 7 Copying Picasso's drawing of Stravinsky

- a) Pablo Picasso *Portrait of Igor Stravinsky*, illustration 4-9 in Betty Edwards.
Shown upside-down in the text book, to discourage verbal (left brain) thinking and encourage visual (right brain) thinking.

b) Examples of student drawings:

Left,
Top
&

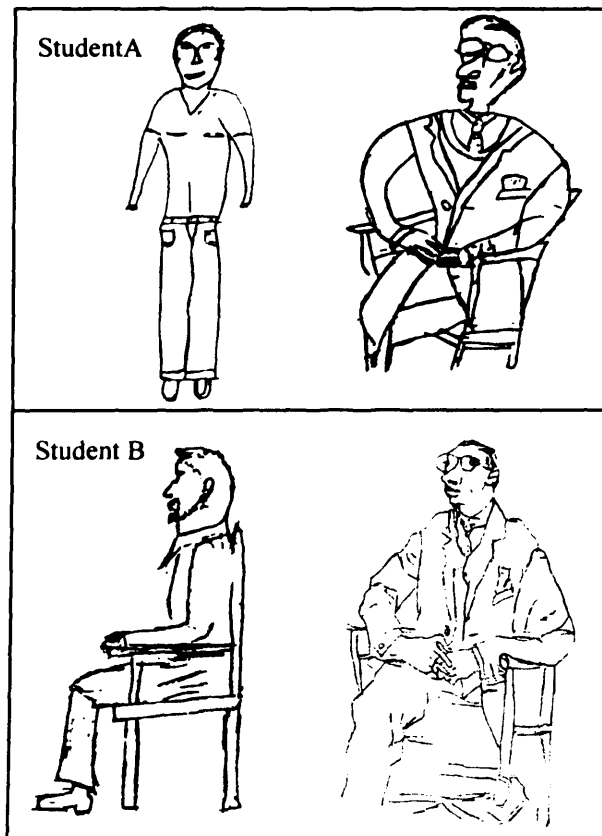
Bottom: Pre-course drawings by
adult students A and B,
showing schematic forms of
verbal/conceptually driven
"childish" drawing.

Top

Right: Copy of Picasso's *Stravinsky*,
copied "the right way up",
showing clear evidence of
continuing verbal-conceptual
(left-brain) thinking.

Bottom

Right: Copy of Picasso's *Stravinsky*,
copied "upside-down",
showing evidence of
decreased verbal-conceptual
and increased visual thinking.



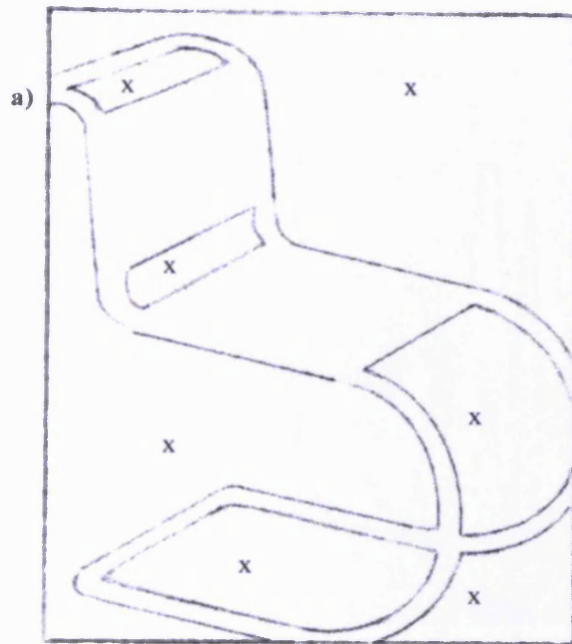


Plate 8 Seeing 'negative spaces'

a) Illustration to assist students to reify "negative spaces" (from Betty Edwards (1979) *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (1993 UK paperback edition) London, Harper Collins, (Fig. 7-19, p. 108, each space marked by an "x", added by me).

b) Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, ca. 1440-50, Fresco, San Marco, Florence.
This picture is characterised by the beauty and harmony of its negative spaces, particularly in the architecture. Note the expressive placement of the haloes within the main arches, giving the angel dynamic movement, and calmness to the Virgin Mary.

