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INTRODUCTION TO THE CHOICE OF THEORETICAL STUDIES
FROM THE CONFERENCE
REVISIONS OF MODERN AESTHETICS

*In memoriam of
Dr Milan Damnjanović and Dr Heinz Paetzold*

It is customary that between each two Congresses of the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA) a national association of aesthetics organizes an international conference and, on the same occasion, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA). Between the IAA congress in Krakow (2013) and the congress in Seoul (2016), the Faculty of Architecture – University of Belgrade and the Society for Aesthetics of Architecture and Visual Arts Serbia (DAEVUS) will organize a conference under the title of *Revisions of Modern Aesthetics*.

The conference is dedicated to the memory of the aesthetic and philosophic oeuvre of the Belgrade professor Dr Milan Damnjanović (1924-1994), who founded the Society for Aesthetics of Serbia and organized the 9th International Congress of Aesthetics (IAA). The conference is also dedicated to the work of the German philosopher and aesthetician Heinz Paetzold (1941-2012), who gave a unique blend of critical theory and the philosophy of culture and architecture. For many years, Professors Paetzold and Damnjanović were both members of the Executive Committee of the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA).

The conference *Revisions of Modern Aesthetics* concerns contemporary issues in aesthetics and its role in visual arts and architecture studies. The issue of modernity in aesthetics and philosophy is posited as central. Reviewing the history of modernity and especially aesthetic transformations in the 20th century is a challenging issue for contemporary society and culture. We live in a world of permanent change; a world of desire to get out of the global crisis into a new world of an unexpected modernity. Therefore, the important issues are those of the project, research, emancipation and the new. By means of paradigmatic models of modernity we will try to construct a theoretical, aesthetic and philosophical platform for contemporaneity. As a whole, the Conference aims to initiate a discussion from the field of contemporary philosophical and applied aesthetics about which we are today compared to the past and in relation to the future. Aesthetics has the right to pose these fundamental questions.

The conference was attended by over 60 participants from around the world - many representatives of national aesthetic companies, university teachers and researchers and post-doctoral and doctoral students. A selection has been made and 13 articles that represent modern global aesthetic scene and especially orientation of scene on aesthetics and philosophy of architecture and visual arts were selected.

THE STATUS OF AESTHETICS TODAY

A B S T R A C T

In my paper I will examine some of the turning points in recent history of aesthetics. I claim that recent developments in aesthetics have not only broadened its range of interests and made it more up-to-date vis-à-vis concurrent art, but have also taken aesthetics into realms that were previously not its own. In this respect, I see Jacques Rancière as the pivotal figure, whose recent writings offer a possible novel – although also risky – endeavor. Furthermore, I will examine some other – divergent, but also highly productive – aesthetic theories of the recent decades.

KEY WORDS

AESTHETICS
HISTORY
JACQUES RANCIÈRE
ART
TURNING POINTS

TURNING POINTS IN AESTHETICS

In this paper I intend to present a brief sketch of what I see as the main turning points in aesthetics – of those at its inception, on the one hand, and those in recent decades, on the other. I thus intend to offer a fragmentary picture of the development of aesthetics to the present time so as to gauge its position and relevance within the current state of the humanities and social sciences. I should add that the views I express here are based mostly on my personal experiences which were to a large extent formed through my experience with and within the International Association for Aesthetics, where I have been active since 1980. Doubtlessly, this activity and my exchange with colleagues from across the globe have left visible traces in my interpretation of what aesthetics was, what it is, and how other people applying it perceive it.

When speaking about aesthetics we all tend to start with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who during the 1730s developed this term in his *Aesthetica* (published between 1750 and 1758). As it has been observed,

in the years to come, the term and the discipline [of aesthetics] spread in Europe with astonishing rate considering the technologies for information exchange at that time. For instance, a chair of aesthetics was established at the University of Copenhagen as early as in 1788. This, however, does not imply that the discipline as such was unambiguously defined and delimited already at that time. On the contrary, Baumgarten's definitions and reflections were themselves rather loose. Not even his own immediate successors, such as G. F. Meier (1718-1777), were especially true to his ideas. The most prominent and influential further development of the concept of aesthetics in Baumgarten's own age we owe to Immanuel Kant.¹

This new term, namely aesthetics, acquired also a number of contradictory meanings, these ranging from that developed by Friedrich Schiller to that suggested by Hegel. From a long-term perspective the turning point was most certainly the meaning that aesthetics was given by Hegel: if Kant viewed beauty – regarded as an object of aesthetic experience – as primarily that of nature, then Hegel interpreted aesthetics as philosophy of art – a designation that for the most part remains in place until our very present. Let me note some essential differences between the two traditions: while in the Hegelian tradition art – driven by the inner dialectical tensions, the spirit and its priorities – undergoes enormous changes to meet at the end its death (or end), the aesthetics arising from Kant ignores such genetic designations and wants to speak from a universal (and therefore also transhistorical) position.

While the former is based on an idea and therefore possesses strong links to its historical and social setting (including that of ideology), then the latter privileges experience and decontextualization. The former is usually regarded as a part of the Continental tradition and the second of the Anglo-American.

“OLDEST SYSTEM PROGRAMME OF GERMAN IDEALISM”

In early romanticism the relation between the art and the aesthetics was essentially modified: early romanticism established a symmetrical alliance between the art and the aesthetics. This change was articulated in the “Oldest System Programme of German Idealism” (1796) attributed to Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling. In this brief fragment the idea of beauty attains a very particular position:

Finally the idea which unites all, the Idea of *beauty*, the word taken in the higher platonic sense. I am now convinced that the highest act of reason, which embraces all Ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are brothers *only in beauty*. – The philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet.²

In the brief remaining passage in the “System,” poetry is raised to the highest position, surpassing sciences and arts, with philosophy requiring “monotheism of reason of the heart.”³ The same document proclaims the state to be “something mechanical,” for “every state must treat free people as a piece of machinery; and it should not do this; thus it must *come to an end*.”⁴ This revolutionary statement is complemented by proclaiming the object of freedom to be an *Idea*. And here we return to the beginning of the discussion of this fragment, for the “Idea” which unites all subordinate ideas is the Idea of beauty, the latter thereby unifying the true and the good, with the aesthetic act becoming the highest instance of human reason. Why should beauty be an object of philosophy and why can beauty be related to ethics? Because it is in an essential relation with the true and the good and is a model of perfection.

In enlightenment and romanticism the criterion of beauty shifted from the object to the subject. The idea of beauty was replaced by the sentiment of the beautiful. From now on it was the taste that was capable of carrying a judgment of beauty – a knowledge that depends on the sensible and not on the intelligible. Until the nineteenth century the idea of beauty was the only basis of the aesthetic criterion. With romanticism the object of art vanished, i.e., it was no longer clear and self-evident that the object of art as representation was erected on the foundations of beauty, but was instead increasingly erected upon categories such as the sublime, the interesting and the ugly.

RECENT HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

Until the post-World War II period, aesthetics was either a discipline of academic philosophy as developed especially in German academic context or analytic aesthetics as developed in the Anglo-American framework and in its extensions such as the Scandinavian countries. Marxism developed its own brands of aesthetics – some Hegelian and some not – with phenomenology being another strong trend, having its roots mainly in Germany and France. From the 1960s and 1970s onwards, the traditions of the Frankfurt School and of the emergent critical theory became yet another broad and influential body of what were also aesthetic ideas, even though their authors (Theodor Adorno or Walter Benjamin, for example) preferred to employ as self-designating terms notions other than aesthetics. This was a consequence of the situation in academia where usually aesthetics formed a part of university philosophy programs. At the universities until the late sixties (or longer), traditional and conservative aesthetic criteria that arose from classical and formalist avant-garde tastes usually ruled. In the sixties and seventies such aesthetics was dominant also among the members of the International Association for Aesthetics (IAA).

Contrary to the Continental tradition, the subject of analytic aesthetics was both art and beauty in general – and therefore also nature. In the sixties, with the rise of structuralism, semiotics and related theories of the sign, phenomenological aesthetics – of Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Mikel Dufrenne, for example – lost its central place in French and partly also in German philosophical “empires” (to employ a term of Richard Shusterman) and was replaced by structuralism, poststructuralism and critical theory, the latter being this time understood in the broadest possible sense and as such employed mostly outside France. Being so often in the twentieth century, and in the 1960s and 1970s as well, French theory was the most influential among the national traditions on the Continent. In this respect the import and influence of French theoretic and philosophical traditions were just the opposite of those of French art whose import and influence were after World War II in their global role replaced by the American art.

Until late 1970s aesthetics was national and regional, on the one hand, and academic on the other. It usually dealt with abstractions that arose not from the knowledge of art but from the needs of aesthetic theories, thereby making aesthetics an easy prey of less rigid but more empirical transdisciplinary and borderline studies such as the newly emergent theories of the 1960s. Such situation was already present in art much earlier, causing the American abstract expressionist painter Barnett Newman to condescendingly remark that “aesthetics is to art what ornithology is to the birds.”

All this showed that contrary to the eighteenth century, when aesthetics spread quickly across Europe, in the late twentieth century it became a rigid, traditionalistic, and conservative discipline without clear method or subjectmatter. The first six or seven decades of the twentieth century were a period in which aesthetics did not find its particular and relevant place within the humanities and even philosophy. One important reason for this situation was the fact that during that period philosophy consisted mainly of holistic philosophical theories wherein aesthetics usually didn't have a place of its own but had to be – to be able to carry the designation aesthetics – extracted from an all-englobing philosophical *Weltanschauung*. Such was the case of Heidegger's, Merleau-Ponty's or Sartre's philosophy.

The situation changed with the arrival of postmodernism and postmodern theory. Not only did the non-modernist or even anti-modernist forms of art emerge, but also the aesthetics as philosophy of art and beauty was rapidly replaced by psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and philosophized forms of Marxism and semiotics. A special role was played by Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser, Jean-François Lyotard and other, mostly French authors, whose discourses in their form and content ran counter the prevalent academic theories of the time. After having been brought up in the tradition of analytic philosophy or phenomenology some of our colleagues from across the globe encountered difficulties when they started to study and understand these authors. Suddenly their students knew of postmodern theory more than they, as their teachers, did. Similarly those from the language departments were often more knowledgeable in postmodern philosophy than those from the philosophy departments. This occurred because such “unorthodox” influences entered national and linguistic environments via language departments (French, for example) and not philosophy departments that tended to be more isolated and thus less prone to the influences from foreign theories. This situation changed in a single generation, spreading Continental influence around the globe.

2000 AND AFTER

Let me jump to the year 2000. By that time on the Continent aesthetics as primarily philosophy of art started to be questioned – not because it would turn analytical, but because of the two decades long view that art was nearing its end and, furthermore, because of the emerging influence of the interpretation of aesthetics as philosophy of the sensible – or of both. While there exist on the globe vast academic and cultural territories where traditional disciplinary

aesthetics continues to be pursued and where “traditional” designates also willful ignorance or avoidance of the mentioned division, it is probably warranted to claim that at this moment this kind of aesthetics is at the forefront of current reflection upon aesthetics and as aesthetics, even though the place and the import of the sensible on the one hand and that of art on the other, are not yet equal.

Nonetheless, this “other” aesthetics, namely that which reaches also beyond the realm of art, is acquiring an important voice. Even more, this kind of aesthetics has caught the attention of artists and critics, as well as many of those who so far were not interested in aesthetics and were thus newcomers to the field.

Let me mention one instance of such aesthetics, namely that of Jacques Rancière who became a particular source of this unexpected attention directed at aesthetics: his special merit for some became the import he ascribed to politics and aesthetics – especially in their mutual relationship. Rancière also became known for the particular characteristics of his interpretation of this tandem and of art, its autonomy and heteronomy, its function in the processes of emancipation, as well as of his criticism of categories such as modernism and postmodernism.

We should not forget that a few other authors have also been important in recent aesthetics and have also visibly overturned its roots, even if they have not always designated their endeavors by that name. I am thinking of Thierry de Duve, Boris Groys as well as Arthur Danto, Alain Badiou and Nicolas Bourriaud. Each of these authors proposed his own description or prescription of the essence or nature of art and artwork.

Nonetheless, it was Rancière who most radically opened a new vista onto aesthetics and its relation to art. Furthermore in his own theoretical practice he took into consideration novels, theater etc., thereby bringing literature once again into the fold of the broad notion of “art” in singular for literature has in recent decades drifted onto its own path, separating itself from arts other than those of the spoken written word. Risking to exaggerate, I would claim that Rancière has visibly reconfigured recent aesthetics and that his theory has at least for the time being become the hegemonic one on the whole globe.

CONCLUSION

In spite of what I may have said in this concluding part of my paper, it appears to me warranted to continue to speak of aesthetics primarily as philosophy of art. This does not exclude the sensible in its different guises as the object of our scrutiny, yet the latter remains – as of now – only partly explained and only partly applied to various situations. Until this is accomplished, it will be difficult to speak of the two segments of aesthetics – one focused on the sensible and the other on art – as equally important and equally relevant.

As I have attempted to show in this brief historical sketch, aesthetics underwent different stages and established varied relations to its main subjectmatter in the twentieth century, i.e. art. Aesthetics oscillated between art as its exclusive, and art as its partial subjectmatter. As Arthur Danto observed shortly after Barnett Newman's statement from the fifties, that I have mentioned earlier, aesthetics has become – at least in United States – an object of strong interest to these same artists. With the decline of postmodernism and of its body of theories, and with the emergence of contemporary art, a theoretical reflection of these new processes both in art and in theory brought about a renewed interest in aesthetics. A crucial figure was Arthur Danto who was perhaps the only author who successfully blended the analytic and the Continental traditions. His theory of the end of art has furthermore significantly contributed to a particular interpretation of art. All these authors consciously entered a realm of the humanities that we designate as aesthetics. This trend spread even further, for Rancière's theory had direct influence on artistic practice.

With the aim of concluding let me mention another characteristic of recent aesthetics, that is, in recent decades it has been catching up with the developments in philosophy proper as well as with those in the concurrent art. If until the arrival of postmodernism (which for aesthetics meant the early eighties) aesthetics was often ignorant of the concurrent developments in art, then today aesthetics has become firmly connected with the on-going artistic developments. For the time being this appears to be a practice that is here to stay.

NOTES

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- 1 Morten Kyndrup, unpublished manuscript.
- 2 “Appendix: the so-called ‘Oldest System Programme of German Idealism,’” in *Aesthetics and Subjectivity from Kant to Nietzsche*, ed. Andrew Bowie (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 334.
- 3 Ibid., 335.
- 4 Ibid., 335.

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THE CO-OPTATION OF SENSIBILITY AND THE SUBVERSION OF BEAUTY

A B S T R A C T

The aesthetic analysis of everyday life has developed an important body of work whose significance extends beyond the academy. Because of its ubiquity in experience, aesthetic sensibility has many manifestations, both overt and concealed. This paper examines some largely hidden ways in which taste and aesthetic judgment, which are manifested in sense experience, have been subtly appropriated and exploited. I identify and describe such procedures as the cooptation (or appropriation) of aesthetic sensibility, a phenomenon that has consequences damaging to health, to society, and to environment. These practices are a form of negative aesthetics that distorts and manipulates sensible experience in the interest of mass marketing and political control. Such practices have great ethical significance and carry social and political implications that suggest another role for aesthetics, a critical one: aesthetics as an instrument of emancipation in social analysis and political criticism.

KEY WORDS

AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY
COOPTATION
MISEDUCATION
PROFIT
TASTE

In due time, the theory of aesthetics will have to account not only for the delight in Kantian beauty and the sublime, but for the phenomena like aesthetic violence and the aestheticization of violence, of aesthetic abuse and intrusion, the blunting of sensibility, its perversion, and its poisoning.¹

I

As a philosopher, I think of emancipation in cognitive terms. It is intellectual enlightenment of the sort that Francis Bacon attempted to instate by exposing 'the idols and false notions which are now in possession of the human understanding, and have taken deep root therein...'.² It is Spinoza's (1632-1677) ideal of a mind, freed from the blinding force of the emotions and guided by adequate ideas, a mind that achieves true equanimity.³ That we still struggle for emancipation is a humbling fact. At the same time, in our day the obstacles to emancipation are not only ignorance of natural causes or human psychology that clouds the understanding. Our need for emancipation continues to come from inadequate ideas and false systems of philosophy (Bacon's 'Idols of the Theatre') from sources undreamed of in the seventeenth century or, indeed, in some cases, unknown before the immediate present. It is with emancipation from these last sources that I am concerned here.

Since the material of the philosophic enterprise is ideas, it is in that realm that, as philosophers, we can hope to contribute. From a pragmatic orientation, the contribution should be ideas that make a difference in behavior, unlike most philosophical discourse. And in keeping with the social context of behavior, such ideas should contribute to behavior that works toward emancipation in the social process. A thoughtful European philosopher once commented on 'the difference between a man who is led solely by feeling or opinion, and a man who is led by reason. The former,' he wrote, 'whether he will it or not, performs actions of which he is utterly ignorant; the latter is his own master and only performs such actions that he knows are of primary importance in life and therefore chiefly desires [*them*]. Therefore I call the former a slave, and the latter a free man...'.⁴

Guided by Spinoza's idea of freedom, I would like to approach the subject of emancipation, presumably a moral and political concern, from the unlikely direction of aesthetics. The observation in my recent book, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, serves as the frame of my comments:

Aesthetic values are no longer confined to the museum and the scenic drive where they are honored but kept isolated and innocuous. They have become increasingly prominent in conflicts with values in morality, religion, economics, environment, and social life.⁵

Over the past half century, philosophical aesthetics has broadened its scope beyond an interest in beauty in the arts and in nature. Following the lead of the arts themselves, the field of aesthetics has spread outward to encompass the environment in all its forms, not only the scenic landscape but the devastated one, as well, and not only the natural environment but also the urban environment.⁶ Over the past half century a considerable body of literature on environmental aesthetics has grown out of these concerns. Aesthetic inquiry has also been directed at humans: personal experiences and relationships, the human body itself, social behavior, and political manifestations are being studied and assessed from an aesthetic vantage. Most recently, over the past decade or so, ordinary objects and experiences have preoccupied a growing number of scholars, and the aesthetics of everyday life has become a center of attention.

This work has had a profound effect on the field of aesthetics. Not only does aesthetic inquiry now embrace the objects, activities, and experiences of human life without constraint but it necessarily implicates other areas of philosophy. As aesthetic inquiry embraces social domains, ethical and even metaphysical concerns cannot be ignored. When eyes sensitive to beauty in art and nature encounter the objects and activities of ordinary life, they see not only their hidden charms⁷ but also their failings.⁸ Aesthetics then becomes a moral instrument and even a political factor in developing new thought in social and political aesthetics.⁹

The aesthetics of everyday life offers a fresh perspective on the world of ordinary experience, revealing facets that have long gone unremarked. These experiences may not be spectacular and may even be routine. Aesthetic value is discovered in common objects, conditions, and situations, ranging from the houses, landscaping, and trees encountered during a walk in one's own neighborhood, to basking in the spring sunshine; from tossing a ball back and forth and even, one scholar has suggested, to finding a certain aesthetic satisfaction in hanging laundry.¹⁰ As Yuriko Saito has noted, "We are yet to develop an aesthetic discourse regarding artifacts such as utensils, furniture, and other objects with which we interact in everyday environment and activities that we undertake with them, such as cleaning, cooking, and socializing with others."¹¹ All these offer occasions of delighting in the sensible experience of an ordinary situation and the sheer sensory pleasure of being alive.¹²

We are not sufficiently aware that the origins of aesthetic value lie in sense experience. That this is the case is shown not only in the etymology of the term ‘aesthetics’ (from the Greek *aisthēsis*, perception by the senses) but also in the dependence of aesthetic appreciation on the sensory content of our encounter with a work of art or a natural landscape. This encounter centers on perceptual experience: acuteness in viewing, listening, touching – the full somatic engagement with the rich world of sensible experience in which we are inextricably embedded.¹³

For such reasons, etymological and experiential as well as historical, I think of aesthetics as the theory of sensibility. Whether sensibility is concerned with the arts, with nature, or with perceptual experience as such, aesthetic appreciation centers on a sensitivity to perceptual qualities as they are directly experienced, to their qualitative sensoriness. We experience the pleasures of sensibility in the arts and in natural beauty, but such sensory gratification also occurs in the activity of savoring the flavors, textures, and aromas of a well-prepared dinner. It is part of the pleasure we take in the cut, color, and fabric of new clothes. It is the delight we have in the intense, low-angled sunlight that causes fall foliage to glow or the snowy landscape to gleam. It occurs, too, in confronting the color abstraction of a Rothko or Frankenthaler painting. Such experience lies at the center of the delight, the pleasure, the emotional feelings associated with beauty wherever we encounter it. Clearly, sensibility is not the whole of art or of beauty but it lies at its core. This understanding of aesthetic value differs from how it is commonly understood, associated as it is almost entirely with the fine arts and with scenic beauty in nature. Identifying aesthetics with sensibility captures the central force in the value we take in the activity of aesthetic appreciation, whether of the arts, of nature, or of ordinary life.

II

Because of its ubiquity, sensibility has many manifestations, both overt and concealed. I want to examine here some largely hidden practices by which aesthetic sensibility has been subtly appropriated and exploited. These practices have resulted in what I call ‘the co-optation of sensibility.’ Their damaging consequences to health, society, and environment are incalculable. Let me explain.

As one cannot help being aware, the developed world has fostered an industrial-commercial culture obsessed with profitability. From schools to public agencies, no institution is immune to the business imperative of reducing costs and

increasing profits. Service institutions, whose *raison d'être* is to meet people's needs and promote the transmission of culture, are particularly vulnerable, since the high labor costs of providing services is a major expense and directly impedes the maximization of profit. This model has taken a firmer and firmer hold on schools and universities, on health care, and public services of every kind. All have been subsumed under the model of profit-making enterprises.

It doesn't take much insight to recognize this pervasive pattern. Education has been turned into a lucrative business whose degrees are sometimes offered and acquired with minimal requirements. Even our public schools have become outlets for the marketing of junk food through vending machines in the hallways and commercialized school lunches, part of a pervasive and insidious pattern of exploiting children as consumers. Furthermore, who owns the air? Who owns the lakes and streams? Our environmental commons has been captured by industry, leading to air and water pollution as a by-product of industrial processes. The pattern is bold and blatant and it is pernicious, for what suffers is the public and its need for conditions and services that make living in community healthful and fulfilling, rather than a situation that is oppressive, tense, exhausting, and exploitative.

We can see this pattern most clearly in the privatization and appropriation of our environmental and technological commons, from the visual pollution of billboards and power lines infesting scenic landscapes to the industrial pollution of our rivers and the very air we breathe.¹⁴ Moreover, everyone is presumed to have a right to the benefits of innovative technological resources, whether electronic devices or flights to luxury vacations in distant places. Sometimes their pursuit is justified as a panacea for real or presumed ills, but often it is merely self-indulgence. Everything has a price and everyone expects to be able to afford it.¹⁵ Actually, the taste for the most up-to-date is a constructed taste, a cultivated desire that is ideologically driven through intensive advertising in the service of the profit motive. Coupled with this is the pervasiveness of the commercial pressure that not only impinges on us in public places but insinuates itself onto the very clothes we wear in the form of commercial logos on their front and bald advertisements covering their back, turning the purchaser into a walking billboard.

Profit is, of course, the principal motive of most business enterprises, and I am not condemning it as such. What can be contested is whether the business model can serve as a universal template for the social order. Actually, some individuals in the business community are concerned about business ethics, and

this area of applied ethics has received attention in recent years from scholars.¹⁶ What is at issue, however, is whether that model justifies manipulative and exploitative practices and, more to the point of this essay, the practices widely followed that I shall describe as the co-optation of sensibility.

For there is a less obvious and exploitative practice in our profit-obsessed culture that is almost completely hidden. It is a subtle form of subverting the genuinely human capacity for fulfillment that lies at the heart of the aesthetic. For there is, I believe, what some writers have called an 'aesthetic need.'¹⁷ We commonly seek out situations that reward our desire for the pleasures of sensible experience. We visit gardens, parks, and art museums; we engage in a wide range of non-competitive outdoor experiences, such as swimming, hiking, and camping; we take delight in colors, clothes, cuisine, a new car; we attend concerts, festivals, and rituals; we stroll through an historic district. All these have diverse appeal but they share the intense gratification we get from sensible experience and the uplift that comes from being taken out of ourselves, expanding our very sense of being alive by engaging in such experiences. The impulse to engage in aesthetic experience is, I think, widely shared though mostly undeveloped. It is important that we recognize it. It is important that we cultivate it.

But in our contemporary intensely commercial culture, no pure impulse is allowed to remain unsullied if it can be made to serve profitable ends, and our aesthetic need can be exploited all too easily. When 'the public' is transformed into 'the consumer,' everyone is vulnerable. Not only is our desire for sensible experience taken over; our very sensibility is corrupted by isolating and exaggerating it. Our impulse for beauty, for delight, for sensory satisfaction is widely appropriated in the service of maximizing profit at the expense of the pleasure and fulfillment of individual people and of society as a whole. This is the co-optation of sensibility. The word 'co-optation' is not in common use but it has special significance in social and political critique.¹⁸ It means 'secretly appropriating,' taking something over to serve one's own interests. In this aesthetic case, the appropriation is hidden so that the 'victim' is entirely unaware of what is being perpetrated.

The co-optation of sensibility in *food and drink* may be most easily recognized. Consider the appeal of sweetness. Soft drinks contain so much sugar that, in granular form, it usually fills over half the container. Normal thirst and the appeal of a sweet taste are turned into a commercial drink of high profitability but with unhealthy effects. Moreover, sugar is regularly added to most prepared

foods, from breakfast cereal¹⁹ to salad dressing, not to mention being a major ingredient in baked goods and most canned and packaged foods, as well as in fruit juices and other kinds of drinks.

Having a sweet tooth is more than an innocent indulgence; it carries consequences for health. Sugar is associated with what is called the metabolic syndrome: obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Moreover, sugar is addictive and plays a part in encouraging the consumption of other addictive substances, including the caffeine in 'Coke' and coffee and in a range of alcoholic drinks including wine, liqueur, and mixed drinks. Salt is another food substance where a tasteful and necessary substance is often found to excess in most prepared foods and a 'taste' for salt is encouraged. At the same time, its influence in heightening blood pressure is well-documented.

Other gastronomic examples are plentiful. Consider the high use of fats and oils in deep-fried fast food that leads to obesity and high cholesterol levels.²⁰ French fries are a vivid example, where the fat-saturated outer crust often penetrates and displaces any soft potato core. In addition, cream or cheese sauces are ladled over many dishes, preceded by cream soup and accompanied by a lavish supply of rolls and butter, not to mention the rich dessert offerings. Please note that I am not condemning the appeal of such foods but rather the encouragement of patterns of exaggerated taste and over-consumption that underlie their use. Taste is largely formed by learning, and the omnipresence of advertising encourages and underlies the acquisition of such inflated desires. To put it baldly, our very sensibility is being exaggerated in order to encourage profitable consumption.

Smell is another sense modality that has been co-opted. False fragrances are infused into a multitude of products, from hand cream and bar soap to laundry and dish detergents, so that it is difficult to know how anything actually smells. Fragrant overlays suffuse hotel rooms and emanate from pets and people. A principal source of perceptual information has been lost. Still another impingement on sensibility lies in the garish colors used in clothing, home decoration and, of course, in print advertising and on the Internet. Strident colors are so widespread on signs and clothing that subtle and muted colors are not noticed or have simply disappeared from the marketplace altogether.

