Aisthesis
PRATICHE, LINGUAGGI E SAPERI DELL'ESTETICO
rivista on-line del Seminario Permanente di Estetica
spes
anno VI, numero 2

A Survey of Artistic Value
From Analytic Philosohy to Neurobiology

Zachary P. Norwood

> To connect the desirable and the desired, to connect values with human needs and wishes, is indeed the task of a naturalistic theory of value. But to make this connection prematurely, through an identification of intrinsic value with immediate enjoyments, encourages a dangerously one-sided approach to human problems.
>
> Beardsley (1965): 17

> In beauty, human beings posit themselves as the measure of perfection; in select cases, they worship themselves in it. In this way, a species cannot help but say yes to itself and only itself. Its *lowest* instincts, those of self-preservation and self-propagation, shine through in sublimities like these. People think that the world itself is overflowing with beauty, – they *forget* that they are its cause. They themselves have given the world its beauty – but oh! only a very human, all too human beauty . . .
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche (2006): 201

Philosophers have long been divided over the status of artistic value. Monroe Beardsley, Malcolm Budd, C. I. Lewis, and others have argued that artworks only hold value «from experience», that is, from perceiving them with the five senses and registering their rewarding properties, psychologically[1]. Such a view may seem obvious to many: is it not a truism that we must perceive a thing before we can rightly judge its value? Without firsthand experience, how can we claim to «like», «dislike», or feel «indifferent» about a work of art? Yet many philosophers have problematized what we call the «experience» a work offers. Rather than perceiving a work's properties «directly», for example, many believe that experiencing a work is highly mediated by epistemic and/or natural variables, such as the degree to which a reader already knows about a work's genre

[1] Budd (2003): 267. – I quote Budd here because his work offers the most circumspect account of value empiricism that I am aware of.

conventions or whether a work appeals to human nature[2]. Those challenging the idea that artistic value is «intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers», to repeat Budd's precise formulation, include Noël Carroll, Kendall Walton, R. A. Sharpe, and many others (proponents of the conceptual art movement, most notably) (Budd [2003]: 264). For these philosophers and artists, a work of art is valued on the basis of its normative and/or natural «instrumental values», such as its moral message or adaptive advantage, rather than for the «intrinsic value» of the experience it offers. Of these two positions – »value empiricism» (Beardsley, Budd) and «value instrumentalism» (Carroll, Walton) – the latter can be the most counterintuitive, since its main premise is that we do not value works for anything they offer firsthand, from experience. It is equally puzzling for newcomers to philosophy of art, I suspect, to entertain the idea that a work's value has a natural, evolutionary basis, yet at the same time to claim that precisely because of this we do not value the work for the experience it offers, but rather for its perceived (not necessarily real) adaptive advantage (cfr. Carroll [2000]). So I shall try to clarify the different varieties of value instrumentalism before turning to an alternative account of artistic value that draws on neurobiology (the neuroscientific investigation of adaptive physiologies and how they affect cognition and emotion).

1. *Normative and natural instrumental values*

It should be understood, first, that *normative* instrumental values, following the work of Kendall Walton, are generally thought to require prior familiarity with whatever artistic «category» a work falls into (or «categories», if a work incorporates more than one) (Walton [1970]). We could say, for example, that a television viewer, Ashley, needs to watch *Star Trek* with prior understanding of the «science-fictional» category of art – which treats humanistic themes through the medium of imaginary, usually futuristic worlds – *before* she can rightly appreciate an episode of *Star Trek* (*ibid.*). If on the other hand Ashley were science-fictionally naïve, then she could not (on the normative instrumentalist view) value her experience of *Star Trek* as a science-fictional type of art, even though her experience may offer other types of value, such as entertainment, wonder, novelty, or whatever else[3]. Failing to appreciate a work's normative

[2] An overview of related issues can be found in Konigsberg (2012). Also, for the subject of human nature and art see Carroll (2004a).
[3] For a discussion of "internal" and "external" values, see Walton (1993).

instrumental values, therefore, does not preclude valuing the same work for other reasons, «internal» or «external» to the experience afforded (such as valuing the work's cognitive, emotional, or aesthetic properties). All that science-fictionally naïve viewers cannot value, according to philosophers after Walton, is *Star Trek*'s genre-specific norms – *Star Trek as* a kind of «science fictional» art.