(from H.W. Janson, (1962) *A History of Art: a survey of the visual arts from the dawn of history to the present day*, London, Thames and Hudson., Fig. 497, p. 326)

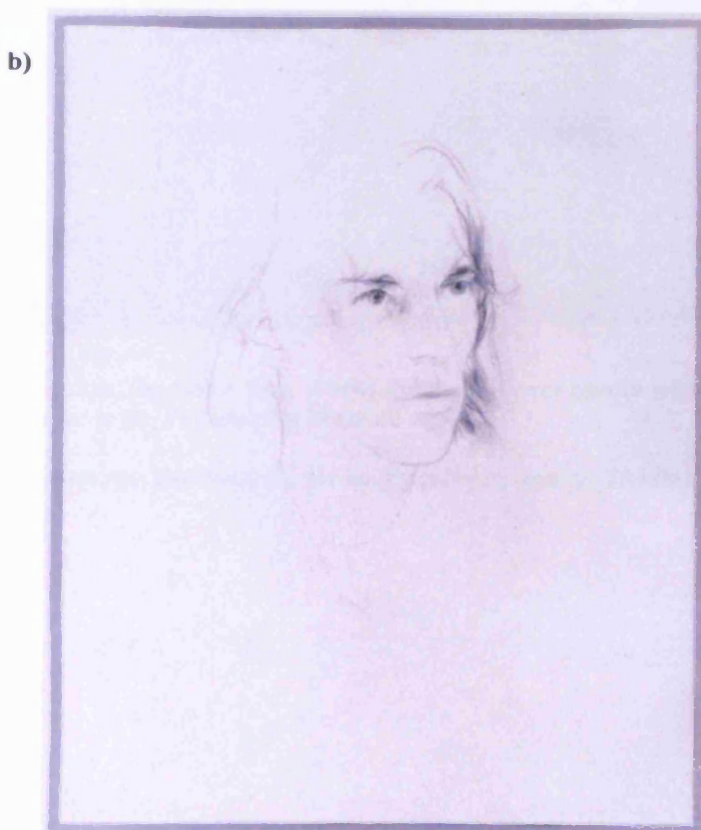
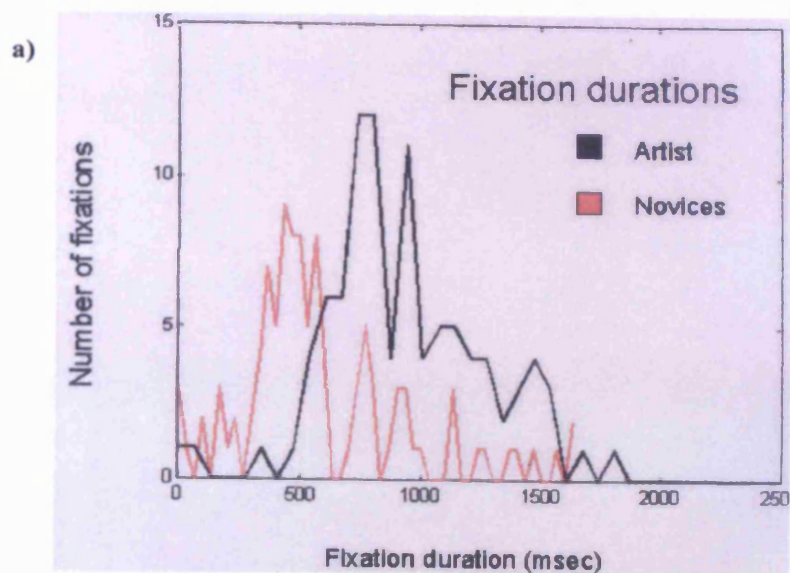


Plate 9 Eye fixations of artist and novice

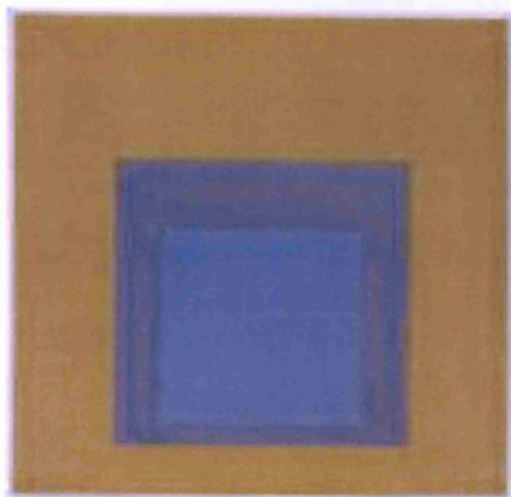
- a) Graph of eye fixations during a 1-minute portrait drawing
 Black: Artist Humphrey Ocean (mean time per fixation, 1 second)
 Red: Similar data for novice artists (mean time per fixation, 0.5 seconds)
 From the "Eye Movements in Portrait Drawing" project at Camberwell College of Art.
 (Fig. 11 of the web report posted in 2001 at:
http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/drawing_cognition/portrait.htm)

- b) *Portrait of Nick*, Humphrey Ocean, pencil on paper, 79.5 x 59.5cm. 1998.
 (Fig. 12 from the same web report as above.)

