

Inside-Out or Outside-In? On Freeing Aesthetic Emotions

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Introduction

In their seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno drastically portray the scientific usurpation of the human sphere:

That they [the behaviorists] apply to human beings the same formulae and results which they wring without restraint from defenseless animals in their abominable physiological laboratories, proclaims the difference in an especially subtle way. The conclusion they draw from the mutilated animal bodies applies, not to animals in freedom, but to human beings today. By mistreating animals they announce that they, and only they in the whole of creation, function voluntarily in the same mechanical blind, automatic way as the twitching movements of the bound victims made use of by the expert.¹

Immanuel Kant famously defined the Enlightenment as emancipation from superstition. He argued in the name of science, that is, natural laws. Yet, against the backdrop of his diagnosis, Kant equally undertook an immense dialectic effort to expose ethical reasoning and aesthetic experience as autonomous islands in the sea of blind natural forces. The Neo-Marxists Adorno and Horkheimer do not subscribe to such a sharp contrast between nature and deontic rationality or aesthetic imagination. They, however, follow Kant in not selling out to science every gram of the human soul. They note, “art, morality, and sublime love are masks of nature, in which nature reappears transformed and becomes expressive as its own antithesis. Through its masks it acquires the gift of speech; in its distortion it manifests its essence; beauty is the serpent which displays the wound where once the fang was implanted.”² The behaviorists, on the contrary, are

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¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 204.

² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 207.

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blamed for tearing off the masks of humanity, a ‘methodological’ move against culture itself, so to speak, whereby the blades of science plough through every corner of human activity.

When Adorno and Horkheimer speak of an “[in]voluntary” submission to scientific mastery, they seem to allude to the dialectics of self-fulfilling prophecies that encapsulate the human sciences far beyond behaviorism. “When the help of psychology is sought among human beings, the meager field of their immediate relationships is narrowed still further, and even within it they are made into things.”³ Against the backdrop of technocratic ambitions, human nature must almost inevitably become its own caricature in order to be more effectively ‘mapped’, explained, and administered.

How can such a critique be made tangible, given that in the current academic climate the arts and humanities are not only increasingly marginalized, but colonized with suggestive neologisms such as neuroaesthetics and neuroethics? If the answer to this challenge should not be solely dismissive, it will be rather futile to primarily take issue with the reductive explanantia at which science intrinsically aims, in its effort to naturalize and contribute to the better understanding of conscious phenomena such as perception, emotion and value. Yet, in times when advancements in artificial intelligence, robotics and neuroscience head towards a trans-humanism that attempts to drastically modify human nature, a sober dialectic mind cannot help seeing the flipside of this one-dimensional trajectory. Instead of allowing humanity to embrace, or else responsibly overcome natural constraints that the sciences so powerfully explore, a *pre-theoretical* diminishing of freedom, imagination, perception and creativity appears too often the more convenient option. The premature expansion of science’s outreach becomes so simply a methodological necessity.

In this article, we will not address scientific reductionism or the philosophical mind/body problem directly. With a focus on aesthetic expression and emotions, in connection to what we have stated in this opening, what interests us are the underpinnings of the explananda from which any systematic consideration of cultural phenomena must depart. We commence with Kant’s conception of beauty, which we subsequently

³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 204.

juxtapose with Nelson Goodman's notion of expression, developing a view of the aesthetic work in terms of the functional form (as known in logic and mathematics). By engaging Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of *Secondness* and with an eye on contemporary emotion theories, we then stipulate art's complex (temporal) expressive trajectories that, as we shall claim, escape the emotional necessities of daily life. After making our main points with regard to music, we end the core of this article with a brief analysis of the emotional dimensions in George Orwell's 'Shooting an Elephant' (1936). We conclude with a brief defence of art as emotionally autonomous.

The Kantian Challenge

Kant's work on aesthetics portrays reflective judgments of beauty as being both subjective and universal. In his framework, genuine aesthetic evaluations are imaginative, rooted in a feeling of delight and withdrawn from the objective *a priori* necessities of cognition and morality. Taste engages a subjective free play between imagination and understanding, the synthesis of which is pre- and, thus, non-conceptual. In the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant highlights with the notion of 'heautonomy' taste's distinctive reflexive structure as follows:

We should actually call this legislation heautonomy: for judgment legislates neither to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself; and it is not a power to produce concepts of objects, but a power only to compare occurring cases with concepts given it from elsewhere, and to state *a priori* the subjective conditions under which this connection is possible.⁴

Kant posits that the notion of beauty cannot possibly be rooted in either nature or formal *reason*. Now, withdrawing the aesthetic realm from natural regularities challenges obviously a causally oriented explanation of aesthetic emotions. Klaus Scherer,⁵ in a seminal article on how emotions should be theoretically construed and defined, draws a crucial distinction between 'utilitarian' and 'aesthetic' emotions,⁶ based on an eightfold "design feature differentiation of different types of affective phenomena."⁷ In the context of this article, two such design features that Scherer proposes for aesthetic emotions are particularly noteworthy: 1) the call for intrinsic,

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 414.