Musical *sound* has a place in nearly every culture and it is especially prevalent in modern developed societies. Sound is an elusive phenomenon. While we can usually identify its source, sound spreads broadly and, like perfume, tends to

envelop us. This is one of the appealing qualities of musical experience, but in some cases this attractive feature is exaggerated so as to become oppressive and inescapable. Extremely high volume is used in some rock concerts to increase the appeal of the music and create a manic, indeed frenetic audience response. Such high volume is intended to impress the audience by its sheer force, and indeed one can literally feel the physical pressure of the sound waves. This presumably attracts a large attendance and makes such entertainment highly profitable. Other consequences may take a little longer to recognize, such as the hearing loss from damage to the tiny hair-like cells in the cochlea of the inner ear that are the auditory nerve receptors.

Even the auditory environment is not safe. Because sound is intangible and invisible, it is easily imposed on others with impunity. Public space has long been taken over by businesses that sell sound in the form of canned music to fill empty sound-space. Commercial sound saturates transitional public places, such as waiting rooms, bars, restaurants, malls, and even the streets. And when canned sound is not present, people cooperate by supplying it through their own headsets. Silence, even relative silence, has become a rarity.

Then there are the means by which sensibility is *distorted* or *drugged*. One of the most widespread and insidious practices of cultivating sensory pleasure for profit is, of course, cigarette smoking. Few smokers enjoyed their first cigarette: the taste is unpleasant, the smoke choking, the physical effects nauseating. But the appeal of emulating celebrities, the desire to display sophistication, peer pressure, and the attraction of transgression are powerful incentives. The tobacco industry uses these successfully to create the desire in many people to overcome their initial distaste, gradually leading to an acquired taste and nicotine addiction with its deleterious consequences.

The use of alcohol has become a regular pastime for many people, reinforced in popular culture on TV and in film by romanticizing drinking and appealing to self-indulgence. It is much like the way cigarette smoking was associated with sophistication until its damaging effects on health were shown to be so widespread and costly that legal measures were enacted in some developed countries to prohibit smoking in public places and by the young. Alcohol abuse may be somewhat less visible than smoking, but it is a public health problem of epidemic proportions. At the same time, the production and dissemination of alcohol is a major industry for drugging sensibilities, and its manifold forms, from beer, wine, and iced tea to mixed and straight drinks, is widely encouraged on many social and economic levels. The excessive use of alcohol is a major public health menace that carries high personal and social costs.

A related instance in which sensibility has been co-opted is pornography. The pornography industry profits enormously from appropriating people's normal erotic sensibility, removing it from feelings of caring and the richness of complex human relationships, narrowing it into pure titillation, and exaggerating it by excess in order to stimulate erotic feelings by focusing on pure sensuality.

It is clear the co-optation of sensibility is a distinctive mode of aesthetic exploitation. Some of its techniques are easily recognized once they have been identified, such as the *exaggeration* or vulgarizing of sensory stimuli in order to enhance their direct appeal. Other modes of sensory manipulation include the *perceptual deceit* in falsifying perception through the use of chemical fragrances and flavors that emulate natural ones. Such perceptual deceit is not confined to the food industry but is pervasive in the cleaning and sanitary supplies used in households and public facilities.

But there is yet another form of sensory manipulation that is directly psychological without the intermediary of tempting foods or entertainment. This consists in using sensory stimuli to create low-level anxiety, making people less attentive, less in control, even spaced-out, and so more suggestible and vulnerable. Chimes, bells, canned music, repeated public announcements, sprayed aromas are pervasive in virtually every public place: waiting rooms, lobbies, supermarkets, retail stores.

This promotion of anxiety assumes a particularly insidious form of sensory manipulation when it cultivates the apprehension of *violence*. Violence is made commonplace through insistent exposure in film, television, computer games, and on the Internet. It is the substance of TV news programs and news channels and a habitual form of mass audience entertainment. Violent behavior is depicted as commonplace and acceptable, and it is put to political use in justifying restrictions and control by exaggerating a sense of alarm in an endless succession of crises beyond immediate circumstances where there may be reasonable danger, crises that range from impending changes in the weather to political confrontations and belligerent actions between ethnic, religious, and national groups. The heightened sensibility of violence pervades public places, leading to often exaggerated security conditions. All this has an underlying aesthetic foundation in creating a permanent sensibility of alarm by cultivating a simmering somatic state of apprehension.

There is a pattern behind these practices that it is important to isolate and identify; indeed, this is the purpose of my discussion. The practice of influencing,

of deliberately cultivating a distorted sensibility, altering people's taste and responses to an exaggerated or excessive degree without their clear awareness or consent, this is what I am calling *the co-optation of sensibility*. The ability to experience sensory pleasure is at the center of aesthetic appreciation of the arts, and sensible enjoyment plays a central part in most of the experiences of living. The practices I am identifying appropriate this native ability and exploit it in order to create a market for extreme tastes. Thus the very capacity for perceptual enjoyment is appropriated and shaped mainly for profit or control. To seduce our aesthetic need and capacity by creating a desire for extreme degrees of sensory craving in order to capture a consumer market is, I believe, both aesthetically and morally vicious.²¹ Our very sense of beauty is subverted by exaggeration and excess. This is a pattern of manipulation that pervades industrial-commercial culture and it is promoted for multiple purposes, from creating the market for a fashion and the conformity it encourages, to acquiring the political control such conformity enables.

It might seem that I am condemning all those appealing qualities and things that give pleasure to daily life, but that is not so. The problem, as I see it, is not in liking the taste of sugar, salt, or alcohol, or in seeking erotic pleasure. It lies in the pursuit of profit or control by sensory manipulation to promote excessive indulgence through miseducating our sensibilities regardless of their detrimental effects on health and wellbeing. That is to say, our sensory delight in tastes and flavors, our curiosity and interests, have been deliberately mis-schooled. Sensible pleasures have been exaggerated and encouraged to the point of overindulgence, resulting in higher profits for their producers and woeful consequences to their consumers. Our desires, our judgments of taste, our very sensibility have been co-opted: they have been appropriated and exaggerated and our self-indulgence encouraged in the interests of commercial profit and political control.

It is not my intent here to condemn the profit motive, as such, but rather to expose its causal influence in this practice of aesthetic exploitation by promoting, therefore educating the public to hyper-sensation, so to say. The tastes I have been discussing rest on normal impulses but they are vulnerable to exploitation. To appropriate these desires, to intensify and exaggerate them by encouraging harmful patterns of excessive consumption, is to take advantage of people's vulnerability by exploiting their aesthetic needs. Such practices are unmitigated moral wrongs.

The insidiousness of sensory co-optation lies in the stealthy insinuation and cultivation of a distorted perceptual sensibility. The analysis I have offered of this phenomenon of mass culture documents the pervasiveness of the aesthetic in daily life and reveals ways in which it has been misused.²² Be that as it may, it could be objected that every culture possesses its own complex, pervasive sensibility. We can identify distinctive preferences in culinary taste, characteristic smells, bodily deportment, patterns of physical movement, speech intonation, vocal quality and style, soundscape – the full range of human sensibility – that characterize particular social classes, societies, and historical epochs. Why condemn mass industrial culture for elaborating its own distinctive sensibility?

This objection rests on a true premise: every culture imbues its members with a range of awareness that is indigenous to the human world it elaborates. We do not choose our cultural sensibility any more than we choose our native language, our parentage, or our ethnicity. We may decide, later, to adopt another, but rarely can this be done completely. Vestiges of our natal culture remain – in speech intonation, in choice of colors and style of dress, in posture, in facial expression.

Yet the sensible characteristics I have been identifying here emerge from different origins and motives and implicate a different morality. And they carry clear consequences and invoke a different order of moral judgment. The critique of mass consumer culture I have been elaborating here is not confined to that condition, alone. At the same time, I do not endorse a relativism of cultures. I believe that a cultural order that does not value and respect human life *eo ipso* but denigrates others who are different in skin color, religion, customs, or language is lower on a scale of civilization than one that respects difference on the basis of a common humanity. A society that benefits from the exploitation of other humans is lower on a scale of civilization than one that respects the varied manifestations of the human condition we all share.

III

But let me now consider some of the *consequences* of aesthetic exploitation through encouraging sensory excess and the co-optation of sensibility. One is the corruption of taste. The rich source of human satisfaction in aesthetic pleasure is distorted by exaggeration, and the distortion becomes habitual. At the least, such excess encourages patterns of over-indulgence that may serve as compensation for the lack of other satisfactions. The yearning for sensory

excess may also lead to extreme behavior and substance abuse. This is not to say that there is a necessary connection between an exaggerated sensibility and such effects, but rather that the habitual practice of sensory extremes cannot but have harmful consequences.

The effects of these practices have been extensively documented. I noted earlier the health problems caused by sugar addiction and the hearing loss from exposure to very high decibel levels. Indeed, sensory extremes can cause decreased perceptual sensitivity in general, so that we notice only gross stimuli. The quality of human life declines precipitously when whole regions of perceptual experience are distorted, impaired, or inaccessible.

The co-optation of sensibility has wide social and environmental consequences as well as personal ones. Let me offer one compelling illustration: the taste for sugar. The growth of the global market for sugar has been studied extensively and provides a dramatic example of the heinous effects of the extreme demand for sensory satisfaction. The sugar economy began in the fourteenth century and grew rapidly. This encouraged the widespread development of plantation agriculture, a system that displaced indigenous subsistence cultivation, resulting in a drastic decrease in food production for the local economy. At the same time, the need for laborers to work the plantations led to the enslavement and the partial or complete extinction of certain native Caribbean Amerindian groups.²³ When this source of labor became insufficient, it encouraged the rapid growth of the African slave trade to replace it.²⁴ A similar instance of sensory exploitation, in this case centering on public health, can be made for the tobacco economy. The tobacco industry spends billions of dollars a year on advertising, and tobacco use costs billions a year in medical expenses and lost productivity. Indeed, at the present time tobacco use is the second highest cause of death in the world.²⁵

Apart from the dramatic, large-scale consequences of sensory co-optation, there are pervasive social effects. Mass culture subjects people to constant ambient sound, to unsolicited visual intrusion, to the oppressive stimuli of the mass media and the pressures of mass population. These intrusions cannot help but produce a condition of sensory excess with the result that we may easily be overcome by perceptual exhaustion and become insensitive, even anaesthetized to sensory stimuli. Because these forces are so widespread and omnipresent, decreased sensibility generally cannot help but produce fundamental changes in the cultural ethos.

The co-optation of sensibility carries moral implications, as well. The appropriation of sensibility for profit, for control, or for other external motives violates fundamental ethical norms. Most forceful is the deeply-rooted value in the sanctity of human life: the belief that life is the ultimate good and must be honored above all else. From the teachings in the Judeo-Christian traditions that, in the golden rule, oblige us to recognize our common humanity, to Kant's categorical imperative²⁶ that enjoins us against using other humans as means only, the Western ethical tradition subscribes to norms that condemn exploitative practices, including those I have been identifying here.

These practices have philosophical implications as well as social and moral ones. Hume's standard of taste has been violated.²⁷ The expert critic has been replaced by the authority of popular taste, taste that has been perceptually exaggerated in the service of consumption to the detriment of public health and the environment. The very capability for sensory perception has been damaged and the capacity for fine, nuanced aesthetic experience subverted, affecting not only perception in the arts but our sensory experience in general. Corrupted by exaggeration and distorted beyond recognition, the capability of developing discerning taste has been miseducated in the service of excessive consumption: expert taste has become popular distaste.²⁸ As with other normative judgments, aesthetic judgment is capable of degrees of negativity, but the moral issue is always negative because taste, that is, aesthetic perception, has been manipulated for external ends.

The practices I have been describing are endemic in global industrial-commercial culture, where the miseducation of natural sensibility is promoted by a huge advertising industry.²⁹ There are undoubtedly regional and national variations but the pattern is everywhere the same. Since these personal excesses feel 'normal' to unreflective, miseducated consumers, their aesthetic harm, is subtle yet sinister. The result of such widespread and comprehensive co-optation of our perceptual modalities is that our very sensibility has been appropriated, our aesthetic orientation in the world distorted, and our behavior made self-injurious. For these reasons the co-optation of sensibility is the more insidious because it distorts the very capacity for sensible perception. In subverting the beauty in experiencing aesthetic value by a discerning sensibility, it diminishes the richness of life.

★

The aesthetic analysis I have pursued in this essay is based on the observation of mass consumer culture in the United States. I expect that, with the rapid spread of a global economy, similar techniques of sensory co-optation are prevalent in other countries in the developed world, and perhaps even more so in third-world regions, where consumers are less experienced and more vulnerable to the marketing strategy of sensory co-optation.

This paper complements the important work now being done on the aesthetic characteristics of everyday life. Investigating the aesthetics of ordinary experience exposes domains of value hidden in common objects and situations. But there are other functions of everyday aesthetics besides uncovering new regions of positive aesthetic value. Exploring these areas reveals manifestations of aesthetic value that do not enhance the quality of experience but rather distort and diminish it in subtle as well as overt ways through the multiple forms and kinds of negative value.³⁰

This paper moves beyond the manifestly negative, exposing a mode of aesthetic negation that burrows beneath the surface of sensible experience and contaminates it by a practice I identify as the co-optation of sensibility. Such an analysis opens the way to further research in the psychology of perception, in social psychology and sociology, in business ethics and other related fields. Indeed, it shows how the aesthetic analysis of ordinary life has wide-reaching social and political implications, and an ethical significance that extends even farther. This suggests another role for aesthetics, a critical one: aesthetics as a tool of social analysis and political criticism. It remains to be seen where it will lead.³¹

NOTES

- 1 Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture, and Social Identities* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).
- 2 Sir Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, by Lord Bacon, ed. by Joseph Devey, M.A. (New York: P.F. Collier, 1902).
- 3 Spinoza, *The Ethics*, Part IV, Prop. LXVI, Note. *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), Vol. II, p. 232
- 4 Spinoza, *The Ethics*, Part IV, Prop. LXVI, Note. *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), Vol. II, p. 232.
N.B. I have slightly modernized the translation.
- 5 Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2010), p. 156.
- 6 Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *JAAC* (Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 1998), 101-111.
- 7 Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 2012).
- 8 See Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense*, Ch. Nine, "The Negative Aesthetics of Everyday Life" and Ch. Ten, "Art, Terrorism, and the Negative Sublime."
- 9 See Crispin Sartwell, *Political Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Duke University Press, 2009); Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense*, Part Three: Social Aesthetics; Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts* (Ashgate, 2012), ch.16, "The Aesthetic Politics of Environment."
- 10 Pauliina Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry: The Place of Beauty in Managing Everyday Life," *Contemporary Aesthetics 7* (2009).
- 11 Yuriko Saito, "Future Directions for Environmental Aesthetics," *Environmental Aesthetics: Crossing Divides and Breaking Ground*, ed. Martin Drenthen and Jozef Keulartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 26.
- 12 The literature on everyday aesthetics is already substantial and growing. While it is a recent trend, it has long been recognized. See, for example, John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch, and Co., 1934) and Melvin Rader and Bertram Jessup, *Art and Human Values* (Englewood Cliffs,: Prentice-Hall, 1976), especially chapter 5. Important contributions to the resurgence of interest in everyday aesthetics are *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 2012); *Aesthetics of Everyday Life, East and West*, ed. Liu Yuedi and Curtis L. Carter (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2014).
- 13 Cf. A. Berleant, "What Is Aesthetic Engagement?," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. 11 (2013), <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=684> .
- 14 Small efforts at mitigation do not alter the basic pattern.
- 15 This expectation and practice supports the credit card industry.
- 16 See the *Journal of Business Ethics* (www.springer.com/...ethics/journal/105...).
- 17 Melvin Rader and Bertram Jessup, *Aesthetics and Human Values*.
- 18 What I mean by 'co-optation' is neither an external force working on sensibility nor an internal impulse but a cultural phenomenon whereby sensitivities and perceptual desires (appetites) grounded in the human organism are quietly appropriated by social-cultural mechanisms, such as (subliminal) advertising, mis-education, influences on style and crowd behavior, etc. for purposes not consciously chosen by the percipient. Those purposes may be political (in a broad, inclusive sense), economic or, more generally, social.
- 19 "General Mills' Vanilla, Chocolate and Cinnamon Chex boxes all proudly display a label that should make many health-conscious consumers happy: 'no high fructose corn syrup.' The only problem: it's not true. These General Mills products all contain a super-concentrated sweetener

that is made from high fructose corn syrup, and within the Big Ag industry is literally called “HFCS-90” or high fructose corn syrup-90. But then the Corn Refiners Association changed the name to “fructose.”¹ And now General Mills is not only disingenuously hiding their corn syrup behind this innocuous alias -- the company is bragging that it’s products don’t contain any! The “fructose” label is especially nefarious, since fructose is a naturally occurring fruit sugar, and HFCS-90 is a highly concentrated, highly processed product that is molecularly different from the fructose you would eat in your apple. The corn industry waves away HFCS-90 as a minor ingredient, stating “HFCS-90, is sometimes used in natural and ‘light’ foods, where very little is needed to provide sweetness.” But that’s clearly not the case. According to the label, there is actually more HFCS-90 in Cinnamon Chex than there is actual cinnamon!” “High-fructose corn syrup more toxic than sugar, study finds,” *Oregonian*, 1/5/15; “General Mills Will Stop Marketing Synthetic Products As ‘Natural’ To Make Them Appear Healthier,” *Credo* petition, 20 Jan 15. act@credoaction.com. Accessed 11/19/14.

20 The “Big Mac,” for example, is a hamburger consisting of two high-fat patties topped by a slice of American cheese, with dressing, lettuce, pickles, and onions on a sesame bun, all of which contains as much or more fat than protein. In the U.S., A Big Mac contains 29 grams of fat to 25 grams of protein, with similar proportions in the many other countries where Macdonald’s restaurants are found. Japan has the highest proportion of fat: 30.5 grams to 25.5 grams of protein. See the article and references on “Big Mac” in *Wikipedia* (accessed 11 Nov 2014).

21 Cultivating an exaggerated sensibility in the art market by paintings of greater than life size and colorful excess by artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Chuck Close might be said to symbolize as well as represent this practice. I do not ascribe to such artists the devious manipulation of the advertising industry but rather cite them as perhaps succumbing to its influence.

22 A revealing account of the practice of shaping sensibility for the purpose of promoting profit is what is known as the “experience economy,” a concept introduced by Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore (“Welcome to the Experience Economy,” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1998, 97-105). I thank Yuriko Saito for this reference. As she describes it, “this economy is premised on the belief that it is insufficient for today’s business to merely sell goods and services. They must also sell experiences associated with the environment surrounding the sale of their goods and services. The branding of Apple distinguishes not only the Apple products but also the whole atmosphere of Apple Store. The same applies to phenomena such as Niketown, Hard Rock Café, and Starbucks. Sometimes referred to as ‘shoppertainment’ or ‘entertailing,’ (99), everything in the store is scripted and designed to promote ‘customer participation,’ ‘environmental relationship,’ and ‘a well-defined theme’ through ‘engage(ing) all five senses’ (102-104). For example, ‘the mist at the Rainforest Café appeals serially to all five senses. It is first apparent as a sound: Ssssss-zzz. Then you see the mist rising from the rocks and feel it soft and cool against your skin. Finally, you smell its tropical essence, and you taste (or imagine that you do) its freshness’(104). Or, recent proliferation of a bookstore combined with café is based upon the discovery that ‘the aroma and taste of coffee go well with a freshly cracked book,’ while one chain of laundromat went bust ‘attempting to combine a bar and a coin-operated laundromat’ because it was found that ‘the smells of phosphates and hops, apparently, aren’t mutually complementary’(105).” Yuriko Saito,, unpublished comments, American Society for Aesthetics annual meeting, San Antonio, TX, 31 Oct. 2014.

23 Arawaks and Caribs, among others.

24 The classic account of this history is Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985; Penguin, 1986). Another one can be found at http://www.learner.org/courses/worldhistory/support/reading_14_1.pdf, taken from Bridging World History, The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004.

25 Extensive information on the sugar and tobacco economies is readily available on the Internet and elsewhere.

26 Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Thomas K. Abbott, Second Section.

27 David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985). Available online at www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r15.html. This essay is widely anthologized.

28 Witness the common condemnation of cultivated taste by calling it "elitist."

29 My argument in this essay rests on an analysis of practices endemic in the United States. I suspect that they are commonly found *pari passu* throughout the developed world wherever corporate culture has acquired the power to form and direct the sensibilities of the mass consumer.

30 This essay deliberately does not consider the overt manipulation of consumers by all the techniques with which the advertising industry influences behavior. Many of these are not concealed as are the practices described in this essay but, like them, may be considered instances of negative aesthetic value. See my discussion of negative aesthetics in *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2010), Chapter Nine: The Negative Aesthetics of Everyday Life. My concern in the present discussion has been with the negative aesthetic of a subtle but all the more insidious influence on sensibility.

31 Spinoza may again be prescient: "...[A]ll those things which bring us pleasure are good. But seeing that things do not work with the object of giving us pleasure, and that their power of action is not tempered to suit our advantage, and, lastly, that pleasure is generally referred to one part of the body more than to the other parts; therefore most emotions of pleasure (unless reason and watchfulness be at hand), and consequently the desires arising therefrom, may become excessive. Moreover we may add that emotion leads us to pay most regard to what is agreeable in the present, nor can we estimate what is future with emotions equally vivid." *The Ethics*, Part IV, Prop. XXX, p. 242.

"We may thus readily conceive the power which clear and distinct knowledge, and especially that ... founded on the actual knowledge of God [nature] possesses over the emotions: if it does not absolutely destroy them, in so far as they are passions...; at any rate, it causes them to occupy a very small part of the mind." *The Ethics*, Part V, Prop. XX, Note, V, p. 256.

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HOW TO DEFEND AESTHETICS?

A B S T R A C T

Milan Damjanović (1924-1994) published his aesthetic opus in the context of (Yugoslav) Marxist “overcoming” (Aufhebung) of aesthetics and of aesthetics’ self-criticism expressed as the “crisis of aesthetics”. To oppose both of these critical positions and at the same time reform aesthetics’ ability to treat all aesthetic phenomena, but still keep art in special focus, he introduced the problem of immediacy of experience of the world by a human being. In his article “The Problem of Immediacy and Mediation in Marx’s Thought” (1970) Damjanović wanted to demonstrate the primacy of aesthetic dimension in immediacy and immediate mediation/reflection which can support philosophy’s legitimate claim to organize it as an open system, and aesthetics’ solidity as a discipline of such system. To achieve this purpose, he introduced an intertwined argumentation which combines his reading of Marx’s philosophy of labour from Paris Manuscripts and from Capital with Helmut Plessner’s esthesiology and Paul Valéry’s esthésique. To revisit Damjanović’s defence of the Whole, of philosophical systematicity, and of aesthetics’ autonomous position as a discipline is an opportunity to argue that he pointed into the right direction, be it in taking Plessner and Valéry for support, or, in taking fundamental philosophical problem of immediacy/mediation as a foundation stone of the status of aesthetics.

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KEY WORDS

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MILAN DAMNJANOVIĆ

HELMUT PLESSNER

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IMMEDIACY AND MEDIATION

Defence of aesthetics, or its abandonment, was discussed in Yugoslav philosophical community as well, but under specific circumstances which included manifold elements. The first one was a need to reject Stalinist philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism (Stalin, 1938) together with socialist realism as its artistic doctrine which included theory of art as reflection of class struggle and dependence of superstructure upon its socio-economic base. This need which appeared after 1948 when Yugoslavia was expelled from the family of socialist countries opened a way to other kinds of Marxism, with so-called Western Marxism as the main new influence on Yugoslav philosophy and aesthetics. Stalinism was a unified and centralised doctrine which excluded all other possible interpretations of Marx's work and of actual historical circumstances of the 20th century, but Western Marxism included a great number of different interpretations and schools of Marxist thought which were developing, as Perry Anderson describes it, in direction opposite to Marx's own, not from philosophy to critique of the political economy but back to philosophy, and consequently to young Marx's works, especially manuscripts. (Anderson, 1976) During 1960s and later, there were two important questions discussed in Yugoslav Marxism: is philosophy possible and necessary after the 11th Thesis, and, as Marx wanted to write aesthetics but did not accomplish it, what kind of aesthetics could Marxist aesthetics be, or, does Marxism need aesthetics at all. But there was a third element as well. With pluralism of Marxism, and with orientation towards Western thought, all other contemporary living philosophies and their aesthetics were read, translated, studied and embraced as well, and with them their doubts about philosophy and aesthetics. These three elements brought up vivid and sometimes quite peppery discussions. Disagreements about ability and status of aesthetics divided Yugoslav philosophers into different camps, and influenced art criticism on one and socialist cultural politics on the other. It was an important issue. To present a view of its borderlines, positions of Danko Grlić and Sreten Petrović may be presented shortly.

Danko Grlić accepted two initiatives: that of Marx's thesis that philosophy has to be abolished (*aufheben*) in praxis, and that of contemporary formula "the death of the aesthetic", and concluded that a shift from aesthetics to another kind of theory of art cannot represent sufficient medicine, proposing a farewell to the existing conditions of the world as such. The answer is, therefore, an art which upsets and disturbs the whole existing reality by producing its own world. Marxism has to abolish aesthetics in favour of art which is an esthesis of not-yet-existing world.¹

Sreten Petrović positioned himself against constitutive Marxist aesthetics which has to be dogmatic because it denies relative autonomy of art. He divided development of Marxist aesthetics in aesthetics of mimesis, of poiesis and of the sensual, which follow the development of German classical aesthetics in reverse. Marxist aesthetics can only be a critique of the aesthetic mind and has to proceed to sensuality and sensitivity as meta-aesthetical realm.²

They both jumped into post- and beyond-aesthetics through esthesis as a field of immediate sensual being-in-the-world. But their worlds are substantially different: Danko Grlić insists on esthesis as a continuity of critical revolutionary praxis and action of art, while Sreten Petrović insists on phenomenology of the sensual which follows his final stage. This final stage is not found in Hegel as in other Marxist re-assessments of German classical philosophy but in Schiller and Schelling who opened the way to the mystical and mythical esthesis of the sensual.

Milan Damnjanović³ took different position, opposing both Marxist 'overcoming' of philosophy and of aesthetics in (revolutionary) praxis and general Western self-criticism and post-philosophical criticism of aesthetics. From his point of view, it is equally wrong to leave aesthetics behind together with systematic philosophical thinking as such, and to treat art which is a kind of production - as an ideology. If art is production, aesthetics has to start with solution of one of the oldest disputes in philosophy: have humans immediate, or only mediated access to the world? Before entering into discussions about Marxist or any other criticism of art, before shaping fields of human sciences of art, and before Marxist or any other aesthetics, this fundamental problem has to be approached and philosophically examined. Its possible solution then enables aesthetics to function as philosophical discipline, i.e., as part of, if not systematic at least coherent philosophical thinking. Damnjanović's text 'Problem of Immediacy and Mediation in Marx's Thought' which appeared first in 1970⁴ represents potential construction for such a solution. Here, he employs philosophical initiatives by Paul Valéry and Helmut Plessner together with his own choice of aesthetic starting point in Marx.

Damnjanović does not start from a definition of an object of aesthetics. Aesthetics is not a science, it is a philosophical discipline, therefore its first question, as in classical aesthetics (Hegel, for instance) is to find out why a phenomenon can become a philosophical phenomenon, and to justify its appearance as a philosophical problem by connecting it with broader philosophical problematics. The initial question is not what is art; the initial

question is why is it important for philosophy, and in what relationship it is with general philosophical account. Damnjanović does not follow these lines in direction of a closed and circular philosophical system – such idea would be out of time in 20th century anyway – but he proceeds to connectivity as general philosophical property and as a property which ties different realms into potential, albeit open unity. He does not start with art, and he does not even start with sensuality or perception. He starts with very old philosophical problem which belongs to gnoseology or epistemology. 'The problem of getting at fully immediate instance of knowledge, or problem of immediate experience as sensual experience, or primordial and pre-reflexive experience of meaning, epistemological and also metaphysical problem of hold on 'real reality', direct contact with the existing which is as it is, with independent existence of the world of nature or with by itself, *extra mentem* existing world of things, represents an always actual problem of the philosophy of art, if art is understood as real instance of immediate experience, primordial meaning etc., or, the aesthetic problem in primary, Baumgarten's sense of the 'aesthetics'...'.⁵ The question which determines importance and status of the aesthetics or of the philosophy of art is: do we have immediate or mediated relation with phenomenal world. Marxism or no Marxism, autonomy and dignity of philosophy demand an answer, its arguments, and consequences for aesthetics. Damnjanović's purpose is to build an acceptable basis for aesthetics against its self-criticism and against its abandonment or overcoming. In need of supportive hand, he calls Paul Valéry, Helmut Plessner and Karl Marx to help him.