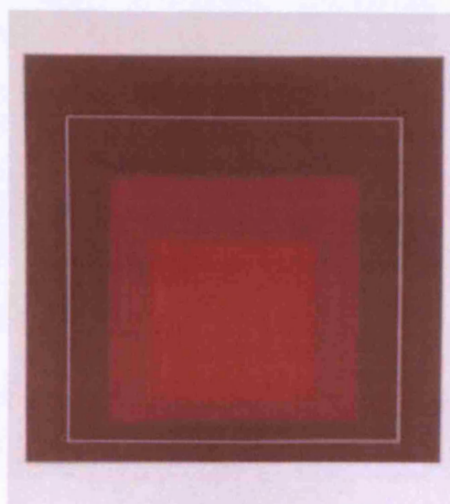


Plate 10 Jasper Johns *The Critic Sees*, (1964) sculptmetal over plastic with glass.
Lent by the artist, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

(http://www.nga.gov/feature/artnation/johns/interpretation_2a.htm)



a)



b)



c)

Plate 11 Priority of Form demonstrated in work of 'extreme colourists'.

Joseph Albers 1888-1976

- a) *Study for Homage to the Square*, 1963. Painting.
- b) *White Line Square IV*, 1966. Painting.

Mark Rothko 1903-70

- c) *Red on Maroon*, 1959. Painting.

(Images from the Tate website)

a)



b)



Plate 12

a) *Earthrise* (1968)

Photograph taken by an unidentified astronaut on Apollo 8.

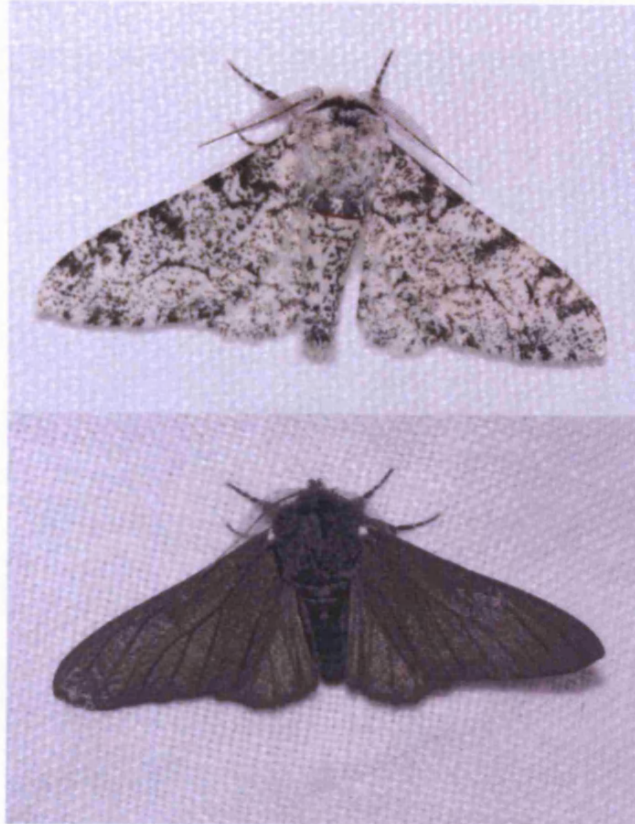
(from the NASA website)

b) *Polar Bear in Northern Alaska*

Photograph on Daily Mail website from a story by Barry Wigmore on 9th September 2007, "Most polar bears 'will be wiped out by the end of the century'."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?>

a)



b)



Plate 13 The Aesthetic as Evolutionary Driver

a) Peppered Moths

Pictures of the two famous varieties of peppered moths, whose change from a predominantly light population to predominantly dark, and back, was documented in the industrial revolution, and since. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peppered_moth)

b) The Heike (Samurai) Crab

The Heike crab is considered sacred and never eaten. Japanese crab fishermen throw them back into the sea, as they resemble the faces of samurai warriors who threw themselves into the sea in 1185, in a mass suicide, after defeat in a naval battle. (From the website: <http://forums.egullet.org/index.php?s=69f5e47192f6233e77c9ece34a8e5e45&showtopic=28569>)

a)



b)



Plate 14. Two Bowerbird bowers

a) The Orange-Crested Striped Gardener Bowerbird

(Plate II from Ernst Gombrich (1979; 1984 edn.) *The Sense of Order*, London, Phaidon)

b) The display ground of the Stagemaker

(Plate 25 from A. J. Marshall (1954) MARSHALL, A.J. (1954) *Bower-birds: their displays and breeding cycles*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.)