⁵ Klaus R. Scherer, 'What are emotions? And how can they be measured?', *Social Science Information*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2005), pp. 695-729.

⁶ Scherer, 'What are emotions? And how can they be measured?', p. 706.

⁷ Scherer, 'What are emotions? And how can they be measured?', p. 704.

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rather than transactional, appraisal; and 2) a low degree of behavioural impact. Such Kantian “disinterestedness,”⁸ as an alleged condition of aesthetic appraisal, however, is not undisputed in current emotion research. Scherer himself, after introducing the distinction between aesthetic and utilitarian emotions, explicitly stipulates that the autonomy of aesthetic emotions does not derive from ‘disembodied’ mechanisms. Rather, in order to exemplify aesthetic emotions, he refers to “the most commonly reported bodily symptoms for intense aesthetic experiences...goose pimples, shivers, or moist eyes.”⁹ Such exemplification of aesthetic emotions can hardly be harmonized with Kant’s aesthetics, which is intrinsically formal. Quite in contrast to Scherer’s spin on ‘disinterestedness’, Kant, despite his postulation of aesthetic universality, seeks distance to the ‘material’ causation of bodily states through stimuli. What Scherer portrays with the aforementioned is actually much closer to Kant’s (material) *Judgment of Sense*. Yet, if not material stimuli, what exactly creates *aesthetic* pleasure? Kant says:

In an aesthetic judgement of the senses it is that sensation that is immediately produced by the empirical intuition of the object, whereas in aesthetic judgements of reflection it is that sensation produced in the subject by the harmonious play between the two cognitive faculties of the power of judgement, the imagination and the understanding, when the former’s capacity for apprehension and the latter’s capacity for presentation reciprocally further one another in a given representation. In such a case, this relation, merely through its form, causes a sensation which is the determining ground of a judgement. This judgement is consequently described as ‘aesthetic’ and is connected with the feeling of pleasure as subjective purposiveness (without a concept).¹⁰

Further:

For these reasons are compelled to recognize that the aesthetic power of judgement, as a special faculty, is nothing but the reflective power of judgement, and that the feeling of pleasure (which cannot be distinguished from the representation of subjective purposiveness) must not be regarded as derived from or related by an a priori principle either to the sensation in an empirical representation of the object or to the concept of the object. This feeling can only therefore be regarded as connected with reflection and the form (the distinctive activity of the power of judgement) through which it advances from empirical intuitions to general concepts.¹¹

⁸ Scherer, ‘What are emotions? And how can they be measured?’, p. 706.

⁹ Scherer, ‘What are emotions? And how can they be measured?’, p. 707.

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 334.

¹¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 353.

Kant's *ideal* conditions for an aesthetic judgment derive from the process of 'formal reflection'. The idiosyncratic moving from the *particular to the universal* in genuine aesthetic experience is supposed to create pleasure independent from: 1) the bodily sensation an object causes in its perceiver; and 2) what the object of pleasure conceptually *is*. Subsequently, the Kantian claim that the predicate 'beautiful' is neither causally nor conceptually predisposed, puts taste, in tandem with morality, into the realm of postulated freedom from nature.

From here onwards, we will not delve much further into Kant's systematic philosophy of judgment as such. What we wish to keep in mind, however, is the Kantian insight that aesthetic experience not only ought to be 'disinterested' and thus demands a universal common sense (*sensus communis*). Moreover, according to Kant, in aesthetic perception particular formal constellations resonate with universal purposiveness. Subsequently, Kantian aesthetics not only stands in opposition to arousal theories of aesthetic pleasure, but is equally distant from simplified *formal* accounts of aesthetic regularity, proportion and symmetry:¹²

Now geometrically regular figures, a circle, a square, a cube, and the like, are commonly brought forward by critics of taste as the most simple and unquestionable examples of beauty. And yet the very reason why they are called regular, is because the only way of representing them is by looking on them as mere presentations of a determinate concept by which the figure has its rule (according to which alone it is possible) prescribed for it. One or other of these two views must, therefore, be wrong: either the verdict of the critics that attributes beauty to such figures, or else our own, which makes purposiveness apart from any concept necessary for beauty...The regularity that conduces to the concept of an object is, in fact, the indispensable condition...of grasping the object as a single representation and giving to the manifold its determinate form. This determination is an end in respect of knowledge; and in this connexion it is invariably coupled with delight...Here, however, we have merely the value set upon the solution that satisfies the problem, and not a free and indeterminate purposive entertainment of the powers of the mind with what is called beautiful. In the latter case understanding is at the service of imagination, in the former this relation is reversed.¹³

¹² Arousal and simple formal principles such as symmetry are indeed the bread and butter of neuroaesthetics. See, for instance, Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein, 'The science of art: A neurological theory of aesthetic experience', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 6, no. 6-7 (1999), pp. 15-51.

