
Aesthetes, Critics and the Aesthetic Attitude

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Is there anything psychologically special about aesthetic experience ? Are there any experiences had towards things which are, by virtue of their intrinsic qualities, aesthetic in nature ? Those who believe these questions to have positive answers espouse what I will call the Attitude Theory; viz., that aesthetic experience involves special psychological states or attitudes which are distinct from all other states or attitudes. Those who reject the Attitudes Theory hold that an experience is an aesthetic one only in virtue of the object of that experience - usually an artwork - and not because of some unique psychological quality. Another way of couching the disagreement is this : Attitude theorists characterize aesthetic experience essentially from the point of view of the subject's mind, while its critics define it in terms of some special qualities of the public objects of experience.

I do not intend to defend or refute the Attitude Theory. I do not think either can be done without begging the question. Rather, my purpose is to try to explain why there appears to be no compelling way of resolving any disagreement between its proponents and critics. What I will suggest is that the acceptance and rejection of the Attitude Theory are more like expressions of an ideological nature about aesthetic experience which remain outside the bounds of arbitration by argument.

These "aesthetic ideologies"¹ so-called are bodies of beliefs about the nature of aesthetic experience which draw upon concerns that lie outside the domain of aesthetics proper: e.g., (a) the accessibility of aesthetic experience (and relatedly the accessibility of art); (b) the quality of aesthetic experience; and (c) the value of aesthetic experience. Commitment to an ideology provides a way of dealing with certain large questions, such as "In what does aesthetic experience consist "" or "What constitutes aesthetic appreciation ?" and thus allows attention to be paid to more specific issues about the nature of aesthetic qualities or the notion of aesthetic judgment. The adoption of any one ideology, four of which I will outline later, provides a stance vis-a-vis the opening questions and thereby defines the boundaries of aesthetic experience.

Critics of the Attitude theory² often adopt a cluster of tactics in their battle against it. The first is the Introspectionist Counterattack which goes like this:

(1) The Attitude Theory entails that aesthetic experience cannot occur without the presence either of some special mental state (e.g. distancing) or some special aspect of an otherwise commonplace mental operation (e.g. unique varieties of sensing).

(2) But, I, the critic of the theory, have genuine aesthetic experiences without either special states or aspects of mind.

So, the Attitude theory is false.

The second, the Semantic Counterattack, shares the same first premise and conclusion as the above. Its second premise is:

(2') Any attempts to characterize such states involve linguistic muddles or simple nonsense or the unspeakable.

Thirdly, the Reductionist Counterattack supplies the second premise. This offensive has a Weak and a Strong formulation; viz.,

(Weak)(2'') Any attempts to identify such states fail to show that they are distinct from or do not reduce to very ordinary states which are not specially aesthetic in quality.

(Strong)(2'') There do not exist any mental states or operations other than the commonplace ones. Indeed, the only distinctions among mental states of a kind derive not from phenomenological differences but from the different objects entertained in experience.

Although I've not time to pursue the details of such manoeuvres, I'm sure that very few committed Attitude Theorists will pack their doctrinal bags and depart defeated and broken. On the contrary, the critic will be branded at best as question-begging and at worst as deluded about the essence of aesthetic experience.

An analogy begs audience. The Attitude Theorist is akin to a person who feels bound to describe the special state of being good and drunk. His critic is the lifelong teetotaler. The point at issue is the elusive state 'being drunk'. The enthusiast for drink might come up with an expression which he will claim stands for some mental condition without which one cannot enter the ranks of the drunken. The critic will latch onto the common mental denominator (e.g., dizziness or whatever), demonstrate its ordinariness, and then proceed to bring into open forum the true nature of the state—which he will do by means, presumably of some causal distinctions. "Being drunk" will reduce to "dizziness brought on by ingestion of alcohol". Although the enthusiast may consent to this formula, he knows that isn't the half of it, and he also knows that he cannot present any argument to the teetotaler to confirm that being drunk is rather special. The analogy is not complete. We require the teetotaler to drink. Suppose he does. Suppose also that he feels what the enthusiast feels. In this case, he

ceases to be a critic and joins the club of happy sots. Suppose, however, that in fact he just cannot get drunk (at least insofar as he fails to appreciate the enthusiast's reverence) but presumes that he must be because he has imbibed something with alcohol and got dizzy. He remains a critic and former condemner of the muddled occultism of the brandy club. This impasse (and that is precisely what it is) betrays what can be called an "ideological" barrier.