From Paul Valéry he takes proposal for establishment of *Esthétique* which he delivered as an invited lecture "Discours on Aesthetics" (1937) at the 2nd international congress of aesthetics and sciences of art in Paris.⁶ Valéry started with admiration for aesthetics importance as 'Science of the Beautiful' and 'Science of the Sensations', choosing the latter because it may lead to better solutions about the secrets of art. After he dismissed Cartesian approach to put aesthetic phenomena in scientific order, he examined pleasure to found out that it contains something which, in spite of this more empirical approach, leads towards metaphysical domains with its 'desire to create for the sake of creating'⁷ which produces its own world when it only thought to represent it. With his third step, he dismissed aesthetics as metaphysics of pure ideas like that of Beauty, because pleasure and beauty cannot be abstracted from beautiful things which are so diverse that unified idea seems out of reach; and because pleasure appears and disappears in just an instant with much more enigmatic than pure existence. Pure and universal aesthetics is out of question, yet that is what we have inherited. To change it according to enigmatic diversity of

aesthetic phenomenon, Valéry is proposing to divide diverse problems into two groups. The first one should be called *Esthétique* and deal with all that relates to sensations, with special concern for all excitations which do not have uniform and well defined physiological function. He claims that all the luxury of arts is developed from infinite resources of sensations. The second one is examining human actions and works in totality, starting from psychological and physiological roots of human activity and its purposes. This one could be called *Poétique*, or, even better, *Poïétique*. Finally, there should be a third one to catch those problems which will continue to puzzle *esthétique* and *poïétique*. As he turns attention to Plessner's esthesiology, Damnjanović does not elaborate further on Valéry. He takes *The Unity of Senses*⁸ as a starting point. His reason is obvious, because in this earlier work Plessner himself started to build a case for esthesiology, which later became the anthropology of senses. Before it comes to esthesiology as a new philosophical discipline, Plessner has to overcome Descartes' and Kant's gnoseology. To accomplish that, he went beyond Husserl as well, claiming that aisthesis has autonomous normative value of its own. Aesthetics, to become esthesiology, has to treat modalities of relationship between humans and environment including cultural processes involved in these connections. With concept of connection, or contact, Plessner upgrades Husserl's intentionality into an open and transitional connection between humans and their world which is not just what there is on the other side of human being but a product of this relation. Alessia Ruco comments: 'Concerning biological centre, human being lives in a situation of radical fracture.'⁹ To understand this fracture, one has to introduce different positionalities of living bodies in the world, where 'positionality' defines their specific being-in-the-world. Lifeless things do not have a boundary between themselves and environment, which means that they cannot cross it. Plants have a boundary, but their organism does not express relationship to their own positionality. Animals have this relationship, as they possess closed or centric positionality, which means that an animal does have a body, which plant does not, and it is in its body. Humans, in addition, cultivate their relationship with their own center and are therefore eccentric, or, as Jos de Mul characterizes, 'as eccentric beings we are not where we experience, and we don't experience where we are.'¹⁰ Or, as Plessner explained: 'A living person is a body, is in his body (as inner experience or soul) and at the same time outside his body as the perspective, from which he is both.'¹¹ We live in three worlds: outside world, inside world, and shared world of culture. For Damnjanović's argument from 1970, the second anthropological law of Plessner is essential: the law of mediated immediacy. Being decentred or eccentric, humans are artificial by nature; our distancing from just being bodies and being in our bodies opens a perspective

and at the same time represents homelessness as our permanent condition. The boundary we possess is at the same time direct connection and the first indirectness or reflection, and this first reflectivity which is a starting point of all culture and artificiality is really a try to bridge the gap of mediation between ourselves and the world. In place where Descartes installed unbridgeable gap between senses and perception, with animal spirits (*ésprits animaux*) mediating between them, is now a boundary crossed in both directions and eccentrically reflected. Here lies another difference between Plessner and Heidegger: where Heidegger expresses the idea that authenticity of human life was lost during time, mainly in favour of technical manipulation with the world, Plessner explains that our initial and eternal authenticity is this difference between inside and outside our body, which triggers the desire to bridge the gap between them by artificial means, i.e., technique. There is no nostalgia for lost authenticity in Plessner's anthropology. In the same year when Damnjanović published his article, Helmut Plessner returned to his idea of an esthesiology based on the unity of senses, but esthesiology now became anthropology of senses, equally important for neuroscience and for philosophy of art.

To open the corridor from esthesiology to philosophy of art, Damnjanović now turns to Marx, after he declared that his effort 'belongs to Marxist aesthetics understood in relation to the problem of sensual immediacy of esthetics (Valéry) or of esthesiology of the spirit (Plessner)'.¹² His turn is typical for Yugoslav Marxism which, instead of division between 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' philosophy understood philosophy as unified and connected field where different initiatives were harvested to support another kind of Marxism from inherited, and where archaeological excavations through layers of misguided interpretations had to take place to get at Karl Marx himself.

Damnjanović takes 'generic essence' of Marx's early works without questioning where such essence could come from, or examining its pretention to get installed as the truth of humans and humanity. He is satisfied with a change accomplished by putting together Plessner's eccentricity and Marx's potential essentialism. It means that 'anthropocentrism' of humanist and enlightened concept of emancipation and of human being are both decentered, so that a satisfactory outcome of emancipatory process becomes possible. Homelessness as human destiny and definition does not open doors to anti-humanism which started its way at approximately the same time, but it does open the doors. These doors may lead away from what Marx calls radical in 1843, when theory '...demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical.'¹³ Instead of leading a way directly to radical praxis (which in Marxism

inevitably means revolutionary praxis), Damnjanović leads the way to *poiesis* understood in Marxian terms as production of human generic situation where *Vergegenständlichung* (objectification) makes humans more at home in the world and the world more humanized. For Marx the problem of immediacy and mediation appears, declares Damnjanović, as 'the philosophical problem of immediate reality understood as a problem of authentic sensual praxis, and not as a problem of immediately given nature (as in naturalism), not as a problem of materially given world (as in traditional metaphysical materialism), but additionally as a problem of unity between everyday sensual perception and sensuality mediated by scientific concept, and finally as a problem of aesthetic *Gestalt* understood in a Marxist way, which means from Marx derived *aestheticum*; with ontological priority of artistic (poetically) understood Whole of meaning and being in relation to any other *Gestalt*: scientific, philosophical (metaphysical) and even theological *Gestalt*.'¹⁴ Philosophy always looks for the original and authentic reality, really real reality covered and overlooked by previous philosophy, and that is what Marx has done both with Hegel and Feuerbach when he arrived at the aesthetic senses and immediate sensual apprehension of aesthetic phenomena. Damnjanović continues that in Marx (obviously taken from his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts from 1844 also known as The Paris Manuscripts),¹⁵ immediate reality as original living situation of human is work as an activity which produces culture, or production in the broadest sense of the word. That is what art is: work and production. Marx's use of the term *urwüchsig* as 'primordial' or 'original' or 'authentic' or 'spontaneous' is interpreted by Damnjanović as the immediacy of experience which arises from work. Work, warns Damnjanović, shouldn't be taken for 'a new objectified metaphysics but ontologically as production of new human reality (human world), a production in which the meaning of being and our existence... is dialectically discovered.'¹⁶ Here are his conclusions on Marx:

1. In the history of philosophy Marx represents a new beginning and not the end of philosophy.
2. Marx's thought does not start with the human being as a being which thinks, it even does not start from any defined human being because it is impossible to define something that plastic and capable of universal productivity. It starts from this universality itself activated in partnership with transcendental being or nature.

From here on, Damnjanović takes a direct path towards art as an inevitable partner of philosophy in production of the real reality over which art has a monopoly, and towards human being as a being which longs to find a sense of/in its existence and turn it into reality. Mediated immediacy, or immediate

mediation is a combination of direct and distanced sensual contact between human being and the world. Even skin as the most important sense represents both direct and indirect contact, while five senses include those more direct, as smell and touch, and more indirect or mediated as vision and hearing. For Damjanović, immediate mediation or mediated immediacy have another, further meaning, that of the first reflection and therefore of the first knowledge. This touch between human being and the world, however, in difference with herbs or animals, has to be understood not just as a sensual drowning into the world, or a source of useful orientation for our needs in the world: it has to be understood as production of new reality, a production of a world which lies beyond that what already is. And that is what art does: art and art only can produce new real realities. And if art is neither a source of knowledge nor morality, not even an education, 'then it is not ideology, even if it was really in the service of ideology and is always endangered by such heteronomy.'¹⁷

Damjanović started with esthetics and esthesiology to get at primordial or original problem of foundation for any aesthetics. This problem is immediate access to reality, and it includes mediation expressed in the reflectivity included into this access. To solve this puzzle, he took Plessner's approach. Then, he went through Marx understood in terms of Western Marxist humanism, but only to develop it in direction of art as the most important praxis which, being production, cannot be ideology (false consciousness) in itself: it can only get in service of ideology. Finally, he arrived where he wanted to: art is production, ability necessary for human beings longing to heal their homelessness, because art produces new worlds from the immediate mediation with the real world.

Damjanović did not find universal way out of the crisis of aesthetics. He himself wrote that aesthetics is doomed to be in crisis till it exists. But he has taken sensual touch between human being and the world under Plessner's terms for aesthetics' foundation, and put a layer of Marx(ist) understanding of praxis, production and work on it. If not else, his positionality was indeed eccentric, even under strange ways of aesthetics in Yugoslavia.

NOTES

- 1 See: Danko Grlić, *Estetika: Povijest filozofskih problema* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1974), Danko Grlić, *Estetika II: Epoha estetike* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1976), Danko Grlić, *Estetika III: Smrt estetskog* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1978) and Danko Grlić, *Estetika IV: S onu stranu estetike* (Naprijed: Zagreb, 1979).
- 2 Sreten Petrović, *Marksistička estetika: Kritika estetičkog uma* (Beograd: BIGZ, 1979).
- 3 Milan Damnjanović, "Problem neposrednosti i posredovanja u Marksovom mišljenju s obzirom na estetiku, filozofiju i književnu kritiku," *Književna kritika*, 1, 2 (1970): 78-82; Milan Damnjanović, *Suština i povest* (Beograd: Univerzitet umetnosti, 1976).
- 4 Milan Damnjanović, "Problem neposrednosti i posredovanja u Marksovom mišljenju s obzirom na estetiku, filozofiju i književnu kritiku," 2-12)
- 5 Ibid., 12-13)
- 6 Paul Valéry, "Discours prononcé au deuxième Congrès international d'esthétique et de science de l'art", 1937., available at: http://www.musicologie.org/theses/valery_02.htm .
- 7 Ibid., 8.
- 8 Helmuth Plessner. *Die Einheit der Sinne: Grundlinien einer Ästhesiologie des Geistes* □ *Gesammelte Schriften, Band III* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), 7-315.
- 9 Alessia Ruco, "Estetica e antropologia dei sensi in Plessner," *Aisthesis: rivista on-line del Seminario Permanente di Estetica SPES*, 4, Special Issue (2012): 117-140.
- 10 Jos de Mul, "Artificial by Nature: An Introduction to Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology," in *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology: Perspective and Prospects*, ed. Jos de Mul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 16.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Milan Damnjanović, *Suština i povest* (Beograd: Univerzitet umetnosti, 1976), 11.
- 13 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction*, 1843., available at: <https://www.marxist.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hps/intro.htm> .
- 14 Milan Damnjanović, *Suština i povest*, 14.
- 15 Karl Marx, *Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts*, 1844., available at: <https://www.marxist.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts.htm> .
- 16 Milan Damnjanović, *Suština i povest*, 19.
- 17 (Damnjanović, 1976, 25)

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THE IDEA OF “COMMON SENSE” REVISITED: A CONTRIBUTION TO AN “AISTHETIC TURN” OF AESTHETICS

A B S T R A C T

We have been experiencing an “aesthetic turn” of aesthetics which focuses neither on our artistic experience or creation, nor on the idea of beauty, but on the *aisthesis*'s role in our aesthetic appreciation, or rather on our *aisthetic* consciousness of our being. The purpose of this paper is to revise the idea of “common sense” of Aristotle and Kant, aiming at reorganizing and reanimating their insights and thereby contributing to an “aesthetic turn” of aesthetics.

Based on commonly held beliefs, there are two strands in the idea of “common sense”: the Aristotelian idea of something *intra*-subjective that is common to the different senses in *one* individual and the Ciceronian idea of something *inter*-subjective that is common to different individuals. Kant's concept of common sense is regarded as belonging to the second strand. In contrast to such beliefs, I argue as follows: first, that in Aristotle there is already a productive germ of the second vein and, second, that Kant's aesthetics succeeds prominently Aristotelean concept of “common sense.”

What is at issue in the *sensus communis* in the broad sense is, therefore, our *aisthetic* consciousness of our own being or life. Put in a modern terminology, it is the *aisthesis* that guarantees the “feeling of realness” (Hannah Arendt) of ourselves and, therefore, also the world in which we live together with others.

KEY WORDS

AN AISTHETIC TURN OF AESTHETICS
COMMON SENSE
PERCEPTION OF PERCEPTION
FEELING OF LIFE
AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS
CO-PERCEPTION

INTRODUCTION

We have been experiencing an "aesthetic turn" of aesthetics¹, which focuses on neither our artistic experience or creation, nor on the idea of beauty, as was the situation for traditional aesthetics, but on the *aisthêsis*'s role in our aesthetic appreciation, or rather on *aesthetic* consciousness of our being. The aesthetic turn of aesthetics has entailed a renaissance of little-read Baumgarten who coined the term "aesthetics (*aesthetica*)," understanding by it a "science of sensitive cognition (*scientia cognitionis sensitivae*)."² In contrast, Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) (*CPJ*), which was regarded as having founded modern philosophical aesthetics, plays a small role in reorienting aesthetics toward a theory of *aesthêsis*. The purpose of this paper is to reconsider the idea of "common sense" in Kant's *CPJ* against the background of the Aristotelian idea of "common sense," aiming at reorganizing and reanimating their insights into *aisthêsis* and thereby contributing to an "aesthetic turn" of aesthetics.

Based on commonly held beliefs, there are two veins in the idea of "common sense": the Aristotelian idea of something *intra*-subjective that is common to the different senses in *one* individual and the Ciceronian idea of something *inter*-subjective that is common to different individuals. Kant's concept of common sense belongs – or, more precisely, is regarded as belonging – to the second vein.³ In contrast to such beliefs, I argue first, that Aristotle already has a productive germ of the second vein and second, that Kant's aesthetics prominently succeeds the Aristotelian concept of "common sense."

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE THEORY OF "COMMON SENSE" IN ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA*

Aristotle argues in *De Anima* III 1 (*DA*) that one kind of special perceptible is related to the corresponding individual sense, e.g. color to sight, sound to hearing, whereas we have a "common sense (*koinê aisthêsis*)" that perceives the common perceptibles, i.e. something common to various senses, e.g. movement, form, or size.⁴ This is the only definition of "common sense" in *DA*, leaving undetermined how each sense is related to common sense.

Common sense is not like a sixth sense that functions separately from the five individual senses. Aristotle says in *DA* III 1 that when "a perception occurs simultaneously in respect of the same thing," as is the situation with bile that is yellow and bitter, the senses perceive "not as such," i.e. as separate individual senses, "but as one (*hê mia*)."⁵ What is at issue in common sense is not primarily that by virtue of common sense several (or all) senses perceive the same thing (e.g. movement), but that crossing over from one sense to the other, individual senses form a unity and enable a cross-modal perception.⁶

Aristotle's argument, as perceived from this perspective, in the last part of *DA* III 2⁷ is worth notice, where we read it is "by sense" that "we discriminate white from sweet," thereby this sense is "divided in being (*tô einai men gar diaireton*), but undivided in place and number (*topô de kai arithmô adiaireton*)," i.e. crossing over several senses, but remaining one. This statement in *DA* III.2 is in accord with his assertion in *DA* III 1 (425 a30-31) that by virtue of common sense individual senses function "as one." The perceptual discrimination between the objects of different senses could constitute a problem of common sense, even though Aristotle does not use the term "common sense" for this perceptual discrimination.

What characterizes his theory of *aisthêsis* is that in *DA* III 2 he addressed the perception of a sort of higher-order perception: "one perceives (*aisthanesthai*) that one sees and hears."⁸ This higher-order perception certainly might be related to our notions of consciousness,⁹ but cannot be equated with a Cartesian notion of consciousness, which resides in the domain of thinking.¹⁰

The question then becomes to which power of faculty is Aristotelian higher-order perception to be ascribed. In *De Somno* 2 Aristotle says:

There is a common power (*tis koinê dynamis*) accompanying all the individual senses, in virtue whereof one perceives that one sees or hears (for, assuredly, it is not by the special sense of sight that one sees that one sees; and it is not by mere taste, or sight, or both together that one discerns, and has the faculty of discerning, that sweet things are different from white things, but by a part common (*ti koinon morion*) to all sensory organs; for this sense (i.e. faculty of discerning) is one, and the controlling sensory organ (*to kyrion aisthêtêrion*) is also one, though its being (*to einai*) differs as a faculty of perception in relation to each genus of sensibles, e.g. sound or color); and this [controlling sensory organ] subsists in association chiefly with the faculty of touch (for this can exist apart from all the other organs of sense, but none of them can exist apart from it).¹¹

The perception of perception in *De Somno* is ascribed to a "common power." Being divided in its "being" (as far as it is related to each sense), but remaining "one" as a faculty, the "common power" also enables cross-modal perception. This characterization of the "common power" agrees with his above reconstructed theory of "common sense" in *DA* III 2-3. The crucial point of the "common power" is that it constitutes a necessary condition of the possibility of each sense, always operating when each sense operates: "When this [primary (i.e. controlling) sensory organ] has become powerless, all the sensory organs also must lack power to perceive."¹²

It is also noteworthy that Aristotle refers to the sense of touch. According to Aristotle, a "medium" (*to metaxy*)¹³ is necessary for each sense to operate. The medium for sight is something transparent (e.g. air, water, crystals), for hearing and smelling air or water. At first glance the sense of touch seems to need no medium. Aristotle, however, argues that "we perceive everything through a medium; but in these cases [of the sense of touch] the fact escapes us (*lanthanein*)."¹⁴ The question is then what the medium of the sense of touch is. The answer is our "body (*sôma*)" or "flesh (*sarx*)."¹⁵ That is, as we see something via the medium of air, we touch something via the medium of our skin. Common to all animals, the sense of touch is located at the bottom of the hierarchy of the five senses, which means, however, due to its medium, the sense of touch permeates the whole body, constituting a condition for the operation of other senses. Being itself not the sense of touch, "common sense" permeates the whole body, as does the sense of touch. This is how common sense monitors all the senses.¹⁶

AN EXTENSION OF THE THEORY OF "COMMON SENSE" IN ARISTOTLE'S *ETHICA NICOMACHEA*

Thus far I have reconstructed Aristotle's theory of common sense in the broad sense within his psychological arguments in *DA. Ethica Nicomachea (EN) IX 9* revisits the theme of "perception of perception" or a higher-order perception from a slightly different viewpoint without explicitly referring to common sense. In the following I would like to sketch a problem of common sense in *EN IX 9*.

In the context of answering the question if a happy person needs friend, Aristotle says as follows:

Someone who sees perceives that he sees, and one who hears that he hears, and one who walks that he walks, and in the case of other activities there is similarly something that perceives that one is engaged in them, so that, if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, we perceive that we think; and to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive that we exist (since we saw that to exist is to perceive or think); and perceiving that we are living is pleasant in itself (since life is by nature a good, and perceiving some good thing as present in us is pleasant).¹⁷

Here digressing once from the theme of friends, Aristotle revisits the subject of "perception of perception" that he argued in *DA III 2*. In *EN*, however, he immediately expands his argument concerning "perception of perception" into "perception of thinking," subsuming both in "perception of activity or being," because our being consists of perceiving and thinking,¹⁸ and claims

that to perceive our activity (i.e. our perceiving or thinking) is “to perceive that we are or that we live.”¹⁹ It follows that in *EN* the subject of “perception of perception” leads to that of “perception of our being or living” that is entirely outside his psychological argument in *DA*. According to *EN* the perception of living or activity is in itself pleasant. We become aware of our living or activity *aesthetically*, i.e. through the pleasure accompanying our perception of activity. The pleasure not only accompanies our perception of activity; it rather “makes our activities more rigorous, longer lasting and better.”²⁰ That means on the one hand, being fatigued, our activity inevitably declines; on the other hand, the “pleasure promotes (*synauxein*) our activity.”

In *EN* IX 9, Aristotle even goes on to argue that what applies to us also applies to a friend as another self (*heteros autos, allos autos*):

If a good person is related to his friend as he is related to himself (because a friend is another self); then, as his own being is choiceworthy to each, so also is the being of a friend, or nearly so. [...] He ought therefore to co-perceive (*synaisthanesthai*)²¹ the being of his friend, and this will come about in living together (*to syzên*) and sharing (*to koinônein*) words and thoughts [with a friend].²²

Here based on and enlarging his argument concerning the perception of our own being or living, Aristotle argues further that we can co-perceive our friend’s being by living together and sharing words and thoughts.

The question becomes how many friends I can have to enlarge my circle. In *Ethica Eudemia* (*EE*), Aristotle answered this question: “If it is possible to live together and co-perceive with many at once, it is most desirable for friends to be the largest possible number; but as that is very difficult, the activity of co-perception (*hê energeia tês synaithêseôs*) must of necessity be in a smaller circle.”²³ Here Aristotle is faced with the gap between idea and reality; in idea the number of friends should be as large as possible. In reality the number must be small.

It follows from what has been said in this section that revisiting and generalizing the theme of the high-order perception (i.e. “perception of perception”) discussed in relation to “common sense” in *DA* III 2, Aristotle in *EN* addresses the subject of “perception of our being or living” that finally leads to the “co-perception of others’ being.” Such co-perception belongs not to the subject of common sense in the narrow sense, but, I claim, to a problem of the Aristotelian idea of common sense, leading its first vein of *intra*-subjectivity to its second vein of *inter*-subjectivity.

COMMON SENSE AND AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN KANT'S *CPJ*

In the *CPJ*, Kant bases a judgment of taste on “common sense (*Gemeinsinn*),” i.e. a “communal sense (*gemeinschaftlicher Sinn*).”²⁴ His idea of common sense belongs principally to the second, *inter*-subjective vein whose representative in Kant’s lifetime was Scottish common sense philosophy. At the same time, Kant opposes his critical philosophy to the Scottish school.²⁵ In the following I would like to show a hidden affinity between Kant’s aesthetic theory in *CPJ* and Aristotle’s conception of common sense.

My argument is divided into two parts. First, I will address the question of how pleasure in the beautiful is brought about. Kant contrasts the beautiful with the agreeable as follows: whereas the pleasure in the agreeable depends on the sensation as sense data and is entirely passive, the pleasure in the beautiful presupposes an *intra*-subjective “free play of the faculties of cognition” (i.e. the “understanding as the faculty of concepts” and the “imagination as the faculty of *a priori* intuitions”) and in this respect active. In section 9, Kant explains the reason a free and active play of the faculties of cognition can be combined with pleasure as follows:

[...] an objective relation [of the cognitive faculties in the case of objective cognition] can only be thought [by understanding in terms of the object], but in so far as it is subjective as far as its conditions are concerned it can still be sensed in its effect on the mind; and further, in the case of a relation that is not grounded in any concept [i.e. in the case of a subjective relation of the cognitive faculties that underlies the judgment of taste] [...], no other consciousness of it is possible except through sensation of the effect that consists in the facilitated play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened (*belebt*) through mutual agreement.²⁶

Here Kant first reconsiders the objective judgment he already addressed in *Critique of Pure Reason (CPR)*. For objective cognition, the relation between imagination and understanding is possible through the “apperception” in the form of “I think,”²⁷ determining the object via concepts of understanding. At the same time, insofar as this relation constitutes a “subjective condition” for enabling an objective judgment, it can be “sensed [i.e. felt] in its effect on the mind.” That is, the activity of imagination and understanding is thought via understanding insofar as it is related to the object through apperception. At the same time, however, it is felt in our mind via inner sense insofar as it is related to the cognizing subject as a subjective condition for objective cognition. The

objective cognition is, therefore, always accompanied – even though implicitly – by a subjective feeling as a kind of inner lining. Kant then considers judgment of taste that is not grounded in any concept. In the judgment of taste where a concept of understanding never determines the operation of imagination and the object is never brought into focus, the activity of both powers does not remain in the background, as is the situation with the objective judgment, but, being enlivened through mutual agreement of both powers and “maintaining” itself,²⁸ comes into the foreground. Kant thus concludes that “in the judgment of taste we become aesthetically conscious (*ästhetisch bewusst werden*) of a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition with each other, through mere inner sense and sensation [in the sense of feeling].”²⁹ In this context, to “become aesthetically conscious” means, therefore, to become conscious via a feeling as an effect on the mind caused by the activity of cognitive powers. This aesthetic consciousness accompanies not only the judgment of taste, but also all sorts of cognitive activity in the broad sense; for cognitive judgment, however, the activity of cognitive powers almost escapes our consciousness. In the judgment of taste we become explicitly conscious of the activity in the feeling through our inner sense.

In section 1, Kant claims straightforwardly that in the judgment of taste “the subject feels itself (*sich selbst fühlen*),” which is nothing other than the “feeling of life (*Lebensgefühl*),”³⁰ understanding by “life” a “consciousness of one’s being.”³¹ That is, it is our own being or life that we are aesthetically conscious of in the judgment of taste.³² To sum up, Kant in *CPJ* takes as its main theme a fundamental aesthetic/aisthetic dimension of our being in the form of “I feel myself,” namely a dimension that remains latent in our objective cognition directed by the synthesis of apperception in the form of “I think.”

As I showed in the second section, Aristotle in *EN IX 9* argued that we perceive our activity; the perception of our activity, i.e. the perception of our living or being, is in itself pleasure; and this pleasure contributes to making our activity longer lasting. In this argument that constitutes the problem of common sense, we find close affinity with Kant’s argument in section 9 of *CPJ*. Kant’s expression “become aesthetically conscious” is, I claim, in particular an equivalent of the Aristotelian idea of high-order perception (*aisthanesthai*).

Second, I will address how the pleasure in the beautiful has universal validity. Kant argues:

This state of a free play of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given must be able to be universally

communicated, because cognition, as a determination of the object with which given representation (in whatever subject it may be) should agree, is the only kind of representation that is valid for everyone.³³

Kant's argument is syllogistically constructed. The major premise is that only cognition is universally communicable. The minor premise is that judgment of taste is based on the free play of cognitive powers. To conclude, judgment of taste and pleasure in the beautiful are universally communicable. Kant thus bases judgment of taste on common sense, by which – Kant says – “we do not mean any external sense but rather the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers.”³⁴ The expression “common sense” does not mean any sensory organ, but a feeling of pleasure as an “effect on the mind” of the *inter*-subjective free play of cognitive powers, i.e. a mere sensation of the reciprocally animating imagination [...] and the understanding [...].³⁵ Common sense in *CPJ* means, therefore, an *inter*-subjectively communicable feeling of pleasure affected by the *intra*-subjective free play of our cognitive powers.

