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Notes & Tones on Aspects of Aesthetics in Studying Harmony and Disharmony: A Dialectical Examination

Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu
University of Applied Sciences
2013



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Kouvola, Finland 2013

Publications of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences.
Series B Research and Reports. No: 96

Copyright: Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences
Publisher: Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences
Printing press: Kopijyvä Oy, Kouvola 2013
ISBN (PB.): 978-952-5963-76-2
ISBN (PDF): 978-952-5963-77-9
ISSN: 1239-9094
ISSN: (e-version) 1797-5972

DEDICATED TO JULIA

*'A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but it will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing'*

(A Poem by Keats as quoted in Hirn 1914)

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PREFACE

The Uffizi Gallery, located in Florence, is undoubtedly one of the most important museums in the world. Hence, it is truly a place for aesthetic experiences. Historically, Florence was once at the core of a nexus - of international network with diverse actors and their divergent intentions and interests. This led to fruitful exchange with artistic influences. Arguably, the collection of the Renaissance painters is one of the most significant on world scale.

One of the painters in the collection, Giovanni Bellini, painted a piece of art with a name *Sacred Allegory*. According to Official Guide of the Museum:

'many different theories have been advanced concerning the symbolic meaning of this enigmatic Allegory..... The painting is full of saints and animals including a centaur, set in a peaceful, aquatic landscape, rich in interesting detail to be noted and explored.'

This study embraces also different theories in order to the approach aesthetics, which is often, at least scientifically, full with diverse symbols, representations, and their explanations. In earlier studies related to the topic of this essay, the peaceful elements of aesthetics, particularly harmony and symmetry, have been under consideration. But not just harmony, also disharmony is connected with aesthetic theories and needs articulation. This state of the Things requires some sophisticated methods to be used and explored. In this essay, the dialectical examination provides a basis for the subsequent argumentation.

In order to intensify the artistic expression, Bellini used opposites in his painting. Most of them can be regarded as beautiful, but not all. The contrast wake interest and delight in the eye of an observer. Also, in this article, the opposites provide some new mindsets for in-depth analysis. The contrasts are not neglected but rather exposed. The notion of dualism is a major carrier of analytical ideas and concepts.

In the work by Bellini, a *hortus conclusus* is depicted as an emblematic attribute. Despite of its mostly theological message in the masterpiece, this detail can also be understood by using more profane expressions. By definition, the originally Latin term can refer also to a garden as a bounded space. Aesthetic experiences always take place in some context. It can be an exhibition, like the one in Uffizi Gallery, but also more prosaic. Arguably, space indicating place or distance, is worth analyzed and explicated.

At the beginning of this study, there was a One. Then the One was divided into Two. In the end, as we'll see, the twoness is reunited. And then there is just the One.

On the day of St. Eutychios of Constantinople (6 April 2013)

Markku Nikkanen

1. PRELUDE

'An aesthetic principle is realized in the economy of the system and harmony of the parts. Everything is necessary, nothing is superfluous' (Sepänmaa 1986, 129)

'Aesthetics is a realistic option of the multiple attempts to understand the world and one's own life in that world' (Kinnunen 2000, 403 as translated by MN)

Although part of our everyday life, aesthetics cannot be regarded as a dominant conception in modern world at least if under explicit scientific examination. This is true particularly when defining the term in the well-known manner referring to issues of beauty on a general manner. Aesthetics confronted by pieces of art is something casual in our behavioural intentions. Clearly identified perceptions caused by aesthetical experiences are not part of our everyday practices. They are rather particular, representations of something extraordinary, than typical for our ordinary life. However, the world we live in is imbued by aesthetical stimuli though we probably do not consciously recognize their prevalence.

There exists an array of different definitions for aesthetics (see e.g. Vuorinen 1996). One of the most prominent scholars in the history of aesthetics, Hegel, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, used the following definition for expressing the essence of aesthetics (quoted in Naukkarinen 1998, 8; original source Hegel: *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*):

The present course of lectures deals with 'Aesthetic'. Their subject is the wide realm of the beautiful, and, more particularly, their province is Art - we may restrict it, indeed, to Fine Art ... The proper expression, however, for our science is the 'philosophy of Art', or, more definitely, the Philosophy of Fine Art"

Accordingly, aesthetics can be seen as a study of art and artistic appreciation. Among many topics that are associated with this is the extent to which our experience and appreciation of art is similar (or different) from our experience and understanding of nature. In order to discuss aesthetics (as the dissection and nature of beauty), it is (often though not always) explicitly presumed that a visible aesthetic object/s is needed (certainly added with an observer). The object *per se* can be a visible one or a symbol of that, but it can be also e.g. an event in/and the environment we live in.

Because aesthetics as conceptualisation refers to all the senses of a human observer, the visibility of that something (an object) is not the only criterion for being involved in an aesthetic experience. The intangibility or invisibility of the issues (that is: impressions provided by senses other than sight) ought and cannot

be ignored as a part of aesthetic studies. Often though, and at the first glance, e.g. the actor networks (tied up with various relationships) representing collectives of human beings seem not to have any distinguishable and clear features of aesthetic worldview or intentions.