II

The ideologies concerning me are these :

- (a) The aesthete's view of the aesthetic,
- (b) the Bourgeois' view of the aesthetic,
- (c) the Critic's view of the aesthetic, and
- (d) the Democrat's view of the aesthetic.

I will concentrate primarily on (A) and (C). It will become apparent that (D) and (B) are, respectively, Everyman's versions of these two.

Both (A) and (C) regard the accessibility of the aesthetic as limited to the select few. (B) and (D) regard aesthetic experience to be achievable by great numbers of people. For (A) and (C), aesthetic experience is usually memorable, and decidedly distinct in quality from ordinary perceptual experience. Both adherents will insist that a special receptivity is needed for aesthetic experience, although the nature of that power is vastly different for the two views. Both positions assume what might be called the intrinsic view of the aesthetic; *ars gratia artist* fits comfortably into either scheme and no shame is displayed at the suggestion that the aesthetic is a realm *sui generis* with its own qualities, rules, and rewards. This, however, is where the alliances end.

For the aesthete, aesthetic experience is essentially an inner event, a physiological episode. The critic adopts an object-related conception of his experience. Furthermore, the aesthete responds primarily to the manifest content of his experience. With (A) we have revelation by encounter :

We don't, generally speaking, simply see, hear, feel, taste, or otherwise apprehend beauty. Beauty is typically an attention-getter; we suddenly notice it; it breaks into our consciousness. Moreover it does so gratuitously; it does so despite the fact that we had no inkling it was going to be there... In these situations beauty always appears the "aggressor"... Beauty "catches" our attention; it "breaks on us"; it "leaps out" at us; it "strikes us". We seem powerless before its pull.³

The critic may, at times, be struck, but he is bound to check it out, to see whether he has been duped or not. Hence, we might say that (C) relies upon the discovery by analysis and interpretation of the latent content of the object. The aesthete eschews the whole process of studying such things. He is committed

to seek out those lucky moments when he is carried off by his striking encounter. In (A), indeed, the ultimate aim is to achieve a great experience:

Beauty has a tremendous holding power for us. When we perceive a beautiful thing, we don't want to let it go, we never want to stop perceiving it. It is as if our eyes wanted to drown in the sight, our ears in the sound. When the beautiful thing has disappeared, or we have gone our way, we sense a loss, we feel let down. The structure of this feeling is remarkable like post-coital "melancholy".⁴

The critic does not see the aesthetic as continuous with his autobiography. He is dedicated to tracking down great works. This reliance upon the object of study makes (C) essentially intellectual in nature, discursive. Criticism is a skill, a craft, which can be done well or poorly, and which can be taught. The appreciation of the aesthetic under (C) can and ought to be expressed to others.

The aesthete has his own ways. Because his approach is quasi-hedonic⁵ and reactive, because appreciation consists in the most private of savouring, (A) cannot be assimilated to the teachable skills of the critical analyst. There is almost an instinct which guides the aesthete, one which permits the most extravagantly sensitive reaction to phenomena which would normally be bypassed by most of us.⁶ He, of course, cannot provide reasons for appreciation before the fact; nor would he want to. For (A), appreciation is a form of enchantment, often so fragile as to be destroyed (rather than enhanced) by discourse :

The beauties that we commonly encounter are often so fleeting that most people do not want to risk spoiling the experience of them by discussing them... Analyses and discussions of specific beauties seem stilted and pointless to all but the most determined of pedants and snobs.⁷

Clearly, for the aesthete one cannot procure an aesthetic experience merely by positioning oneself in front of something that happens to be held by all critics to be a masterpiece for all time. The aesthete not only does not need the critics; he can actually do without the masterpieces for all time as well. What he holds aesthetically dear is a certain kind of experience itself, which is, for him, monumentally intense and memorable.

The aesthetic Attitude Theory is clearly a corollary of (A). Furthermore, unless one subscribes ideologically to (A), one is bound to have difficulty comprehending what on earth the Attitude Theorists are trying to describe. One must first think of the aesthete as having a coherent view of the aesthetic in order to accept meaningfully something like an aesthetic attitude.