¹³ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 72-73.

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Delightful art lets one discover purposiveness in aesthetic *gestalts* due to a formal arrangement of elements of sensation that is not predisposed yet still apparently rule-based. This peculiar particularity, as we will highlight below, is also of interest in understanding the source and signature of aesthetic expression and emotionality.

The Universal Resonance of the Aesthetic Particular

Adorno spoke of advanced twentieth century *avant-garde* as the ‘non-identical’ negation of modern political and economic totalitarianism. However, quite independent from any rigid philosophy of history, one hardly can deny that the experience of art, from a diversity of historical epochs and cultural settings, can have a profound impact on the development of one’s personality, imaginary powers and, more tangibly, perceptual abilities. Practically, Kant’s *sensus communis* can only be the result of education, cultivation and emancipation, the ‘civilizing’ of the subject through reflective aesthetic experience. After all, taste should display *universal* sensibility. Relative to a particular genre or style, at least, this demand is less outrageous than it might appear on first sight. For perceptual discernment and comparative judgment are definitely often necessary for the detection of a particular artwork’s significance, as well as of more ‘trivial’ objects of taste. In one of his typical bottom-up reflections, Ludwig Wittgenstein illustrated this point laconically:

What does a person who knows a good suit say when trying on a suit at the tailor’s? “That’s the right length”, “That’s too short”, “That’s too narrow”. Words of approval play no role, although he will look pleased when the coat suits him. Instead of “That’s too short” I might say “Look!” or instead of “Right” I might say “Leave it as it is”.¹⁴

Particularly canonical art is apparently getting ‘it’ right within a field of innumerable symbolic options, which supplies an underlying structure for beauty’s emergence. Yet this ‘it’ is often located on axes of symbolic alternatives that outstrip in complexity what could be exemplified with the simple fitting of a suit’s dimensions. Furthermore, what renders basically Kant’s demand for the intrinsic purposiveness of the aesthetic, is the paradox that great art hits a target that only materializes after its impact. With this in mind, what Wittgenstein has outlined in his *Lectures*, specifically with regard to the performing arts, stems from a

¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 5.

straightforward observation that stands in the way of simply declaring art experience ineffable. Adjusting expressive units that are continuously valued, such as sound intensity or the length of pauses in the practical rehearsing of a piece of music or play is indeed a simple yet powerful example for a case where the subtleties of aesthetic experience can materialize publicly before our senses.

In order to unpack the aforementioned more generally, as well as mitigate both Kant's non-conceptual *and* non-causal moments in his analysis of the beautiful, we would like to recall Ernst Cassirer's juxtaposition of the notions of substance and function.¹⁵ The basic idea behind Cassirer's dichotomy is that generic terms such as 'man', drop specificity in, for example, referring to a particular friend. Equations for, say, the graph-based ellipse, on the contrary, constitute a function that is at least as general as 'man', yet encapsulates all possible instances of this shape type, including the circle form. Cassirer's insights into the method of modern, 'non-Aristotelian', science factor also into a curious interplay between logic and philosophical aesthetics. Particularly with regard to, ultimately, the (relational) predicate calculus, one can retrospectively draw a surprisingly straightforward line from, say, Gottlob Frege's *Function and Concept* (1891), passing through Rudolf Carnap's *The Logical Construction of the World* (1928), and Goodman's *The Structure of Appearance* (1947), only to reach the seemingly rather remote territory of the latter's *Languages of Art* (first published 1968).

Goodman's *Symptoms of the Aesthetic*¹⁶ exemplify how 'functional' categorical analysis, in form of an integrated systematic terminology, can contribute to a complex phenomenon such as the arts. Note that one can indeed frame the Kantian definition of beauty in terms of the functional form, with independent aesthetic variables along certain dimensions, both syntactic and semantic, carrying specific values that afford 'universal taste' to respond delightfully. Paraphrased in this way, one does not need to subscribe to Kant's rigid distinction between formality and (causal) materiality in aesthetic experience. Aesthetic *gestalts* interest us because of the particular ways they form (syntactic) 'material' that is necessarily

¹⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1923).

¹⁶ For a contextualized summary, see Catherine C. Elgin, 'Reorienting Aesthetics, Reconceiving Cognition', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 58, no. 3 (2000), pp. 219-225.

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perceptible, potentially affective and, in most of the cases, symbolizes qualities and ideas.

