

Towards a Wittgensteinian Aesthetics Wollheim and the Analysis of Aesthetic Practices

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1. *Rhetoric of the Ineffable and Practice of Understanding*

The heading of this part of the essay strongly emphasizes a theme that deals with a problematic – and in several ways crucial for the whole aesthetics – link between what we feel, or perceive, concerning expression (in particular, artistic expression) and what we can say and make understandable about it.

There is a sort of canonical strategy for confronting this problem. It tries to explain the success of comprehension by combining or even making identical the content expressed and the content understood by reducing both to a merely propositional content which is ideally neutral with respect to the concrete form of both the expression and the comprehension. Such a strategy proves, however, unsuccessful as soon as one considers, firstly the incidence of the medium of expression as a whole (from the means to the manner of construction of the expression), and secondly, the fact that understanding is itself an expressive practice which concerns the entire mode of dealing with an expressive language in general, and not only the conceptual grasping of a single nuclear segment. As Wittgenstein states:

There is a certain *expression* proper to the appreciation of music, in listening, playing, and at other times too. Sometimes gestures form part of this expression, but sometimes it will just be a matter of how a man plays, or hums, the piece, now and again of the comparisons he draws and the images with which he as it were illustrates the music. Someone who understands music will listen differently (e.g. with a different expression on his face), he will talk differently, from someone who does not. But he will show that he understands a particular theme not just in manifestations that accompany his hearing or playing that theme but in his understanding for music in general. (Wittgenstein [1978]: 70)

The relationship between expression (in appearance tending towards the ineffable) and understanding (effectively articulated in a practice) as a problematic link recognized in its complexity as such, constitutes one of the pivotal principles of a substantial part of Wittgenstein's philosophy in general. It could actually be said that, from this perspective, Wittgenstein's philosophy translates this problem, traditionally considered as an aesthetic one, into an eminently theoretical issue. Here a suspicion arises that the more or less scattered annotations that Wittgenstein has devoted to aesthetic matters – and that often revolve around this subject – are mostly motivated by the wish to offer effective examples to illustrate a theme which is crucial because it is purely philosophical. The theoretical profile of the Wittgensteinian aesthetic annotations then becomes obvious, as has been widely emphasised by many interpreters.

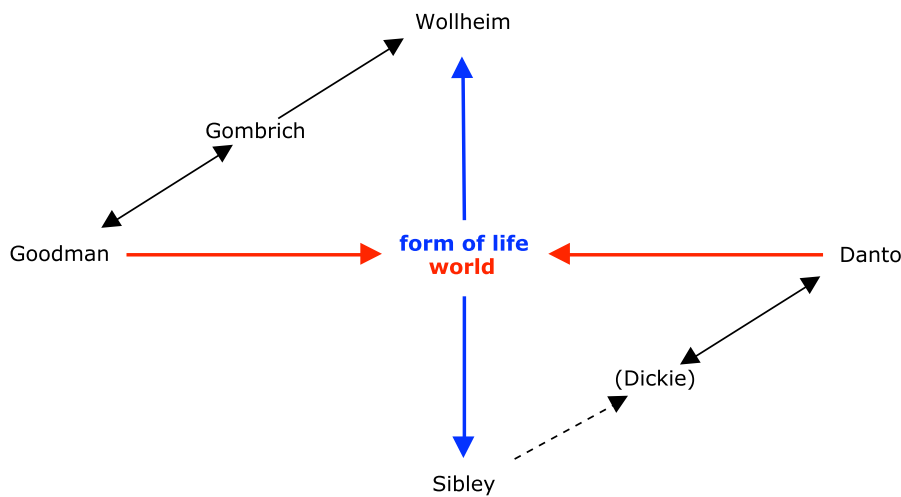
What I would like to ask myself is, however, the feasibility of the reverse course, that is, how it is possible – if at all – to outline a programmatically aesthetic reflection based on these same Wittgensteinian annotations. In perspective, this means asking what are the constraints and risks of such an undertaking. The preliminary step I will limit myself to here, however, is to consider other attempts of proceed in this direction and also to highlight what a Wittgensteinian aesthetics should *not* be. Is there a positive example according to which is legitimate to talk about a Wittgensteinian aesthetics, keeping in mind that his most distinctive observations about art and aesthetic experience – with all their theoretical connotations – reveal at most a potential, not fully accomplished, aesthetics?