(C) is subject to more scrutiny and controls than (A). The critic is part of a discursive community; the aesthete is very much a free and isolated agent. The critic must deal in justifiable criteria and must rationalize his appreciations

for them to deserve the name under this ideological banner. The value of aesthetic experience, then, for the critic will be determined by the professionally demonstrable greatness of the object of experience.

Another matter distinguishing the ideologies concerns attitudes toward the true extent of the aesthetic. It should be easy to see why, given (A), nothing is excluded. Because it is contingently possible for any object whatever to elicit in the right person at the right time the requisite enchantment, (A) is just not bound or inclined to draw any hard and fast lines between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic.⁸ Nor will the aesthete consider for a moment any reason to uphold on aesthetic grounds a distinction between natural objects and works of art. What is pertinent are the qualities of things which happen to trigger off aesthetic response. If an artist can do as successful a job by means of his craft as a volcano can do on its own steam, then the artist is to be commended and encouraged. (That the aesthete can operate thus is testimony to his relative lack of concern with very human matters such as creativity. His appreciation of creativity (if he has it) will not likely be aesthetic in nature).

(C), of course, must distinguish between art and nature. One may be a literary critic, a music critic, an art critic, but one will fail utterly as a geological critic, an astronomical critic, or a zoological critic unless one happens to be a qualified geologist, astronomer, or zoologist. Most aestheticians aren't any of these things.

(C) is, as well, intrinsically culture-bound. The critic has a stake in the special status of Art. This Art becomes value-laden, as the vehicle of higher thoughts and sentiments, the product of complex skills, the manifestation of clever structures and symmetries. The tacit allegiance to art qua created mirrors the structured discipline of criticism itself. Nature is not the product of human craft; and whatever God is, He is not an artist :

Works of art have an "inner life" which natural objects do not have... Speaking of the "inner life" of works of art was a way of referring to the conventional distinctions as to which of their aspects are properly appreciated and criticized and which are not. Natural objects lack this "inner life" because they are not embedded in the matrix of conventions in which works of art are.⁹

Criticism and appreciation are channeled and guided from the start. Equally revealing is this reflection of J.S. Ackerman by whom a style is conceived "as a class of related solutions to a problem - or responses to a challenge that may be said to begin whenever artists begin to pursue a problem or react to a challenge...."¹⁰

What is significant here is that art which necessarily manifests itself in specific styles is conceived as a form of problem-solving, an activity confined to intentional beings whose purpose and limitations can be delineated fairly clearly. Here, the dimensions of the aesthetic are bounded within the program of criticism, a view which can make sense only from within (C).

Something must be said about the place of feeling. We cannot ever conceive (A) without passion. Unlike the aesthete, who cannot relinquish affect, this is not necessarily an ingredient of (C).

Aesthetic experience is always pleasant, but the pleasure is not always (perhaps not even usually) an affect; i.e., a feeling. We are frequently pleased by something without having a feeling of pleasure.. Many of our aesthetic experiences are without affective content.¹¹

From the vantage point of (C), this must be true, even though an aesthete will reject it is misunderstanding of what aesthetic experience is. The (C) stand on affect is not without merit, however, and we would be hasty in dismissing the ideology as insensitive. Because (C) can accommodate an intellectual, problem-solving conception of art, it can offer reasons for appreciating much art that simply leave the aesthete cold.¹² Such art is essentially discursive and perhaps even replaceable by a crisply written provocative dissertation. (C) not only makes room for such works as art; it evaluates them and gives grounds for preference should such be required. The aesthete might well be left indifferent to these works—as will most people—but that is not the problem. The aesthete will never, via (A) alone, understand that these works have a point. Ironically, if the critic must limit himself by trying to confine the aesthetic to the artistic, the aesthete will have a far more restricted conception of art than the critic—unless he happens contingently to be captivated.

There are, of course, many other dimensions to these two outlooks. If I have made it seem as if the schism were like that between the gourmet and the nutritionist, I can only beg indulgence for the graphic value of caricature. My point has been to give atmosphere to what I perceive as an intractable breakdown in communication. One will note that what I've called (A) is not reducible to theories, analyses, and generalizations either about experience or its objects. Indeed, (A) outlooks commonly verge on appeals to the ineffable which, by definition, is not a fit topic for discussion. There is nothing particularly reprehensible about this; however, there is nothing much (A) can contribute to an analytical approach to experience which seeks guidelines, criteria, and evaluative schemes.