Natural instrumental values, on the other hand, are governed by evolved sensibilities. When Ashley values a work of art «naturally», she does so on the basis of the work's perceived (not necessarily real) adaptive advantages, rather than whatever she might think she values about the work's experience, *as* a work of art (*its* particular kind of reward, from the experience the work offers and not something instrumental to it)[4]. An example would be playing *World of Warcraft* because «leveling» and gaining reputations in «guilds» tap into a primal need to display fitness, even if *World of Warcraft* offers no real adaptive advantage (or even if playing obsessively results in a *reduction* of fitness). What anyone values from playing *World of Warcraft*, on the natural instrumental approach, is not the game, as a kind of massively multiplayer online experience, but the perceived (perhaps unconscious) adaptive advantages the game offers. Likewise, paintings, novels, and other types of art, on the natural instrumentalist view, only confer value from their biological saliency. «Symmetry» would thus be rewarding because, as humans, we find symmetric faces rewarding; «sexual stimuli» because propagation is a core biological drive; and «threats» because they tap into survival instincts (Little, Jones, DeBruine [2011]: 1639-1640). What makes «symmetry» and other such properties *naturally instrumentally* rewarding, in any case, is their contingency upon adaptive physiologies that influence aesthetic perception: it is not the property in itself that we find rewarding from a work of art, but our brain registering a «natural kind» of salient stimulus[5].

From the above overview of instrumental value, in both *normative* and *natural* forms, it should be reemphasized that works are thought to confer value *not* from anything «intrinsic» to the experiences they offer, from the works themselves. This is

[4] Here I am thinking of Noël Carroll's seminal paper: Carroll (2000). A similar, broader view may be found in Carroll (2004a). As I believe, many others have developed important variants of the natural instrumental value position, even if the subject of artistic value is not directly addressed. See for example Boyd (2009).

[5] For recent debates on the "natural kind" status of some perceptual properties, such as those that trigger emotional responses, see Lench, Bench and Flores (2013). See also Scarantino, Griffiths (2011).

the main thesis of value instrumentalists, with two variations: the *normative* variation is that we cannot even appropriately understand a work without sufficient background knowledge of its artistic «category» – its genre conventions, standard modes of presentation, the circumstances surrounding the work's origin (who made it, how it was made, and when). The *natural* variation, on the other hand, holds that what we value from a work is not «the work itself», experienced «directly», but whatever kinds of evolutionarily salient properties the work offers. In either case, an instrumental value is mediated, its origin being antecedent to the experience of the work.

2. *Aesthetic ontology*

Taking note of the ontological status of «aesthetic properties» in general – what it is about a work that makes it «balanced», «powerful», and so forth – ought to also help frame a neurobiological reassessment of artistic value. Whether properties are thought to be psychologically, physically, or otherwise instantiated in works of art, what they *are* can be framed in terms of their being «mind-independent» or «-dependent», «intersubjective» or «subjective», «real» or «phenomenal». Consider how realists take aesthetic properties as actually inhering in works, as they are: a «red splotch» on a canvas is seen as such because its pigment and shape exist in such a way that it looks like a splotch reflecting red light, intersubjectively, and this is so whether a colorblind viewer fails to see red in the splotch, or whether a blind viewer fails to see redness or splotchiness altogether. Anti-realists reject this claim: aesthetic properties require minds capable of translating whatever can be sensed from a work into subjective impressions. «Redness» and «splotchiness» can vary between individuals, and so there is nothing *about* these properties, as they are, that determines their perceptive quality. For want of space I must sidestep the nuances of this debate, though what I should like to argue in relation to it is intelligible enough without needing further elaboration, namely, that value empiricists and instrumentalists can share a common ontology for aesthetic properties. If this is so, then differences between empiricists and instrumentalists on value ought to dissolve.

First, instrumental conceptions of value may share ontological assumptions found in Malcolm Budd's and Jerrold Levinson's quasi-realist positions on artistic value, even though both of these philosophers are value empiricists, epistemologically (Levinson [2004] and [2011]; Budd [2003]: 269). On the quasi- or indirect-realist position, works embody «intrinsically» valuable experiences because their properties can reliably confer value, on their own, once they have been experienced with understanding. An example

might be Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, whose satirical and formal properties offer rewarding experiences to those able to understand them. If readers fail to understand Swift's *satire*, then they will not value *A Modest Proposal* as a satirical work; or if some readers are radically conservative, then they may dislike the work's sociological message, because it maligns radical conservatives' preferred method of social control: economic subjection. In either such case, it would be the reader who fails to appreciate the work, as a satire or apolitical moral message, not the work that fails to deliver value. What the instrumentalist on value rejects from the latter view is that it is really the work itself, as experienced, that confers value. What both instrumentalists and empiricists on value can agree upon, however, is that the ontology of the work's properties is relational – that only humans can understand the work, from perceiving and experiencing it, rather than the work holding value mind-independently.