My first steps in such a direction will draw from the brief but substantial history of the reception of Wittgenstein's "potential" aesthetics by resorting to the work of Richard Wollheim. His work is probably to be considered the most flavored with a Wittgensteinian taste to be found within the analytic tradition. There is an initial *topographic* reason, so to speak, that confirms this last statement. As a matter of fact, Wollheim's aesthetic program can be located as equidistant from both extensionalism (Goodman) and intensionalism (Danto), by representing it in a manner analogous to the conception of the meaning of "use" as a vanishing point in respect to the Fregean polarity of *Bedeutung-Sinn*.

2. *The Analytic Constellation*

If we want to trace a schematic representation of this rough topography we can observe how between the end of the 60s and mid 70s of the XXth century a sort of *constellation*,

made up of the major positions in the general field of analytic aesthetics, took shape. In those years the leading theses within the “analytic” reflection on art find their fullest expression, thanks also to the publication of masterpieces ranging from Sibley’s essays, *Art and Illusion* by Gombrich, to *Languages of Art* by Goodman, *Art and its Objects* by Wollheim, to *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* by Danto.



Such a constellation firstly envisages a horizontal axis with Goodman and Danto at its opposite and conflicting ends. It concerns the theme of the “artworld”, that is the way in which art “makes” the world. There are two different ways in which this is thought to happen. One is by mere extensional act (we might say, by making the function of *Bedeutung* unilateral and absolute), when we affirm that art is a construction of world-versions, regardless of whether there is, or not, an absolute ontological referent. The other is by mere intensional act (by making the function of *Sinn* unilateral and absolute), when, on the contrary, we maintain that art establishes, in a purely ontological manner and perhaps with an interpretative function, a particular world.

Compared to this horizontal axis, which follows the *Bedeutung-Sinn* polarity and gets stuck with the ontological question by providing at the extreme ends a completely negative, or completely positive solution, the vertical axis makes an orthogonal reversal which leaves out the alternative between extensionalism and intensionalism. This means insisting on the artistic practice within a context of practices, and therefore presenting the question of art as (or in relation to) a form of life. This occurs according to two specifications both characterized by a robust phenomenological-anthropological

component: on one hand, as an enquiry into the predicative practice of ordinary (aesthetic) language; on the other hand, as an analysis of perceptive and expressive practice. Along this vertical axis we can place, in opposite directions, strategies such as those of Sibley and Wollheim (analogously to the opposite positions occupied by the Oxonian school of ordinary language philosophy and by the so called "second" Wittgenstein). While the opposing views of Sibley and Wollheim are focussing on the *use* of the aesthetic, they share the need to escape from the extensional-intensional determination of the "meaning" of art.

In synthesis, then, within the analytic constellation, Wollheim takes a particular position which is intrinsically Wittgensteinian as it is directed to defining the meaning of art as *use* of the aesthetic meant as feature of a form of life.

To complete the scheme, however, one should mention infinite intermediate positions. Among these, the position of Gombrich is especially noticeable. His view converges with the subversion of ontological absolutism, but focusses on the structures of perception, positioning itself halfway between Goodman and Wollheim (who, however, start their aesthetic observations precisely by reviewing *Art and Illusion* by Gombrich). But Dickie's position is also influential. By means of the "institutional" dimension of the world of art, Dickie repeats the step taken by Danto, but connotes it in a way that in many aspects is comparable to the institutive and performative sense clarified by Austin (and inherited by Sibley).

3. *Wollheim: Five Moves for an Analysis of Art as a Form of Life*

I will try to set out in five moves the essential passages through which Wollheim, in my opinion, outlines the profile of a purely Wittgensteinian aesthetics, positioning himself beyond certain restrictive interpretations – mainly sceptical-relativist in origin – of Wittgenstein's points relevant to art and aesthetics.

3.1. In *Art and its Objects* Wollheim explicitly maintains that «art is, in Wittgenstein's sense, a form of life» (Wollheim [1980]: 104). He does not affirm that art is implied in a form of life, nor that it is comparable to a language-game among other language games; he declares instead that art is a form of life.