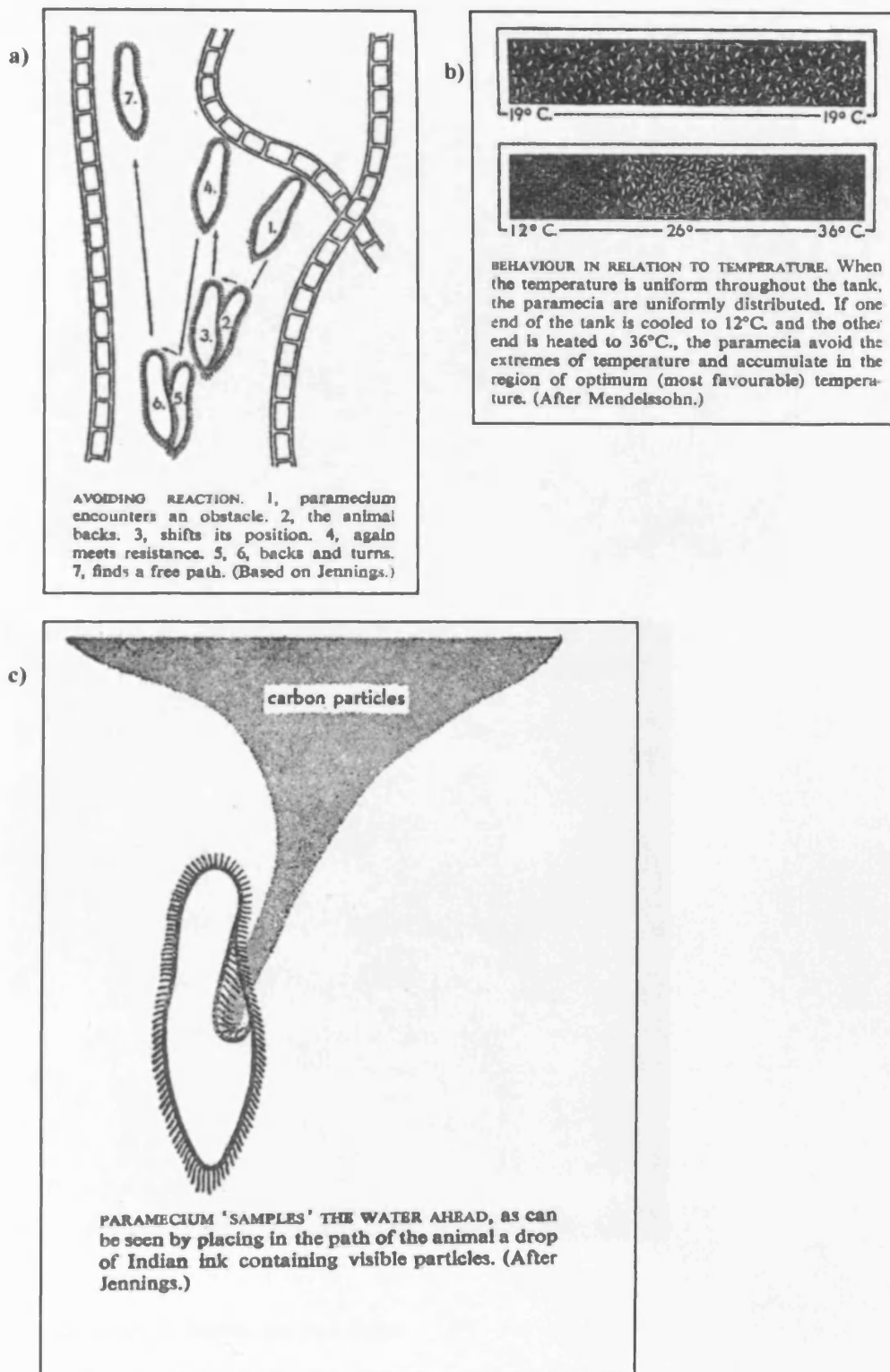


Plate 15 Sensitivity of *Paramecium* to its environment

- a) Avoidance of obstacle.
(From Ralph Buchsbaum *Animals Without Backbones*, p. 38)
- b) Movement to preferred temperature range, but "trial and error" exploration.
(From same source as a) above, p. 39)
- c) The beating of the cilia in the oral groove draws a plume of water, allowing *Paramecium* to "sample" conditions ahead and either to take avoiding action or to follow the trail, e.g. to a food source. (From same source as a) and b) above, p. 40)

a)



b)