But it is precisely at this point that there is some confusion about the meaning of the term «intrinsic». If both instrumentalists and empiricists can agree that valuable properties must be registered by *human* minds capable of predictably *human* kinds of responses (what Budd calls the «anthropocentricity» of artistic value), then it will always be the case that a work cannot hold value without being experienced and understood by human minds first. In philosophic shorthand, what makes realism «quasi» or «indirect» for artistic properties is their *mind-dependency*. Perceiving «straight lines» *as* straight requires a visual system capable of perceiving straight lines (from «lateral inhibition», for example). A jumping spider's visual system, on the other hand, cannot register «straight lines» as straight, as we do. Though a line's configuration is undoubtedly *mind-independent*, as a physical property out there in the world, our perceiving a line *as* straight is psychologically relational and anthropocentric[6]. Thus we could say that a work offers kinds of value-conferring experiences, across individuals, rather than different kinds of value-conferring experiences, between individuals, but only on the basis of their being psychologically accessible and understood. This is why it is claimed – by instrumentalists and empiricists alike – that a work's experiences must «emerge» from a psychological exchange with its properties, rather than from unmediated, «direct» perception. A biological kind of real thing – a physiological system – combines with and registers another real thing – an artistic property of some sort, such as the color blue, the feeling of jealousy, disgust, the perception of balance, and other such emergent

[6] I forego any review of Kantian metaphysics and related concerns here, for want of space. To see an elaboration of the position reviewed here, see "Aesthetic Supervenience" in Levinson (2011).

properties. This interaction between real minds and real things is what makes artistic values «indirectly real».

Arthur Danto, commenting on Dieter Roth's *Tibidabo*, a work consisting in part of twenty-four hours of recorded dog barking, exemplifies the kind of psychological emergence required for intrinsic value: «our response to [the recorded dog barking] is exactly like the response we would have to uninterrupted dog barking in real life. It gets on our nerves. It is annoying. […] We are all alike when it comes to the barking of dogs» (Danto [2004]: 28). Though uninterrupted dog barking is not «rewarding» but «punishing», as an aesthetic property it nevertheless illustrates how something «real» about a work (recorded sound patterns) can elicit an intersubjective kind of aesthetic response (annoyance), even though human minds must decode the recorded sound patterns and comprehend them *as* dogs barking.

3. *External values*

An idea that may help relieve some tension between realists and anti-realists on artistic value is «external» value. Imagine hypothetically that *Tibidabo* is a protest piece about the aversiveness of ambient noise. We find the work displeasing, intrinsically, but understand its positive political message, conceptually: it raises consciousness about the ills of poorly placed, noisy industries, such as dog kennels. If this were so, then *Tibidabo* would assume value not from any naturally emergent reward, intrinsic to the experience the work offers, but from its sociopolitical message. *Tibidabo* may have no such message, and what is «aesthetic» about the work – our perceiving (seeing, hearing, noticing, feeling) its «annoyance», «unity», «mixed media», «texture», and whatever else, after Frank Sibley ([1965]: 137) – may not be directly discernible with the five senses, but many works do offer strong sociopolitical messages, indirectly expressed, messages that can be shown to relate to the works' presentation in some way. When such a work is valued for what it suggests, alludes to, or otherwise symbolically represents, rather than for its directly perceived properties, its value becomes a species of what Walton (1993) calls an «external» artistic value. For these kinds of value, artworks and their sensible properties are akin to «props» in a game of «make-believe»: we see a stump (the prop) and agree to see the stump as a bear, and we do so on the basis of our adopting rules about what the stump represents (Walton [1993]: 501). The stump in this game is not frightening, from perception, but the idea that the stump is a bear is frightening, and it is from our shared idea that the stump is frightening that it acquires «external» value.

An example: although Duchamp's *Fountain* offers little intrinsically rewarding experience as far as its sensible properties go, the work nevertheless acquires value as a prop within the «anti-aesthetic» game of make-believe (the game – understood in a neutral sense – where participants agree to reject the art establishment and its lofty norms, such as by denying that we can only appreciate a work on the basis of its perceptively beautiful forms).

It is important to recognize, also, that «external» kinds of value apply to works whose properties would otherwise offer intrinsically «unrewarding» experiences. To instance such a possibility, we need only consider «disgusting» or «otherness» inducing works of art, the kinds of work whose properties «refuse conventional human measure» (Siebers [2003]: 192). Such works are thought to include Marc Quinn's *Self*, a bust sculpted from the artist's own frozen blood; Damien Hirst's *This Little Piggy Went to Market*, a sagittally halved pig suspended in formaldehyde; Jake and Dinos Chapman's *Übermensch*, a fiberglass, rocky spire surmounted by Stephen Hawking; and other kinds of work that, to most, evoke a sense of oddity, repugnance, or anthropocentric irony (*ibid.*). Such works offer little intrinsically rewarding experience *from* perceiving and interacting with their properties. They have little to do with what Jerrold Levinson calls «a life being a certain [positive] way» and everything to do with sociopolitical commentary, provocation, and rebelliousness vis-à-vis established make-believe norms and institutionalized values. However we wish to categorize such works – as «anti-establishment», «anti-aesthetic», «anti-norm» – they generally serve to reject «aesthetic dictates that ally beauty to harmonious form, balance, hygiene, fluidity of expression, and genius» (Siebers [2003]: 186). They are meant to oppose – perhaps even exclude – transcendental and/or naturalistic values (those thought to be universally moral, *a priori*, or biologic).