In so doing Wollheim also provides a precise reading of Wittgenstein's thought concerning the relationship between form of life and language:

The phrase [form of life] appears [in Wittgenstein] as descriptive or invocatory of the total

context within which alone language can exist: the complex of habits, experiences, skills, with which language interlocks in that it could not be operated without them and, equally, they cannot be identified without reference to it. (Wollheim [1980]: 104)

From this quotation we receive an initial warning. According to Wollheim, we should not assimilate a language or language-game to a form of life. The problem is, rather, to understand the connection between them. Wittgenstein himself goes back to this question many times, maybe not in the lucid way we would prefer, but probably because it is impossible to do so completely, as such interlocking is inextricable. For example, when the expression “form of life” appears in the *Philosophical Investigations* it tells us what is necessary to understand a language, or a language-game, without however showing the identification between the two different levels. As we read in Wittgenstein (1953): «to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life» (§ 19); «the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life» (§ 23); «it is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life» (§ 241). And in all these cases we could well distinguish the level of the form of life from the level of language, which in turn refers back to the first level as well.

In any case, the distinction between the two levels for Wollheim is essential. By virtue of this distinction, we should add, Wollheim’s position in aesthetics appears alternative to the theories that connect art to the establishment of a world or to the construction of a world-version. Rather than discussing the ontological problem of art in general, he prefers the phenomenological investigation of the source practices in which a form of life manifests itself. From such source practices emerges the concept of “art” as principle of grammatical structuring of (artistic) language-games. For Wollheim, the unity of the field of art objects, as a specific segment of a form of life before being an institutionally established cultural superstructure, depends on a precise *use* of the concept of art.

This is the reason why Benjamin Tilgham’s critique of Wollheim’s thought is not pertinent. He maintains, on the contrary, that art instead of being a form of life, presupposes a form of life as «a set of shared reactions, judgements and the like». It seems that Tilgham does not catch Wollheim’s point, claiming instead that art should be intended as an artworld as it is culture, or at the most as a «language-game» (Tilgham [1984]: 57-58). Thus Tilgham denies himself the opportunity of grasping the difference between historically given art and art as a particular “concept” containing within itself practice

and grammar – a difference that Wollheim instead regards as an essential premise in his entire discourse.

Concerning the interpretation of Wittgenstein's notion of form of life, Wollheim reminds us that to define language in relation to form of life, Wittgenstein, as is well known, criticizes two false views deriving from the tradition: one view according to which language is a collection of names, and the other that considers language as a set of inert marks. In both cases, the consequence would be that, in order to understand a language, it is essential to refer to extralinguistic experiences:

In particular Wittgenstein set himself against two false views of language. According to the first view, language consists essentially in names: names are connected unambiguously with objects, which they denote: and it is in virtue of this denoting relation that the words that we utter, whether to ourselves or out loud, are about things, that our speech and thought are "of" the world. According to the second view, language in itself is a set of inert marks: in order to acquire a reference to things, what is needed are certain characteristic experiences on the part of the potential language-users, notably the experiences of meaning and (to a lesser degree) of understanding: it is in virtue of these experiences that what we utter, aloud or to ourselves, is about the world. There are obviously considerable differences between these two views. In a way they are diametrically opposite, in that one regards language as totally adherent for its distinctive character on certain experiences, the other regards it as altogether complete prior to them. Nevertheless, the two views also have something in common. For both presuppose that these experiences exist, and can be identified, quite separately from language; that is, both from language as a whole, and also from that piece of language which directly refers to them. [...] The characterization of language (alternatively, of this or that sublanguage) as "a form of life" is intended to dispute the separation on either level. (Wollheim [1980]: 104-105)

Wollheim identifies the fact that the Wittgensteinian notion of form of life emerges once the field has been cleared of ghosts such as those, for example, that imply reference to an ineffable extra-linguistic experience, or – more generally – an extra-expressive experience. Wollheim's project contemplates precisely that what Wittgenstein has done in relation to language is projected in the field of aesthetics. It is a matter of grasping not so much the working rules of a language-game, or of an institutionalized world, but rather the rules and the source dynamics which are rooted in experiential practices and which give rise to formative grammars of art.