Plate 16 Key evolutionary moments: sex and vision

a) Paramecium “conjugation”

These unicellular organisms supplement simple cell division with an early form of sexual reproduction, with a direct exchange of some of the DNA in their chromosomal “microneuclei”. It is assumed that sexual reproduction “accelerated” the process of evolution, by rapidly increasing variability. This image comes from the Clinton Community College website by Googling ‘paramecium’ and ‘images’.

b) The Trilobite, which evolved the first eyes known to science. The bar is 5mm long.

(<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/PhacopidDevonian.jpg>)

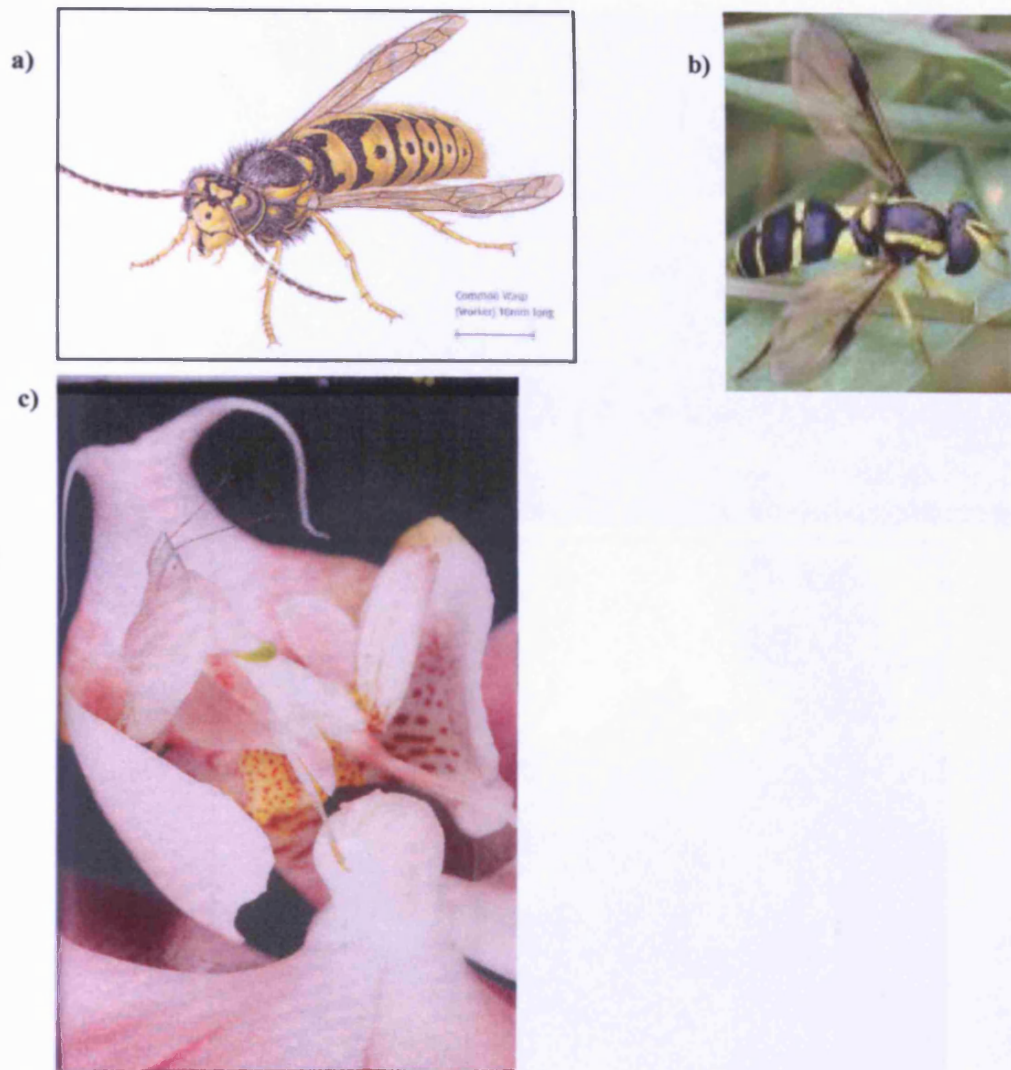


Plate 17: Warning signs and mimicry

- a) Wasps and many other stinging or otherwise poisonous animals have evolved yellow and black patterning, which renders them conspicuous. This is probably because potential predators learned to leave them alone, so they had less need for camouflage, eventually benefiting from the immunity conferred by their livery. Image from www.preston.gov.uk