(C) on the other hand, cannot dismiss the aesthete's groundwork either as non-existent or muddled. The aesthete may not be terribly clear but he is not

so naive as to require unfamiliar descriptions of his experience while clumsily ignoring the obvious. The experience of the aesthetic for him is, indeed, one of the mysteries. So long as he can say that experience is not just a matter of listening attentively or making sure not to be distracted or exposing oneself to something with no ulterior motive, etc. then that itself should humble his detractor. After all, these species of studious attention are all pretty ordinary, easily recognizable for what they are and not likely to be confused with something rather more magnificent and stunning.

III

If the aesthete seeks private culture and the critic lasting culture, the bourgeois and democrat agree on a more instrumental view of the aesthetic, the consumer aspect. But they differ despite both being attitudes constitutive of mass culture.

I mentioned earlier that there are alliance between (B)and(C), on the hand, and (D)and (A) on the other. Recall, however, that insofar as (A)and (C) are elitist, specialized views, these are at odds with (B) and (D) for which aesthetic appreciation is an experience that can be had by all without too much fuss (as in (B) or without any fuss at all (as (D) has it).

I will have rather little to say about the democrat, the advocate of popular culture. This position is not infrequently denounced as vulgar, Philistine, crude, and superficial by those who should know better. A reconsideration of these complaints might follow upon exposure to the robust and unequivocal Curt Ducasse. Then again, it might not. Ducasse allows a conception of "the aesthetic connoisseur" whom we might identify either with the aesthete or critic depending upon the case.

To call upon the aesthetic connoisseur for an answer to one's own questions of aesthetic worth is, when considered in broad daylight, as ludicrous a procedure as would be the letting some person whose taste in matters of cookery differs from ours, but who is a connoisseur of foods, while we are not, choose our dainties for us. what he may do for us to introduce us to delicate dishes of which we knew nothing....But if after tasting these connoisseur's dishes we do not like them, or do not find them more enjoyable than our own familiar foods, we should be fools indeed to pick our menu, according to our gourmet's taste rather than our own. Coarse the latter may be called by him; but we too have a stock of poisoned, question-begging adjectives out of which we may with out of reputation call his taste perverse.¹³

How then do we determine what shall ultimately guide us in our pursuit of worthy aesthetic experience ? We must abide by the dictates of good taste, the existence of which is heartily endorsed by Ducasse:

There is, of course, such a thing as good taste, and bad taste. But good taste, I submit, means either my taste, or the taste of people who are to my taste, or the taste of people to whose taste I want to be.¹⁴

Following this is a simple rule offered by way of suggesting the basis for the pursuit of beauty:

"For a ranking of beauties, there are available only such principles as the relative intensity of the pleasure felt, its relative duration, relative volume, and relative freedom from admixture of pain".¹⁵ Pushpin lives. Bentham couldn't have said it better.

Before one reduces this to crass hedonism, a consideration must be entertained. True, (D) operates upon a principle of seeking out the quickest most accessible and enduring, most intense, and least complex kind of pleasure from art. But that it suggests pursuit of any art at all is itself miraculous if pleasure were merely conceived in the most obvious of forms. Pleasure is just not that monolithic and no hedonist has suggested that there is e.g., one and only one source of the most intense pleasure such that all men ought to pursue only that. The democrat seeks pleasure as the *ultimum bonum*. But he finds that some kinds of pleasure can only be got from rock music or soap operas or canned spaghetti. Furthermore, these pleasures are, in themselves, special enough to warrant his spending time pursuing them even if that time might otherwise have been taken up with "more intense" pleasure, so-called.

I do not think (D) a genuine "attitude" toward or "view" about the aesthetic. Certainly, it leaves far behind a great many interesting aspects such as arise in (A) and (C) (e.g., the value placed in the search for novel aesthetic experience and the notion of expending skill to uncover greatness in an artwork) and seems to be crippled by its own simplicity. However, it is an outlook of sorts and does provide a notion of aesthetic experience. Democrats certainly hold no grudge against those who disagree with them unless they are instructed to change their ways. Nevertheless, the democrat has no notion of a boor as does his distant aesthetic relative, nor does he look very deeply into the quality of experience. The democrat though will not go far out of his way to achieve a certain special feeling, as does the aesthete, because, in the end, he does not really subscribe to any such psychological doctrine. Interestingly, he shares this idea of the basic ordinariness of feeling with his bourgeois brother, to whom we will now turn.