In this sense, the very adoption of the concept of form of life constitutes Wollheim's first move towards an overtly Wittgensteinian aesthetics.

3.2. A second Wittgensteinian move within Wollheim's discourse is to be found in the quotations from those texts of the 30s (principally *Blue Book* and *Brown Book*) in which the intransitive usage of terms such "particular" and "peculiar" is examined. Wollheim refers directly to such analysis to show how – in his view – the intransitive usage has the «function of emphasizing or concentrating upon some object or some feature of an object» (Wollheim [1980]: 95), rather than the function of designating something extrinsic in relation to the expressive experience. The intransitive usage of the expression has the function of *making one perceive in a different way*, rather than to impart knowledge or give information.

It is evident how the evaluation of such intransitive usage becomes essential for Wittgenstein's whole thinking. It is precisely in this aspect that that crisis of language models he uses as starting point to elaborate the concept of form of life is epitomized. A problem thus arises as to how something may be almost totally linguistic although not functioning according to traditional (or prescribed by philosophical thinking) models of linguistic communication. In this sense, we could state that the intransitive expression reveals itself as "para-linguistic", since the saying of it almost shows something in an image, revealing an aspect of it, and therefore makes one see something according to a sort of perceptive performativity. This, however, is not a simple image but one which spreads and articulates in the understanding. Such a perceptive performativity, for example, is at the core of the following observation of Wittgenstein on understanding: «To understand an ecclesiastical mode doesn't mean to get used to a sequence of tones in the sense in which I can get used to an odour and after a while no longer find it unpleasant. It means, rather, to hear something new, something that I haven't heard before»; that is, it means acting in a perceptive mode in a different way (Wittgenstein [2005]: 322e). Para-linguistic, on the one hand, the intransitive expression is, on the other hand, "para-iconic".

The attention given to the point of connection between iconic and linguistic determines moreover the divergence of Wollheim's aesthetic project from the one elaborated in the same years by Nelson Goodman, and presented in the volume *Languages of Art* published, as *Art and its Objects*, in 1968.

Goodman draws inspiration from an extreme extensionalistic nominalism in which the link between sign and referent is governed by a network of denotative cross-references directed towards the abolition of the very problem of resemblance through its resolution in the function of representation: «Denotation is the core of representation and is independent of resemblance» (Goodman [1976]: 5).

In this respect Wollheim perceives a more radically Wittgensteinian problem when he observes: «It is hard to see how the resemblance that holds between a painting or a drawing and that which it is of would be apparent, or could even be pointed out, to someone who was totally ignorant of the institution or practice of representation» (Wollheim [1980]: 18). This is the peculiarity of Wollheim's position. When we analyse the practice of representing usually we avoid asking ourselves if and how we have learnt, and what has made us acquire, the capability of seeing a representation as such. But what assures us that we are acting in the right way when we are confronted with something which is to be intended as a representation? It is the same question Wittgenstein asks about meaning: if we want to investigate the meaning of "meaning" we have to ask ourselves how we have learnt to "to mean". How can one know that a certain vocal emission is to be intended as a word and not as a mere sound? Once we have learnt the first word we possess an entire language, precisely because the learning of even a single word (or sign) implies the training in the practice of signifying as such¹. In the same way in which an articulated string of sounds implies the linguistic problem of meaning only once we have learnt the practice of "to mean", so the representing function of an image is able to be understood only if we are already trained in the function of "to represent". This means: only if we have already learnt to recognise the link between something as representing and something as represented.

Both in Goodman and in Wollheim resemblance is not a starting point. But while for Goodman it is made to disappear by attributing, in an extensionalistic manner, the representation to the denotation, for Wollheim it is resolved through the enquiry about the meaning (that is, about the *use*, following Wittgenstein) of the act of representing.