4. *Neurobiology and artistic value*

Whether the kinds of art canvased above are truly «anti-aesthetic» or only seemingly so, it may remain true that there is something *about* these works that grants their external and/or instrumental value, even when the properties in question are understood «externally». Specifically, I should like to argue that *Tibidabo*, *Fountain*, and other such conceptual works of art may not be altogether «anti-aesthetic» – a *sui generis* kind of non-perceptual, non-universal art – but rather only anti- «natural», «ideal», or «political» norm. What is valued in or from such works remains neurobiologically instantiated as valuable kinds of property emergent *from* the work.

First, contentions between value empiricists – those believing in the contingency of artistic value on experiencing a work's properties, as discernible in or from the work (Budd, Levinson, Beardsley) – and value instrumentalists – those believing artistic value is contingent on properties antecedent to or «beyond» a work's firsthand experience (Walton, Sharpe, Carroll) – can be resolved by appealing to neuroscientific distinctions between perception and memory. Second, what is intrinsically valuable about an experience rather than instrumentally valuable can be clarified by appealing to research on emotional systems and how they modulate both perception and memory of a work's properties.

When perceiving a work's properties, it is thought that what is experienced is not «direct» but cognitively mediated (by psychological drives, adaptive physiology, culture, beliefs, and a number of other possibilities). Richard Wollheim famously argued that we do not only «see» a work's properties, on the canvas or inscribed on the page, but rather «see-in» to the canvas, page, or whatever other medium an inward, *representational* sense: we see a formation and figure in Jake and Dinos Chapman's *Übermensch* and, concurrently, «see-in» to this formation, figure, and title a wheelchair-bound man triumphantly looking out atop a rocky summit, a man we know to be Stephen Hawking; we «see-in» to the work an ironic juxtaposition between physical disability and mental ability, an impossible feat made possible from what we know of Hawking's iconic status as a mental powerhouse (Wollheim [1998]). But how can this «twofoldness» of perception, as Wollheim calls it, be accounted for in a way that brings what we see together with what we conceive? How can we «see» properties and, concurrently, «see-in» to them a fuller representational sense, without assuming that the one can disjoin from the other? Seeing and seeing-in may be the everyday experience of consciousness, but understanding how *perceiving* a property – its sensory input – and relating this perception to what is unseen – our cognitive registry of a property's sensory input – can be challenging. Ostensible connections (or disconnections) between perceived aesthetic properties, on the one hand, and the cognitive reception of these properties, on the other, is what problematizes aesthetic judgment.

Neuroscientific work on perception and memory over the past ten years has shown how memory formation and recollection is largely *representational* in nature: what we encode into memory is a kind of «mental image» of perceived objects, discrete properties, contexts, and events in the world (not photographic kinds of representational images, or representations that can be understood in altogether

Aristotelian terms, but images that pick out highly specified perceptual characteristics, across sensory modalities; properties that have a purposeful plasticity about them, that can «reconsolidate», rewrite themselves over time, degrade, retain lasting fidelity, combine with other mental images; properties that are prone to suggestive alteration, falseness, confabulation, or partial representation of what was actually perceived at the time of encoding)[7]. When interacting with a chair for the first time, we encode the chair's properties – discrete and holistic – into «long-term» («remote») memory, and we do so using various perceptual modalities – visual, tactile, proprioceptive, auditory. The result is a «multimodal representation» of the chair, an impression thenceforth associated with everything perceived from chairs into a continually reconsolidated conceptual repository, one that is coded for *that* particular class of object, namely, all the various styles, functions, weights, noises, and textures of chairs (Barsalou [2010] and [2008]).

What the above suggests, epistemically, is that understanding and finding value in works of art require sufficient re-activation of relevant representational memories, *unless* the properties in question evoke instinctive responses from mere exposure. The latter kinds of value, which I discuss further below, include shrill or soothing sounds, various emotional postures – dominance, submission, anger, fear – and types of sexual stimuli. For most works, however – especially novels and poems – there is no meaning to be had on mere exposure: we need to translate textual symbols into representational memories, and it is only on the basis of such a translation that a work can confer value[8]. This makes «aesthetic properties», in Sibley's sense, a necessary ingredient of artistic comprehension, especially if these properties identify with multimodal representations built from the fabric of «non-aesthetic properties», from raw kinds stimuli that have no aesthetic meaning in isolation[9] (textual symbols, phonetic representations, and other types of raw sensory data – visual, auditory, tactile – that have no inherent meaning until translated into fuller multimodal impressions: the sense of a chair, the sound of a person, the feeling of sandpaper).