The others to whom we communicate such a feeling are not those we encounter in an empirical world, but “everyone else,”³⁶ which explains the primary difference between the pleasure in the beautiful and that in the agreeable, because the pleasure in the beautiful is based on “universal rules,” while the pleasure in the agreeable only on “general ones (like all empirical rules are).”³⁷ That means the universality of the pleasure in the beautiful is only *de jure* and not *de facto*. Kant, therefore, does not deny factual diversities in the judgment of taste between us. He argues that due to common sense we can “take account of everyone else’s way of representing in thought (*in Gedanken*) (a priori),”³⁸ claiming with justice a universal validity of our judgment of taste.

Due to its strict apriority, Kant’s explanation of common sense in *CPJ* certainly seems too abstract or, as Kant writes, “too artificial.”³⁹ His explanation pertains, however, to a fundamental aesthetic/aisthetic dimension of our being in the form of “I feel myself.” At issue in Kant’s idea of common sense is my *aisthetic* consciousness of my own being or life that is not limited to myself, but is ideally communicable to all possible others. Kant would agree with Aristotle in this sense when Aristotle argues: “If it is possible to live together and co-perceive with many at once, it is most desirable for friends to be the largest possible number,”⁴⁰ even though Aristotle shows a realistic inclination insofar as he restricts the number of friends *de facto*. Reconstructed in this manner, Aristotle and Kant encounter each other without knowing it, opening a broad field for an *aisthetic* turn of aesthetics that focuses on the *aisthetic* consciousness of our being.

NOTES

N.B.

References to Aristotle's works are given in the following form: abbreviated title, book (if available), chapter, followed by page, column, and lines in Bekker's edition. Translations are mine. References to Kant's works are given to the standard German edition (Akademie-Ausgabe). References to the first *Critique* are given in the usual form, referring to the original edition. I have followed (and slightly modified) the translation provided by *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.

- 1 Christina Lechtermann, *Berührt werden* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2005), 47.
- 2 Alexander Baumgarten, *Ästhetik*, trans. Dagmar Mirebach (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2007), 10.
- 3 Christian Helmut Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant's Aesthetics. Core Concepts and Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 82.
- 4 *DA* III 1, 425 a14-17, 27-28. See Pavel Gregoric, *Aristotle on Common Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78.
- 5 III 1, 425 a30-31.
- 6 For the oneness of common sense, see Wolfgang Welsch, *Aisthesis. Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 282-96, 307-18.
- 7 III 2, 425 a30-31.
- 8 *DA* III 2, 425 b12.
- 9 Gregoric, *Aristotle on Common Sense*, 174.
- 10 Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 31-41.
- 11 *De Somno* 2, 425 a30-31.
- 12 *De Somno* 2, 455 b11-12.
- 13 *DA* II 7, 419 a20.
- 14 *DA* II 11, 423 b7-8.
- 15 *DA* II 11, 423 a14-15.
- 16 For the sense of touch in Aristotle, see Tanehisa Otabe, "On an Aesthetic Consciousness of our Being: Toward a Contextualization of Shusterman's Somaesthetics" (in print).
- 17 *EN* IX 9, 1170 a29-b3.
- 18 See *EN* IX 9, 1170 a17-18.
- 19 *EN* IX 9, 1170 a19.
- 20 *EN* X 5, 1175 b13-15.
- 21 Considering his expression in *EE*, "to live together and co-perceive with many at once (*pollois syzēn hama kai synaisthanesthai*)" (*EE* VII 12, 1245 b22), we would be justified in saying that the verb "co-perceive (*synaisthanesthai*)" that appears only five times in his works and whose meaning is difficult to specify means in this context to perceive (something) with other(s). For the verb "synaisthanesthai," see Dorothea Frede, "Sensus communis und Synästhesie bei Thomas von Aquin," in *Synästhesie*, ed. Hans Adler (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 149-166 and Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch*, 79-89. The examples are as follows: synaisthēsis: *EE* VII 12, 1245 b24, synaisthanesthai: *EN* IX 9, 1170 b4-5, b 0; *HA* 534 b18; *EE* VII 12, 1244 b25; 1245 b22.
- 22 *EN* IX 9, 1170 b5-8, 10-12.
- 23 *EE* VII 12, 1245 b21-24.
- 24 *CPJ*, § 40, V, 293. All references to Kant indicate volumes and pages in the Akademie-Ausgabe.
- 25 *Prolegomena*, IV, 258.
- 26 *CPJ*, § 9, V, 219.
- 27 *CPR*, B 131.
- 28 § 12, V, 222.
- 29 § 9, V, 218.
- 30 § 1, V, 204.
- 31 V, 277-8.

- 32 See Piero Giordanetti, *Kant und die Musik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 181-4.
 33 § 9, V, 217.
 34 § 20, V, 238.
 35 § 35, V, 287.
 36 § 40, V, 293.
 37 § 7, V, 213.
 38 § 40, V, 293.
 39 § 40, V, 294.
 40 Aristotle, *EE* VII 12, 1245 b21-23.

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AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN THE NATURE-CULTURE CONTINUUM. THE BIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

A B S T R A C T

In 1930 American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey introduced into aesthetics a relatively new idea of experience. Living in modern time Dewey offered non-modernist way of thinking which especially in the field of aesthetics seems to be more adequate to our time than the modern ideas of aesthetic experience and autonomy of art. After short presentation of Dewey's philosophy of aesthetics I would like to show its inner dimensions that are fully developed today: ecological, evolutionary and transhuman tendencies, experience as interaction, soma and sensuous perspective.

KEY WORDS

PRAGMATISM
SOMAESTHETICS
EVOLUTION
ANIMAL AESTHETICS

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS AND SOMAESTHETICS

Pragmatist aesthetics is associated with the name of Richard Shusterman, for he was the person who published a book of this title in 1992, offering in it an outline of the whole conception. Never before had a book with this or a similar title been published and – despite an increasing interest in pragmatism and pragmatist aesthetics – no larger work that could compete with that by Shusterman has been published since. However, a lot of articles of detailed works developing particular threads of pragmatist aesthetics have been published all over the world.

Nevertheless, pragmatist aesthetics, though bearing a different name and not offered as a whole project had been in existence before Shusterman, implicitly included in pragmatist philosophy, and in particular in John Dewey's philosophy of experience and philosophy of art. In his book Shusterman himself indicates Deweyan roots of his aesthetics.

Shusterman's somaesthetics constitutes an integral part of his project of pragmatist aesthetics. Somaesthetics refers to man's corporeality (soma) and sensuality. Like Dewey, Shusterman opposes the main trend of European philosophical thought based on duality, in which consciousness was separated from body and the subject was identified exclusively – to put it in Cartesian way – as *res cogitans*. Reaching deep into the sources of ancient Greece and Orient (Confucius) and later appraising critically European philosophy, Shusterman identifies those thinkers who spoke up for carnality pointing at the identity of the mind and the body, that is, consciousness and matter. Among those thinkers he found also American pragmatists and, in particular, John Dewey.

In his somaesthetics Shusterman deals exclusively with body of a human being. My goal is to indicate that Dewey's philosophy of pragmatist aesthetics allows for developing certain threads of thought concerning art and the recipient of art – the thought going beyond the sphere of this which is human. And the 'non-human' sphere does not signify the divine sphere or even the angelic one. Just the opposite – it is directed at biology and the theory of evolution. It is not above, but rather below everything that is human. Dewey's aesthetics and his conception of aesthetic experience are open to all dimensions of the world of nature.

My interest in this part of Dewey's thought was undoubtedly evoked by the new trends in research that have occurred in aesthetics within the last decades. Works on animal aesthetics as well as works in the area of evolutionary

aesthetics have been published. Their authors do not tend to refer to Dewey. I believe that the considerations included in the book *Art as Experience* fully correspond to the above mentioned trends in research, introducing – at the same time their own specific character rooted in Deweyan naturalism.

RECONSTRUCTION OF JOHN DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY OF EXPERIENCE

I shall now proceed to reconstruct Dewey's thought.¹ In numerous works regarding his philosophy the authors emphasize that Dewey was born in the year when Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* was published (1859). Obviously, being born in that year was a chance situation, but it is no longer by chance that Dewey's book totally devoted to 'philosophy of aesthetics' starts with two chapters dealing with a 'live creature'. I wish to emphasize that this is highly characteristic and significant; I know no other book on aesthetics and, the more so, in the tradition of this discipline it would be hard to imagine a book that would start with this concept and this kind of problems.

In those two starting chapters, the leading concepts are those of life and of experience that is treated as a portion, as an emerging particle of the process of living, characterized by an interaction of a living creature with its environment or, more broadly – as Dewey puts it – 'the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.'²

It should be remembered that in Dewey's conception experience may take place also below the level of life, where interactions between different forms of energy take place. Nevertheless, Dewey is focused not so much on the physical level of experience as on the biological one, in which it is a live creature that takes part in the interaction. The concept of a 'live creature' (also an organism) is obviously broader than that of a 'human being'; it also includes representatives of flora and fauna, and Dewey admits a possibility of experience as an interaction between plants and their surroundings (heliotropism) as well as between animals and their environment. Finally, however, the live creature in the center of Dewey's attention is, first of all, a human being for it is the only individual aware of participation and interaction that experience involves. It is worth stressing that in Dewey's naturalism there is no gap between humans and other forms of life; just the contrary, there is continuity embodied also in the continuity of experience. There is also continuity between a live being and its surroundings and the differentiation is merely an indication of various aspects of experience.

'The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listens, the very brain with which he coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.'

And Dewey concludes: 'These biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic in experience.'³

BIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF DEWEY'S AESTHETICS

What does the aesthetic mean in this context? It means a harmony of interactions between a living being and its surroundings. This harmonious interaction acquires the name 'an experience' and its indicator is 'aesthetic quality' permeating the experience. Although Dewey does not do it explicitly, we could speak of the beauty of the process of experience. This experience is possible on all levels of nature; what is more, sometimes the harmony of interaction with the surroundings is easier to achieve on the level of animals than that of humans, which was due to many causes. One of the most important causes is the specific attitude to carnality and sensuality worked out in the western philosophical thought.

Dewey posed a fundamental question before the Western philosophical tradition: 'Why is the attempt to connect the higher and ideal things of experience with basic vital roots so often regarded as betrayal of their nature and denial of their value?''⁴ He claimed that in order to answer this question one must examine 'the conditions that have brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh and spirit', the conditions in which 'sense and flesh get a bad name''⁵.

Dewey wrote: 'To grasp the sources of esthetic experience it is, therefore, necessary to have recourse to animal life below the human scale. (...) The live animal is fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffings, its abrupt cocking of ears. All senses are equally on the *qui vive*. As you watch, you see motion merging into sense and sense into motion – constituting that animal grace so hard for man to rival. What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present.'⁶

I have executed a reconstruction of Dewey's thought concerning the basis of aesthetic experience which, in order to be understood, requires getting below the level of the human and considering what an interaction of an animal with its surroundings consists of. Now I would like to show, by way of example, what specific features may be introduced by Dewey's conception into the currents of evolutionary aesthetics developed today.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOLFGANG WELSCH'S "ANIMAL AESTHETICS" FROM THE PRAGMATIST PERSPECTIVE

Let us start with aesthetics of animals. During the Congress of Aesthetics in Rio de Janeiro (2004) Wolfgang Welsch presented a paper entitled 'Animal Aesthetics'⁷. Opposing the anthropocentric character of modernist aesthetics Welsch perceives the need for a turn towards trans-human aesthetics conceiving the man and his problems in the cosmic perspective, that is, in the perspective of the whole nature. There occurs a fundamental question: Did the aesthetic attitude – experiencing the pleasure of beauty – develop only within the human culture or does it have its foundations in the animal world as well? An attempt at answering this question directs us to the theory of evolution.

[Remark: animal aesthetics does not refer to so called animal art. Of course, the animal aesthetics does not mean 'aesthetics created by animals', it would be a nonsense. The animal aesthetics consists in putting the main aesthetic concepts and questions in relation to the non-human species.]

Welsch criticizes the previous achievements of evolutionary aesthetics, accusing it of supporting the anthropocentric approach in which it is pre-Darwinian for it recognizes the 'infinity of the difference between the humans and the animals'. He claims:

'Darwin initiated the subject of evolutionary aesthetics. He did so by providing an account of animal aesthetics. The current champions of evolutionary aesthetics, however, mistrust and even demolish his concept. While Darwin had advocated the existence of a genuinely aesthetic sense in some animals, most contemporary evolutionists reduce the aesthetic to mere survival value'.

Welsch tries to outline the foundations of evolutionary aesthetics through a return to Darwin's writings and their new and thorough reading.

Welsch's considerations are subtle and ultimately they lead to the following conclusions: In accord with Darwin we should accept continuity between the human and animal aesthetics and search for the moment at which the correlation

between beauty and the sense of beauty occurred. We could distinguish the following phases:

- pre-aesthetic beauty (stripes, shades and patterns on the body devoid of aesthetic implications);
- proto-aesthetic beauty (colors of flowers and fruit, 'attracting attention'; 'striking the eye', which signifies orientation at building certain relation attracting insects and birds to achieve pollination);
- beauty in its proper meaning directed at the aesthetic sense; this beauty occurs within a single species, in the intersexual relation – the beauty of a male is addressed at the sense of beauty of a female. And although here we are entangled in the context of sexual selection and reproduction, Welsch – in accord with Darwin – treats this kind of beauty as aesthetic beauty – the beauty in itself. For we have to do here with enchanting the females with the ornaments possessed by the males (and these ornaments, like deer antlers, are not only useless but, in fact they make the struggle for survival more difficult, for example during the flight from danger in a forest); the females make an aesthetic choice – a choice of the most attractive male.

Welsch claims: When females opt for more attractive males their choice is based on aesthetic judgment, which, in turn, is rooted in their 'taste of beauty'. Welsch admits: "Aesthetic judgment' is my term, not Darwin's; but I am confident it grasps and faithfully represents his idea'. What is more, aesthetic evaluation is based on pleasure, the appearance of a male triggers the sensation of pleasure and the more beautiful it is the greater the pleasure. Although it is sexual energy that provokes this relation, the issue of usefulness connected with sexual selection and reproduction is pushed to the background and the issue of beauty in itself evoking the pleasure of aesthetic nature comes to the lead. Welsch writes: 'Yet there is strong evidence that the females do perceive the beautiful as such. With peacocks, for instance, a slight variation of the beautiful ornaments can already reduce or even ruin the chances of mating'. And he adds that no proof has been found that a change in ornaments might be connected with a reduction of fitness. Thus the causes of rejection would be purely aesthetic.

Accepting the principle of continuity that is fundamental for evolution, which states that higher stages are always formed on the basis of lower stages and cannot be understood without them, Welsch supports the thesis that the beginnings of the aesthetic sense and aesthetic evaluation already appeared in the world of animals. Although his approach differs from the attitudes assumed

within the neo-Darwinian and socio-biological currents where the aesthetic is reduced to the issue of survival and beauty to fitness, Welsch's considerations follow intentionally the same kind of discourse that was designated by Darwin. Its aim is to determine whether the perception of beauty for its own sake does occur in the world of animals or whether it serves only natural and sexual selection and therefore does not attain the aesthetic character. According to Welsch beauty may lead to achievement of various goals, but the condition of achieving them is perception of beauty as such.

Welsch's considerations over the aesthetics in the world of animals are marked by the terms like: beauty in itself, the aesthetic understood as free of usefulness, aesthetic attitude as orientation at perception of beauty in itself. These are concepts of modern aesthetics, which cannot be fully applied to the earlier phases in the development of art and aesthetics in human history. The closest higher stage, comparative to the level of animals, should be rather a reconstruction of human aesthetics at the initial stages of its development. But at those earliest stages art and beauty were not separated from usefulness and practical goals.

My doubts, however, are of more fundamental nature. Should we – while asking about the aesthetics of animals – focus our considerations on beauty? Is the language of Darwin's theory the only option that allows us to perceive the continuity of the development of aesthetic experiences on the subsequent levels of nature?

Let us now return to Dewey. His philosophy is based on the ideas of continuity and continuation, which puts it close to the theory of evolution. Nevertheless, the central concept of Dewey's aesthetics is not beauty (he hardly ever mentions this concept, using the term 'aesthetic quality'), but experience – understood as 'an experience' of aesthetic character. This experience is not opposed to other life experiences; it is one of them, if certain conditions are satisfied. These conditions, however, do not include liberating the experience of practical, cognitive or any other goals. The aesthetic and the useful do not oppose each other in the conception of the American pragmatist.

Let us recall once again the broadest definition of experience in Dewey's conception: it is an interaction between different kinds of energy. Detailed description of the kinds of energy entering the interaction allows us to place the occurring experience on the appropriate level of the continuum nature-culture. So, as regards the above quoted considerations of Welsch concerning

the relation between a female and a male, in which the pleasure of perceiving beauty and the aesthetic appreciation take place, Dewey would describe this situation in a different way, using his own terminology. He would understand the relation between the female and the male as an interaction between the sexual energies represented by the masculine party and the feminine one, between which the tension arises. If the course of the interaction is rhythmic, expressive, and both parties are fully involved, the tension will be relieved and it will be replaced by harmony completed in consummation. For Dewey, a consummatory experience is an experience endowed with an aesthetic quality. If we decided to give this aesthetic quality the name of beauty, which Dewey does not do explicitly, though in his works we could find certain suggestions accepting this course of reasoning, this beauty will not be the beauty of a male attracting a female, but the beauty of an experience which has been accomplished due to their mutual interaction. In other words it is not about the beauty of an object, but about the beauty of a process. The questions fundamental for evolutionary aesthetics – whether we have to do with beauty in itself (free of usefulness) or whether animals possess the sense of aesthetics, are removed to the background. Just like the question whether the aesthetics is a product of human culture exclusively.

Dewey does not introduce the opposition nature – culture, but he speaks about a continuum nature-culture. This is why the experiences taking place on various levels of this continuum assume the same pattern of interaction while the contents filling the experience or, most generally speaking, kinds of energy change. The perception of pleasure of consummation that is an experience of aesthetic brand is possible on each level, but the degree of its intensity, participation of consciousness and emotion, etc., will vary.

It seems that Dewey's theory of experience provides an effective tool to prove the fundamental for Darwin's theory thesis about continuity of aesthetic phenomena having their roots in pre-human world. It allows us to avoid the danger of both introducing a highly specialized concept of aesthetic beauty into the world of animals and limiting the perception of this beauty to the relations occurring in the narrow sphere of sexual selection within one species. A consummatory experience may also take place in an interaction of the leader with the herd, in the struggle for survival, building nests and foraging. If these actions finally assume the form of a harmonious experience, they will thereby achieve an aesthetic value. The orientation at practical goals that is present in them does not disturb their aesthetic character at all.

The interpretive possibilities opened by Dewey's aesthetics are connected with the fact that this aesthetics was constructed totally on the margin of the mainstream of the modern aesthetics. The starting point for Dewey's aesthetic considerations was not the history of aesthetics but his philosophy of experience. This philosophy gave rise to the conception of an aesthetically branded experience in which the place of categories like the beauty of an object and attraction is taken by the category of the harmony of the course of interaction, aesthetic quality and consummation. This approach to the foundations of aesthetics does not limit it to the human dimension, opening the possibility of smooth entrance into other dimensions of the continuum of nature-culture. The difficulties of the evolutionary aesthetics consist in the fact that first we start from the dualistic opposition culture-nature and then we search for the ways of overcoming the gap that separates them. Dewey's thought strives to conceive the aesthetic phenomena not overcoming the dualism but ignoring it. It is not easy, considering the power of habit and the traditional thought patterns.

NOTES

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- 1 “Biological Dimension of Art in the Pragmatist Aesthetics,” in *Annals for Aesthetics: Hellenic Society for Aesthetics – Fifty Years*, (Athens: The Panayotis and Effie Michelis Foundation”, 2011), Vol.1,219-229.
- 2 J. Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Book, 1980), 14.
- 3 Ibid. p.13, 14
- 4 Ibid. p. 20
- 5 Ibid. p. 20, 21
- 6 Ibid. p. 19
- 7 I refer to this paper which I received from the author, then translated and published in Polish. Welsch developed some ideas of the paper in his book *Blickwechsel. Neue Wege der Ästhetik* (Reclam: Stuttgart, 2012). especially in the chapter “Der animalische Ursprung der Ästhetik, p. 211-251.

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THE STATUS OF AESTHETICS TODAY

A B S T R A C T

In this paper I argue for the possibility of expanding the field of aesthetics not only beyond art and beauty but also beyond everyday aesthetics (or prosaics) centered in human sensibility. This implies considering sensibility or aesthesis in all live beings to understand the vastness of bio-aesthetics. Part of this query is zoo-aesthetics. We have such growing evidence, enriched day by day, that animals are capable of creating, recreating, imitating, enjoying, exhibiting and expressing sensibility or aesthetic taste in various forms that it is harder to deny the more we record and witness their behavior. Moreover, as there are various artistic genres, we can equally speak of similar genres in zoo-poetics, namely: a) musical b) visual (both architectonic and decorative), c) drama, and d) dance.

Are females enamored by the male bat or bird mating song? Do peahens feel pleasure at the sight of a male peacock's tail? As Nagel asked 'what is it like to be a bat?' I would really like to know what it is like to be a peahen.

This full inquiry is being published in *The indispensable excess of the aesthetics: evolution of sensibility in nature*. (Lexington 2015)

KEY WORDS

EVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS
DARWIN
BIOSEMIOTICS
ZOO-POETICS
AESTHESIS
ZOO-AESTHETICS
EVOLUTION

THE ANOMALY

The enigma of the peacock, a singular aesthetic and absolutely excessive event in nature, was so unfathomable that made Darwin literally sick. No wonder. Such magnificent peacock tail casted doubt on the process of random mutation and natural selection as the sole explanatory principle of evolution in *The Origin of Species*. This principle predicts that a short-tailed peacock would have been selected over a long tailed simply because it is more practical for survival. So hard to maintain and show off, so dangerously conspicuous to predators and cumbersome in need to escape, requiring more nutrients and more vulnerable to parasites, revealing its flaws to females, this vast tail did not seem to find a coherent explanation in Darwin's theory. Such extravagance became like a ghost that haunted Darwin's paradigm threatening it to collapse. The only possible explanation turned out to be even more extravagant: the aesthetic taste among peahens.

Since aesthetics has been considered the peak of human refinement, this preposterous idea of animals owning a sense of taste was questioned by diverse authors, especially by Darwin's co-author and colleague Alfred R. Wallace who criticized him for attributing sophisticated human emotions to supposedly lower creatures. Yet to this day we have not found a more convincing account.

In this paper I present the results of a research into this problem published in my recent book *The Indispensable Excess of the Aesthetic: Evolution of Sensibility in Nature*, that just came to light this month published by Rowman and Littlefield. These results have taken me to argue for the need to expand the field of aesthetics not only beyond art and decorative objects, but beyond everyday aesthetics and socio-aesthetics, the subject of my six previous books dedicated to Prosaics or non artistic aesthetics. We must consider the broader manifestation of bio-aesthetics in all live beings to understand the vastness of these splendid phenomena, since aesthesis is the condition for the possibility of life. Solid evidence confirms the existence of animal sensibility, imagination and creativity in what we can clearly call zoo-poetics, examples of which are presented here.

THE PUZZLE

In 1866, James Shaw published a very brief text in the *Athenaeum*, 'Feeling of Beauty Among Animals' which was the first essay to openly address the question of animal aesthetics.¹ This article certainly inspired Darwin who in 1871 and without any philosophical inferiority complex published a section entitled 'The Sense of Beauty' as a serious reflection on this subject in his new book dedicated to sexual selection.²

And as Greek Tragedy was the paradigmatic example to Aristotle for understanding Poetics, the behavior of peacocks and bower birds was equally so to Darwin for the case of zoo-aesthetics. In a letter to his friend Asa Gray on April 3, 1860 Darwin writes that 'the sight of a feather in a peacock's tail, whenever I gaze at it, makes me sick'. Darwin's sickness turned into a real passion for explaining it. Despite the criticisms and objections even from those who could help him solve it, as his co-author Alfred R. Wallace, Darwin assumed this enormous challenge notwithstanding its great intellectual cost: the effort to write another book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (899 pp.), almost double in size to the *Origin of the Species* (502 pp.), and the penalty of having to remain almost ignored by academic publishing for a century. In this second text, Darwin confesses that he collected notes on the origin of man with the intention of not publishing them, as merely the slight mention that 'light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history' (Darwin 1859, 254) caused such commotion as to discourage anyone.³

By the new version, the process of evolution is due not only to the blind and fierce mechanism of natural selection by random mutations and selective retention of traits in the struggle for survival, but to something different and more radical: The idea that the female of each species could be running the selection process. To top it off, this is done with aesthetic criteria, the superfluous almost by definition. Biology at the hands of the aesthetic whim of females!

This demonstrates Darwin's intellectual honesty, considering his misogynist bias prevalent in the Victorian context, having then the bad taste to write that: 'The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman — whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands'".⁴ So the eternal feminine now billed Darwin's prejudice dearly: again as Eve, Lilith, Pandora, Helena of Troy, Cleopatra and Malintzin, it was entirely the female's fault.

THE PUNISHMENT

Darwin was ridiculed for his idea of female selection and still in 1960, as Trivers notes, scholars took seriously an explanation according to which females were wooed not because they could choose partner but because they were too lazy to mate naturally and were afraid of being touched since when a predator touches them, they die.⁵ Such a theory is false as proven by the highly selective sense of females in various species i.e. *Physalaemus postulosus* frogs in Michael Ryan's experiment demonstrating that they are able to accurately distinguish the size of the male by the simple croaking tone and therefore select the largest.⁶

The female is at the helm of the evolution of multiple species as she requires to be captivated by the male specimen whose particular features she chooses to pass on to the next generation. In many cases, she not even has to wait to be seduced, but goes straight to the male that is most attractive to her and copulates with him.

Just as man can give beauty, according to his standard of taste, to his male poultry, or more strictly can modify the beauty originally acquired by the parent species, can give to the Sebright bantam a new and elegant plumage, an erect and peculiar carriage – so it appears that female birds in a state of nature, have by a long selection of the more attractive males, added to their beauty or other attractive qualities. No doubt this implies powers of discrimination and taste on the part of the female which will at first appear extremely improbable; but by the facts to be adduced hereafter, I hope to be able to show that the females actually have these powers.⁷

This female frivolity implies, therefore, that at stake are not only direct instrumental, practical criteria, but the aesthetic as well. This is a scandal that not only upsets the misogynist bias when recognizing that females drive the evolution of certain species but also offends the sensibility of aestheticians who think the field should circumscribe itself to the study of works of art and the essence beauty. It also puts into question and turns around the evolutionary formula of 'blind mutation and natural selection' to the opposite. What is at work here is a deliberate and very discerning mode of selection. Darwinian functionalism derives, paradoxically, in hedonism and caprice.⁸

THE REWARD: ANIMAL SENSIBILITY

Females in many species are not forced to mate with the bravest male winning all contests at the birds' public square or lek, but seduced by the most charming. Darwin describes that '[t]he rock-thrush of Guiana, birds of Paradise, and some others, congregate; and successive males display their gorgeous plumage and perform strange antics before the females, which standing by as spectators, at last choose the most attractive partner.'⁹

Given that various animal species proudly display their quality in symmetry, proportion, garb, poise, this points to the fact that somebody, namely the females, must be, and in fact are sensitive to these qualities. It is not merely the case of possessing these qualities, but also of being conscious of it and displaying them proudly. Shaw noted:

I have a black bantam cock and hen. [...]. I have tried him several times with the mirror, he being handsome and having a very pretty rose-

comb. He never once pecked at his shadow there but walked mincingly and slowly before it on his toes or drew up a foot as he does when one speaks coaxingly to him.¹⁰

ANIMAL ART?