3.3. Closely connected to what has just been stated is the third Wittgensteinian move that can be found in Wollheim's aesthetics: the adoption of the paradigm of learning in order to explain what art is. In the same way that Wittgenstein has shown that the problem of language learning puts us in a good position to understand something about language, as there is a close link between the learning mode and the nature of what we learn, so we should proceed to understand art's nature. The act of learning, both in lan-

¹ It may be noted that the same question is asked by Ernst Cassirer in years not too distant from those of Wittgenstein's reflections. He analyses cases of language pathology and aphasia to emphasize that the possession of even just a single term as a real word means having access to an entire language. From this point he draws important analogies with art. Cf. also the essays on *Language and Art* in Cassirer (1979).

guage and in art, Wollheim observes, is not a mere question of learning the external functioning of the relationship between marks, nor is it based on the reference to states of mind. This is the crucial point for evaluating the effective significance of Wollheim's so called "intentionalism" (and in this evaluation we should not underestimate his great interest in pictorial art, and especially figurative art).

The core of Wollheim's intentionalism lies in his placing in the artist's intention the standard of correctness of the vision of representation. But we must be cautious. This intentionalism is to be read in the light of the basic assumption – programmatic and methodological – of a Wittgensteinian-style paradigm. Being a form of life, art cannot be understood by referring to the private experience of the artist. As is revealed by the fertility which Wollheim explicitly attributes to the psychoanalytic instrument, it is true that the psychic context both of the artist (as to the intention within the creation) and of the consumer (as to the expectations involved in its reception) is an essential element in fully understanding the way in which a work of art operates. However the psychic context is also and above all so essential thanks to those *non private* elements that are embedded in it. What Wollheim is interested in, and what pushes him to resort to the psychoanalytic instrument, is not so much the so called *intentio recta* of the artist, but rather something that, as artist's intention, is acting within the expression quickly precipitating into an expressive form as a result of being filtered through the position of the individual. In other words, its being expressive material among other materials. The concept of mind has thus been revolutionized. It is no longer a private domain over which the individual rules, but it is what is woven into the individual by means of the learned practices which are grafted onto a form of life, anonymously, through an unobserved process of mediation (bringing about that «renunciation [...] of the immediate gratifications of phantasy [...] in response to the stringencies of something that he [the artist] recognizes as external to, and hence independent of, himself» which distinguishes the artist from the neurotic; Wollheim [1980]: 117). Therefore, it is no accident at all that, to investigate this level, Wollheim puts together the devil and the holy water, that is, the "second" Wittgenstein and a Freud as read according to the interpretation of Melanie Klein.

This can also be seen in the way in which Wollheim, on one hand, connects the artist's intentionality with the criterion of determination of the correctness of what a figurative picture represents; on the other hand, however, he constantly links the effective possibility of fully realizing such need for sense with the material configuration of the image. In addition, for him, "intention" *per se* indicates more than a mere wish to mean, as it includes the articulate and confused totality of beliefs, emotions and desires that

operate in the mind of an individual as his/her context, which certainly goes beyond a private personal domain. If this was not the case, it would simply be contradictory to endorse intentionalist positions within the framework of a theory of art as a form of life. According to this theory it is necessary to consider the most subtle aspects of the intricate relationship between the specific traditions of the arts, their transformations in particular historical and social contexts and their activations in individual concrete practices – in the same way in which language comprehension is connected to the use of “grammatically well composed” constructs which, while expressing somebody’s experience, only function when not subjected to an idiosyncratic discretion.

The attention to practice, which emerges in this analysis of the intention is also confirmed by the acknowledgement of the underlying assumptions relevant to the training in usage, even in the case where there is an exclusive and reductive reference to the practice of ostension. Two elements are anyhow implied here: the first is that for learning in general, one has to know what it means to “obey a rule”, that is, to be able to regularly use a word, and to know how to go on; the second is that, notably in the case of language, one needs to know how to organize the words learnt under more general linguistic categories – for example, “brown” under “color”. The application of these emphases to the “art lesson” leads Wollheim to take sides against elementarism. As he observes, what occurs during an art lesson is «imparting or transmitting something like a language», that is to learn how «to make elements out of what [one] studies», to build a language (Wollheim [1974]: 149). To do so, one needs to possess a concept of art, which is both a grammar and a practice at the same time². As a consequence, Wollheim concludes, «We may think of the concept of art as a protective parent. It is in its shadow that the vast oedipal conflict that is known as the history of art is fought on – a conflict in which the sons win, if they do, by becoming parents. Then they bear the concept that has borne them» (Wollheim [1974]: 151).