In *Languages of Art*, Goodman provides some ground-breaking ideas as to what factors into art's complex interplay of syntactic and semantic variables. There, he departs from an examination of notational systems in the development of his analytic symbolic theory's technical core part.¹⁷ Goodman chooses notational systems as initial point of reference due to their paradigmatic definitional rigidity, both in syntactic and semantic terms. One of Goodman's main aesthetic concerns is an artwork's identity. Particularly classical music, a paradigmatic "two stage art,"¹⁸ is exhaustively represented in scores that provide the identity standard for diverse performances.

The main issue here, however, is a possible reversal of the score/performance direction; music notation allows for an unambiguous transcription of continuous sound into a discrete structure. Goodman's identity criteria regarding musical works form an ideal that in musical practice cannot be strictly implemented. Its underlying principles, however, are not only relevant to an understanding of the diverse identity criteria that different art forms invoke. Music performance is indeed exemplary for the 'subjective' rendering of *gestalts* (phrases, texture, motion, and so on) that emerge from the valuation of, at least in terms of pitch (harmony) and duration (rhythm), *unambiguous* score information.

Music can of course be poorly composed and poorly performed. While this also applies to theatre, in terms of an interpretative 'execution', it would be rather far-fetched to say that someone reads literature or sees paintings 'poorly' in this sense. Yet, Kant's emphasis on free play of mental faculties, as the underpinning characteristics of aesthetic delight, seems to necessitate oscillation between the level of basic material and *gestalt*-perception, in order to 'tastefully' judge an artwork's particular significance. What we have in mind here is not simply the idea that in perception, bottom-up observations are interpreted through top-down coding, like in the projection of a particular word onto a barely readable visual mark. In such cases, efficiency in identification and, hence, systematic disregard of perceptual particularities is key. Quite on the contrary, the alert comparison of aesthetic *gestalts*, across different

¹⁷ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, rev. ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1976), pp. 127ff.

¹⁸ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, p. 114.

artworks, can direct a perceiver to details that a simple bottom-up analysis of their isolated elements would not be able to uncover.

Further, Goodman's methodology cannot be fully comprehended without a functionality notion. His 'de-substantializing' of semiotics is best explained at the basic syntactical level that is concerned with the constitution of signs as fundamental semiotic material. In his theory, certain sensibilia ('marks') become semiotic entities ('characters') only as elements of syntactical schemata. Identical marks can thus function differently in heterogeneous manifestations of such schemata. An identical 'C' mark, for instance, could be used in a text as the correlated alphabetic character, but may also function as part of the fermata symbol in music notation, or even as nose in a drawing. While this may seem trivial, already at the basic material level of character constitution, one is reminded that aesthetic symbols, in most cases, do not simply affect us in a causally straightforward manner.

Now, Goodman's notions of exemplification and expression elevate functionality to the semantic level. Exemplification, for Goodman, generates from a *selective* reversal of denotation. Expression, then, is defined as metaphorical exemplification. Hence, every entity can, either literally or metaphorically, symbolize what is predicated of it. For instance, an expensive table *can* exemplify being expensive, becoming thereby a symbol itself. Goodman explains exemplification with the functioning of representative samples of, for instance, a particular fabric. In terms of Goodman's nominalist semiotics, this leads to the phrasing that symbols exemplify or express *labels* under which they, literally or metaphorically, fall.

However, in relation to art reception, particularly in the case of aesthetic emotions, common (verbal and non-verbal) labelling appears insufficient to properly denote what art is revealing, which disables exemplification and expression at their core. In order to meet this difficulty, one needs to find a solution that accounts for both Goodman's symbol creating reversal of denotation as well as Kant's insistence on the cognitive intangibility of art's formal purposiveness. We would like to suggest here that while art, based on its idiosyncratic syntactic material, captures in its

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particular expressions essential aspects of certain labels, it does so not without the labels themselves being re-configured.¹⁹

Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata BWV82 '*Ich habe genug*' ('It is enough'), for instance, in both text and music, exemplifies alienation from this world and expresses ultimate trust in God. By offering an illustration of a faith-based and well-measured acceptance of death, in its expressive idiosyncrasy, the cantata is able to 'give birth' to what retrospectively can be considered essential aspects of its formal theme. Compare this, say, to Gustav Mahler's '*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*' ('O garish world, long since thou hast lost me') from his *Rückert Lieder*, which expresses equally disconnection from the world, yet with hyper-sensitive romantic melancholy. Particularly in juxtaposition, both works create layers of meaning that would allow a sheer endless stream of verbal commentary, due to the pieces' idiosyncratic aesthetic 'construction' of emotional content in light of deep existential questions. Any sensible discourse about great art and its history will inevitably exemplify the insufficiency of straightforward categorization.