Is there animal art? To answer this question we must distinguish between 'art' and 'poiesis', the latter an activity from which the former evolved. 11 Art is institutional, conventional, and framed, as Danto and Dickie have argued.¹² Consequently, there cannot be animal art. Komar and Melamid's so called 'elefant art' and other similar exhibitions are in fact human forms of entertainment by trained animals to perform certain tricks, as in the circus, not animal art. They are not genuine art because these are not spontaneous and authentic animal forms of expression. One can still propose the serious study of a zoo – poetics if not a zoo – artistics.

Poiesis is the elaboration of artifacts, displays, or messages with particular emphasis on formal qualities, such as a song to a bird call, or a bower to a nest. Many species make artifacts: bird and fish elaborate nests, beavers make dams, bees construct beehives, spiders weave their webs, etc. Formal aspects are involved in all of them because construction and communication depend on morphological constraints. When an additional effort is invested in formal aspects like emphasizing color, symmetry, rhythm, or proportion, we are dealing not only with praxis but with poiesis.

Homo sapiens and Neanderthals both practiced poetics in creating ocher painting, carving bifacial axes, singing, performing, and dancing. This does not mean they were prehistoric artists; what it does mean is that poetics has a very long evolutionary history that transcends our species.

ZOO-POETICS

We must also distinguish between two modes of zoo-poetics: One is indirect, *phylo-genetic poetics*, referring, as we shall see, to the visual conformation of the species through many generations as a result of female sexual choice of particular male traits (color, size, brightness, symmetry or composition). The other is direct, *onto-genetic poetics*, generally performed by males who deliberately construct attractive artifacts like bowers, or decorate nests, and perform antics or dances for their immediate alluring effect. *Phylo-poetics* centers on the genotype, whereas in *onto-poetics*, the phenotype is at stake; one relates to what the individual *is*, and the second to what the individual *does*. To illustrate the precise meaning of phylo-poetics, I am quoting Darwin when he writes that: '... if man can in a short time give elegant carriage and

beauty to his bantams, according to his standard of beauty, I can see no good reason to doubt that female birds, by selecting, during thousands of generations, the most melodious or beautiful males, according to their standard of beauty, might produce a marked effect.”¹³

We have such vast evidence, enriched day by day, that animals are capable of creating, recreating, imitating, enjoying, exhibiting and expressing sensibility or aesthetic taste in various forms that it is harder to deny the more we record and witness their behavior. Moreover, as there are various artistic genres so we can equally speak of similar genres in zoo-poetics, namely: a) musical b) visual (both architectonic and decorative), c) drama, and d) dance.

MUSIC

David Rothenberg who researched bird song for more than a decade and has made significant attempts to interact musically with birds, asserts that while bird calls are innate, songs are not. Bird songs are created and learned, exhibit pitch and rhythm ‘repeating patterns, themes and variations, impressive virtuosic trills and ornaments, scales and inversions’¹⁴.

Not only birds sing. Toadfish, mice, bats, antelope squirrels, beluga whales, bonobos and humans sing. It is known that male humpback whales’ songs, when played to higher frequency, show similar patterns to bird and human songs. Edward O. Wilson reports on the humpback whale the following:

The most elaborate *single* display known in any animal species may be the song of the humpback whale *Megaptera novaengliae*. First recognized by W. E. Schevill and later analyzed in some detail by Payne and McVay (1971) the song lasts for intervals of 7 to more than 30 minutes’ duration. The really extraordinary fact established by Payne and McVay is that each whale sings its own particular variation of the song, consisting of a very long series of notes, and it is able to repeat the performance indefinitely. Few human singers can sustain a solo of this length and intricacy. The songs are very loud, generating enough volume to be heard clearly through the bottoms of small boats at close range and by hydrophones over distances of kilometers. The notes are eerie yet beautiful to the human ear. Deep basso groans and almost inaudible high soprano squeaks alternate with repetitive squeals that suddenly rise or fall in pitch.¹⁵

To witness Aristotle’s concept of mimesis live, we just need to watch the lyrebird acoustic mimesis of other birds’ songs or of mechanical and natural sounds. Mockingbirds do not simply imitate other birds’ songs, but they do so according to a pattern as do lyrebirds in a creative combination of mimesis and inventio.

VISUAL AND SPATIAL

On visual expression of animal creativity, hummingbirds both camouflage and decorate their nests with lichen and sometimes place an odd feather at the sides to highlight its symmetry.

The best evidence, however, of a taste for the beautiful is afforded by the three genera of Australian bower-birds The Satin bower-bird collects gaily-coloured articles, such as the blue tail-feathers of parrakeets, bleached bones and shells, which it sticks between the twigs, or arranges at the entrance. ... These objects are continually re-arranged, and carried about by the birds whilst at play. The bower of the Spotted bower-bird 'is beautifully lined with tall grasses, so disposed that the heads nearly meet, and the decorations are very profuse.' Round stones are used to keep the grass-stems in their proper places, and to make divergent paths leading to the bower. The stones and shells are often brought from a great distance. The Regent bird, as described by Mr. Ramsay, ornaments its short bower with bleached land-shells belonging to five or six species, and with 'berries of various colours, blue, red, and black, which give it when fresh, a very pretty appearance.'¹⁶

In this much contested competition, the Pritzker Architecture Prize goes to orange-crested gardener's bower in the rain forest of New Guinea:

The two openings in front of the hut are connected inside by a semicircular passage. The bird has covered a column between the two openings with dark moss. It is decorated on one side with blue iridescent beetles, in the middle with yellow flowers, and on the other side with broken shells. In front of the bower is a fence plaited from twigs and decorated with brightly colored fruits (sometimes with flowers as well), which forms the boundary of the 'garden'.¹⁷

DRAMA

Mimesis, which for Aristotle was the key to art, is an entire zoo-aesthetic dimension across various genres. Flatfish camouflage as sand to escape predators and Transvestite fish disguise as females to fertilize eggs in another male's constructed nest. Insects camouflage themselves as leaves (cyclopetra or chitoniscus feedjeanus), non toxic butterflies mimic toxic ones. Shrimps are capable of bluffing and appearing larger to scare away predators. In a territorial dispute, ants raise their body with their elevated head and abdomen to impress their opponent, and stand as on stilts drumming on the rival's body who after 10-30 seconds gives up defining hierarchy. The beta or Siamese fish keep

their gill upright during a fight to display fitness by a handicap in breathing and impress their rival. The male stickleback fish zigzags to court the female and the winner of the combat increases its brightness in color to boast its power, while the defeated literally becomes pale. Another genre is the *thriller*, performed by the *Aspidontus taeniatus* fish, which dances and pretends to be *Labroides dimidiatus*, a fish that maintains a mutualist relation with its host by cleaning parasites from the host's scales. Once the host has been fooled, *Aspidontus taeniatus* attacks and bites it.¹⁸

Yet, there are those dramaturges with greater inventive. Nominated for best actress in animal drama is the killdeer bird who emits a distress call and flaps her wings simulating being injured to attract the predator away from her nest in her magnificent interpretation of the classic 'Broken-wing act'. For best actor category, the Oscar goes to the wunderpus or mimic octopus capable of masquerading as 20 other species.

DANCE AND ACROBATICS

Certain birds, such as larks, are masters at acrobatics as they fly plunging down at great speed and do not open their wings until the very last moment to dramatize and exhibit their skill. The Scolopax gallinago flies at high altitude and rapidly descends in a zigzag curve with its tail extended to produce a special sound by the outer feathers. The grouse performs a dance before the female blowing his chest up and extending his tail while turning around to exhibit himself. The cranes move graciously and gratuitously without a particular goal evoking ballet dance. All these are marvelous acrobats and dancers, but no one compares to our winners of this year's contest: for salsa the Bird of Paradise, and for pop style Snowball the cockatoo!

CONCLUSION

The selection of such exotic luxuries of nature as birds of paradise, pheasants and peacocks have no other explanation than 'aesthetic' taste of females in total rebellion against evolutionary instrumentalism. The peacock phenomenon is a challenge not only to misogyny but to the pragmatic heart and marrow of evolution, because choosing the beautiful rather than useful requires some explanation. In a way, Kant intuited it when he wrote that the beautiful 'directly brings with it a feeling of the furtherance of life'.¹⁹ We owe so much to the females of each species the variety of colors, shapes and ornaments of nature by selecting and cultivating the finest for reproduction that it's about time to thank us!

Stripping the argument:

1. There is evidence on the preference of certain traits over others in some species that do not appear to relate directly to any useful purpose.
2. There are species that contradict the law of natural selection in that they are focused on the reproduction not precisely of functional fitness.
3. To our knowledge, we have no proof nor can we be sure that there is no sense of 'beauty' in other species, but that their preferences for vivid colors, symmetry, proportion are consistent with human criteria in aesthetic evaluation is a fact.

The main consequence of this approach is that the evolution of creatures appears not to be blind at all but very sharp, sensual and selective to the extent that by contributing to it we are rewarded with the experience of beauty (whatever that means), as well as alerted by the sense of ugliness.

Why do females require beauty to mate? Do they feel pleasure at the sight of a male peacock's tail? How important is the beauty of the male to a peahen if she stays away from him immediately after copulation anyway, as is the case of polygamous peacocks? Is the female cricket moved when listening to the stridulating music of the male? Does she really interpret it as something close to 'beautiful' or something else? Does the peahen admire colors and proportions or rather perform a calculation by phenotype of resistance to parasites and genotype quality indexes? Is the female bat enamored by his mating song? As Nagel asked 'what is it like to be a bat?' I would really like to know, to solve this mystery, what it is like to be a peahen.

NOTES

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- 2 Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed. (John Murray, 1882).
- 3 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, *Darwin Online*, 1859, 254. available at: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?viewtype=side&itemID=F373&pageseq=104>.
- 4 Darwin, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 564
- 5 Robert Trivers, *Social Evolution* (Menlo Park: Benjamin/Cummings Pub. Co., 1985), 333, 336.
- 6 M. J. Ryan, "Female Mate Choice in a Neo-Tropical Frog," *Science* 209 (1980): 523–25.
- 7 Darwin, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 211.
- 8 During the twenties of the last century, Fisher proposed an answer to this enigma when he coined the idea of the "runaway process", a hypothesis that assumes that not only traits but preferences are inherited and thus traits that are preferred have an advantage in selection. Fisher explains the case of the peacock as a result of preferences in females inherited to their daughters, and traits in males inherited to their male offspring, who will be the preferred for mating. Sir Ronald Aylmer Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection: A Complete Variorum Edition*, ed. J. H. Bennett (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 9 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, *Darwin Online*, 1859, 89.

- 10 J. Shaw, "Feeling of Beauty Among Animals".
- 11 I have argued this extensively the Artistic matrix in Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot UK: Ashgate Pub Co, 2007). ch. 32 .
- 12 Cf. Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (1964): 571–84. George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974).
- 13 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, *Darwin Online*, 1859, 89.
- 14 David Rothenberg, *Why Birds Sing: A Journey Into the Mystery of Bird Song* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 9
- 15 Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 108-09.
- 16 Darwin, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 413.
- 17 Thomas A. Sebeok, "Precognitions of Art," *Semiotica - Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies / Revue de l'Association Internationale de Sémiotique* 27, no. 1–3 (1979): 3–72.
- 18 Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed. (John Murray., 1882), 326.
- 19 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*. Trans. James Creed Meredith. Electronic version, 1790. American Philosophical Association Gopher. Section 23

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THE PROMISE OF MEDIA ARCHEOLOGY

A B S T R A C T

Media archeology offers a new and necessary tool in dealing with the plurality of phenomena we so indiscriminately – anachronistically or in other ways – recognize as art and classify as artworks. The paper tries to stress the difference in comparison with related viewpoints: the theories of cultural transmission, of the materiality of culture, of the logic of aesthetic regimes etc. One might call it “media before media” (and follow Kittler) or delve with Zielinski into the “Deep Time of the Media” with a good connection to the “history of the senses approach” or go straight with Jussi Parikka and Erkki Huhtamo and use “media archeology”: it is always an acknowledgment of the protean nature of art and architecture.

THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

How useful are aesthetic distinctions, aesthetic concepts in dealing with “the time of spectacle and media” evoked in the title of our section? There is of course no agreement about any of that, neither about the analytical use of “aesthetic” nor about the existence or not of concepts defined as aesthetic. Nevertheless we all here operate on the principle of family resemblance or the so-called box of tools encompassing all kinds of things under the label “art” and do not have trouble admitting that we all have a common interest. But some of us are prone to disregard the “thingness”, the material embodiment or aspect of our common subject while I maintain there is no advance in clarity without an awareness of materiality.

THE GENERAL CONTEXT

I am speaking today about some fairly new ways of dealing with it: hence the “promise” in my title. I want to see if there is something new or are we dealing only with a gimmick, a clever strategy to draw attention to something produced in an already well established line of inquiry. The “media” approach in a general sense introduces the connection between technology and changes in sensual perception and usually begins with a reference to Walter Benjamin, deals with the impact of Marshall McLuhan and after that diversifies in several more or less interesting directions. To name but a few of them: Jonathan Crary’s seminal research in to the *Techniques of the Observer* for instance, or the work on literacy and orality and their interface determined by printing and later digital transmission done by Walter Ong, Eric Havelock Jack Goody, Vilem Flusser and many others. Important work was done under the heading of the “materiality of communication” and organized by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K.Ludwig Pfeiffer brilliantly disregarding disciplinary boundaries. There is the maverick Regis Debray, there are all the gurus of visual culture, W.J.T.Mitchell, Norman Bryson, Michael Baxandall, Hans Belting, James Elkins – or all the important theories of the five of six senses, especially a possible history of the senses or in a speculative vein in the work of Michel Serres. Not to forget the great Friedrich Kittler who among other things corrected Marshall McLuhan on the matter of acceleration happening with the growth and expansion of media. Martin Kemp’s work on art, science and intuition is equally important. Jacques Ranciere introduced a strong reading of aesthetics as an ordering, and dividing of sensual experience – and that is unthinkable without precisely determined transmitters and that goes as well for Barbara Maria Stafford and her use of neurobiology.

One is almost ashamed of repeating the widely distributed slogan, but the medium truly is the message and excavating its transformations and permutations makes us realize that we can not distill some eternal essence of art somewhere

beyond the material embodiment and possibilities of perceptions. Although Benjamin's work remains the incisive turn, an epistemological cut, as one used to say in the heyday of Theory with a capital letter, new ideas were already there in the researches of the *Kunstgeschichte*, to give that chapter in art history its proper German name. The emphasis was on the constraints of handling the material whatever the different intentions of the artists. An even that has a well known history, in passing we could remember both Lessing's *Laokont* and the sometimes out ragingly funny contortions of aesthetic systems, especially Hegel's endeavoring to explain the nexus between the material and the idea.

THE QUESTION

But: is it possible to speak about the "promise" of media archeology? Should I have made it clear that it is really about *my* expectation and nothing "promised"? Speaking about archeology they quite explicitly refer to Foucault and Foucault's statements on archeology. In Jussi Parikka's summary: archeology is monumental, does not look outside a discourse or construct an interpretation by referring to something outside. Media archeology deals with ruptured and irregular temporal strata. Parikka now even speaks about a *geology* of media, as if dealing with superimposed but separate layers.

By contrast, my usual conceptual strategy, while not prone to tales of progress, tends to construct narratives of connections and historical developments. There is, of course the paradigm of a genealogical approach.

It should go without saying that the various manifestations of cultural theory, cultural history etc. are honor bound to be aware of their own cultural history, of the way they came to be, that is constructing a genealogy of truth and the ways truth is produced.

My question, not a new one, is: *can we conceive of a science, new or not, starting with a limited claim?* Can (or should) the cultural relativism of cultural studies be seen only as a rejection of the presumption of universal knowledge and emphatically not as the rejection of truth as truthfulness, the intention of finding out about the truth? Isolating? Can we just look for bits and pieces instead of an overall theory?

AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL EXCURSE

Cultures are always the product of an *In Between*, a transmission (mediation) so successful that it is forgotten. It is almost generally accepted that there are different cultures with different rules and games, so that you have to know

about the whole of a culture if you want for instance to understand a work of art or a device, a new technology. We know as well that things happen, cultures disappear or deteriorate, even if we do not accept the idea of an inescapable movement towards decline; we know we can change our cultural environment. Naturalizing, the process of representing the cultural and historical as natural, was the result of ideological discourses, a major force in the maintenance of hegemony. Man-made objects, man-made technology, become obsolete and in that state effectively prevent naturalization; they cease to be “natural”.

John Searle's, a philosopher's conclusions, are more or less as follows: the traditional opposition between biology and culture is misguided, culture is the form biology takes: “There could not be an opposition between culture and biology, because if there were, biology would always win. Different cultures are different forms that an underlying biological substructure can be manifested in.”¹ Searle counts on the biological capacity to make something symbolize, without any need for a radical break.

Foucault's famous remarks about the “history of space” are used to make the point, partly because they come from someone so immersed into genealogy: “The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and of cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world... The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed... One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space”².

NEW IDEAS

Siegfried Zielinski's *Deep Time of the Media* delves into the unexpected depths with a clear program, in the foreword he writes: ‘An anemic and evolutionary model has come to dominate many studies in the so-called media. Trapped in progressive trajectories, their evidence so often retrieves a technological past already incorporated into the staging of the contemporary as the mere outcome of history. These awkward histories have reinforced teleologies that simplify historical research and attempt to expound an evolutionary model from much more than vague readings of either the available canon or its most obvious examples.’³ He goes on speaking about “vague linearity” and a “flawed notion of the survivability of the fittest”. He is also well aware that the resurrection of dead media or the rediscovery of uncommon or singular apparatuses can

be just farcical or “techno-retro-kitsch” if it is not a work of discovery – not of some innermost secret but of specific effects of practices: of a possible genealogy not a grand narrative. Zielinski’s own examples really construct an unexpected constellation: Empedocles, the Italian magician Giambattista della Porta, the great Athanasius Kircher, romantic experimenters like Johann Wilhelm Ritter and Evangelista Purkyne, the unpleasant Cesare Lombroso and Aleksei Gastev, a proper avant-garde poet – dreamers, outsiders, heroic inventors. It is entertaining but I for once fail to see how (and why) one should try a magical approach to abolish mind-body divisions and other features of an emergent rationality, European or not. The examples somehow remain isolated, entertaining as they are. Strictly speaking, some do anticipate future media praxis, an art of combination or an attempt to create a global network

Jacques Ranciere’s “scenes from the aesthetic regime of art”⁴ work in a similar way. Allow me to quote his statement of intent: “Each one of this scenes presents a singular event, and explores the interpretative network that gives it its meaning around an emblematic text. The event can be a performance, a lecture, an exhibition, a visit to a museum or to a studio or to a film release. The networks built around it shows how a performance or an object is felt and thought not only as art, but also as a singular artistic proposition and a source of artistic emotion, as novelty and revolution in art – even as a means for art to find a way out of itself. Thus it inscribes them into a moving constellation in which modes of perception and affect, and forms of interpretation defining a paradigm of art, take shape.” Ranciere’s scenes evoke some well-known and some fairly obscure “events” but certainly nothing like a mainstream reconstruction. He starts with Winckelmann who is followed by Hegel – a detail out of Hegel. Then he deals with the reception of Stendhal’s *Le rouge et le noir*. A conference by Emerson from 1844 and a performance of English clowns described by a French poet and a review of Loie Fuller by Mallarmé, Maeterlinck writing about Ibsen, a conference on the designs of Emile Galle, Rainer Maria Rilke on Rodin. In the next “scene” Edward Gordon Craig explains modern theatre, followed by Viktor Chklovski writing about Chaplin and then there are Alfred Stieglitz, Dziga Vertov and James Agee.

It is an encounter, an alternative history of aesthetic modernity – not an excavating of unrelated events. Ranciere’s enterprise has numerous ramifications but for my theme the important issue is the way his notion of a “regime of art” deals with an overall sensorium. The world is something to be sensed, perceived and of course thought but the “scenes” show the functional relations linking the constitutive elements of effects, perceptions etc. That can not be explored without the material, the tools – in short, without the media. Ranciere’s effort has been called a “paradoxical materialism” by Jean-Philippe Deranty, who

underlines the logic of symbolic materialism in Ranciere, the way he interprets symbols in a literal, materialist way, as powerful fragments of the world, not as figural expressions of abstract thought.

But what I am trying to explore is where this entire embodiment, this entire materiality happens – or in other words to claim that media archeology is a wonderful supplement to the understanding of aesthetic modernity, a bridge between “media before the media” and the digital environment that conditions all of us. I agree with Ranciere that there is an impossibility built into any attempt to state a “general concept of art and beauty founded on a general theory of man or the world”. Such concepts are themselves a result of a transformation of forms of sensible experience, of ways of perceiving and being affected.

There is an urgent need to reflect on our sensible experience as it is formed and affected right now. We can not come to see how it works without some distancing, without questioning the very ease that is the hallmark of a reigning aesthetic regime. Obsolete models offer epistemological gains. It is a new field and we must try to prevent the seamless incorporation happening with the so-called cultural heritage. There is a need for contextualization and intermediality. The editors of a collection on papers concerning media archeology, Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka quote in their introduction Thomas Elsaesser’s text on “The New Film History as Media Archeology”: “Sound for instance, since the silent cinema was rarely if ever silent, in which case: why is the history of the phonograph not listed as another tributary? And as we now understand the cinema as part of a multimedia environment, how about the telephone as an indispensable technology? Radio-waves? Electro-magnetic fields? The history of aviation? Do we not need Babbage’s difference engine ranged parallel to his friend Henry Fox-Talbot’s Calotypes or Louis Daguerre’s sensitized copper plates? These questions in themselves show how much our idea – and maybe even our definition – of cinema has changed even without appealing to digitization as a technology, which is nonetheless implicit as a powerful “perspective correction” and thus count as an impulse in this retrospective re-writing of the past.”⁵

That is a serious plan of work, but much of media archeology is just sheer, unmitigated fun. That is, not perhaps so much fun when Wolfgang Ernst describes a cybernetic epistemology that is implied by the idea of a feedback loop between an analogue past and a digital present. But “digital retro-action” is very much everywhere, analogue source material is converted at an astonishing rate so we are well advised to try and understand what is happening and Wolfgang Ernst book with the German title *Gleichursprünglichkeit. Zeitwesen und Zeitgegebenheit technischer Medien*⁶, that is something like *Common Origin. The Temporary Essence and Presence of Technological Media* deserve careful readers.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

Generally speaking and as a conclusion, I would say the battle for media awareness is over. We are all now “media savvy” – and I do know it means something completely different. Let me quote Jean-Luc Nancy on books and computers, from his slim volume *On the Commerce of Thinking*, written originally as an occasional piece to celebrate a bookstore. It exemplifies the predicament it comments on: our situation in the midst of endless (“analogous”) books being increasingly confronted with digitally transmitted texts, some of them clearly books as well. Every aspect of books and bookstores is connected with the title: with the commerce of thinking. “For, in the end, the Idea of the book will always, from its very first conception, have been the Idea of its reading and, through that reading, the Idea of another book, of another writing that continues on from the first. Not necessarily the writing of another book, but at the very least the writing of another tracing or thinking, another curve, volute, or meander of representation, of meditation, imitation, or creation. The Idea of the book is the Idea that there is no end to this very Idea, and that it contains nothing less than its own proliferation, its multiplication, its dispersion, at always, at some moment and in some respect or another, there is the silent or eloquent advice from the book that it is an invitation to throw it away, to abandon it. In fact reading does not lead to more reading, but to everything else, to what is sometimes called action and sometimes experience, where we rub against the illegible real.”⁷

There is something outside the text, very much so. The digital innovations suddenly reinforce the role of the return of the Real. Nancy writes about the screen as neither a medium nor a message “but a subtle and ductile electricity propagating an uninterrupted excitement in a text that in the end says only that, that it is excited in favor of its propagation”⁸; also: “Indefinite expansion and in every sense, in all directions of the internal invisible proliferation of virtual pages that the screen swallows and bounces back, digests and regurgitates at will, and where do they go, lying low, compressed, vaporized, reduced to a gaseous substance a luminous state in order to spring back out of storage shining and ready for printing again for Gutenberg returns as a rapid laser jet burst of ink printer blocks of wood transmuted into ink cartridges...”⁹

I quote Nancy so extensively to get authority for the point I want to make: the wonderful excitement created when we are living through a change of ... And there comes the most important question. A change of what? An aesthetic regime? A way of life? Or...

NOTES

- 1 Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. II, ed. by James D. Faubion, (London: Penguin Books 2000), 175.
- 2 John Searle, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (New York: Simon & Schuster 1995), 201
- 3 Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (Cambridge, Ma: The MIT Press 2008), VII.
- 4 Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis* (London: Verso, 2013), XI.
- 5 *Media Archeology*, ed. by Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 12.
- 6 Wolfgang Ernst, *Gleichursprünglichkeit. Zeitwesen und Zeitgegebenheit technischer Medien* (Berlin: Kadmos Verlag, 2012)
- 7 Jean-Luc Nancy, *On the Commerce of Thinking*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, 41-2
- 8 Nancy, *On the Commerce of Thinking*, 51
- 9 Nancy, *On the Commerce of Thinking*, 55

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FORM AND MEANING IN ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

A B S T R A C T

Often architectural theory has been articulated on prescriptive views about what architecture should be, rather than on views formulated from historical experiences and examples of architecture. In this paper I will try to offer readings of architectural form by looking at a historical example from classical Ottoman architecture and at contemporary examples, to show how different architectures treat form. In examples taken from Sinan's architecture, symbols are investigated in relation to movement, to urban settlement, to religion and power. It is hoped that this analysis will offer an understanding of how the significance of architecture in human experience and in the urban context goes beyond structure and function.

KEY WORDS

ARCHITECTURE
SINAN (OTTOMAN ARCHITECT)
FORM
MEANING
STRUCTURE
BODILY RELATIONS

ABOUT STRUCTURE, FUNCTION AND MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE

Architectural theory has usually tried to give form to meaning and to relate content to form or to interpret form in terms of symbols and social significance. Meaning and form concern all human enterprise, all art and craft; therefore it is important to understand how architectural theory or theory in general approach meaning. Jürgen Habermas, explains how theory has religious roots in ancient Greek culture. Théoros was the person sent by the Greek cities to watch the public games. He would lose himself in the observation of the sacred events. Later, 'theoria' was adopted by philosophy to mean the observation of the cosmos. Theory then becomes the tool of 'Logos' cleaned of all doubt. Theory eventually meant how one traces the changes in nature and becomes educated. "Theory imprints its form on life, it is reflected in the ethos, in other words, in the attitude of the one who submits himself to its discipline."¹ In our day theory is understood as a critical approach to a subject, often prescribing a definition about the role and function of that subject. The function of theory is to define through proposals or to explain through models or examples. However, in architecture, theory nowadays is often seen as the exclusive right of critics, excluding any possibility of deriving interpretations from historical examples about what architecture is. My approach will be contrary to this supposition. As Théoros who observes the sacred events, I will look at examples of architecture and try to lose myself in their meaning and form in formulating a theory.

I have two guides. George Bataille who had written quite extensively on what architecture meant and the Ottoman architect Sinan whose buildings speak for themselves and whose writing reflects how forms can mean.

Sinan wrote about his architecture, but not in the sense that we understand architectural theory today. Besides, till the eighteenth century there was very little literature that could be considered directly as architectural theory. Therefore it is of course not misplaced to treat of Sinan's texts, which were dictated to his friend the Poet Mustafa Sai Çelebi, as expressions of architectural theory.²

An important claim that I would like to start with belongs to Dennis Hollier in his important book entitled 'Against Architecture'.³ Hollier claims that architecture is what is left of a building after its functionality and its structure are put aside. According to Hollier, buildings, whether they are monuments, temples or houses are only means for something else; buildings always refer to something outside themselves. A building is never built for itself, it is built for a reason outside itself. The interior of a temple or of a house is empty,



Figure 1. The Süleymaniye Mosque seen from the port inside the Golden Horn, lithograph by a 16th century traveller.