IV

The bourgeois seeks in his own mass way "proper" culture. Typically, conventionalist theories of art fall well within the bounds of (B). If the aesthetic attitude theories reflected dependence upon (A) and drew their strength from it, it will be easy to see why criticisms such as Dickie's hail from (B) which has sought spiritual guidance from (C).

Whereas the critic approaches the aesthetic as judge; the bourgeois approaches ideally as informed spectator. We have seen that the aesthete and democrat brother with art because there is in encounter with it some valuable visceral experience to be had even if the nature and value of that experience vary vastly between the two. The critic seeks value in his discovery of the greatness of the work. It is no surprise that complexity- admittedly of a highly specialized sort appeals strongly. Consider the reflections of critic and theorist Leonard Meyer on greatness in music:

Insofar as the intricate and subtle interconnections between musical events, whether simultaneous or successive, of a complex work involve considerable resistance and uncertainty- and presumably information- value is thereby created, This viewpoint seems more plausible when we consider that as we became more familiar with a complex work and are therefore better able to comprehend the permutations and interrelations among musical events, our enjoyment is increased. For the information we get out of the work is increased.

What reasons prompt the bourgeois to approach the aesthetic domain and in what does the value of his experience consist given the putative vacuum created by his eschewing the need for "affective content" in aesthetic experience? Since the normal spectator cannot hope to acquire equal standing with the experienced critic without giving up his law practice or assistant directorship or associate professorship in favor of a life of criticism, his own appreciation of the "intricate and subtle interconnections" will never be quite complete.

If an answer can be provided, I suspect it will lie in expression like "aspects of works of art we ought to attend to "and" which of their aspects are properly appreciation". Worthwhile exposure to art involves something very like a ritual. For example, the theater-goer is described as someone "who enters with certain expectations and knowledge about what he will experience and an understanding of how he should behave in the face of what he will experience".¹⁷ The propriety invoked has nothing to do with etiquette; to have aesthetic experience, (B) requires that we learn the house rules of the art world. Aesthetic experience is conceived of as an achievement of sorts the successful acquisition of which comes with an understanding of the conventions governing the behaviour

of artists and audience, "the understanding.... that they are engaged in a certain kind of formal activity".¹⁸

This is strongly Wittgensteinian in flavour and is meant to be. It explains why (B) can dispense with affective reaction in its characterization of aesthetic experience. It can do so because the "experience" consists in participating in a certain kind of behaviour according to certain conventions. This requires no one to feel anything, let alone anything special. Furthermore, the objects of experience, the works of art, need not themselves be thought of as essentially expressive or affect-laden. The reliance upon commonplace emotions where these enter experience is also understandable. We would be stretching the point to say that the emotions felt and expressed in watching a chess match were special Chess-feeling distinct in inner quality from, say, Baseball-feelings. Similarly, (B) holds no truck with a class of Art-feeling distinct from all others. The only variable is the object of attention, the chess game, the baseball match, the exhibition, the quartet's performance- and that is precisely what replaces and neutralizes concern about any peculiarities such as there may be in the mental condition of spectator.

This notion of experience rests upon a person's ability to identify something as an aesthetic object. Once he can do so, so long as he pays attention to it and is not terribly and hopelessly distracted, then he has an aesthetic experience just by exposing himself to the object. An analogy is perhaps apt here between the bourgeois' aesthetic experience and the experience of a trained amateur bird-watcher. If there were such a thing as an "ornithological experience", it would be defined in terms of something like a background knowledge of different bird species, their distinctive marks and habits, and those circumstances where one is undistractedly bird-watching in a relatively efficient way. The catch with aesthetic experience is that it is putatively not so easy to single out a work of art as it is to single out a bird. In a way, however, (B) claims that it is not so difficult either. The bird-watcher ultimately relies upon evolution theory and taxonomy to define his class; the art-lover relies upon the cultural conventions and critical theories which make certain choice objects into worthy artworks.

What is important here is that (B) holds central the epistemic quality of aesthetic experience. Knowing that such-and-such an artwork has certain properties is integral to the bourgeois experience of art. One would expect the adherent to (B) to read literary criticism, record jackets notes, and histories of art. Such from part of the program of expanding one's knowledge Of the conventions. The idea of (B) would be to approach as possible the comprehensive expertise of the critic. Since that in practice is not feasible, the bourgeois places his faith in the conclusions of criticism in much the same way that the bird-watcher tacitly trusts the taxonomist.