In summary, the feeling of aesthetic delight must be rooted in the material particularities of the aesthetic object. Wittgenstein suggests, "when aesthetic judgments are made, aesthetic adjectives such as "beautiful", "fine", and so on, play hardly any role at all".²⁰ His argument for expressive particularism in relation to art is striking indeed: "There is a tendency to talk about the "effect of a work of art"—feelings, images, etc. Then it is natural to ask: "Why do you hear this minuet?", and there is a tendency to answer: "To get this and that effect." And doesn't the minuet itself matter? Hearing this: would another have done as well?"²¹

Expressive Trajectories

Aesthetic beauty confronts us with an ontological paradox: from delightful art, we can spontaneously abduct 'generic' rules that only they seem to *successfully* instantiate. Now, as we have highlighted, for Kant, it appears

¹⁹ For a more detailed and technical analysis of exemplification, see: Gerald Moshammer, 'Routes for Roots: A Mapping Shorthand Symbolism with Reference to Nelson Goodman's Hidden *Ars Combinatoria*', *History and Philosophy of Logic*, vol. 38, no. 3 (2017), pp. 263-281.

²⁰ Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 3.

²¹ Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 29.

that while the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful is simple, what causes it, the formal purposiveness given in aesthetic experience, must be necessarily complex or, at least, *Gestalt*-based. At this point, a challenging phenomenological question arises, as to how the cause and intentionality—the ‘aboutness’—of an (aesthetic) expression could actually factor into the particular characteristics of its feeling. Can feelings be complex *per se*, or are they qualitatively simple (yet possibly built into mental complexes as autonomous factors)? In this regard, aesthetic experience is undoubtedly the chief informant. Obviously, in terms of instruction and communication, the search for a proper performance of a musical composition, staging of a dramatic text or reciting of a poem, is didactically less challenging than finding a formula for how to write, paint or compose great art. However, for recipients of art, developing taste and preference cannot be detached from cognized comparisons and, often, verbalization of what is perceived and felt, be it through communication or self-reflection.

In relation to the challenge of ‘outwarding’ qualitative mental content, Peirce’s dialectically oriented distinction between *Firstness*, *Secondness* and *Thirdness* offers the key to a curious theoretical space. He writes:

A Firstness is exemplified in every quality of a total feeling. It is perfectly simple and without parts; and everything has its quality. Thus the tragedy of *King Lear* has its Firstness, its flavor *sui generis*. That wherein all such qualities agree is universal Firstness, the very being of Firstness. The word *possibility* fits it, except that possibility implies a relation to what exists, while universal Firstness is the mode of being of itself.²²

What one can draw from this passage is that the idea of experiencing unmediated qualia, such as a simple feeling, is self-defeating. For *Firstness*, as mere possibility, is not yet subjective. Subjectivity co-occurs with awareness, the latter being always awareness of something distinct (as general or blurred it might be). Distinction, however, generates from contrast, which fundamentally is a feature of *Secondness*:

The type of an idea of Secondness is the experience of effort...Effort only is effort by virtue of its being opposed; and no third element enters. Note that I speak of the experience, not of the feeling, of effort. Imagine yourself to be seated alone at night in the basket of a balloon, far above earth, calmly enjoying the absolute calm and stillness. Suddenly the piercing shriek of a steam-whistle breaks upon you, and continues for a good while. The

²² Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, volumes 1–6, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–1936), CP 531.

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impression of stillness was an idea of Firstness, a quality of feeling. The piercing whistle does not allow you to think or do anything but suffer. So that too is absolutely simple. Another Firstness. But the breaking of the silence by the noise was an experience. The person in his inertness identifies himself with the precedent state of feeling, and the new feeling which comes in spite of him is the non-ego. He has a two-sided consciousness of an ego and a non-ego. That consciousness of the action of a new feeling in destroying the old feeling is what I call an experience. Experience generally is what the course of life has compelled me to think.²³

Peirce's 'Hegelian' analysis of the transition from feeling to experience through the perception of a perceived 'non-ego' addresses a key feature of artistic expression. Indeed, if art did nothing more than causing a simple feeling of beauty, it would, at most, function solely meditatively, like chanting, or else simply arouse us. Quite on the contrary, however, art carries the potential of rapid expressive change, to a degree and with versatility that our daily encounters with emotional faces, body language and linguistic prosody in common social space cannot match. Note that while information density with regard to art's emotion trajectories, both temporally and symbolically, is most straightforwardly exemplified by music and literary texts, visual art is actually the most informative source of speculation here. For it is fair to say that a perceiver of a, say, painting, in most cases only engages in an aesthetic process of seeing if she *moves* between syntactic and semantic layers of the artwork, rather than solely getting an instant impression or 'kick' from it.