Figure 2. The Sokollu Mosque in the foreground with Süleymaniye Mosque in the distance, lithography by a 17th century traveller



Figure 3. The Pyramidal Form – Süleymaniye Mosque



Figure 4. The interior of the Rüstem Paşa Mosque (c.1566) rich with tile decoration



Figure 5. The Ablution fountains on the outer wall of the Süleymaniye Mosque

it is when humans or gods fill this emptiness that the aim of its existence is fulfilled; this emptiness is filled with something other than architecture. It is only the symbolic status of the building that makes it possible to transcend this exteriority. In reality, architecture is the identity of a building that cannot be reduced to its structure. And this means that architecture is the focus or the frame of representation. Architecture is what is represented beyond structure and beyond function. Architecture beyond structure and beyond function is meaning or representation. In other words architecture is the metaphysical presence of a building.

IDEA AND FORM

In ancient Greek the word 'idea' was the word 'form' in Latin. Therefore an idea is the origin of form; there is no form without idea. Form is the result of the relation with an idea, with a purpose; idea is the generative force of form. Therefore there cannot be form without idea.

Likewise in art, in science, in technology or craft, form is always the result of an idea. Idea and form are inseparable. It is in the form that we can go back to the idea, to intention and to the original idea that is the source of the process of creation of coming into being. Art and science, technique and craft have always existed within an endless labyrinthian realm. Their limits are unclear, they cannot ever be defined in finite terms. They are like the Minotaur, a mixture of various identities. Architecture, likewise, is difficult to describe and define. It is not the building, it is not the structure, nor is it the function. All throughout history, architectural theory has tried to deal with this problem, often evading a description and formulating prescriptions about what it should be.

Does the key to understand architecture lie in the relation of form to meaning? Before the Enlightenment, generally speaking architecture was only those buildings that already had a symbolic function, which could be religious or commemorating an event or a person. The meaning came ready with whatever form that building had to have according to the exigencies of structure. There were some architectural elements evolved through cultural processes that had to be included in architectural types, such as the minaret and dome for a mosque, towers for cathedrals, etc. Apart from these, often meaning was directly represented through images, such as the narrative designs on glass or the sculptural reliefs on cathedral doors. It is only after the Enlightenment, when new types of buildings began to come into existence because of the new social need created by industrialization that form began to be investigated as a source of meaning. Rather than typical symbolic elements that previously had to be used to create meaning, form in its abstract geometry began to be interpreted and used to refer to ideas and ideals.

HOW FORMS MEAN - SINAN'S ARCHITECTURE

In reference to the above explanations, I will treat of examples from fifteenth century architecture, and from a few contemporary buildings, trying to understand what is left as the metaphysical presence of architecture when function and structure are left aside. How forms mean, beyond the building. I will start with the meanings that are conveyed in Sinan's buildings, both as we observe them in the context of the city and when we observe them as we use or as we inhabit them.

I propose four ways of reading Sinan's work. First as urban sculptures that help us to orient ourselves in the city. Süleymaniye was the entrance to the city in the Ottoman times when the port was inside the Golden Horn. Süleymaniye, seen from the Golden Horn was like a sentinel guarding the city; it was the face, the façade of the city.

Secondly all of Sinan's mosques in Istanbul were related to each other visually. From any of Sinan's İstanbul mosques you can see the Süleymaniye Mosque, which represented Sultan Suleiman and his power, as well as being the intellectual center of İstanbul with its four educational institutions (madrastas). This creates a certain mapping, a certain network to read the urban structure.

Especially the mosques built for Sultans or for the princes are of pyramidal form that symbolizes the primal mountain, the first earthly structure, which is a natural temple. The form of Sinan's mosques is constituted by the connection of two symbolic and pure forms: the square and the circle; in three dimensions, the cube and the sphere. The sphere represents the heavens, what is infinite

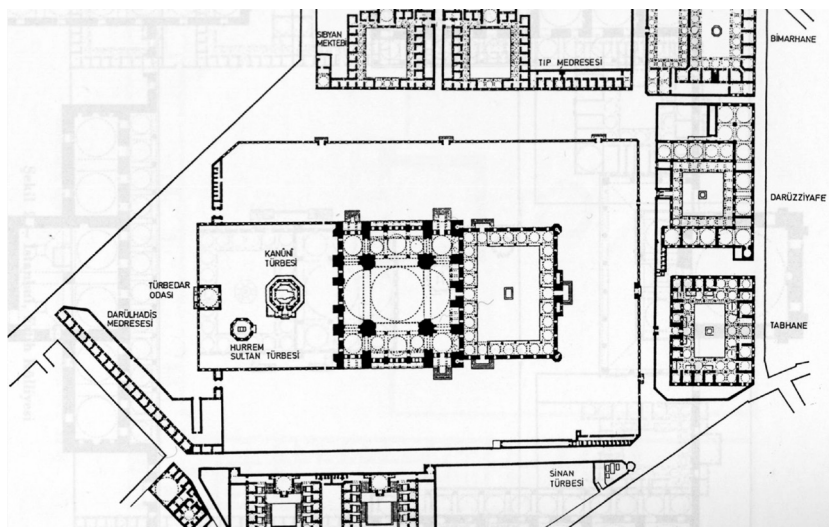


Figure 6. The settlement plan of Süleymaniye Mosque with its dependencies, such as madrasas, soup house, hospital, around its central core

and sacred, the square represents the world of mankind with the four cardinal points, North, South, East and West. The world of man rotates within the infinite realm of the sacred, of God and of heavens. The sphere covers the rectangular space of Sinan's mosque. But this symbolism is all inclusive: you find it in the decorative patterns on wood, on marble and on some carvings. The building is an exclusive symbol of man's relation to God. The whole complex stands in the middle of the city, at one of its highest points and symbolizes the intellectual and spiritual center with its many madrasas, centers of learning. It also points to the fact that the center of the Empire with its ruler, the Sultan, represents the highest attainment of learning.

Another important symbolism and meaning is apparent in the site planning of mosques or rather of külliye's, which contain different buildings of social function, such as schools, soup houses, hospitals, etc. arranged around the focal center of the mosque. The arrangement is like water rings around a stone falling in water: first the space right under the central dome, then the extended spaces under the secondary domes, or the half domes, as we can see both in the Süleymaniye and in Şehzade mosque. Then we have the semi open spaces around the mosque, which are the portico, the galleries on the sides and as in the Selimiye the gallery at the back. Then we have the open space surrounding the building; we have then the other building encircling the main building, then we have a circulatory space, a path, etc. All this revolving arrangement in the spiral represents a conception of space and time that is also found in Ottoman music. The spiral is one of the most common forms of dynamism and growth in biology and astronomy, and has its equivalent in geometrical shapes and mathematical systems. Many great artists have used it in their buildings or musical compositions either consciously or unconsciously. Not only does it create a harmonious and naturally pleasant relationship, but can also be seen as a symbol of life and of infinity. In many of Sinan's mosques the spiral is used in the system of circulation, creating a kinetic experience that is akin to the Dervishes dance.

In Sinan's work the exact equivalence of the interior and the exterior form, the way the convex and the concave are folded upon each other results with a form where structure and function are no longer external to architecture, they are both dissolved in the meaning of what Sinan's architecture stands for.

How was this symbolism in which both structure and function are dissolved, seen by Sinan? In his treatise, the *Risale_i Ebniye* which Sinan dictated to his poet friend Mustafa Sai, he narrates that on a certain day he was going

all around Istanbul to look for a pleasant spot, a sort of picnic or promenade place. In the end after going around the city, he narrates that they entered the Şehzade mosque and that with all that it offered to the senses it was the place they had been looking for. Obviously the interior of Sinan's mosques are meant to represent the paradise Garden. Every aspect of the interior symbolizes very closely the descriptions of paradise in the Koran. The sound of water in the Selimiye, the floral designs on tiles, the reflections of light. In the Rüstem paşa Mosque in Eminönü this symbolism is carried to the extreme.

The central door has two panels on either side representing trees and flowers and Heaven's door. Sinan is also very attentive to the quality of sound in his buildings. In this tiny mosque placed in the middle of a very busy commercial environment, the double portico, its being elevated over the street guarantees absolute quiet and peace within the interior space.

All that we have talked about up till now concerns Sinan's buildings' relation to the user, to the human; the human contact. The physical relationship to the mosque, the bodily experience of the huge building, this intimate contact is of course common for many Islamic mosques because of the physically active form of prayer. However, Sinan goes further in this and makes sure that the relationship between the huge monument and the pious is something that will not be missed and will be a deep experience: it is the building, in the Süleymaniye which offers the pious the water for ablution. Water, being the main symbol and source of life is put to many symbolic uses in the mosques of Sinan. We see it also in the Selimiye right under the elevated platform.



Figure 7. Peter Eisenman, Berlin Memorial – <https://www.google.com.tr/search?q=peter+eisenman+memorial>



Figure 8. Zaha Hadid, Beko Building <https://www.google.com.tr/search?q=zaha+hadid+architecture-Galaxy+SoHo+photo,+archdaily.com>

Sinan is conscious that good architecture will be an educative example, and that art and architecture are cultural meanings and knowledge passed on to young generations. In one of his treatises he says *'I have put special doors on the domes, so that the experts will study my domes and enjoy their beauty'*. The mosque, which is an object of adoration to God, is as beautiful as Nature. The domes are described by Sinan as the waves of the sea which change color with the lights of the Sun. But light is the supreme symbol. Its source should be the spirit or God, hence, as Burelli writes, the windows are often covered with colored glass or opaque material so that the sun's position cannot be understood, creating an effect as though the light is coming from every direction, from all the heaven.

FORM AND MEANING IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

From contemporary architects Peter Eisenman can be chosen as the representative of deconstruction and Zaha Hadid for her winding and fluid forms. In both of these architects' works, as well as many others the meaning that is associated with function is eliminated. When we look at these buildings we do not have any idea of what it is used for. Thus, in one way, function is eliminated, leaving place to understanding form in its symbolism. Yet, often form is created just for itself without any external reference. After a while this becomes overbearing and repetitious, since it does not relate to human understanding or apperception. On the other hand, many of these forms lead one to ask questions about structure and gravity. Therefore, we are not yet totally in the realm of architecture in its metaphysical implications, although for many architects who wanted to avoid direct meaning of form and who chose a conceptual, philosophical idea of architecture, this has not been possible because there is no empirical guide to lead us beyond the materiality of the building.



Figure 9. Armand Boudreaux / YIMBY / Google Earth – A rendering of the condominium towers planned or under construction at 225 West 57th Street. From the article of Martin Filler, 'New York, Conspicuous Construction' - New-York Review of Books, April 2, 2015, Vol. 62, No 6

Often, straight lines or curves, geometric shapes are not appreciated only for their own worth, but become related to questions or affects of our perception related to gravity, to stability, to understanding order, orientation and sequence. What is claimed in De-constructivism as related to the philosophical treatises of Derrida have been tried to be translated into physical form where gravity and laws of physics play primary roles. With the buildings of Zaha Hadid where a cantilever form reaches towards us, there are two ways we can respond. If we are too close, maybe such a form is felt as something sublime and one does not ask to understand it. Or, it can create fear and anxiety. As Nikos Salingaros has mentioned about many Modernist architectural forms, where horizontal lines are repeated, a certain anxiety is created because horizontality means passivity, it may mean death and inability to move.⁵ The horizontal bears heavily on our body. Buildings, structures and forms' meanings are first sensed through the body and through our body's relationship to those forms. Peter Eisenman or Liebeskind have used these anxiety causing forms in specific cases related to the Holocaust, where they are put to legible use.

CONCLUSION

As I tried to demonstrate form and meaning are certainly related, but not outside human experience. Sinan's buildings, and certainly some other fifteenth and sixteenth century buildings such as those of Borromini or Michelangelo were concerned to create an architecture to remain intelligible after all concerns of structure and function. In this quest the relation to human sensibility was the key determinant. In many new buildings where the incentive is to create original form the human content has been lost. With old religious buildings, even if God was the focus, man related to it through his/her bodily senses; through music, through color, through forms that were almost universal such as the circle or the square and triangle. Today when individual subjectivity seems to be so important, what buildings mean is usually beyond and beside human sensibility. Often they are related to power and money as evident in Fig. 8 of the new New York Condominiums which the author Martin Filler likens to cash registers.

NOTES

- 1 Jurgén Habermas, *La Technique et la Science comme "idéologie"*, tr. and with a preface by Jean- René Ladmiral, (Paris, Gallimard, 1973), 134.
- 2 Sai Mustafa Çelebi, *Yapılar Kitabı, (Mimar Sinan'ın Anıları)*, tr. Hayati Develi, Samih Rifat, ed. Samih Rifat, Arzu Karamani Pekin, (İstanbul: Koçbank, 2002).
- 3 Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture – The Writings of Georges Bataille*, trans., Betsy Wing, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992).
- 4 Sai Mustafa Çelebi, (2002), 65-66.
- 5 Nikos A. Salingaros, *Twelve Lectures on Architecture, Algorithmic Sustainable Design*, (Nikos A Salingaros & Umbau-Verlag, 2010), 49.

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PAUL SCHEERBART AND THE UTOPIA OF GLASS

A B S T R A C T

This paper will consider the architectural writings of the German expressionist writer Paul Scheerbart, focusing on his fascination with glass as an architectural and symbolic material within his writings. I will discuss Scheerbart's architectural treatise *Glass Architecture*, his novel *The Grey Cloth*, and related writings on glass architecture. Scheerbart represents an alternative tradition within architectural modernism, which saw glass as a constructive material that represented modernity by exposing structural elements of the building, thus guaranteeing conformation of form to function. Scheerbart, in contrast, considered glass as a bearer of color and multiplier of light, which he saw as capable of transforming the human environment and exercising positive effects on individuals and collectives. He saw light as culture-formative, and glass architecture as the means by which the built environment could maximize modern culture's utopian potential. I also discuss the influence of Scheerbart on the anarchist architect Bruno Taut and on the thinking of Walter Benjamin.

KEY WORDS

GLASS
ARCHITECTURE
UTOPIA
TRANSPARENCY
PAUL SCHEERBART
BRUNO TAUT

The name Paul Scheerbart is not common currency among philosophers, and even among architects and historians of architects, he remains a relatively obscure footnote in the story of modernist architecture. Scheerbart is best known as the author of the treatise *Glass Architecture* from 1914 and as the inspiration and collaborator on Bruno Taut's legendary Glass Pavilion at the Cologne Werkbund exhibition, which included inscriptions about glass architecture composed for the occasion by Scheerbart. Through the exception of its actually having been realized (though of course now known only through various photographs, plans, and descriptions), Taut's Scheerbartian glass pavilion has become the text-book case of the visionary imagination of expressionist architecture, which for the most part remained an artistic and literary practice on paper. After World War I, when the opportunity to build was extremely limited, Taut subsequently formed, under the inspiration of Scheerbart's imaginative architectures, the 'Crystal Chain' (*Gläserne Kette*) group of artistic and literary correspondents, seeking to develop a utopian conceptual architecture and architectural discourse that might help carry forward the visionary impulse across the present barren period in practice. 'Ideas about architecture,' Taut declared to his correspondents in a chain letter of March 1920, 'have... become more important than architecture itself, and I truly believe that only by proceeding from the point can we reach the root.'"¹

But who, then, was Paul Scheerbart? Born in 1863 and deceased in 1915, having seen come to pass the technological war he had foretold with irony and dread for many years in his books, Scheerbart enjoyed a certain celebrity status amidst the literary bohemia of Berlin in the late 19th and early 20th century. Scheerbart was the author of scores of fantastic, utopian, science fiction-like novels, short stories, and essays, many of which projected the reconstruction of modern life through technology and architecture. The best-known representation of him is probably a sketch of him by Oskar Kokoschka, published in 1915 in the avant-garde journal *Sturm*, which renders his face with edgy pen scratches and scrawls and owl-like features, reinforcing Scheerbart's image as an eccentric forerunner and father-figure of the German expressionists. For years an impoverished alcoholic and nocturnal denizen of Berlin's bohemian cafés, transmitted legend has it that Scheerbart brought about his death by refusing to eat in protest of the war.

Given his fantastical work and bohemian lifestyle – in certain respects akin to the Viennese café-writer Peter Altenberg – it is then surprising to read of a personality of the stature of Walter Gropius in 1919 enthusiastically recommending to the artist and writer Hermann Finsterlin that he should

read Scheerbart for his wisdom and beauty,² and to find a later spokesman of functionalism such as Adolf Behne advancing Scheerbart as (in Iain Boyd Whyte's words) 'a progenitor of the new age of glass architecture.'³ Scheerbart's writings also figured very seriously in Walter Benjamin's early thinking about utopia; in his correspondence with his friend Gershom Scholem, who had given Benjamin a prized copy of Scheerbart's utopian 'asteroid-novel' *Lesábendio*, Benjamin discusses a philosophical treatise, now lost, on 'true politics,' in which he offers a critique of Scheerbart's novel and seeks to prove that this fictional asteroid society represents the best of worlds. Notably, at the same time, Benjamin was grappling with a critical review of Ernst Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia*, and he presumably intended to draw upon Scheerbart to offer an alternative conception of utopian politics. Scheerbart would continue to surface intermittently in Benjamin's work as he developed his genealogy of modern architecture from the glass and iron phantasmagorias of 19th-century arcades through the rationalist architecture of Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe. In his 1933 essay 'Experience and Poverty,' Benjamin cast Scheerbart's science-fiction novels as a forerunner of a contemporary reduced or 'impoverished' (in a positive sense) culture – a despiritualized culture stripped of the excrescences of *Geist* – which also included Paul Klee, Bertolt Brecht, and Mickey Mouse. And late in his life, in an unpublished essay, Benjamin brought Scheerbart's post-historical technological fantasies in conjunction with the classic architectural utopia of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, suggesting that Scheerbart –

sometimes seems like the twin brother of [Charles] Fourier. In Fourier's extravagant fantasies about the world of the Harmonians, there is as much mockery of present-day humanity as there is faith in a humanity of the future. It is unlikely that the German utopian knew the work of his French counterpart. But we can be sure that the image of the planet Mercury teaching the Harmonians their mother-tongue would have delighted Paul Scheerbart.⁴

In a pathbreaking article published in *The Architectural Review* in 1959, the architectural historian Reyner Banham would look back on the now-canonical history of modern architecture and argue that it was necessary to bring Scheerbart's visionary line back into the conversation, from which it had been marginalized. '[I]f one applies to [Scheerbart] the normal test for missing pioneers, that of prophecy uttered in the right ears at the right time,' Banham writes –

he scores more heavily than many other writers of his day. Not only were his architectural writings known and in varying degrees influential

among the generation of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, but at a time when many spoke of steel and glass, he also spoke of water as the natural complement of glass, of the need to temper the white glare of light through glass by the use of contoured tinting, he spoke of America as the country where the destinies of glass architecture would be fulfilled, and he spoke of the propriety of the ‘Patina of bronze’ as a surface. In other words, he stood closer to the Seagram Building than Mies did in 1914.⁵

Banham suggests – as have other later architectural historians such as Rosemarie Haag Bletter and Detlef Mertins – that Scheerbart initiates a non-rationalist, visionary modernist counter-tradition in architecture centered on glass and colored light. Extending through the Activism of Bruno Taut into the technology-inspired light-motion experiments of László Moholy-Nagy, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, and Zdeněk Pešánek, Scheerbart posed an alternative aesthetic within architectural modernism, which came to see glass as a ‘rational’ constructive material that represented modernity by exposing the structural elements of the building, guaranteeing honest, unadorned conformation of form to function. Scheerbart, in contrast, considered glass in terms of its experiential qualities as a bearer of color and multiplier of light, which he saw as capable of enlivening and transforming the human environment and exercising positive moral and emotional effects on individuals and collectives. He saw light as culture-formative, and glass architecture as the means by which the built environment could maximize this potential for new culture. As Detlef Mertins concludes, ‘for Scheerbart and Taut, glass architecture created a new environment for new kinds of experience, for a new subjectivity. The Glass House provided an immersive artistic environment – a total work of art integrating glass construction, glass art and mosaics – which induced an altered state of consciousness as the subject dissolved empathetically to be at one with the world.’⁶

This is the point I want most strongly to emphasize, and which makes a consideration of Scheerbart and his utopia of glass of more than art-historical interest: in this tradition of architectural thinking and, to some extent, practice as well, architecture is considered not simply as a way of containing and articulating various social functions, but rather as a kind of phenomenological-sensory technology akin to media like cinema, as a kind of materialized and enactable correlate of various actual and possible experiences. In this regard too, the distinction between the imaginary, fictional, and speculative architectures in Scheerbart’s novels or in the letters of Taut’s Crystal Chain group and actual

avant-garde buildings such as Taut's Glass Pavilion are not essential, but represent merely different sorts of materialization of common experiments in potential modes of human thought and feeling. In fact, the eccentric and fragmentary archive of materials related to this tradition – mostly composed of photographs, plans, drawings, and texts – raises interesting general questions about the relationships between built space, phenomenological experience, language, and graphic traces in architecture broadly, not just in this particular lineage.

With this conceptual background in mind, I will now turn briefly to two texts by Scheerbart, the first a novel about glass architecture entitled, in full, *The Grey Cloth and Ten Percent White: A Ladies Novel*, published in 1914, and, from the same year, his treatise *Glass Architecture*, which together reveal a number of aspects of his utopian aesthetic of glass architecture. The novel *The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White* centers upon the adventurous life of a Swiss architect Herr Edgar Krug and his wife, Clara. Scheerbart's novel is episodic, serving mostly as a vehicle for a series of witty, imaginative, descriptive vignettes of the extravagant glass constructions of the architectural master and the futuristic technologies of transportation and communication at his disposal. At an exhibition space designed by Krug on Lake Michigan in Chicago, he meets his future wife, one of the exhibited artists. Scheerbart first describes the interaction of the colored glass with the water of the lake:

One saw the very colorful reflection of the palaces in Lake Michigan. Like hummingbirds, dragonflies, and butterflies the countless colors flickered along the moving waves of the lake. And the full moon glowed. It too was reflected in the water. Several airplanes travelled over the lake, letting their colorful floodlights frolic.

‘A very colorful picture!’ said Herr Krug. And he lit himself a cigarette.⁷

The title of the novel refers to the modernistic, austere garment that his future wife Clara is wearing when Herr Krug first encounters her among his colorful glass exhibition hall, and which subsequently becomes part of their marriage contract:

Herr Krug was extremely surprised by the appearance of Fräulein Clara Weber. The lady wore a simply gray garment with ten-percent white trim. Herr Krug was immediately enchanted by this outfit and said so, again apologizing to Miss Amanda for not finding her colorful clothing beautiful – since it did not work well with his glass walls – for in Herr Krug's view only a gray outfit with ten percent white suited his glass walls. (*GC*, 8)

Bound by their humorously eroticized aesthetic encounter, Edgar and Clara fall precipitously in love, and resolve to marry. Edgar, however, demands of his wife that she relinquish colorful clothing and wear only grey with ten percent white, so that she will be forever in harmony with his colorful glass architecture, which the novel portrays him constructing all over the world, from Antarctica to Ceylon to Central Asia to Cyprus and North Africa. Through the doubts and objections of his wife and other women characters in the novel – the gender politics of the book are anything but straightforwardly celebratory of the patriarchal artistic genius, caught up in his glass world – Scheerbart ironizes Edgar’s fetishistic obsession with materials and colors and his temperamental monomania, as in this scene:

Desperately, Edgar said to his wife:

‘Look! I could assemble the biggest thing in the world here. The people here are excited about glass architecture. And over and over again I find that wherever on earth there is excitement there is never any money. That is a sorrow.’

‘But be that as it may,’ consoled Frau Clara, ‘you must build on all those sites that have enough money available.’

‘There can never be enough built!’ shouted Mr. Edgar, and he left the room.

‘There is something insatiable about my husband,’ Miss Clara said to her chambermaid. (*GC*, 80)

Yet Clara remains faithful both to Edgar and to her sartorial pledge not to compete in color with the glass-produced colored environments of her husband’s practice. What was originally a bizarre and authoritarian demand on her, eventually becomes a freely chosen constraint on her fashion choices as she comes to appreciate her inclusion in the endlessly renewed worlds of color, light, and sounds that her husband designs using his favored material and its kaleidoscopic architectonic forms, spatial transformations, and patterned light.

Scheerbart’s treatise *Glass Architecture* is the discursive counterpart to *The Grey Cloth*’s narrative fantasia. Written in a series of one-hundred and eleven manifesto-like short paragraphs – and published under the imprint of the Sturm Verlag, which was closely associated with the expressionistic avant-garde in art and poetry – the section titles veer between the practical (‘Magnesite and the perfect floor covering for the house,’ ‘Glass fibres in applied art,’ ‘Glass mosaic and reinforced concrete,’ ‘Vanquishing vermin’) and the speculative (‘The beauty of the Earth, when glass architecture is everywhere,’ ‘Aircraft with coloured lights,’ ‘Airports as glass palaces,’ ‘The transformation of the

Earth's surface,' 'A composed and settled nation, when glass architecture comes'). Similarly, at the level of content, Scheerbart's text is a curious hybrid of practical observations and utopian fantasy. For example, he has prescient remarks on the use of glass bricks as a building material:

So-called glass bricks make a wall material which may well become an interesting speciality of glass architecture. . . Everything fire-proof and transparent is aesthetically justifiable as a wall material. Glass bricks should make many iron skeletons superfluous.⁸

He also perceived that the greater possibilities for shaping that glass and iron materials allow would also shift the hierarchy of relations between the building's silhouette and the groundplan. As the building shape becomes increasingly independent of its groundplan, the groundplan becomes much less determinative than when vertical walls were a near inevitability of the building material (*GA* 53). Scheerbart drew a number of implications from this, ranging from an individual's experience of a room, where, for example, curved walls and dome-effects can change the experience of horizontal and vertical orientations in space, to the near-cosmic, in which the use of glass, colored light, and aviation frees human habitation from its Earth-bound weight and gravity.

In other sections, Scheerbart evokes an acute phenomenological sense of his imagined technologically modified environments, as in this passage on ventilators, which captures the sensory oddity of the air-conditioned glass spaces we have since become accustomed to live and work in:

It will seem very natural that ventilators should have a principal part to play in a glass house, and will supplant everything window-like. When I am in my glass room, I shall hear and see nothing of the outside world. If I long for the sky, the clouds, woods and meadows, I can go out or repair to an extra-veranda with transparent glass panes. (*GA* 51)

The psychological effects of colored light on dwellers would, in Scheerbart's view, be another aspect of the expansion of glass architecture to all domains of habitation. Like the colored lamps and windows of earlier sacred architecture, colored glass would introduce a spiritualizing influence into the modern house. 'Glass architecture,' he writes, 'makes homes into cathedrals, with the same effects' (*GA* 87). It will lead to a kind of utopian domestication of the desire for new places that tourism fulfills, since all the modern demand for sensation and novelty of experience can be satisfied by the kaleidoscopic glass-light machine that everyone will live in: 'When home life has reached the stage where even the wildest fancies appear to be realized, the longing for something different ceases;

people will travel only to learn about a particular type of glass art and possibly to bring it home – to be able to reproduce it in a similar design’ (*GA* 88).

For Scheerbart, the material to be replaced by glass architecture is especially brick, the extensive use of which has led to the dark, colorless, unhygienic, and militarily vulnerable cities of the early twentieth-century: ‘The present brick ‘culture’ of the city, which we all deplore, is due to the railway. Glass architecture will only come if the city as we know it goes. It is completely clear to all those who care about the future of our civilization that this dissolution must take place’ (*GA* 84). Bruno Taut would soon take up and elaborate these propositions of Scheerbart in his post-World War I, anti-urban, anarchist architectural fantasies such as *Alpine Architecture* (1919) and *The Dissolution of the Cities* (1920). ‘The face of the earth would be much altered,’ Scheerbart writes, ‘if brick architecture were ousted everywhere by glass architecture. It would be as if the earth were adorned with sparkling jewels and enamels. . . We should then have a paradise on earth, and no need to watch in longing expectation for the paradise in heaven’ (*GA* 38). He concluded that a new glass culture would arise that would be, at once, a return to nature from the alienated world of the 19th-century industrial city, and a transcendence of nature through its technological transfiguration.