The bourgeois believes that aesthetic experience is accessible to anyone who exposes himself studiously to accept art forms, thereby achieving informed perception. What is of interest in (B) is the object of perception itself and not what that object happens to do one. This is not to say that (B) shuns the affective power of the arts; but it is to say that that power is not compelling reason to expose oneself to art in particular. In a sense, the pleasure of aesthetic experience is almost educative for the bourgeois; it functions analogously to a physical fitness program or a trip to a spa. Aesthetic experience is good for one, but not necessarily because it is a source of pleasure pure and simple. If it were just that, then the valued call to further one's knowledge of the work would have to be underwritten by the promise that more study leads to more pleasure. Not only may this be false; it probably is false. At best, it is merely contingent and is certainly not going to be true for everyone. But if art is pleasant and elevating for (B), it cannot be extraordinarily so. Consider Dickie's chiding of those who choose what he regards as a false paradigm of aesthetic experience:

In the overwhelming majority of cases (and this includes most of the experience of painting we either like or think good) paintings do not produce emotional feelings or expectations.... Instances that do produce feelings tend to stand out in memory and because they do, they have been taken as typical.¹⁹

Spoken like a committed bourgeois. The moral is that one must not expect to experience memorable feeling in the presence of art. If one does, that is a suspicious bonus and not linked intrinsically to aesthetic experience.

Of course, the aesthete is scandalized by all of this. To the suggestion that much of our experience of art consists in our having "cool" aesthetic experience", the aesthete replies that such people are probably without aesthetic sensitivity and so without aesthetic experience. Whether or not the aesthete relies upon a special state of mind, a special operation of some typical mental state, a special type of affective response, or what have you - whether indeed the aesthete backs an aesthetic attitude or aesthetic reaction view of experience--is immaterial. What becomes apparent here is that the very points at which communication ceases between (B) and (A) define what aesthetic experience happens genuinely to be.²⁰

V

The account offered so far may seem impressionistic, but it does have a moral. Behind every theory purporting to capture the essence of aesthetic experience there lurks an aesthetic ideology. What makes these ideology what they are, are a number of assumptions some of which are partially philosophical but most of which are either psychological or value-dependent. Where such

assumptions fail to overlap, there one finds uncomprehending disagreement. I have tried to illustrate why attempts to rid aesthetics of the relevance of aesthetic attitude will work only in context where aesthetic is viewed as the handmaiden of criticism. That is, the putative incoherence and insignificance of the aesthetic attitude can figure prominently only when one assumes that art appreciation is primarily epistemic and not affective in nature. That assumption is one which never is nor can be the conclusion of any aesthetic argument. Furthermore, the desire to extirpate aesthetic attitudes insofar as they take on a tinge of the extraordinary will follow from the similarly unargued assumption that an experience unaccompanied by affect or professional knowledge can be an aesthetic one.

What, in effect, is at stake in these distinct ideologies is a conception of real essence of appreciation. It is not clear, however, whether there can be any truth about that beyond an exposure of and to the values which form an intrinsic part of its conception. Suffice it to say that what some adherents to (C) and (B) champion as bonafide appreciative experience would be regarded by the aesthete not only as falling far short of aesthetic appreciation but also as failing to count at all as an esthetically valuable experience.

If these rifts are merely terminological, so much the worse for aesthetics. If they rest on something more than words, aesthetics might well reduce to a topic in social psychology or axiology. Whatever the case there is no philosophical manoeuvre available across ideologies that does not beg the questions at issue.

The four aesthetic ideologies I have presented are, understandably, limiting cases. The complexity and compromise inherent in individual presentations allow no unequivocal pigeonholing; however, there is enough specific commitment in such cases to make profitable an attempt to understand their concerns in the light of these idealized simplifications. What the ideologies do is to underline one stubborn feature about the aesthetic; namely, different people experience and value the aesthetic in very different ways. Such differences are akin to those which encompass ways of responding to death or one's homeland or the future of our species. The worlds of the pessimist and the optimist, for example, have a certain amount of furniture in common, but what interests us about these worlds is that they vary in their apportionment of significance. Aesthetic outlooks resemble these value distributions to a large extent.