From a representational standpoint, therefore, whenever a work has us read or think about a class of properties, our understanding of that class is contingent on reactivating

[7] Moulton, Kosslyn (2009); Meyer, Damasio (2009); Thompson (2008); Martin (2007); Schacter (1999); Schacter, Addis (2007).

[8] Hickok, Poeppel (2007); Barsalou (1999); Damasio *et al.* (2004).

[9] Sibley (1965). See in the latter the classic distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties, which I have reframed in neuroscientific terms.

our repository of sense impressions for that class. If we have no idea who Stephen Hawking is, or what «Übermensch» means, philosophically and historically, we cannot understand and appreciate Jake and Dinos Chapman's *Übermensch*. Understanding and appreciating «Stephen Hawking», «Übermensch», and the relation between these perceptual properties, requires re-activating corresponding mental representations about particular people, historical contexts, and ongoing philosophic debates. This applies to our expectations about how artistic works ought to be presented as well. If some imaginary civilization has grown accustomed to appreciating paintings whose features «protrude from the wall like relief maps of different kinds of terrain», then for members of that civilization, what is taken as «standard» – paintings that protrude – will make our norms – flat paintings – appear «contra-standard» (Walton [1970]: 347). Even within a civilization, much will seem contra-standard between sociological groups and individuals with contrasting educational, travel, and work histories.

Applying the above to comprehending works of art, it becomes clear that when we perceive a portion of some representational type of stimuli – the bust of a man, the sound of barking – we *simulate* along with the portion its associated set of memories and customary expectations. We know that it is a *dog* that is barking and not another kind of animal, because we have already encoded multimodal memories about the various sources of barking, not just particular barking patterns in isolation (although this type of isolated learning is possible, too) (Hubbard [2010]). Likewise, when we see a bust of a man, a figure apparently in motion, or some other sensory segment, we simulate along with these particulars their associated wholes, that is, the corresponding set of memories and contextual relations encoded for each class of object. This is why when we see a bust of, say, Socrates, the visual sense affords a concurrent «seeing-in» to all that we know of Socrates that is not seen: physiognomic and dispositional associations (humor, wit, wisdom, his robust stature), historically documented behavior (where he lived, who he associated with), philosophic precepts, and so much else.

We also simulate along with perceived portions foregone verdicts and instinctually value-laden impressions. If someone does not like Socrates, finds him ugly, or whatever else, then his or her value for Socrates will be «negative». Or if someone has already developed a positive appraisal of Socrates, his or her value will be «positive». Whether such values necessarily relate to a work, as a work of art, is of course debatable, since it is commonplace to understand a work yet find it lacking in value (an outcome typical of kitsch, amateur art, television sitcoms, and most Hollywood blockbusters). In some cases we may even wish to *resist* understanding a work, after sensing a glimmer of what it is

trying to communicate, because the kind of value we suppose it represents is already objectionable. Rudolph Giuliani, after viewing some of the artworks discussed above, found them «sick», and although this reaction likely belies an inability to value conceptual art, as a category of art, in other respects it registers a valuative kind of reaction relevant to the work. Assuming for example that Giuliani found the bust of a man carved from frozen blood repulsive (as found in Marc Quinn's *Self*), then part of his valuative response would be biologically sanctioned, *if*, as humans, thinking of blood is valued as a naturally punishing kind of stimulus[10]. Or if Giuliani found a particular work's religious desecration revolting, such as that found in *Piss Christ*, then his reaction to the work would be valid within the horizon of religious norms. In either case, what Giuliani values is not the work, *as* a work of a particular kind, but another kind of value: one biological (feeling sick at the thought of another's blood) and the other normative (feeling repulsed by religious desecration).

Even if all value attributions depend on natural kinds of affective responses, such as disgust, desire, fear, threat, novelty, and jealousy, the overall makeup of an aesthetic judgment can assume multifarious forms. The underlying ingredient of artistic value may always be some kind of primal affect (disgust, anger, fear), yet what makes a particular work valuable is *its* multimodal characteristics and social implications. Given the representational nature of artworks, there is generally some relation between a work's properties and what we value from life outside them. This makes adjudicating between competing evaluations challenging, because we may dislike a work for all the wrong reasons, or like a work for the right reasons yet overlook its instrumental ills. Many theatergoers walk out on Zhangke Jia's *A Touch of Sin*, perceiving in its violence a meaningless gratuity; but what these theatergoers fail to understand is that the violence depicted in Jia's film is not gratuitous but historically representational. Every violent episode in *A Touch of Sin* has actually taken place in contemporary China, often in worse forms than depicted in the film[11]. Without knowing of the film's historical representation, however, Jia's effort can only be misunderstood in the worst of ways: where expressive, many will see only excess; where the film is meant to be morally progressive, there will be only a sense of decadence. It is also understandable that *A*

[10] For a review of research that looks at, among other things, aversive responses to blood, see Olatunji, Sawchuk (2005).