As Detlef Mertins summarizes:

Glass architecture served to designate a world that was a compound – 100 per cent human and 100 per cent natural – the result of natural evolution and technological development rolled into one. In this world, it was understood that technologies were transparent when their technical forms were perfected so as to express their immanent logics... The geometric perfection of their morphology gave them the character of a crystal, while their capacity to perform functions and do work gave them the character of living organisms.⁹

Of course, the optimism with which in 1914 Scheerbart greeted the exponential unfolding of modern technology, embodied for him by his utopia of glass architecture, is ironic, given the outbreak of the First World War only a few months after the publication of Scheerbart’s treatise and the author’s own death, in torment over the destructive conflict gripping Europe, the following year. I will conclude by allowing this irony to resound in Scheerbart’s pronouncement in his penultimate paragraph of *Glass Architecture*: ‘We are not at the end of a cultural period—but at the beginning. We still have extraordinary marvels to expect from technics and chemistry, which should not be forgotten. This ought to give us constant encouragement’ (*GA* 90).

NOTES

- 1 Letter of Bruno Taut, 13 March 1920, in *The Crystal Chain Letters: Architectural Fantasies by Bruno Taut and His Circle*, ed. and trans. Iain Boyd Whyte (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1985), 73.
- 2 Iain Boyd Whyte, "Introduction," in *The Crystal Chain Letters*, 8.
- 3 Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 187.
- 4 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume IV: 1938-1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 387-88.
- 5 Reyner Banham, "The Glass Paradise," in *A Critic Writes: Essays*, eds. Mary Banham *et al* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 38.
- 6 Detlef Mertins, "Glass Architecture" in *Modernity Unbound: Other Histories of Architectural Modernity* (London: Architecture Association, 2011), 17-18.
- 7 Paul Scheerbart, *The Grey Cloth: Paul Scheerbart's Novel on Glass Architecture*, trans. John A. Stuart (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), 7.
- 8 Paul Scheerbart, *Glass Architecture*, in *Glass! Love!! Perpetual Motion!!!*, eds. Josiah McElheny and Christine Burgin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 45.
- 9 Mertins, "Glass Architecture," 17.

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POLITICIZATION OF SENSIBILITY: THE SPECTACLE EFFECT OF COLONIAL EMPIRE IN THE 1930S SEOUL

A B S T R A C T

This paper aims to analyse the phenomena of the consumption culture in terms of the spectacle effects of the colonial empire, which were unprecedented prosperity in the 1930s in Seoul. The phenomena could be interpreted as the politicization of sensuality. The spatial change intensified the colonial differentiation of city that was segregated into the Southern Village for Japanese and the Northern Village for Koreans. It facilitated the modern homogenization of the urban space. Especially, department stores were invigorated as a powerful apparatus for consumer capitalism, inviting Koreans to Japanese street, transcending the spatial border of the colonial segregation. Manipulating the exhibition techniques of department store, Japanese Empire built up the visually attractive self-representation image, encouraging the colonized to experience the fascination of modern urban culture as crowds or spectators in the street. The spectacle of the Empire made new lines of cultural distinction based on the differentiation of social stratum inside the colonized community.

KEY WORDS

SPECTACLE EFFECT
URBAN SPACE
COLONIAL CITY
CONSUMPTION CULTURE
DEPARTMENT STORE
SEOUL

INTRODUCTION: CITY IN COLONIAL MODERNITY

The ‘modernity’ phenomenon occurs on the grounds of urban space. It implements new systems of variability and liquidity, change and innovation, growth and development, destroying and dismantling the traditional life in a flash. It is a change in the macroscopic and collective aspect, and at the same time, a change in the microscopic and individual aspect. The modernity in terms of individual experience is a process in which the modernity of collective institution is reproduced in daily urban life. ‘Urban experience’ is the key driving force of the production of modern subjectivity. The fundamental details include artificial ‘urban built environment’, ‘fashion and trend of capitalist product economy’, and ‘change and speed’ that replace the long duration of rural environment and agricultural economy, and slow rhythm of circulation.

This paper is an attempt to focus more on the elocutionary behavior of ‘the subject of desire’ than the structural power of ‘disciplinary power’, and more on the hegemonic aspect of consumer culture than institutional compulsion, in determining the urban phenomenon of ‘colonial modernity’. In other words, the main social venues where people of colonial modernity are produced are not closed spaces such as schools, factories, prisons or police stations, but are rather display windows of department stores or open streets of the city where modern boys and girls are striding down.¹ Our awareness of problems shifts from observation and surveillance to display and watching, or from compulsion and repression to agreement and desire. This change in theoretical perspectives can be referred to as a shift from the ‘panopticon’ model to ‘spectacle’ model.²

The urban space of Seoul has been sustained as a colonial ‘dual city’ throughout the Japanese colonial era (1910~1945), facing a significant change in its qualitative attributes around the mid-1920s. This change is closely related to Japan’s colony industrialization policy and the mainland’s large consumption capital entering the colony. This paper will analyze the change brought by urban space to the urban society of the colony by focusing on consumer culture of the 1930s such as department stores and cafes in Seoul.

In general, department stores are referred to as an essential system of modern capitalism, with which the capitalist economy drags human beings into being the main agents of consumption, mediated by their consumption desire for products. This is the same in colonial Korea as well; thus, department stores were not just commercial facilities, but they played a variety of roles as the ‘heart of the city’ and ‘pier of the streets’, with state-of-the-art devices of consumption and trend, cultural facilities, entertainment and amusement facilities, and society galas.

We aim to define the urban space of Seoul in the 1930s as a dominant system of colonial power, and explain the main aspects of its spatial change. To this end, we will analyze the changing aspects of urban space caused by complete colonial consumer capitalism in the 1930s by focusing on department stores and Bonjeong (Honmachi in Japanese) commercial district. Furthermore, we will examine how the changes in the urban space and colonial consumer culture transformed the urban experience and independence of the colonists.

URBAN CULTURE AND SENSIBILITY

Seoul in the 1930s must have been a city of civilization that was showing off glory. It was a different and unfamiliar space that ruthlessly destroys identity. Such chaotic change was imprinted on the minds of the people as a shocking experience. Writers such as Yi Sang or Gubo had already visualized in their novels the appearances of Seoul in the colonial era and the extensive shock. The urban civilization reflected by them was a capitalist society transplanted by strong heteronomy. Such urbanization had the dual attributes of the breathless transformation of appearance and the rooted colonial contradiction. Seoul at the time was already undeniably inside the process of urbanization, modernization and industrialization. A typical example could be that the city population exceeded the rural population.

With the urbanization in progress, new sensibility called ‘urban sensitivity’ began to take form. There appeared urban people and intellectuals who fully accept the aspects of urban life. Urbanites are people who live a completely different pattern of life from rural areas, and who can also experience the ‘urbanity’ of urban space. Urban experience led Koreans to be aware of the dual structure of obsession and denial of tradition. Moreover, desire for material things created the schizophrenic self-deprecation of humans, capitalized within the lagging economic conditions.

As streetcars were introduced in Seoul in 1898, its urban space changed rapidly. Streetlights were being set up on the Jongno crossroads in 1900. The most thriving street at the time was Jongno between Namdaemun and Dongdaemun. However, the streets of Myeongdong and Chungmuro created by the Japanese people gradually became the center of Seoul.

What dominated the urban culture of Seoul was the wave of commercialism that began to emerge on a large scale. It alerted the colonial society to the rules of trends, fashion, advertising and consumption via mass media representation, and gave people a taste of the world of civilization, individualization and

desire, away from the world of traditions, morality and customs.³ With the relocation of the Japanese General Government Building to Gwanghwamun (1926), the shift from the 500-year dynasty capital to the administrative capital of a colony was wrapped up for the time being, after which consumer culture began to flourish.

The changes in urban space of Seoul in the 1930s have three distinctive characteristics. First, there was a functional division of urban space, including economy-centered and politics-centered division. Second, the population was increasing more rapidly around those flowing into the outskirts of the city. Third, the unemployment rate of Korea including Seoul reached its peak in the depression in the early 1930s, and then decreased in the mid-1930s. By the mid-1930s, the appearance of the traditional 500-year capital Hanyang of the Joseon Dynasty barely remained; instead, the aspect of metropolitan policy of capitalist began to unfurl, characterized by the remarkable hierarchical polarization of the rich and the poor, horizontal expansion of urban lands, and vertical change of the urban landscape.

Grounded on the change in the industrial structure, growth of the urban middle class, expansion of the consumer market and growth of purchasing power, followed by the implementation of the 'Joseon industrialization policy' in the 1930s, there began to occur great changes throughout the shopping districts, focusing on Seoul's most thriving area 'Bonjeong' or 'Honmachi' in Japanese. In short, this can be summarized as the movement to expand the shopping districts in Seoul, or the urban business districts. There are two aspects that characterize this movement. First, it led to an expansion of the business districts followed by construction and extension of big department stores; second, the entertainment business spread out rapidly among the urban middle class. These changes have been made with a gradual ripple effect throughout the entire city, and they were mostly led by the biggest and most thriving district of adult entertainment in Seoul, namely 'Bonjeong'. The goods sold in Bonjeong were like symbols of 'modern boys' and 'modern girls' who led the trends at the time, and they were accepted also as objects of consumption for individuals as well as symbols of modernity.

This tendency of the city's consumer capitalization did not just bring change to space, but also brought change to the subject. It is necessary to analyze two conflicting matters to examine such aspects: one is the 'material system of consumer capitalism' that brings the urbanites to the venue for capitalist consumption, and the other is the 'changing aspects of the urban subjects in the colonial society' that respond to the above.

SPECTACLES OF THE EMPIRE

System of Consumer Capitalism

Koreans began to position themselves as buyers at the Bonjeong shopping district since the early 1920s.⁴ Since then, there was a full-scale interaction between Japan's consumption capital and Korean colonists.⁵ The goods that led the trend of urban pop culture during this period are magazines, films, fashion and gramophones. The major material systems of consumer culture that brought changes to the urban space are department stores, cafes and theaters. We aim to focus on two aspects here.

First, these consumer goods that were popular in colonial Korea were, unlike the premium 'Western-style' cultural goods directly imported from the West and consumed by the Japanese upper class and elites, 'Japanized' cultural goods that were acculturated to the public taste of Japan through the Taishō period. A typical example is the culture of transforming cafes into 'ero-gro'⁶ decadent entertainment spaces, despite the fact that they had been introduced originally as social scenes for intellectuals. Cafes were established as the 'cradle of culture' where artists and writers who led the latest trends and culture of the Meiji period gather together, along with young people who admire them. However, upon entering the Shōwa period after the Taishō period, cafes were transformed into popular Japanized bars that represent the entertainment district.⁷

In the similar context, department stores have transformed into places with a unique Japanese character in the popularization process after the Taishō period. Department stores in the Meiji period had been places for a high-class urban hobby. However, after the Great Kanto earthquake, the scope of customers expanded from a few privileged billionaires to the general public including ordinary salaried workers. As a result, department stores became the 'hall of consumption' and 'hall of vanity' that arouses the desire for consumption through the phantasmagoria⁸ of the display windows overflowing with mass-produced goods. The aspect of a compact urban amusement facility that includes an amusement park or event hall was also emphasized, acting as the 'hall of amusement' that provides leisure for families. 'The most remarkable trend among the distinct characters of Japanese department stores is the fact that they have become an 'institution of pleasure'.' The exterior of department stores at the time took the form of 'architecture as media', displaying the advanced consumer culture widespread in the city.⁹

The second thing to note is that as a result of the spatial expansion of imperial media, the colonial urban space experienced dual changes. With the increasing

investment and development of big Japanese capital, the urban space of Seoul experienced modern capitalist homogenization on one hand, while on the other hand spatial discrimination and polarization became more intense between areas with concentrated development and areas alienated from development. Namchon and Bukchon of Seoul, namely Bonjeong and Jongno, started out as spaces that were qualitatively different from each other, as the former was the street of Japanese people and the latter was the street of Korean people. With the general homogenization of urban space due to capitalist urban development, the colonial dual city transformed into a homogenous yet differential space in which the qualitative difference can revert to quantitative difference of land value and rent. As Jingogae, which had been the 'base of Japanese invaders', transformed into Bonjeong, the hub of consumer culture and the civilized empire's 'space of spectacles', the ethnic boundary between Namchon and Bukchon gradually changed into the boundary of capital that separated development and alienation. The concentration of theaters in Namchon was noticeable in Seoul. Korean people were forced to visit Bonjeong (or Honmachi) to have a taste of the empire's civilization'. The phenomenon of 'Honbura'¹⁰, which emerged as a custom of 'pilgrimage' popular in the Korean society, was an outcome of such spectacles of the empire and discriminative homogenization of colonial urban space.

In general, introduction of capitalist urban development and consumerist popular culture transforms a space into an object of speculation and trading by removing the qualitative attributes like historicity and place from urban space. The urban space of Seoul experienced discriminative homogenization due to consumption based on taste in 'Hakurai' (importation), followed by the inflow of big consumption capital from Japan. The capital expanded the consumer market beyond the ethnic boundaries. The political discourse on the reality of ethnic discrimination faltered, whereas the discourse on the expansion of channels for consumption capital emerged.

Department Stores and Cafes

The Japanese stores of Namchon Jingogae that secured commercial supremacy in Seoul had already positioned themselves as seductive spaces that simulate and satisfy the modern consumption desires of Koreans as well. Among them, 'department stores' were particularly viewed as the symbol of consumptive temptation. Department stores in the streets of Seoul are the places where new consumer culture flourished over the barren life of colonial Korean people. Department stores not only sold products but also dreams of cultural life. The world's first department store was Bon Marché opened in Paris, France in 1852.

Department stores depend on increasing merchandise turnover with low rate of profits, and tempt consumers to enter the store freely without the obligation to purchase something. They replace the conversations, which had mediated transactions in traditional stores, with wordless price tags. The perception of customers who stroll by the products piled high on display becomes a panorama similar to that of the passersby traveling on railroad or strolling down the main streets. Department stores are what focused on the movements of the crowds gathered on railroads and station squares, and linked them with business skills.

Department stores have been the symbol of modern consumer civilization. There were total 6 department stores established in Seoul during the colonial era. It is remarkable that Japanese people opened as many as 5 department stores in Seoul where the population was only 400,000, leading a significant growth of the business district and enjoying the ‘golden days of department stores’.

It was only in the 1920s when department stores began to be established and managed in earnest. Mitsukoshi Department Store started out as Mitsukoshi Gohukuten, which is the Seoul office of Japan in 1906. Mitsukoshi Department Store designed, constructed and completed a department store with the total floor area of 6,000 m² in October 1930, with a rooftop garden on the roof. That store is still now being used as the main building of Shinsegae Department Store. Department stores of the Japanese shopping district were appealing and fantastic temptations of consumer culture for Koreans, while they also stimulated their ethnic inferiority.¹¹ Hwashin Chain Store was established as Hwashin’s new business in 1934, which later expanded and became Korea’s leading chain stores with 350 stores. Moreover, elevators were commercialized in Hwashin Department Store, which was reconstructed in 1937. The sensibility fever in the 1930s first began from the display window of that department store. As the escapist journey of a helpless schizophrenic of a colony boils down to the ‘soaring’ on the roof of Mitsukoshi Department Store in the novel *Wings*¹² by Yi Sang(1910-1937). Department stores at the time were a symbol of the richness of the empire and the power of advanced civilization.

We aim to focus particularly on two aspects here. One is the fact that the Japanese products sold in department stores operated by the big capital of Japan enjoyed immense popularity among Korean people, and the other is the fact that there was a department store based on the native capital of Korean people that competed with the overwhelming attack of the big Japanese capital.

The most advanced thing in urban space was ‘café’. Since cafes were modern, they were deviant; and as they were deviant, they were spaces that form a modern city. Spaces that newly emerged in the city such as cafes, bars and tea rooms formed a new culture in the 1930s. The fact that both cafes and tea rooms sold coffee was something they had in common; but while tea rooms could not sell alcohol, cafes offered alcohol as well as waitress services. The exotic interior design as well as the mere fact that women dressed in ‘modern’ clothes waited on customers was enough to turn cafes into an open ‘space of sexual service’. Accordingly, intellectuals who had considered themselves as modern people, as well as ‘westernized people’, ‘modern boys’ and ‘modern girls’ all gathered in cafes.

Cafes were new spaces of consumption, established by leisure that was created amidst industrialization, and were also spaces of communication to express resistance to the society. Furthermore, they were spaces where people who wanted to lead the latest fashions could be acknowledged for their differentiated styles from others. Cafes could be used only by the Japanese and upper-class Korean people around Japanese settlements, but the scope was gradually expanded to Joseon settlements. The reason why intellectuals at the time visited cafes was because there were modern waitresses in cafes to sing with, sit down and talk about life and studies, and enjoy liberal academic traditions as well as free love with modern women. The intellectuals’ agony and confusion between modernization and colonial reality were fully revealed in such cafes. Admiring the superior Western culture and feeling relative superiority for enjoying it, as well as the contradictory behaviors to overcome the inferiority toward Western culture by emphasizing tradition were all expressed in various ways.

These cafes were spaces that were closely related to artists in the modern days. Artistic activities in the medieval times mostly had the character of a joint event of the village with some social purpose. There had been spaces for community cultural life in each village unit. However, as these conditions gradually vanished along with the fall of feudalism, these spaces were replaced by cafes. In the 18th century of the West, artists broke away from the financial support of lords or aristocrats to form an invisible market economy with readers. By losing the opportunity to directly meet with readers or the audience, artists came to need contact with a different world, along with interaction among one another. Due to this demand, cafes became the most essential place for artists to interact in the space of a modern city.¹³

Cafes became a staging area for artists. The early 1930s was the golden days of cafes; there were 1,000 cafes in Seoul only. After Nagwon Café opened and succeeded in 1931, cafes sprung up everywhere in Jongno, the center of the Korean society, which expanded the base of café users. Cafes were “consolation like an oasis in the middle of the desert for young Seoul citizens, as only a 10-jeon coin provides Brazilian coffee and service of beautiful waitresses.”¹⁴

Homogenization of Urban Space

Since some ‘Western-style buildings’ like foreign official residences and churches began to be constructed in Seoul, the city’s landscape and skyline changed. After the Japan–Korea Annexation, Japan established many buildings due to increased service needs. Buildings that were big at the time were the Japanese General Government Building (1926), Bank of Korea (1912), Seoul Station (1925), and Seoul City Hall (1926). These are mostly constructed in modern styles with individual forms of the modernist buildings. In the colonial style, the plane and elevation compositions are grounded on aesthetic principles, emphasizing perfect proportion, symmetry and harmony. The first thing invaders to do in their colony is building big and imposing buildings. Architecture is fundamentally a product of power.¹⁵ Western-style buildings secured their places as symbols of the city, and transformed the structure of the streets. Along with the shoddy Japanese-style or Japanese and Western-style housing, buildings with Neo-baroque, Renaissance and Eclecticism techniques used in government offices at the time established themselves as the new landscape of the city.

What formed the city’s image, along with those new buildings, were the ‘signboards’ on the streets. Signs were one of the urban images that predicted the changing times more quickly than others. They also raised people’s interest in design and typography. Another new urban scene is ‘advertisements’ hanging up all over the streets.

Signs were also the most conspicuous part of the external characteristics of cafes. At the time, the ‘modern’ trend was converted to images on the streets through the physical substance of signs. Signs were the medium that turned colonial and contemporary urbanity into objects of specific experiences. The writings on the signs were mostly in Chinese characters, along with some Kana characters of Japan as well as English, which gave the Korean streets an exotic sensation. The ‘neon signs’ introduced on the signs and displays brought a complete transformation of the urban street landscape. Neon signs were

first used for outdoor advertising in Korea in 1932. Neon signs are nighttime advertising media that attract consumers walking by or standing into the store. First invented in 1911, neon signs shed light on the nights of Seoul by the 1920s.

‘Railway’ of the Japanese colonial era has ambivalent elements of modernization and colonial rule. Railway stations are passages to bring in the goods and civilization, while also being the staging areas of collapsed farmers and unemployed urbanites. It is the assembly area of the ambivalence of Seoul. Railway was a new traffic route that connects one city to another, and it accelerated the urban growth at an unprecedented speed. It was a symbol of separation of time and space, as well as compression of time and space. Accordingly, railway not only caused the population fluctuation but also created new forms in human relations. As the means of travel changed to railway, people were won over by the production system and transformed into one of the public and simple consumers from being personal individuals. Moreover, railway saved time by enabling people to cover a long distance in a short period of time. This saving of time indicated saving of space. Standardization of time demanded by railway eliminated different regional times and replaced them with standardized, physical dynamic and homogenous time of abstraction. Railway provided the visual experience of perceiving time and reality as spectacles. This indicated the mechanization of time. Railway travelers have limited chances to turn their heads around to look at the scenery. What they see is a scene of spectacle that brushes past and then disappears. As scenery quickly brushes past, the amount of visual impressions that must be processed by visual perception increased drastically.

Three ‘streetlights’ were first set up on the Jongno crossroads on April 10, 1900, but it was only in 1935 when streetlights were widespread in the city. What played a significant role here is the production of big ‘plate glass’ that can be used on display windows of stores and use of ‘mirrors’ on the display. As a growing number of anonymous middle-class customers replaced former customers, the importance of display windows of stores further increased. The windows with bright light pouring on the big plate glass were like big stages, the streets like theaters, and passersby like the audiences. This is a nighttime scene of the big city Seoul. Passersby strolling down the main streets see the products displayed inside the stores through the huge plate glass, as if the scenery outside the window brushes past on a train. This gaze of the people strolling along the arcades is none other than the ‘flowing gaze’.

BROKEN IDENTITY

Divided Space

The optimistic state of affairs such as the end of World War I, emergence of the League of Nations, and Wilson's self-determination, which excited the colonial intellectuals over the rosy ideals, quickly cooled down after 1921. Accordingly, the prospects for cultural sophistication and humanitarianism became gloomy, and cultural movements were divided into two directions. One was to 'move to the left' and proceed toward class movement, and the other was to move on to capitalist ability fostering movement based on the social evolution theory.¹⁶

What the consumer-capitalist cultural goods mean for consumers, particularly colonists, is to seek temporarily refuge in the fantasy of goods away from the deprivation and helplessness of the reality. In other words, it is to imagine and experience the 'power of civilization' through foreign products. Therefore, what is important for them is not the utility value of the product itself, but the symbol of new power called 'Hakurai' (importation), and the emblem of civilization. Colonists, who cannot break free from the 'nonsense' of colonial reality, found psychological consolation in such 'imaginary world of symbols'.

But the realistic issue here is the fact that due to the absolute entry barrier of monetary exchange value of products, there were only a very small minority of colonists who could have access to such 'allurement' of the empire on a daily basis. These very few people that enjoyed the modern urban cultural goods imported from Japan appeared repeatedly in magazine articles that described the scenes of thriving streets in Seoul at the time. 'Honbura' that caught the eyes of observers and the main customers that enjoyed shopping at department stores were mostly women and students. In other words, people who played a central role in urban popular culture in the 1930s were middle-class women and students. They were the only ones with the requirements for purchasing goods of popular culture, such as leisure in life, habitation in the city, and cash buying power. However, under the colonial capitalist economic structure, the middle class was an anxious being with no stable grounds for reproduction.

It was not easy for most common people to enjoy the lifestyles of modern boys and girls, Hakurai and fashion, or Honbura and nighttime picnic under cherry blossoms. Thus, they created a new identity that mixed ethnicity with publicness in daily life, by designing various different cultural systems from extremely traditional ways to the latest 'cheap' imitations. In other words, the

upper limit on cultural goods produced by colonial consumer capitalism was limited by the colonial character; but in the reality of urban society where an absolute majority of urbanites were suffering from famine and poverty, the lower limit was boundless. As such, the spectrum of how urbanites existed was broad and diverse. And those boundaries were clearly set up according to the ‘spatial split lines’ of the colonial dual city.

‘Cafes’, which represented the latest entertainment culture at the time, were located in Bonjeong or Honmachi mostly as stores managed by the Japanese. On the other hand, most ‘restaurants’ were located in districts where Koreans lived, and was managed by Koreans. This ‘restaurant’ category includes various forms, but most of them were pubs selling makgeolli or Korean dark rice wine. There was the space of northern village where pubs scattered the mazelike backstreets, and the space of southern village filled with the dazzling lights of cafes with neon signs. One ironical issue here is that while the former was an exclusive space for Koreans, the latter was not limited to Japanese people only. Modern boys and girls enjoyed Honbura, and revealed their changed bodies by displaying that they have become ‘civilized’ and ‘Japanized’ in the civilized space of the Japanese people.

On the hidden side of the boom of Seoul’s consumer and entertainment culture with the ‘golden days of department stores’, there was a dark shadow of absolute poverty. The allurement of colonial capitalist civilization was absolutely limited in terms of the scope of its effect. Most colonists were deprived of their spending power, far from the venue of such allurement, and were living their life as neglected ‘spectators’. Their world was of colonial blending and imitation, and what determined its method from the root was monetary value. The night market of Jongno was always filled with cheap imitations, and the streets were overflowing with all kinds of people wearing such diverse combinations of imitations. For the civilized people, they were ‘ridiculous’ and ‘nonsense’; but such ‘cultural hybridity’ was a frank representation of the colonists’ life.

Changing Aspect of Urban Subjects

Intellectuals are originally those who have ambivalent attributes. They have the desire to climb up the social ladder using their many years of education, and commonly reveal their will to resist to the conventional system for the lower-class people in the material and spiritual sense. The contradiction of these conflicting desires appears to be bigger in the distorted reality of a colony. The subtle conflicts of this contradiction might have been the true colors of Korean intellectuals.¹⁷

Since the opportunity to become elite under the Japanese rule and be appointed as a government official was monopolized by a few pro-Japanese people, it was difficult for intellectuals to have satisfaction in the material and spiritual sense. Thus, Lumpen Intellectuals in Korea faced alienation not just in the economic sense but also in the complicated ethical and social sense. Many escapist intellectuals despised people who took advantage of the distorted modern reality, while rationalizing their solitude and passiveness. In other words, ‘when the desires they fantasize and portray are not satisfied, they wandered around cafes, bars, revues (light amusement plays), jazz, eroticism, and salons to escape the reality. The decadence of wandering on the streets and the hedonism of nihilists did not originate from mere poverty or personal taste, but were rather characterized by resistance to the society.’¹⁸

The number of Koreans visiting Japanese stores at Jingogae increased, and there emerged a new generation graced by urbane manners, namely ‘modern boys’ and ‘modern girls’. They roamed around the shopping districts and department stores to fulfill their desire of consumption, and sat around cafes to discuss the solitude of urbanites. They were conducting artistic activities by strolling along the streets of Namchon dressed in eye-catching outfits and exchanging jokes in tea rooms. The epitome of Lumpen Intellectuals as outsiders were their colleagues.

But on the other hand, small Korean traders in their downfall groaned everywhere; and the urban poor and the unemployed roamed around the streets in search of jobs, as the byproducts of the colonial agricultural policy. Then again, for young intellectuals and new women, the city was a symbolic place, an object of admiration, and an exit. Seoul was the closest city to modernity, but was the farthest place from their reality.