Given the aforementioned, aesthetic emotions seem to naturally associate with a *constructionist* approach to the expression and perception of 'feeling', which, in contrast to Basic Emotion Theories and Causal Appraisal Theories, speaks of emotions as (linguistic) clusters that interpret core affects (body states). In one of their early paradigmatic publications, two major advocates of what has been coined the 'core affect movement',²⁴ elicit their approach as follows:

To illustrate, we distinguish *prototypical emotional episodes* from *core affect*...These two are also interesting because considerable research is available on the structure of core affect, whereas we know of no research that has examined actual prototypical emotional episodes when addressing the question of their structure...We use the term *prototypical emotional episodes* to refer to what people consider the clearest case of emotion. Fleeing a bear

²³ Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, CP 8.330.

²⁴ Andrea Scarantino, 'Core affect and natural affective kinds', *Philosophy of Science*, vol. 76, no. 5 (2009), pp. 940-957.

out of terror, fighting someone in rage, and kissing another enraptured in love are intense examples. Milder examples also exist...²⁵

Now, with the importance of a temporal dimension in mind, on the backdrop of the affect/episode distinction, the study of aesthetic emotions faces three intertwined indeterminacies, regarding their intentionality, valence and ontic status.

It is indeed often underlined that emotions are intentional. In a broad sense, exactly in contrast to core affect, they are directed towards something. They are said to be about a good friend, for instance, or about something embarrassing one recalls, and can even attach to abstract entities, such as in the excitement about an elegant mathematical proof. This suggests two sides of the same coin in the formation of emotional labelling: One is confronted with the ‘immediacy’ of a (physiological) state, which in the most straightforward view is simply characterized by a certain degree of arousal carrying either positive (‘pleasure’) or negative (‘displeasure’) valence, or, as more recently have has been emphasized, dimensions of power and surprise.²⁶ Particularly from an evolutionary perspective, in order to identify ‘an emotion’, one has to understand specific somatic constellations in terms of their ecological functions, by giving them meaning in a motivational framework of action. The latter can be seen as a cognitive or linguistic effort, leading to emotional episodes that can be (verbally) represented through the telling of social interactive stories.

Intentionality links core affect to meaning, which in due course allows to clearly frame emotions in terms of valence, as positive or negative. Whether valence occurs in retrospective interpretation of core affect, or changing core affect is itself the result of situational cognitive appraisal, is not our main concern here. Note, however, that art experience is usually detached from immediate situational urgency. With practical motivation being removed from the picture, aesthetic expression is set free, becoming self-sufficient and emancipatory. While text, image and sound

²⁵ James A. Russell and Lisa Feldman Barrett, ‘Core affect, prototypical emotional episodes, and other things called emotion: Dissecting the elephant’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 76, no. 5 (1999), p. 805.

²⁶ Christelle Gillioz, Johnny R. J. Fontaine, Cristina Soriano, and Klaus R. Scherer, ‘Mapping Emotion Terms into Affective Space’, *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, vol. 75, no. 3 (2016), pp. 141-148.

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have their non-artistic uses, particularly art's engagement with non-denotational meaning and fictionality generates its own 'combinatorial' powers, similar to the immense cognitive forces that mathematical symbols unleash. Not unlike mathematics, art compels the human mind to move beyond biological and practical concerns. Art, however, stays within the realm of perception. This leads us to the third aforementioned problem, the search for the 'location' of aesthetic emotions. Conventional wisdom suggests that when art expresses emotions, it can do so only metaphorically. Only the feelings it causes in its perceiver are supposed to be real. While expressed and felt emotions may travel on different lanes during the experiencing of art, they also do often go hand-in-hand and cannot always be de-coupled. The latter case is of particular interest in our context.

Let us first focus on (absolute) music, where, unlike, say, in most forms of literature, not only do we find ourselves exposed to fictional characters in fictional circumstances, but encounter 'disembodied' fictional 'quasi-emotionality'. As it has been suggested, music often exposes a quasi-subject, a (virtual) *persona*.²⁷ With the performing arts in mind, we believe one has to synthesize a distinction that social cognitive neuroscience puts forward, namely between an *inference* based theory of mind and *felt* empathy²⁸, with the aforementioned differentiation between emotions expressed *in*, and emotions evoked *by* art. Further, in what follows, we will employ two auxiliary notions, of indexical and iconic causation respectively, in order to guide our discussion.

We use ' $X \rightarrow X$ ' in order to signify that an event X causes another event X with both instantiating a common structure. Applied to aesthetic emotions, 'entrainment' could serve here as the most straightforward illustration, for instance, when music makes a listener move her body and become cheerful in accordance with a fast and 'jumpy' beat. Indexical causation, on the contrary, symbolized with ' $X \rightarrow \text{non-}X$ ', is meant to cover cases where art evokes perceptions and feelings whose signature is extrinsic to what is actually happening. Simplistic sentimental music, for instance, may cause someone annoyance, or classical music deter young

²⁷ David Lidov, *Elements of Semiotics* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p. 219.