[11] *China Shooting Spree Ends with Six Dead*, "London Guardian", www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/23/six-die-china-shooting-spree.

Touch of Sin's violence should evoke repulsion, whether the film's message is understood or not. A repulsive reaction is of primal relevance to the film's content: without an inborn sensitivity to violent kinds of punishing stimuli, theatergoers could not value the film's representational message.

5. *Some conclusions*

What is of lasting theoretical significance in the above discussions? If there is continuity between background impressions, encoded from experience, and how we come to perceive works of art, representationally, then some disputes between «value empiricists» and «value instrumentalists» would seem to dissolve. First, the idea that «anti-perceptually aesthetic art», to recycle Noël Carroll's term, is actually anti-perceptual seems suspect. To reiterate this claim, it is thought that what we can understand and value from a work is not «perceptual» in nature because, as soon as the work's stimuli enter into the brain and mix with beliefs, cultural preferences, psychological drives, or whatever else, the experience the work offers is no longer native to the perceptual input – it is now «cognitive», «subjective», «psychological», or some other kind of response. However, if all aesthetic properties must, in some way, be understood on the basis of their perceptually encoded memories (as developed by Lawrence Barsalou, Stephen Kosslyn, Antonio Damasio, and others), then whatever we «seen-in» to a work (cognitively, psychologically, culturally, or otherwise) is already inherently perceptual in nature[12]. Of course, what we «seen-in» to a work, cognitively, may be disconnected to a work's sensible properties (its «non-aesthetic properties», in Sibley's terms). But determining what is truly or falsely related to a work's properties is a matter of aesthetic epistemology, not ontology (of intersubjective verification, falsifiable claims, and so forth).

Recall that anti-perceptual art is thought to exclude whatever can be perceived from a work, firsthand. A prototypical example would be John Cage's *4'33''*, a musical composition instructing a player to sit, in silence, for the duration of three movements. The audience gazes on (restlessly, rarely delightedly) while the musician turns the page of a composition booklet for four minutes and thirty-three seconds. Appreciating this work, in Walton's terms, requires participating in a game of conceptual art make-

[12] This conclusion is in response to arguments laid out by Carroll (2004b): 419). Again, for works reviewing the perceptual origins of conceptual representation, see: Barsalou (2008); Moulton, Kosslyn (2009); Meyer, Damasio (2009).

believe, where the player, instrument, and audience become props in the service of generating ambient noise. What is valued in this kind of work is the *conceptual* understanding of its intended experience – the wonder of unique ambient noises, the composer's philosophic ingenuity – rather than the composition itself.

As I have argued, however, it is mistaken to think that works such as *4'33''* can have value, conceptually, in a manner that excludes perceptual cognizance. The source of this cognizance may be largely *simulated*, rather than directly perceived, yet simulated sense is correlative and contingent on previously encoded impressions from perceived senses (Barsalou [2009]). The idea that «anti-perceptually aesthetic art» could truly be anti-perceptual is therefore misleading, because it relies on an artificial division between perception and conception, rather than an interrelation.

The concept of «blue» interrelates with perceptually acquired memories of what objects look like when reflecting 450 nm wavelengths of light; the concept «dog» interrelates with perceptually acquired memories of a kind of four-legged, domesticated mammal, and so forth. I may never see, directly, a particular shade of blue or a rare breed of dog, though for me to *imagine* such a shade or breed, I need only have already encoded perceptual exemplars of blue and types of dog. This is why a poem can instruct me to «Imagine a cross between / a German Shepherd / and a Poodle», and I will imagine just such a cross, even if I have never seen one. That my mind is able to fill in the blank between one shade of blue and another, or imagine a hybrid dog that I have never seen, does not then suggest that the imagined shade or dog is purely conceptual or an anti-aesthetic kind of exercise; rather, imagining either such example is only possible if I have already encoded impressions of blue and types of dog. What I can understand from a work of any sort – conceptual, conventional, literary, experimental – is contingent on my simulated sense of what the work is trying to get at, and if the work fails to achieve the right kind of simulation, it will lack value. To reformulate Budd's theory of artistic value, we might say that if the perceived or simulated sense of a work cannot induce affective rewards or punishers, then the experience the work offers lacks «intrinsic value» in the analytic philosophical sense – that is to say, the work's non-aesthetic properties cannot determine its rewarding experience. We may value the work indirectly by some «external» association, as Walton makes clear – such as valuing a stump for imagining that it is a bear – but if there is no ostensible link between the work and the external value, then what we value is not determined by work but something extrinsic to it (a make-believe rule, projection, collective delusion, or something else).