One matter I have taken to be central to aesthetic ideology is the nature and content of aesthetic experience. This in turn draws upon what is taken to be valuable in the pursuit of aesthetic experience. What I have tried to show is that the friction between those who emphasize and those who denigrate aesthetic attitudes is caused by failures on both sides to see either that such attitudes function either primitively and ineliminably or that they fail to function at all.

But all of this depends in turn upon just what one identifies as an aesthetic experience.

The matter is obviously circular. This should come as no surprise. Nor should it be thought odd that one cannot either analyze out or argue in the experience of aesthetic attitudes. So it is fruitless to embark upon a program of annihilation, just as it is awkward to suppose that claims like "Beauty expands our receptive faculty" or "We never want to stop perceiving a beautiful thing" can have any general title to truth. The accounts we have dealt with are rather more like reassurances to the already committed. As such they are perhaps interestingly descriptive of the details of their respective ideologies, but have no more combative force that does the cry that mankind is doomed in the presence of the beaming optimist.

How does one have aesthetic experience.? Many ways, it seems. What can one hope to get out of them? Many very different things, so it appears. If these answers seem the apotheosis of dullness, then their very boring obviousness concludes my case.²¹

Notes and References

1. Although the analogy may be strained, the relationship between these ideologies and aesthetics proper is meant to resemble that between various metaphysical outlooks (e.g., empiricism) and the special problems arising from within which form the accepted contexts of discussion in epistemology, say, or the theory of action.
2. By far the most unequivocal source of criticism can be found in George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974)-henceforth, AA.. This work grew out of an earlier piece, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude". *American Philosophical Quarterly* I (1964). Of related interest is J. Urmson, "What Makes a Situation Aesthetic", *PASS XXXI* (1957).
3. Guy Sircello, *A New Theory of Beauty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), P.19 Henceforth *NTB*
4. *NTB*, p.19
5. I say "quasi-hedonic" because of the appearance of pleasure-seeking. The aesthetic is not however so simplistic. He seeks out "experience"- novelty of reaction, even if that involves horror, disgust, and revulsion.
6. See *NTB* where Sircello aesthetically admires the 'elegant' beauty of high-voltage electricity towers (p.106). More poignant is his fixation upon "the gracefully swelling mound of beautifully smooth, creamy-white guts" of a squashed garden slug (p. 108).
7. *NTB*, p.128
8. "Because the sources of aesthetic experience make a difference for (C) it is no surprise that there is great concern about the "boundaries" of art.
9. *AA*, p.199.
10. J.S.Ackerman, "A Theory of style", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XX (1962), p.
11. *AA*, pp.190-1
12. One has only to think of some of the more iconoclastic contemporary works, such as those of Cage or Rauschenberg or Man Ray. Artworks that are at the same time works of criticism about the nature of art itself are easily assimilated under (C) because the value in such work derives more and more from critical rather than creative skill.

13. C.J. Ducasse, *The Philosophy of Art* (New York, 1929) from an extract in J. Hospers (ed.) *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: Free Press, 1969), p.292. Henceforth, *PA*
14. *PA*, p.296
15. *PA*, p.297
16. L.B. Meyer, "Value and Greatness in Music", in *Music, the Art and Ideas*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967), p.36
17. *AA*, p.
18. *AA*, p.174.
19. *AA*, p.191
20. It might appear that salvation is at hand if only we were to adopt a Pluralistic view; i.e., one which provides a disjunctive picture of the aesthetic domain. There are, however, two major problems with this:
 - (1) It is not clear that a pluralistic view is anything other than descriptive of the existing competition. Aesthetic ideologies are, as I conceive them, largely regulative and survive in part because of what they forbid from discussion.
 - (2) The various ideologies are indeed competitors; i.e., they are (in various groupings) mutually incompatible.
 To adopt a disjunction of such views is tantamount to believing nothing in particular about the aesthetic because it amounts to accepting anything whatsoever. Such toleration might well verge on vacuity. The view I have adopted in this paper is a second- order one; viz., it is about the presence of the ideologies themselves rather than an overarching fifth option which would, I think, be self-defeating.
21. I thank John Baker and John Heintz for their helpful suggestions. Previous versions of this paper have been read at the Western Canadian Philosophical Association and the American Society for Aesthetics (Pacific Division) Conferences.

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