²⁸ Tania Singer, 'The neuronal basis and ontogeny of empathy and mind reading: Review of literature and implications for future research', *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 855- 863.

people from sticking around in a particular public venue. At least superficially, this allows for cases where 'X \rightarrow non-X', and 'non-(X and non-X) hold, namely perception in which what art expresses and the emotion it causes appear mutually exclusive. In this view, sad music, for instance, can cause a positive feeling in a listener.

What we call the theory-of-mind model of aesthetic emotions captures now the particular case where one might be able to declare 'There is X' (such as 'this piece sounds happy'), without embodying X (not feeling the happiness as a listener). Psychopaths exemplify this pattern in an extreme manner, as they can 'read' the other's emotion without being empathetically involved. This thought raises doubts whether emotion research is on the right track if it limits itself to the 'epistemic' mapping of discrete aesthetic features with corresponding basic emotional content. Obviously, strong association of stimulus features with emotional content allows also for the opposite scenario, where aesthetic emotions become 'fetishized', to borrow an expression by Adorno.²⁹ Quite clearly, we have at our disposal diverse routes to making claims about art's expressivity. In our view, what really matters, is here to find out how much of 'empathetic' and 'embodied' engagement is actually *necessary* to first and foremost detect and differentiate expression in certain art.

'Embodiment', however, is a difficult scientific notion. We thus would like to invoke the more fundamental concept of 'analog representation', which interprets the stipulated isomorphic causal nexus 'X \rightarrow X' in terms of a continuous mapping of a particular (temporal) sequence. Manfred Clynes' sentograph,³⁰ for instance, is a paradigmatic *analog* machine, generating curves from pressure and horizontal movement of a finger that navigates on an interface during the listening to music. Clynes is a universalist. His analog music interpretation in terms of directed trajectories in a tactile space is supposed to provide the key to a world of 'essentic forms' of distinct emotions. On the contrary, by arguing in favour

²⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1985), pp. 270-99.

³⁰ Manfred Clynes, 'The communication of emotion: Theory of sentics', *Theories of emotion*, vol. 1 (1980), pp. 171-216. For a more far-reaching approach to the analog representation of music, see: Gerald Moshhammer, 'Contour, Motion and Gesture in Abstract Score Animation: A First Approach', *Journal of Music Research Online*, vol. 3 (2012). Can be accessed at <http://www.jmro.org.au/index.php/mca2/article/view/61>.

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of a more constructionist understanding of aesthetic expression, what we suggest is a strategy akin to nominalism. For instance, exactly because music is ontologically opaque, de-contextualized and debarred from direct ecological functions, the emotional interplay between intentionality and valence often becomes destabilized in its fine-grained expressive trajectories. Only through what we have coined iconic causation, however, such indeterminacies can emerge, which ultimately makes the rendering of art in terms of basic emotion terms ('a happy piece of music') aesthetically insufficient, or else art rather irrelevant.

Literary reading is less streamlined and travels along more complex semantic pathways than music listening. Recent years have seen a debate concerning whether literary reading enhances empathy.³¹ We would like to re-phrase this problem by asking whether temporal analog representation, such as the moving along subtle changes in an emotion-laden trajectory, can play a role in the 'emotional' reading of literature that is similar to the case of dedicated music listening.

Let us just indicate what is at stake here with a few excerpts from George Orwell's famous essay 'Shooting an Elephant'.³² The text is appealing to us as facing a potentially dangerous animal is a standard example of how emotions are supposed to work, by interrupting our routine, engaging an 'old' affective program for fear that correlates motivation ('fleeing') with spontaneous situational appraisal ('danger', 'possible harm'). Orwell, in his allegoric reflection on colonialism, however, moves away from the topic of imminent threat by the elephant in his essay, by directing emotional awareness towards the observing crowd:

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I

³¹ See, for instance: David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, 'Reading literary fiction improves theory of mind', *Science*, vol. 342, no. 6156 (2013), pp. 377-380; and Eva Maria Emy Koopman and Frank Hakemulder, 'Effects of literature on empathy and self-reflection: A theoretical-empirical framework', *Journal of Literary Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2015), pp. 79-111.

³² George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant', in *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950).

was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind.

The narrator, a British police officer in colonial Burma (possibly Orwell himself), is called upon to handle the situation after an elephant had gone on rampage in a poor quarter of Moulmein (today's Mawlamyine), killing an Indian man. The narrator operates on the backdrop of an ambivalent state of mind:

All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal byproducts of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

To this mixture of two conflicting, extremely negative 'moods'—the hatred of the British empire and the annoyance of the local 'little beasts'—the elephant, later in the text also referred to as 'great beast', adds another value dimension. First, however, by downplaying the 'natural' emotion of fear ('the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow'), the social emotion of pride is moving towards the center of attention:

For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

In due course of his essay, Orwell turns the shooting of the elephant into a symbol of reversed social power in a colonial context:

Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind.