Research on memory function therefore supports the view that conception and perception are not separate or exclusive domains but continuous and correlative. What we «see-in» to a painting is continuous with what we have «seen» on it; what we conceptually «simulate» from a work (of literature or conceptual art) is correlative with whatever kind of perceptual impressions the work re-activates, from memory. Reading about a dog or listening to incessant dog barking re-activates memory impressions encoded *from* perceiving dogs, multimodally. Otherwise, we could not understand what «dog» means, as a word, or what the source of the audible noise is in Roth's *Tibidabo*[13]. On this view, our ability to understand Cage's *4'33''*, Walter De Maria's *Vertical Earth Kilometer*, and other such works, is not anti-perceptual in nature, since we must simulate a perceptual sense of what the artist intentionally conceals, a process contingent on multimodal representations *about* perceptual kinds of property: music, ambient noise, what a kilometer long steel bar would look like, and so forth. Works such as Cage's and Maria's, then, could be more aptly conceived as «anti-*presently* perceptible art», a type of work whose appreciation depends on «external» values of the sociopolitical kind. What we value from such works is not «intrinsic» to the experiences they offer, as works of art; rather, what is valued is the sense of participating in a «conceptual art» game of make-believe[14]. Simulating a kilometer of rebar buried into the earth may induce wonder, to be sure, but only if we grasp the magnitude of such an operation from a perception-like simulation, one that needs to be explained by someone familiar with the work's creation. Such values, secondhand as they are, could not be «intrinsic» to the experience the work offers unless it is granted that the work's aesthetic properties include knowledge of its design.

Second, and of equal importance to how we come to understand a work, I believe neurobiology sheds light on the nature of value itself. When handled with philosophic wariness, a willingness to place serious checks on grand claims about what is valuable for humans in general, the thesis that all value is biologically contingent seems correct. This thesis can be found (and subtly cautioned against) in Nietzsche's aphorisms on beauty. Nietzsche (2006) observes that «the instincts are filled to the brink with

[13] Hickok, Poeppel (2007); Damasio *et al.* (2004); Barsalou, Santos, Simmons (2008).

[14] Carroll ([2004b]: 418) makes a similar argument when he says that «a conceptual piece like *Fountain* may be said to possess aesthetic properties – properties intimately connected with feeling – even though they need not be literally perceived by one of the five senses», though what he seems unaware of is the fact that our simulated sense of *Fountain*'s meaning is literally built from encoded memories of a perceptual kind.

accumulated premises» about what is beautiful and degenerate: anytime anyone senses degeneracy, he feels instinctual hatred; anytime beauty, empowerment. But he also says that these kinds of value judgments can be «human, all too human» – that is, they ought to be regarded with philosophic suspicion. So now that there is growing consensus in the neurosciences that the nature of «value» – how we come to perceive anything as good or bad – is an evolved sensibility, we ought to heed Nietzsche's caution[15]. If a thing is positively valued, it rewards; if negatively valued, it punishes; yet such findings need not lead to the conclusion that ugly art is degenerate and beautiful art ennobling. Quite the contrary: if the physiological *stuff* of valuation is a punishing and/or rewarding response of an affective kind, then we can learn to see punishing and rewarding works as equally valuable. «Disgusting» and «otherness-inducing» art may offer intrinsically valuable kinds of experience, either from direct apprehension of percipient properties, or from learning of the work's rewarding conceptual implications (Siebers [2003]). And what is valuable about work need not be any adaptive advantage, only a reliable means of emotional provocation (Carroll [2000]).

So it would seem on the basis of the above that *Star Trek*, even if not fully understood, can be «intrinsically valuable», from experience, while Cage's *4'33''* and De Maria's *Vertical Earth Kilometer*, though not valued on the basis of their directly experienced properties alone, can be valued for the rewarding experiences they offer when understood from their simulated sense. In either case, the stuff of value is some kind of affective response to something *about* the work. What remains an open question is the degree to which a punishing or rewarding experience can be valued over time, comparatively – or whether, in Nietzsche's terms, there is in fact a «hierarchy of values».

Bibliography

Barsalou, L.W, 1999: *Perceptual Symbol Systems*, "Behavioral and Brain Sciences", 4, pp. 577–660.

Barsalou, L.W, 2008: *Grounded Cognition*, "Annual Review of Psychology", 59, pp. 617-45.

Barsalou, L.W., 2009: *Simulation, Situated Conceptualization, and Prediction*, "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences", 1521, pp. 1281-89.

[15] Damasio (2005); Kringelbach (2005); Nussbaum (2004); Vuilleumier (2005); LeDoux (2012).

Barsalou, L.W, 2010: *Grounded Cognition: Past, Present, and Future*, "Topics in Cognitive Science 2", 4, pp. 716-24.