Flowing Gaze and People Taking Walks

The work that best depicts the modern city of Seoul in the Japanese colonial era is *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist*¹⁹ by Park Taewon, one of the best-known modern boys of the time. It is a novelette serially published in *Joseon Jungang Ilbo* for a month in 1934. Park Taewon carried around his college notebook at all times and scribbled the urban scenery and customs as well as the aspects of the crowds. He confessed that he could not write the novelette with imagination alone, so he walked around the downtown area to see the actual thing with his eyes.²⁰ He grandly announced that his work is an analysis and interpretation of modern customs based on systematic research

and investigation of life at the time. *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist* is about the author's persona and novelist Kubo, who gets out of his house at noon, wanders around the streets of Seoul, and returns home at 2 a.m. the next morning. He named this methodology as 'Modernology'. It includes the institutions and customs of 1930s Seoul such as tea rooms, cafes, streetcars and department stores, and embraces the cultural landscape of people living there, such as relationships, love, reading and gossips.

As he walks along the streets of Seoul, he lets his imagination run wild about the petty everyday adventures, mental errantry, urban landscape and people. The novelette is set on the paths of isolation and wandering, the streets of Seoul where intellectuals roamed about. This is reflected by the images of going out or taking a walk, which are common motifs of *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist*. Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) said that 'modernity (modernité)' is characterized by not only separation from tradition and sensitivity toward new things, but also awareness of the dizzy time discontinuity in the moments that brush past.²¹

Modernism that revolts against the bourgeois values and enlightening rationality is an aesthetic reaction to such conditions of modernity. This questions the values claimed by modernity in the past, such as belief in reason and progress, obviousness of the subject, objectivity of reality and transparency of representation. At the same time, it maximizes the modern attitude of the fundamental introspection on everything and oneself, while embracing the sensitivity toward reality that approaches in discontinuity and fragmentation. Modernism is an 'urban art', and it clearly found its place of settlement in the 'city'.

Modernity, a 19th-century phenomenon, was a product of the city²². It is responding, in a fictional or ideological form, to the new and complicated social beings that pass by strangers, in the atmosphere where there are mental stimulations that make people sensitive in the face of day. It is dominated by exchange of money and daily necessities, suppressed by the intensifying individualism and economy, and controlled by the atmosphere that reveals the character of being extremely expressive in the context of individuals and family, while seemingly indifferent in public. The key figures that embody such modernity are leisurely flâneurs, pleasant wanderers, or inert strollers. These flâneurs observe yet do not interrupt, and gaze yet do not truly look. Like watching products on display, flâneurs symbolize the privilege and freedom of roaming around the public places of the city while watching others. They embody the view of greedy and erotic modernity.²³

CONCLUSION:
EMPIRE ON DISPLAY, AND THE CROWD LOOKING ON

The colonial urban space was a theater screening the spectacles of the empire that shows off the power of civilization, as well as a stage of a tragic life producing the desperate drama of racial discriminative polarization.²⁴ Considering the duplicity of such colonial space, this paper aimed to reveal what political and social effects have been brought to the colonial society by the material systems such as department stores and cafes, which are characterized by the consumer culture of economic capitalism. One is the characteristics of the material systems of consumer capitalism, and the other is the response from the colonists. As a result of analysis, the former was mainly characterized by the fact that it acted as the media of empire that was ‘depoliticized’ and became a ‘spectacle’, represented by ‘Hakurai (importation)’; and the latter was mainly characterized by the fact that the main agent of enjoyment was actually limited in the colonial society, which resulted in the ‘cultural hybridity’ and ‘crack of collective identity’ in the colonist society.

It was necessary to ‘civilize’ the Korean habitation as the spatial base in order to eradicate the political expression of collective identity of the colonists, in which colonist power is the source of anxiety, and to accomplish an ultimate assimilation. However, the limited power of the Japanese material civilization was not enough to allure and attract the participation of most colonists that were alienated from the benefits of civilization. Furthermore, the amplification of the social contradiction --- the rich get richer while the poor get poorer --- in the big city of Seoul due to capitalist industrialization and urbanization further intensified the crack of colonial urban society. The empire devised the scheme of ‘politicization of sensibility’. In other words, they maximized the ruling effect with the spectacles of urban space, and as a result, the colonists watched the spectacles of civilization as the crowds on the streets. However, despite the claim for assimilation with such grandiose ideology, the empire could not embrace most of them as anything more than by-standing ‘spectators’. Most colonists could only roam around the ‘cheap night markets’ scattered with colonial imitations of the empire’s civilization, and could not actually obtain their rights from the empire of civilization as well as the empire of goods.

The colonial society was split up between those who were graced by the spectacles of the empire produced by big consumption capital and those who were not, according to the capitalist polarization of the rich and the poor. In the end, the national topsiders grew farther away from the chaos and impoverishment of the ethnic reality by choosing to become ‘civilized’.

NOTES

- 1 Lee Gyeong-hoon, "Yobo, Mobo, Gubo : Life of a Colony," in *Yonsei University Institute of Korean Studies, Everyday life of the Korean people under the Japanese colonial rule* (Seoul: Hyeon, 2004), 219.
- 2 The former is represented by Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1975), while the latter is represented by Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, translation by Fredy Perlman and Jon Supak (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).
- 3 In the U.S., idealism collapsed and Americanism emerged in the 1920s, characterized by the revolution of manners and morality. It was an era dominated by new moral laws created in the postwar disillusionment, during which the young men and women who had claimed radical theories of class or politics many years ago came to support new ethics and express sexual desire.
- 4 Jeon Woo-yong, "Formation and Transformation of Seoul Namchon Shopping District under Japanese Colonialism", *Seoul Namchon: Time, Place, People* (Institute of Seoul Studies, 2003), 196.
- 5 This trend of change clearly appeared in the publication market as well. Since the mid-1920s, 'reading materials for hobby' that are clearly tools for capitalist entertainment began to emerge, such as *Byel-geon-gon*, that replaces political magazines like *Gaebyeok* in the early 1920s. In 1920,

- Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* increased the number of pages and separated their film and sports articles as well as women's column. It was also around this time when pornographic publications imported from Japan via mail order began to be massively consumed in the urban society. Cheon Jeong-hwan, *Modern Book Reading* (Seoul: Blue History, 2003), 198.
- 6 In the early 1930s, popular culture had been dominated by 'ero gro nonsense' so much that it could easily be referred to as 'the era of ero gro nonsense'. This expression is short for 'erotic, grotesque, and nonsense', and it was widely popular in various fields such as newspapers, magazines, literature, drama, films, gramophones, and records.
- 7 Hashizume Shinya, *Birth of Modern City: Street of Osaka, Street of Tokyo* (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2003), 42-66.
- 8 Phantasmagoria was a form of theatre which used a modified magic lantern to project frightening images such as skeletons, demons, and ghosts onto walls, smoke, or semi-transparent screens, frequently using rear projection. The projector was mobile, allowing the projected image to move and change size on the screen, and multiple projecting devices allowed for quick switching of different images. Invented in France by a Belgian physicist in the late 18th century, it gained popularity through most of Europe throughout the 19th century.(from Wikipedia)
- 9 Hashizume Shinya, *Birth of Modern City: Street of Osaka, Street of Tokyo*, 107-110.
- 10 'Honbura' refers to the act of looking around Honmachi, a thriving street of Seoul. It originates from the word 'Ginbura' that refers to strolling (burabura) the street of Ginza in Tokyo at the time in Japan.
- 11 Su-hyeon Mok, "Cultural Space of Namchon", *Seoul Namchon: Time, Place, People* (Institute of Seoul Studies Symposium Sourcebook), (Institute of Seoul Studies, 2000), 150.
- 12 This is a story by Yi Sang published in the magazine *Jo-gwang* in 1936. It is a typical work of psychological or intellectual literature in the 1930s. The story expresses inner anxiety and sense of identity, and shows the despair about the society and history as well as dissolution of identity.
- 13 Steve Bradshaw, *Cafe Society* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1978).
- 14 Eul-han Kim, "Gyeongseong Yahwa", *Byel-geon-gon*, 1930, 86.
- 15 Jeong-dong Kim, *Remaining History, Disappearing Buildings* (Daewonsa, 2000), 185-186.
- 16 Chan-seung Park, "Study on Korean History of Modern Political Ideas: Theory of Ability Fostering Movement by the Right-wing Nationalists," in *Seoul: Historical Criticism* (1992), 202-233.
- 17 Young-taek Park, "Colonial Urban Space and Art," *Journal of Korean Modern & Contemporary Art History*, Vol. 10 (2002): 202.
- 18 Jin-won Choi, "Intelligentsia Theory", *Chosun Ilbo*, March 5, 1932..
- 19 Taewon Park, *A Day in the Life of Kubo the Novelist* (Moonji Publishing Company, 1998).
- 20 Hye-sil Choi, "Effects of Urbanization of Gyeongseong on Korean Modernism Novels in the 1930s," *Journal of Seoul Studies*, Vol. 9 (1998): 186.
- 21 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, "Modernity," (1863).
- 22 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 25.
- 23 Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity", trans. by Lee Sun-ryeong, *The Issues of Art After Modernism* (Noonbit Publishing, 1999), 462-463.
- 24 Baek-yung Kim, "A Theoretical Exploration on Colonial Urbanism," *Society and History*, Vol. 72 (2006):172.

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AESTHETICS AS POLITICS: REFLECTIONS ON AN ARCHITECTURE OF DISSENSUS

A B S T R A C T

Contributing to the debate for a democratic articulation of the urban environment, this paper focuses on the reinterpretation of the relation between thinking and perception in Kant's Second Moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, by Jacques Rancière. Rancière argues that the dissensual operation implied in Kant's definition of the beautiful involves a superimposition that transforms the given form or body to a new one. Social emancipation for Rancière becomes an aesthetic matter, a matter of dismemberment of a body animated by a particular belief. When the loss of destination implicit in aesthetic experience, as explained by Rancière, disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions in a social order, then a political effect is produced. The aesthetic effect presupposes dis-identification. Within the aesthetic community, political subjectivisation is based on a dis-identification process. Furthermore, reconsideration of modernity for Rancière means going back to Schiller's idea of the *aesthetic education of man* which originated in Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful*. We can argue with reference to an architecture of dissensus that through a process of dislocation, dismemberment and dis-identification, tradition opens up to a constant transformation to something new, involved in a never-ending play between totally different layers that make up everyday experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Refuting Jurgen Habermas's idea of democracy founded on a rational, consensus-oriented dialogue, Jacques Rancière points on the impossibility of rational deliberation that is free from power. He insists that disagreement in democratic politics is a power-based misunderstanding between poor and rich with regard to a more equal distribution of the sensible. Rancière's turn from language to materiality permits him to interpret misunderstandings as being beyond language and yet related to the possibility to speak as such. With this approach, by addressing the mechanisms through which the domain of sensual experience is divided, Rancière contributes to the crucial discussion concerning a viable urban reality related to transnational politics and the operation of democracy today. He suggests an egalitarian political practice, through which the given division of urban sensible experience can be disrupted by individuals who cannot legitimately speak.¹

It is apparent that dissensus design can take different forms which can vary from a decision not to intervene in an existing built environment, to an explicit challenge to the established order of space. In opposition to a consensus-oriented design, the partition of the sensible that comes out in this way is not a new spatial ordering, but rather a new ordering of thought which aims to a perpetual questioning of the limits which define the aesthetic appropriation of things in the built environment. Investigating the concept of dissensus in the core of the Kantian beautiful, this paper includes three parts: The first deals with Rancière's approach to the Aristotelian *mimesis* and his interpretation of Kant's Second Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful, the second focuses on the aesthetic dis-identification as a precondition for political subjectivisation and the third explores the in-between space between thought and perception in terms of the Schillerian conception of play.

THE KANTIAN BEAUTIFUL UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF *DISSENSUS*

Initiating an innovative approach to the relation between thinking and perception or between aesthetic pleasure and concept with reference to Kant's Analytic of the Beautiful, Rancière insists on the meaning of modernity as fundamentally aesthetic. He uses the term "dissensus" in order to signify the ontology of the rupture between aesthetic pleasure and concept which he identifies in Kant's Second Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful.

In order to elucidate Rancière's approach, we will start with a brief account of his analysis on *mimesis*. Rancière understands *mimesis* and representation as a "regime of concordance between sense and sense".³ The ability of art to

unite people through sensation is basic in Rancière's approach. The conception originates in Deleuze's approach to sensation.⁴ Departing from Aristotle, Rancière considers the theatre as the site of manifestation of this twofold harmonic relation, which involves *poiesis* and *aisthesis*. *Poiesis* deals with the exhibition of signs that could be read without ambiguity, while *aisthesis* concerns the thoughts and emotions by which the play is felt and understood. Their concordance implies continuity between the intrinsic consistency or autonomy of the play and its capacity to produce ethical effects in the minds of the spectators.

As early as 1750, the consistency of this model was called under question by Rousseau. In his *Letter to D'Alembert on the Theatre*, Rousseau questions the direct line between performance and the mind of the spectator, with reference to Moliere's *Misanthrope*. Going further back, Rancière asks how theatre can unveil a hypocrite, since hypocrisy is its very essence. Twenty-three years after Rousseau, Schiller, in his *Robbers*, breaks with the idea that nature sustained the coincidence between performance and its ethical efficacy in the minds of the spectators. The consequent rupture in the harmony between performance and the spectator or between *poiesis* and *aisthesis* is the very meaning of the term "aesthetics", Rancière argues. Rousseau counter-poses to the play of the hypocrite the Greek civic festival, while Plato opposes the ethical immediacy of the *chorus* to the passivity of the audience in a theatre.⁵

Rancière insists that it is this rupture in *mimesis* what Kant conceptualized in his definition of the beautiful as "what is presented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept".⁶ Rancière rejects any equation of Kant's definition with the traditional definition of beauty as harmony. He also fiercely opposes to the connection of this rapture to Kant's definition of the sublime. He identifies the radical break with representation not in Kant's conception of the sublime but in the phrase "apart from any concept". It leaves no place to any relationship between the concepts of artistic *poiesis* and the forms of aesthetic pleasure, between *poiesis* and *aisthesis*, Rancière argues. Thus art as a creative procedure involves concepts, while the feeling of aesthetic pleasure excludes concepts. Free appearance is offered to the free play of art. Free appearance is the product of a dissensual operation in a community, Rancière claims, between two sensoria. The sensorium of *poiesis* and the sensorium of *aisthesis*.

In order to support his interpretation of the Kantian beautiful as rapture, Rancière recalls Winckelmann. In his *History of Ancient Art*, published twenty-six years before Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Winckelmann has selected a crippled and beheaded statue, known as the Belvedere Torso, as the masterpiece of Greek art. The paradox is intensified by the fact that Winckelmann considers the statue as a representation of Hercules.⁷ Rancière finds an analogy between

the Belvedere Torso and the Deleuzian “body without organs”.⁸ He considers Deleuze’s approach to Bacon’s athletic figures in his *Logic of Sensation* as an heir to the Schillerian conception of liberty that has disappeared as the political liberty of people. On this ground, he criticizes Deleuze’s insistence on the sublime dramaturgy. He argues that the dissensual operation implied in Kant’s definition of the beautiful involves a superimposition that transforms the given form or body to a new one. In a process of subtraction and addition, Winckelmann reinvents with his words the shape and meaning of Greek statues. In this way, the Belvedere Torso or Bacon’s mutilated figures could evoke a new sense of community.⁹

Rancière recognizes a similar process of subtraction and addition to modern choreographers, poets and theatre directors. He mentions Adolphe Appia’s *mise-en-scène* of the Wagnerian operas, where Appia places the characters in a space of geometric modules, in a way that their bodies look like statues to be molded by lightening.¹⁰ Similarly, we could argue referring to an architecture of dissensus that it implies a process of subtraction and addition, through which tradition opens up to a constant transformation to something new. It involves a never-ending play between totally different layers that make up everyday experience.

Architecture has to follow the logic of the dissensual operation, which can be best expressed according to Rancière by the art of *mise-en-scène*, because it embodies “the way in which sensory presence and ethical immediacy, opposed to representational mediation, are transformed, thwarted and eventually overturned by the powers of subtraction and disconnection of the statue, the words and the shadows.”¹¹ A work that come out in this way, does not have to conform either to the modernist “truth to the medium” or to the Deleuzian “pure sensation”, he says. He claims that what he calls “the ontology of the dissensual” is just a play of aesthetic ideas and in this way a “fictional ontology”, an ontology which operates *as if* it had a different texture from the sensations that make up everyday experience. The aesthetic work that comes out in this way is a substitute to the work that realizes the law of the medium or that of pure sensation.

AESTHETIC DIS-IDENTIFICATION AS A PRECONDITION FOR POLITICAL SUBJECTIVISATION

Rancière refers to the example of the museum in order to elucidate the meaning of dissensus further, in relation to everyday experience. In the museum the works are taken away from their original destination and the specific community in which they belonged. In the new environment there is not any boundary separating what belongs to the realm of art and what to the realm of everyday

life. All representations are offered to the same indifferent gaze. Aesthetic separation does not imply a private paradise for amateurs or aesthetes, claims Rancière. This is why Schiller after reading Kant's Third Critique could not conceptualize of a community united by the vision of eternal beauty, he insists. The aesthetic effect is in fact a relationship between two "separations". Before entering the realm of aesthetic experience in the museum, the works had been produced for a particular destination: festivities and religious ceremonies, building decorum etc. The entering in the aesthetic sensorium of the museum is marked with the loss of destination. Along with the loss of the harmony between *poiesis* and *aisthesis*, the relation between each work and its particular place in the social order, identified with relations of dominance and inequality, has also been lost in the museum's environment. The meaning of the word loss here is different from the loss of the aura as its unique relation in space and time, to remember Benjamin.¹² Social emancipation is not related to the mechanical reproduction of an archetype. Social emancipation for Rancière becomes an aesthetic matter, a matter of dismemberment of a body animated by a particular belief.¹³

When the loss of destination implicit in aesthetic experience, as explained by Rancière, disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions in a social order, then a political effect is produced. It consists in "a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible".¹⁴ The political effect Rancière claims, occurs under the condition of an original disjunction, which separates cause and effect. The aesthetic effect presupposes dis-identification. Within the aesthetic community, political subjectivisation is based on a dis-identification process.

Rancière attempts to show the relation of "dissensus" to art and life by using three propositions.¹⁵ The first proposition, "Séparés on est ensemble", which he translates "Apart we are together", is a poetic statement quoted from Mallarmé's prose poem "The White Water Lilly". The poet makes a short boat trip in order to see a lady, but when he hears the faint noise of footsteps, he decides to leave the secret of their "being together" intact and departs. The second proposition deals with the project "Campement Urbain" (Urban Encampment), conceived by a group of French artists, which engages with the public space of one of the most wretched outskirts of Paris, where riots erupted in 2005.¹⁶ The project was to create a place "extremely useless, fragile and non-productive" a place of solitude that could be occupied by one person at a time. The project was discussed with any resident who wanted to get involved. The third proposition is a quotation from Deleuze and Guattari's book *What is Philosophy?* It concerns the ability of art to unite people through sensation. The work of the artist is to wrest percepts and affects from the perceptions

and affections that make up the fabric of ordinary experience. Through the operations of twisting, seizing and rendering art weaves a community together, claims Rancière. In Deleuze and Guattari's words:

“This is precisely the task of all art and, from colours and sounds... (it) extract(s) new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth's song and the cry of humanity. (...) The success of a revolution resides... precisely in the vibrations, the clinches, and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming...”¹⁷

The three propositions mentioned above, define, according to Rancière, a specific kind of community, a community of sense, a *sensus communis*. It suggests three forms of community. At a first level, a community of sense is a combination of sense data and a combination of different senses of “sense”. However, the three propositions mentioned above, share in common the staging of a conflict between two sensory regimes or two sensory communities. It concerns the superimposition of one sensorium upon another. For instance, the sensory reality (the boat, the river etc) suggested by Mallarmé – first sensorium, neutral – is a metaphor for his poetic activity – second sensorium, carrier of artistic power. This is the meaning of dissensus, Rancière claims. The suspension of the fragile and non-functional architectural construction above the poor suburb also manifests a dissensual relationship. At a second level, the philosopher provides the conceptual frame for the tension between the two sensory worlds. And at a third level, the assemblage of sensory data and the intertwining of contradictory relations established by art, are intended to produce a new form of community. The construction of the solitary place aims at creating new forms of socialization and a new awareness of everyone's own capacity. The new forms of the community have already been actualized by collective discussion concerning the design of the place. The artwork refers to the future; it is a monument to the people to come, a monument to its absence. The artistic “dissensual community”, a community structured by disconnection has a dual operation: as a means for producing an effect and as the reality of that effect.¹⁸

Investigating aesthetic disconnection in the sense of “being together apart”, as an expression of the autonomy of art, within modernism and postmodernism, Rancière distinguishes the modernist approach which loosely connects the work to a future community, from the postmodernist for which “being apart” turns to an “aristocratic illusion” aiming to reject the reality of “being together”; moreover, he distinguishes the aesthetic of the sublime in which “being apart”, by fear of heteronomy, turns into an absolute heterogeneity.¹⁹

INVESTIGATING THE INTERMEDIATE SPACE BETWEEN THINKING AND PERCEPTION

On the basis of the concept of “dissensus”, Rancière coins the term “aesthetic regime of the arts”, in order to denote the political essence of the conception of the aesthetic in modernity. The meaning of the term aesthetics for Rancière does not refer to a theory of art in general as a theory of taste or sensibility. It refers to a specific mode of being of the objects of art, *a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts*. Artistic phenomena are identified by an aesthetic regime which, freed from all its ordinary relations, *is inhabited by a heterogeneous power, the power of a form of thought, that has become foreign to itself*. This implies a transposition between the activity of thinking and the perception of the aesthetic. Rancière considers Schiller’s *aesthetic state* as the manifesto of his conception of modernity as the “aesthetic regime of the arts” as far as it indicates a special identity of opposites between thinking and art’s perception or between life and the autonomy of art. As Rancière claims on the basis of his approach to Kant’s *Analytic of the Beautiful*, the *aesthetic state* is *a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself*. Art’s autonomy is defined by him in this way.²⁰

The rejection of the concept of *mimesis* by modernity, Rancière claims, implies art’s liberation from specific rules and specific hierarchy, subject matter and genres. The aesthetic regime is identified by destroying the mimetic barrier that separated the way of doing and making of the arts from the order of social doings. The aesthetic regime defends the absolute singularity of art and simultaneously it destroys every pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. Thus it sets the foundations of the autonomy of art and identifies the forms of art with those which life uses to shape itself.²¹ With reference to the autonomy of the work, Rancière shares Adorno’s aversion to any form of assimilation of art into life and his persistence on the radical separation of the work from aestheticized commodities. He however opposes to Adorno’s conception that the work has to become even more mechanical and “inhuman” in relation to mass consumption, in order to denounce the capitalist division of work and the embellishments of commodities. Rancière claims that it is against its autonomy.²²

In his writings *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*²³ Schiller asserts that domination and servitude constitute, at first, part of an ontological distribution, the activity of thought against the passivity of sensible matter. Nevertheless, Schiller identifies an in-between situation, a situation of dual cancellation, where thought and perception become one and the same reality. This indicates a new region of being, the region of free play and appearance, which, Schiller insists, makes the conception of equality possible. Schiller’s concept of aesthetic

education, Rancière claims, aims to train men in this particular form of living in a free political community. Consequently, a new meaning of political revolution was produced by Schiller's conception of an aesthetic revolution. It is best expressed in the "*Aesthetic programme*" of German romanticism, a rough draft written in common by Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling. It deals with the fusion of pure thought and life in the material expression of the unconditioned freedom of pure thought. The meeting of the new paradigm for aesthetic autonomy with the Marxist revolution and its consequent failure to lead to a political revolution resulted to the appearance of Surrealism and the Frankfurt School on the one hand and postmodernism on the other, Rancière insists.²⁴

Considering postmodernism in particular, Rancière argues that its desperate attempt to establish art's autonomy through a historical rapture, was in fact useless, since this does not differ from modernity conceived as the aesthetic regime of the arts. However, the situation soon turned out to be a challenge to art's autonomy. This suggests either to go back to the beginning or original separation. And while reconsideration of modernity for Rancière means going back to Schiller's idea of the *aesthetic education of man* which originated in Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful*, the postmodern reversal has as its theoretical basis Lyotard's reinterpretation of the Kantian *Analytic of the Sublime*. Consequently, critical tradition was transformed into a thinking of mourning and regression. Rancière claims that Kant had placed art beyond the sublime feeling, in order to make it a witness to the encounter of thought with the unrepresentable that cripples all thought; a witness for the prosecution against any aesthetico-political utopia of thought-becoming-world.²⁵ In this way, Rancière overcomes the sovereignty of reason implicit in Lyotard's understanding of the Kantian sublime.

If the notion of modernity has a meaning in the frame of the aesthetic regime of the arts, proposed by Rancière, this does not deal with aesthetic innovation as such, but with the invention of aesthetic forms and material structures referring to a life to come. This is what aesthetic avant-guard believed to have brought to political avant-guard, or at least tried to: the transformation of politics into a total life programme through an aesthetic appreciation of reality based on sensation. Aesthetics understood in this way, does not suggest a philosophical discourse aiming to dominate art or architecture. Rather it suggests an attempt to activate thinking by pointing to the work's paradoxes and contradictions. Thus, an architecture of dissensus implies dislocation, dismemberment and dis-identification of the work, while it still remains within the spectrum of the Kantian indifferent gaze. As such, it contributes to a perpetual free play between thinking and perception conceived as equals. In this way, architecture opens up its limits to other art species and perceptual means, while it participates in a political operation in terms of autonomy and equality.

NOTES

- 1 See for instance: Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas MacCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press 1984); Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus. On Politics & Aesthetics*, ed. & trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).
- 2 For the presentation and critical discussion of an urban development project aiming at an alternative development process on the basis of Rancière's philosophy, see: Camillo Boano & Emily Kelling, "Toward an Architecture of Dissensus: Participatory Urbanism in South-East Asia," *Footprint*, Delft Architectural Theory Journal, Delft University of Technology, 13 (2013): 41-62, ISSN 1875-1504, accessed July 17, 2015, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7480/footprint.7.2.769>. The project includes the Thai programme *Baan Mankong* (secure housing) and its regional counterpart Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA). As the writers of the article explain, "people that were previously ignored and marginalized are engaged at the centre of a process of transforming their lives, spaces and position in the city."
- 3 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 60ff.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, trans. Graham Burchell & Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso), see 163ff., in particular.
- 5 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 60-63, in particular.
- 6 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 64ff. For Kant's *Second Moment* of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, see for instance: Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1969), 50-60.
- 7 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, trans. Giles Henry Lodge (Boston: James Munroe & Co, 1849), Vol. II, 234, in particular.
- 8 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2004), 44ff., in particular.
- 9 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 64-67.
- 10 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 67.
- 11 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 67.
- 12 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" incl. in: ed. Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217-251.
- 13 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 69-71.
- 14 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 72. See further discussion in: 72-73.
- 15 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 51-57.
- 16 See a discussion on the project "I & Us" with the members of the *Encampement Urbain* Group in: *Networked Cultures* e-magazine accessed July 17, 2015, <http://www.networkedcultures.org/index.php?tid=64>.
- 17 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 55. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 76.
- 18 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 57-59.
- 19 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 59-60.
- 20 Jacques Rancière, *The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics & Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 10, 22ff.
- 21 Rancière, *The Distribution of the Sensible*, 23.
- 22 Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 39-41.
- 23 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, intr. & trans. Reginald Snell (N.Y.: Dover Pbl., 2004).
- 24 Rancière, *The Distribution of the Sensible*, 26-28.
- 25 Rancière, *The Distribution of the Sensible*, 9, 28-30. Rancière draws a line between two different conceptions of political subjectivity related to the avant-guard: the archi-political idea of the party, that is to say of a political intelligence which sums up the essential terms of change, and the meta-political idea of a global political subjectivity, the idea of a potentiality inherent in the innovative sensible modes of experience of a community to come.

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