Juxtaposed with this progressing oscillation between the elephant and the watching crowd, Orwell seems to plant another emotional trail, by dedicating a comparatively large portion of text at the end of his essay to the slow death of the elephant. The elephant is first described in terms of its extrinsic value:

It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided.

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After a description of the shooting, however, the narrator engages in a dense account of the elephant's agony, hence almost individualizing him, in passages such as the following:

He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time - it might have been five seconds, I dare say - he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him.

Orwell is stopping the time here, granting the elephant's dying a depiction in slow motion. Killing the elephant was wrong. The narrator did it for flawed reasons. His motives, keeping face and submitting to social pressure, are easily stated. Orwell, however, creates an emotional landscape in his essay only the *process* of reading can grasp, potentially teaching the reader new emotional constellations through autonomous linguistic expression.

Conclusion: Masks and Faces

In Orwell's essay, the narrator characterizes the 'white man' during colonial times succinctly: "he wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it." This leads us to a brief final thought regarding the idea of 'ritualized', or 'stylized', emotions. In a thought-provoking paper that contrasts Chinese with Western bourgeois theatre and modern Hollywood cinema, Haiyan Lee differentiates between the presentation and representation of emotion. For our purposes, the following passage from Lee's text is particularly noteworthy:

To suppose so is to view a presentational style of emotional communication through the tinted lens of representationalism which ultimately rests on a Cartesian division of mind and body. In the presentational mode, actors communicate powerful emotions and enact intense lyricism not *in spite of* all those gestures and quotes, but *by virtue of* an elaborate repertoire of ritualized expressions. The actor's body is the locus of emotion, not merely a medium for a hidden mind or soul. It is the artistry of suggestiveness (*dhavani*), not transparency, that is the Holy Grail. Ritual enables, not obstructs, the communication of emotion, as Confucius already intuited two millennia ago.³³

³³ Haiyan Lee, 'Chinese Feelings: Notes on a Ritual Theory of Emotion', *Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2016), p. 22.

The recent popular Pixar animated film *Inside Out*³⁴ demonstrates that in popular culture, as much as in scholarship, there is a tendency to think of emotional expression as an expression of an inner self. However, 'expression' is an ambiguous term. With 'an expression of anger', for instance, one can refer to an anger-like-expression as well as imply that anger has been expressed by a particular person. Goodman argued in his symbol theory that symbolic functions are not always relational. This is an important insight.

For example, there is a very specific 'heavenly melancholic expression' in the beginning of the slow movement of Franz Schubert's String Quintet D956, yet obviously there is no genuine person that carries this emotion, not even Schubert. The autonomous substrate of musical expression emerges in interplay between acoustics and psycho-physiological hearing. This is why we are skeptical of Goodman's definition of expression as mere metaphorical exemplification. In following Kant, we have suggested that particular works of art re-define, rather than submit to the labels they express. Yet, one must ask, if aesthetic emotions are 'non-human' and new, how are we related to them?

The answer here can only take an approach *ex negativo*. Aesthetic expression leads us to a new, 'non-physiological', realm of expressive possibilities, discovered in 'playful' imagination that cannot be substituted with simple categorization or the engagement of an evolutionary formed affective program. What constitutes this land of expressive freedom, however, is beauty. Friedrich Schiller, in his critical reception of Kantian philosophy, provides here interesting insights. In the 'depiction of beauty' in form of an 'objective particularity', as an agent of freedom, according to Schiller, the artists must seek autonomy from both their personal natural constraints and the 'nature of the medium'.

The great artist, one could say, shows the object (its depiction is purely objective), the mediocre artist shows himself (his depiction is subjective), and the bad artist shows his material (his depiction is determined by the nature of the medium and by the limitations of the artist).³⁵

Schiller also focuses on acting in order to illustrate his ideal:

³⁴ Jonas Rivera (Producer) and Pete Docter (Director), *Inside Out* (United States: Pixar Animation Studios, 2015), film.

³⁵ Friedrich Schiller, 'Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Koerner 1793', in Jay M. Bernstein (ed.), *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 145-183.

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When Ekhof or Schröder play Hamlet, their persons behave towards their role as matter to form, as the body to the idea, as reality to appearance. Ekhof was the marble out of which his genius formed Hamlet, and his (the actors) person was completely submerged in the artistic person of Hamlet because only the form (the character Hamlet) and not the matter (nowhere the real person of the actor) was noticeable...³⁶

In times when authenticity and ‘personal’ experience are increasingly taken as *non plus ultra*, Schiller, long before Bertolt Brecht, in his eighteenth century antipode of what in the twentieth century became known as ‘method acting’ provides a role model for the comprehension of aesthetic emotions in general: the delightful masks that great art has been crafting will not fit us if we fail to outgrow our very own nature.

³⁶ Schiller, ‘Kallias or Concerning Beauty’, pp. 180-181.