- b) The harmless hoverfly has achieved immunity in the wake of the wasp's reputation, as potential predators did not want to risk eating them, for fear of being stung.

http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://piccies.flybywire.org.uk/General/20040612/20040617/Hoverfly.jpg&imgrefurl=http://piccies.flybywire.org.uk/General/index20040612.html&h=640&w=480&sz=40&hl=en&start=1&um=1&usg=__sW9LWU10o4AKKa0rsAcnFhV9Z20=&tbnid=TNN05Qe5fUFfzM:&tbnh=137&tbnw=103&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dhoverfly%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3DGGGL,GGGL:2006-31,GGGL:en%26sa%3DN

- c) An orchid mantis waiting in an orchid for its prey to arrive.
(from David Attenborough (2005) *Life in the Undergrowth*, London, BBC, p. 175)

a)



b)



Plate 18 Selective aesthetic pressures on our apple tree

a) May.

The selective pressure of pollinators' perceptual abilities and appetites shaped the evolution of apple blossom.

b) September; two Gestalt factors are at work here:

1) "pop-out" colour, for frugivores with colour vision, and

2) grouping according to colour and shape. The perceptual systems of the fruit consumers provided a selective pressure on fruit-bearing plants, which disperse their seeds in this way, to develop these characteristics, in addition to a sugary pulp and fragrant smell.



a)



b)

Plate 19 Sexual ornaments leading to extreme dimorphism

a) Humming-birds *Spathura underwoodi*

Comparison of male (right) and female (left). From *Descent of Man*, 2nd Edition, p. 388.

b) Beetles *Chiasognathus grantii*

Comparison of mouthparts, male (above) and female (below). From *Descent of Man*, 2nd Edition p. 301.

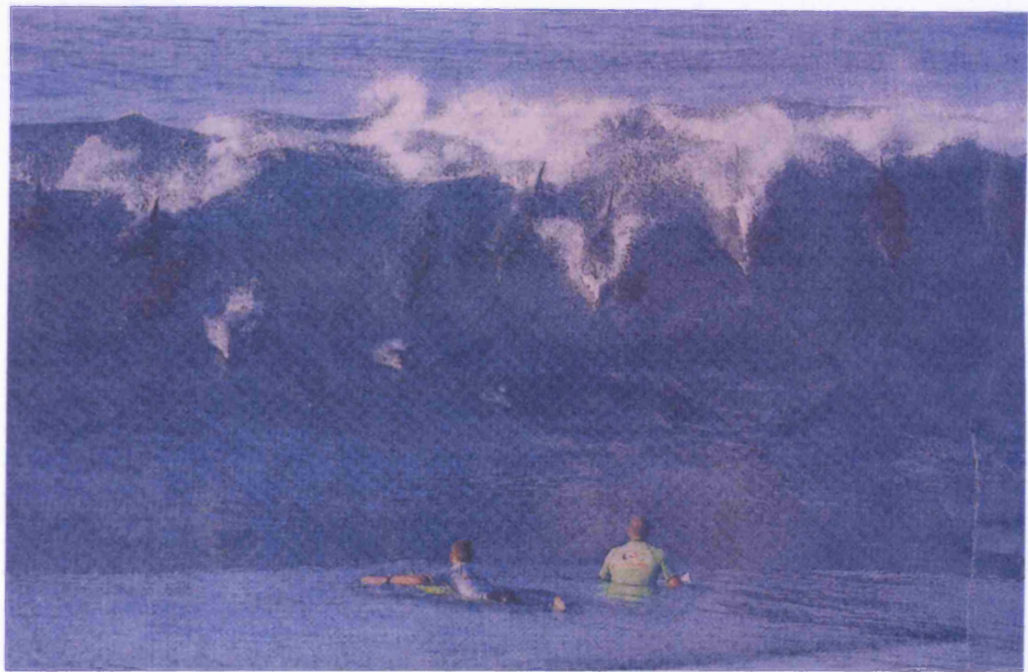


Plate 20 Dolphins at Durban surfing competition

(The Guardian, Travel Section, Saturday 29th April 2006, p.16)

a)



b)



Plate 21 Examples of Ramachandran's "Laws" at work

a) The "Peak Shift Principle", identified by Ramachandran with the Sanskrit term, "rasa".