A fundamental difference between art and language remains, however, which emerges at the very moment in which their specific modes of learning are examined. Wollheim specifies that the motif of the learning a language, in Wittgenstein, concerns

² Since for Wittgenstein, only because «“obeying a rule” is a practice» is it possible to argue against the notion of a private language: «to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule “privately”: otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it» (Wittgenstein [1953]: § 202).

«the case of the person learning his native language»³ (Wollheim [1980]: 132). In the case of art, in contrast, Wollheim doubts that it is possible to find an «equivalent» of the «native speaker», as there is no “0 grade” of expressiveness that can be described. Just because the aesthetic is a form of life before being a language-game, it is impossible to suspend the familiarity that it always implies. This familiarity gives it that iconic character which prevents any sharp distinctions between sign and referent, and between expression and content, although such iconicity doesn't cover the whole artistic expressive sign which, equally, is always directed to linguisticity (Wollheim [1980]: 120-123). In short, it is in the concrete experiential practice of expression and understanding that the union of iconic and linguistic emerges. This union has fundamental connotations for the aesthetic, which exists in a field in which naturalness is not given (as it would be if we dealt with purely iconic signs) but is established in the features of familiarity: «to call a sign iconic is just to say of it that it is part of a well-entrenched or familiar system. The naturalness of a sign is a function of how natural we are with it» (Wollheim [1980]: 121).

3.4. The fourth typically Wittgensteinian move that emerges in Wollheim's discourse is the acknowledgement of the complex situation that characterizes perception in its relationship with understanding. In *Art and its Objects*, in order to demonstrate such complexity, Wollheim introduces the difference between seeing something in the flesh and «representational seeing», which is examined by starting from the analysis of seeing-as, or seeing aspects, conducted by Wittgenstein. In representational seeing, in Wollheim's view, one sees more than what is merely given (as Adorno would say: *was nicht der Fall ist*): one sees what does not happen, beyond what happens, “against” the first proposition of the *Tractatus* according to which «Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist». To be able to see representations, besides knowing already what representing means, and therefore having already acquired the practice of representation, one needs to go beyond the mere retinal evidence. The gaze, so to speak, should be grammatically structured⁴.

³ In the second edition of *Art and its Objects* a striking typographical error reverses the meaning of Wollheim's discourse (and that of Wittgenstein), by the omission of the words set out in <...>: «In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein insists that if we try to find out about the nature of language by considering how someone learns a language, we must not (as St Augustine did) take <the case of the person who already knows one language and is learning another, but we must take> the case of the person learning his native language» (cf. the first edition of *Art and its Objects*: Harper and Row, New York 1968, p. 114).

⁴ As occurs in the transition to philosophical investigation when – according to Wittgenstein – beyond seeing phenomena we have «to penetrate [*durchschauen*] phenomena» through an investi-

By deepening the particular statute of seeing representations, after *Art and its Objects* Wollheim changes direction and introduces the notion of “seeing-in” to indicate only that peculiar perceptive experience in which one can see both the pictorial surface and the constitution of the representational image:

Seeing-in is a distinct kind of perception, and it is triggered by the presence within the field of vision of a differentiated surface. Not all differentiated surfaces will have this effect, but I doubt that anything significant can be said about what exactly a surface must be like for it to have this effect. When the surface is right, then an experience with a certain phenomenology will occur, and it is this phenomenology that is distinctive about seeing-in. [...] The distinctive phenomenological feature I call “twofoldness”, because, when seeing-in occurs, two things happen: I am visually aware of the surface I look at, and I discern something standing out in front of, or (in certain cases) receding behind, something else. (Wollheim [1987]: 46)