Barsalou, L.W., A. Santos, and W.K. Simmons, 2008: *Language and Simulation in Conceptual Processing*, in De Vega (*et al.*): *Symbols, Embodiment, and Meaning*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Beardsley, M.C., 1965: *Intrinsic Value*, "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research", 26, 1, pp. 1-17.

Boyd, B., 2009: *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Budd, M., 2003: *Artistic Value*, in Lamarque, P., *et al.*: *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology*, Blackwell, Malden, pp. 262-273.

Carroll, N., 2000: *Art and the Domain of the Aesthetic*, "British Journal of Aesthetics", 40, 2, pp. 191-208.

Carroll, N., 2004a: *Art and Human Nature*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 62, 2, pp. 95-107.

Carroll, N., 2004b: *Non-Perceptual Aesthetic Properties: Comments for James Shelley*, "British Journal of Aesthetics", 44, 4, pp. 413-23.

Damasio, A.R., 2005: *The Neurobiological Grounding of Human Values*, in Changuaux, J. *et al.*: *Neurobiology of Human Values*, Springer Verlag, Berlin-Heidelberg.

Damasio, H. *et al.*, 2004: *Neural Systems Behind Word and Concept Retrieval*, "Cognition 92", 1-2, pp. 179-229.

Danto, A.C., 2004: *Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art*, «Art Journal », 63, 2, pp. 25-35.

Hickok, G., Poeppel, D., 2007: *Opinion – The Cortical Organization of Speech Processing*, "Nature Reviews Neuroscience", 8, 5, pp. 393-402.

Hubbard, T.L., 2010: *Auditory Imagery: Empirical Findings*, "Psychological Bulletin", 136, 2, pp. 302-29.

Konigsberg, A., 2012: *The Acquaintance Principle, Aesthetic Autonomy, and Aesthetic Appreciation*, "The British Journal of Aesthetics", 52, 2, pp. 153-68.

Kringelbach, M.L., 2005: *The Human Orbitofrontal Cortex: Linking Reward to Hedonic Experience*, "Nature Reviews Neuroscience", 6, 9, pp. 691-702.

LeDoux, J.E, 2012: *Rethinking the Emotional Brain*, "Neuron", 73, 4, pp. 653-76.

Lench, H.C., Bench, S.W. and Flores, S.A., 2013: *Searching for Evidence, Not a War: Reply to Lindquist, Siegel, Quigley, and Barrett (2013)*, "Psychological Bulletin", 139, 1, pp. 264-68.

Levinson, J., 2004: *Intrinsic Value and the Notion of a Life*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 62, 4, pp. 319-29.

Levinson, J., 2011: *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Little, A.C. *et al.*, 2011: *Facial Attractiveness: Evolutionary Based Research*, "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences", 366, 1571, pp. 1638–59.

Martin, A., 2007: *The Representation of Object Concepts in the Brain*, "Annual Review of Psychology", 58, 1, pp. 25-45.

Meyer, K., Damasio, A., 2009: *Convergence and Divergence in a Neural Architecture for Recognition and Memory*, "Trends in Neurosciences", 32, 7, pp. 376-82.

Moulton, S.T, Kosslyn, S.M., 2009: *Imagining Predictions: Mental Imagery as Mental Emulation*, "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences", 364, 1521, pp. 1273-80.

Nietzsche, F., 2006: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. by Norman, J., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nussbaum, M., 2004: *Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance*, in Solomon R.C.: *Thinking About Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 183-99.

Olatunji, B.O., Sawchuk, C.N., 2005: *Disgust: Characteristic Features, Social Manifestations, and Clinical Implications*, "Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology", 24, 7, pp. 932-62.

Scarantino, A., Griffiths, P., 2011: *Don't Give up on Basic Emotions*, "Emotion Review", 3, 4, pp. 444-54.

Schacter, D.L., 1999: *The Seven Sins of Memory: Insights from Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience*, "American Psychologist", 54, 3, pp. 182-203.

Schacter, D.L., Addis, D.R., 2007: *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Constructive Memory: Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future*, "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences", 362, 1481, pp. 773-86.

Sibley, F., 1965: *Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic*, "The Philosophical Review", 74, 2, pp. 135-59.

Siebers, T., 2003: *What Can Disability Studies Learn from the Culture Wars?*, "Cultural Critique", 55, pp. 182-216.

Thompson, E., 2008: *Representationalism and the Phenomenology of Mental Imagery*, "Synthese", 160, 3, pp. 397-415.

Vuilleumier, P., 2005: *How Brains Beware: Neural Mechanisms of Emotional Attention*, "Trends in Cognitive Sciences", 9, 12, pp. 585-94.

Walton, K.L., 1970: *Categories of Art*, "The Philosophical Review", 79, 3, pp. 334-67.

Walton, K.L., 1993: *How Marvelous! Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 51, 3, pp. 499-510.

Wollheim, R., 1998: *On Pictorial Representation*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 56, 3, pp. 217–26.