Plate 4 from "Art and the Brain", a special feature in *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (1999) Vol. 6; no. 6-7) The caption reads:

"A Celestial Nymph— the rasa of feminine perfection. (Mathura, 800 A.D.). Notice the clever use of abdominal creases and dimples produced by subcutaneous fat—a feminine secondary sexual characteristic. (Replica in Ramachandran Collection.)"

b) The "Isolation Principle" (Plate 12 from the same source as a), above)

Horses drawn by Nadia, an autistic *savant*, aged 3 years and 5 months. Two forms of isolation are at work: 1) the "island intelligence" of the autistic child

2) restriction of the image to line.

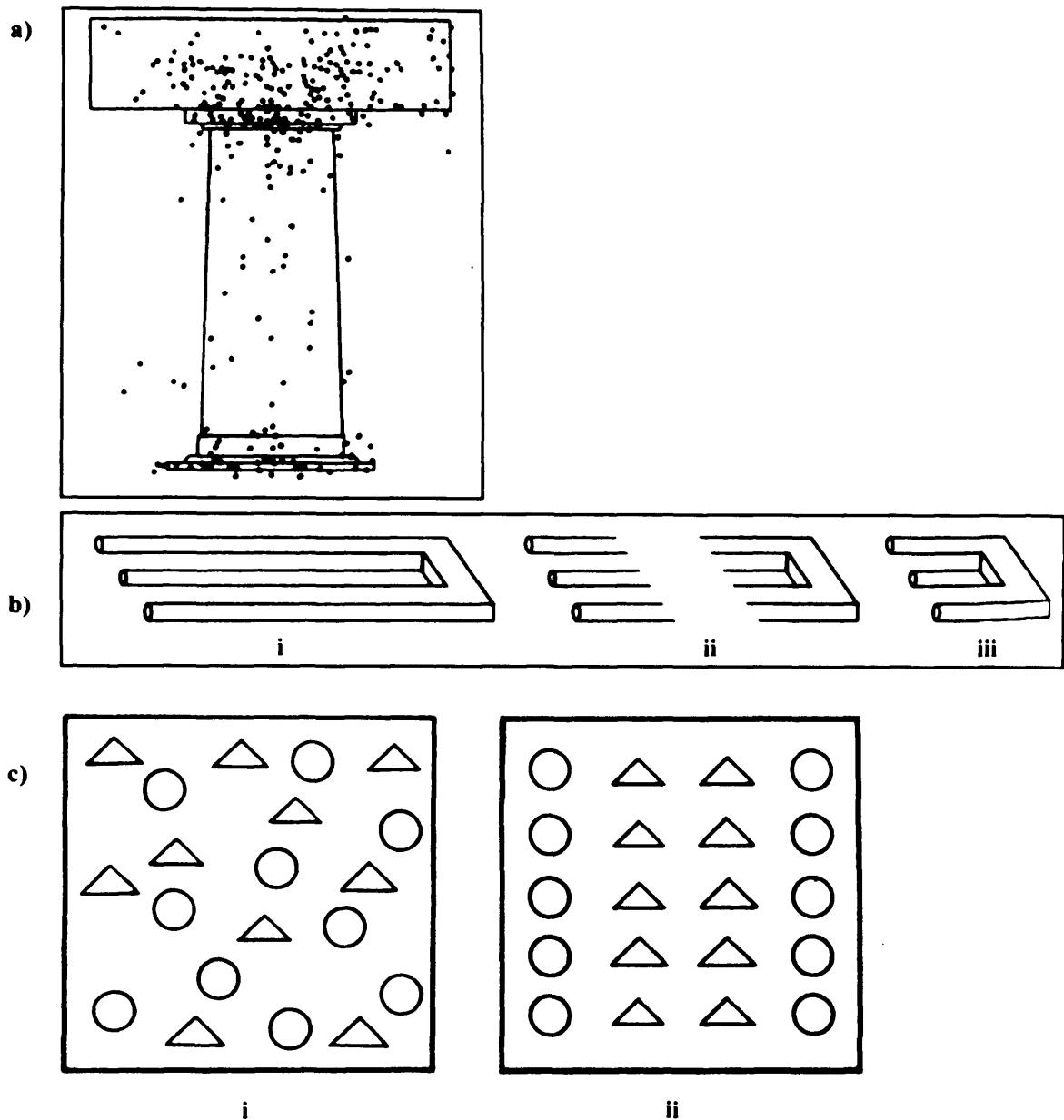


Plate 22 Gombrich: “break spotter” and “extrapolator”; Gestalt vs Information Theory.