The specification of seeing-in marks a significant transformation within Wollheim’s thought. In *Art and its Objects*, where this locution does not yet appear, Wollheim holds that seeing representations is in a continuum with “seeing-as” examined by Wittgenstein and used independently by Gombrich as a basis for the discourse developed in *Art and Illusion* (but adopted also by Aldrich [1963]). Subsequently (see especially the essay *Seeing-as, Seeing-in, and Pictorial Representation*, in Wollheim [1980]: 205-226), he arrives at the categorization of “seeing-in” precisely to stress, contrary to his previous approach, the particular discontinuity between seeing representations and visually perceiving *tout court*. When we see a representation as representation – such is Wollheim’s thesis – the perceptual practice incorporates schemes which determine an order of constraints that are different from those implied by the usual perceptive pattern. In seeing-in one grasps more than a perceptive pattern, even when what is experienced is potentially unstable. Wollheim speaks, in this respect, of a particular «perceptual project» implicit in the seeing-in, that is a «special perceptual capacity» that «some animals may share with us but almost certainly most don’t» and that «allows us to have perceptual experiences of things that are not present to the senses: that is to say, both of things that are absent and also of things that are non-existent» (Wollheim [1980]: 217).

In the case of seeing-in, a clearly aesthetic restraint conditions the cognitive performance. In order for the seeing-in to occur, it is necessary to remain within the perception (precisely *in it*) to be able to have access – only as a consequence and within those

gation which «is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the “possibilities” of phenomena», that is, where «our investigation is therefore a grammatical one» (Wittgenstein [1953]: § 90).

borders – also to what materially appears as non-existent. This is the opposite of the scheme according to which we can project an arbitrary cognitive categorization on the visual pattern, and where the cognitive would become the restraint, while the aesthetic would operate exclusively as incidental backing. It is also relevant that this becomes a particular human quality: the capacity to get more than what is strictly given in the framework of the perceptive tissue becomes then an anthropological feature, which gives rise to internal grammars of experiential practice. The aesthetic becomes the context in which the interaction between emotion, cognition and imagination is manifested. This underlies human cultural performances as the specific way for humans to articulate the interaction between organism and environment as a system of differences, derived from the original difference between “simple” perception and the perception of something else *in* what is the mere percept by assigning to that something else an expressive aspect.

3.5. The fifth move is probably the most important in this context, even though it appears the least clearly Wittgensteinian of all Wollheim’s moves that are directed to the programmatic construction of aesthetics. It consists in the acknowledgement of the problematic link between the act of perception and the perceived content on the one hand, and expression on the other hand, which is categorized by Wollheim through the Baudelairian concept of “*correspondance*”. The problem is whether and how there may be a correspondence – precisely – between what is perceived and the expression that accounts for such content. If we didn’t move within a Wittgensteinian framework we would be tempted again to deem it necessary to refer to a private content which would mysteriously mediate between sign and what is designated, and between the emotion which is offered for consumption through the expression, and the emotion just as it would have been felt by the artist. But the Wittgensteinian framework, however, allows us to focus on an essential and conclusive point: by means of the notion of correspondence, Wollheim wants to emphasize the adjacency in the real sense between what is normally called “lived-experience (*Erlebnis*)” and what is usually called “expression”. Adjacency means contiguity, adherence, fitting into another’s shape to become its profile in its expressivity. From the artist’s point of view, the problem becomes that of finding the “right” (in German: *treffend*) word that best expresses a content through an enquiry which is motivated by an objective that cannot be put in front of one’s eyes, but which is recognizable only once we have “hit” it. The correspondence Wollheim is talking about is primitive compared to the «expressive perception» exactly by virtue of its independ-

ence from the projection (but non “indeterminate” in relation to it, as Budd [2001] maintains to the contrary).

It is an experiential link, and not merely semiotic, which connects the represented and the representing as expressed. This is why Wollheim refers to the Baudelairian category of *correspondance* (cfr. Wollheim [1980]: 31-32 and 118-120) in which there is a mediation which, however, takes the form of an immediacy. It is through the category of correspondence that fusion in perception between aesthetic and cognitive is described, and which Wollheim later recognizes also to be enriched by the third component of emotion. In the first place, on *correspondance* is based the “representational” perception as «blending of concept and perception» (Wollheim [1980]: 220). This is not articulated in two phases, but as an original unity, a “state of fusion”, as here we are dealing with a concept that derives from a perceptive practice and it is not imposed upon it (thus giving rise to that “analytical a posteriori” feature which is typical of Wittgenstein’s prior discourse and Wollheim’s subsequent discourse). In the second place correspondance is the main principle of “expressive” perception in which «expressed emotion and perception fuse» (Wollheim [1987]: 82) by virtue of an act that goes from objectuality to subjectuality, and therefore in the opposite direction to that taken by the traditional approach based on semantic investment.