- a) Records of eye fixations (G. T. Buswell, 1935); From Gombrich *Sense of Order* (1984 Edn.) fig. 132, p. 122. The “break spotter” examines the boundary; the “extrapolator” ignores the un-broken length of the column, which has been shortened to save paper in a book of architectural diagrams.
- b) “Devil’s Tuning Fork” from Gombrich *Sense of Order* (1984 Edn.) fig. 133, p. 124.
 - i. “Break spotter” fooled by “extrapolator” generalising from either end without checking continuous area.
 - ii. Making a break, and reducing the distance apart, removes most of the illusion
 - iii. Bringing both ends together gives the “extrapolator” no role; the “break detector” works.
- c) Comparison of the explanatory power of Gestalt vs Information Theory
 - From Gombrich *Sense of Order* (1984 Edn.) fig. 130, a and b, p. 121.
 - i. The principle of simplicity in Gestalt Theory successfully explains a certain level of simplicity achieved by visually grouping the circles and triangles. However, the design is still restless, and Gombrich says that the best explanation for this comes from information theory. All the different “breaks” leave the “break detector” unable to resolve the arrangement into an orderly pattern.
 - ii. Grouping the same ten circles and ten triangles produces a simple arrangement which carries much less information, and settles quickly into a restful, but more boring, Gestalt.

a)



b)

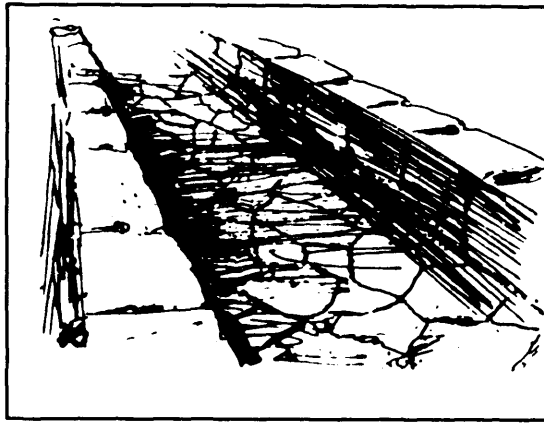


Plate 23. 'Top-down' information affecting vision.

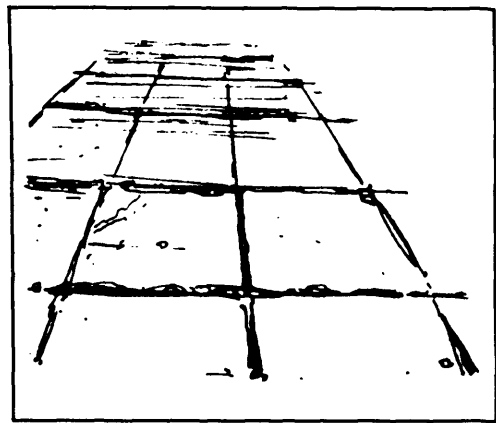
a) *The Rhine at Rheinfelden* (1992) P. Bilon

This view of the Rhine from Haus Salmegg, the Rheinfelden municipal museum and gallery, was painted by a visiting Russian Artist. The painting was hanging in the municipal visitors' flat. I thought the handling of the water was 'crude' before I had seen the current at high-water level for myself the next morning.

b) View from the balcony of Haus Salmegg, with the river at a high level, on 3rd September, 2005. In the painting the water level looks about a meter higher, as the vertical pier is completely submerged.



a)



b



c)

Plate 24 Perceiving unity: from challenge and pleasure to frustration or boredom

a) Crazy paving

(from Ernst Gombrich (1979; 1984 edn.) *The Sense of Order*, London, Phaidon, Fig. 6, p. 8.)

b) Regular paving (source, as a) above)

c) Gestalt "Aha!" moment of resolving apparent chaos.

(from V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein (1999) "The Science of Art" in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 6, No. 6-7) pp. 15-51, p. 21)



Plate 25 German cheesecake and other homemade gateaux for a wedding in Wales.

The parents of the German groom contributed both still and sparkling wine from their region, Rheinland-Pfalz, and homemade cakes from traditional German recipes. These conveyed messages of goodwill, cultural diplomacy and tangible tokens of the donors' personal worth.