4. *From the Ineffable to the Expressive*

We are now at the point of resolution of the aesthetic problem mentioned above (for another way to make this point, analysing the problem of the expressive properties, cf. Spackman [2012]). This problem has prompted the rhetorics of the ineffable, which have often served only to nourish the myth of an internal world, which is created through narratives. Wollheim’s aesthetics insists on this point, as were the earlier systematic reflections of Wittgenstein, in order to eliminate or at least reduce the distance from a philosophical analysis needing to separate intertwined and united elements for its own exclusive benefit. Such attempt at divarication produces conceptual fetishes which lead to psychologistic analyses of the expression, of the concept, of art and of philosophy in general.

In this respect the pages in which Wittgenstein explores the link between lived experience and expression are extraordinary documents. In these pages he tries to diminish their differences according to a conception in which expression is essentially understood as the face of experience. It is not a mask that can be taken off by whoever is wearing it.

This face is the wrinkle, the physiognomy (cf. Wittgenstein [2005]: 87), that an experience assumes in the forms and ways of its sedimentation. Such sediment is the result of the attempt to find the “right” expression in a continuous circularity between what is experienced and what is expressed, where the same framework of expression, in turn, operates retroactively on the texture of experience. This causes it to take on what seems like the familiar, usual face which we almost iconically recognize as belonging to our experience: «It’s like searching for a word when you are writing and then saying: “That’s it, *that* expresses what I intended!” – Your acceptance certifies the word as having been found and hence as being the one you were looking for» (Wittgenstein [1978]: 68).

In Wollheim, this view emerges within a conception of art as a form of life which gives value to notions referring to the practical dimension in which the understanding of such elements develops. If it is true that there is a close unity, an intimate fusion between lived experience and expression – precisely because the possibility of understanding expression as an instrument for designating the internal world or as its mere symptom has been excluded by virtue of the coincidence in the correspondence –, then we can only remain within this unitary and fused structure even in order to articulate something like an understanding (by restoring the link between lived experience, expression and understanding). The understanding is the development of such expressive potentiality, therefore implementing practical structures that are embedded even within an expression.

This is what is pointed out in a set of observations contained in the *Philosophical Investigations*, in which Wittgenstein firstly asks himself:

What happens when we make an effort – say in writing a letter – to find the right expression for our thoughts? – This phrase compares the process to one of translating or describing: the thoughts are already there (perhaps were there in advance) and we merely look for their expression. This picture is more or less appropriate in different cases. – But can’t all sorts of things happen here? – I surrender to a mood and the expression *comes*. Or a picture occurs to me and I try to describe it. Or an English expression occurs to me and I try to hit on the corresponding German one. Or I make a gesture, and ask myself: What words correspond to this gesture? And so on. (Wittgenstein [1953]: § 335)

And finally observes:

But didn’t I already intend the whole construction of the sentence (for example) at its beginning? So surely it already existed in my mind before I said it out loud! – If it was in my mind, still it would not normally be there in some different word order. But here we are constructing a misleading picture of “intending”, that is, of the use of this word. An intention is em-

bedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question. (Wittgenstein [1953]: § 337)

By elaborating on these themes, Wollheim's discourse presents an interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought which, while critical of the first reception in the context of aesthetics of Wittgenstein's stimulating suggestions (especially *à la* Morris Weitz) – which relied almost exclusively on scepticism, or an insufficiently constructive relativism – through the notions of practice and embedded intention, and the understanding of art as a form of life rather than as a mere language game, are aiming also to reach the bedrock on which the spade of aesthetic speculation is turned (cf. Wittgenstein [1953]: § 217)⁵.

In conclusion, in Wollheim's work a promising Wittgensteinian aesthetics is signalled, in which the enquiry explores the articulations of the form of life in practices at the beginning of expressive dynamics, of the perception of representation and therefore also of the understanding of art which underlie the world of art and its always relative structures⁶.

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⁵ See, for example, Johannessen (1981) and Eldridge (1987).

⁶ I'm grateful to Mariella Lorusso for the translation of this paper.

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