Aesthetics is, however, somehow engaged in many of the practices, policies, and intentions performed and managed by the human actors. Hilde Hein claims that aesthetics is present practically everywhere as she says that *'the aesthetic dimension, in a manner of speaking, rides "piggy back" ad infinitum on all our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. We can divert our attention away to consider things refracted otherwise, but the aesthetic is a presence accessible to, if not directly before, consciousness. It haunts the edges of being'* (Hein, cited in Naukkarinen 1998, 48). Although beauty may be a reflection of something very important – even if not always explicit - it is not easy to find any evidence of its relevance in actor networks. Monk Serafim (Seppälä 2010, 8, translated by MN) remarks that when *'big corporations (representing group of actors and their intentions) are seeking for values, issues like ethics, authenticity, and moral are addressed - not beauty'*.

Aesthetics and ethics as conceptualisations can be consolidated. Wittgenstein claims that *'ethics and aesthetics are one'* (Wittgenstein 1922, TLP, 6.421). For him, ethics was more transcendental, probably because it cannot be explained truly linguistically nor formally. This close to the Aristotelian approach when he claims that beauty it is in the good it will bring and of how much it can spread that good to other people. In other words, to be more ethical means to be more aesthetical as well. However, long before Wittgenstein, Plato combined ethical (goodness) and aesthetical (beauty) by using a concept of καλός (good). This concept, which has several variations in terms of interpretation, can be a carrier of many things, which have a positive connotation. Hence, the way this concept is interpreted reflects also the philosophical choice of an observer. For some scholars *kalos* can be a synonym of good, for others it refers to issues of beauty (Monk Serafim 2010, 16). Beauty has a dominant role in the thinking of Plato it is actually *'a paradigmatic representative of the world of the Ideas'* (Serafim 2010, 22 as translated by MN). In all, aesthetics represented by the individuals' perceptions is in close conjunction with ethical decisions (like those employed by organizations' in their efforts to be more ethical and responsible; see e.g. Nikkanen 2012 for more discussion). One part of the aesthetics is the examination of values. The discipline is sometimes even classified as a branch of value theory (The Dictionary of Art 1996, 172) – along with ethics. In the field of axiology, the value theories combine both of the disciplines by complementing the adjacent scrutiny.

On the other hand, there are differences in these concepts as well. Ethical mainly deals with human action while aesthetic is concerned with contemplation – with seeing and beholding something whereas ethical is close to general rules and principles. Aesthetic judgments are made by reference to the particular features of what is judged. (Collinson 1985, 266). Hence, aesthetics is not just transcendental (though from theological point of view it can – think about how the Absolute

is attributed and characterized), but visible and concrete based on the visual images and perceptions. Hence, the immanent features (having impact on human behavior) of aesthetics are worth discussed. Unquestionable, and as already noted, axiology as a form of value theory consolidates both disciplines by complementing them. Axiologically, the value theories carry out combinatory elements between the two distinct approaches.

Conceptually, aesthetics refers to all the senses of human beings and to the personal capabilities of the persons to perceive some qualities of the surrounding reality. More accurately, aesthetics belongs to the diverse branches of Western philosophy though the contribution of non-Western thinkers and philosophies should not to be neglected. According to Ramirez (2005,29) it deals with the *'forms of understanding, perception, conception, and experience which we qualify (often after the fact) with adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'elegant', or 'repulsive'*. The knowledge created with experienced depends largely on our emotions, and affections including empathy and intuition. Therefore, the rational evaluation accomplished by a single actor (or an assumption of that) in his/her life and the subsequent deliberate behavior is just one way for absorbing and filtering perceptions and stimuli. Attitudes, preconceptions, and past experiences do influence how we see the world and its beautiness – or ugliness.

Aesthetics is, however, not associated with human perceptions only on individual level, but it is also a concern of the collectives. Hence, it must be asked how a particular set of collective observers understands the meaning of it. Considering cooperation as a form of human behavior, Ramirez (2005, 32) proposes that *'cooperation enabled by management is first experienced aesthetically'* Therefore, the other forms of cognition are subsequent to this first reaction. Fenner (2008, 36) proposes that aesthetic can be used as a modifier of property, object, experience, attitude and attention. Hence the word aesthetic *per se* is both an adjective (as often) but also a noun.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This essay is an *étude*.

There is a sublime (pls, consider appealing and mostly aesthetical adjective) intention to test the relevance of *aesthetics* and its content (attributes of what is perceived *aesthetic*) in understanding, not just the concept itself, but also the logic of harmonisation *inter alia*. Hence, the practical skills by the researcher for analysing the conformities of beauty are also subject to scientific - but also technical - rehearsal. Indeed, in the aesthetics of music, *étude* as a particular form of composition is often practice material for perfecting a particular skill. The technical (or mechanical) side of doing things should not to be underestimated. On the contrary, this form of exercise is valuable, if not even crucial, for gaining new knowledge in the field that is studied and examined. With an *étude*, a researcher deliberately and intentionally, wants to achieve higher levels, also aesthetical ones, in understanding more properly the phenomenon (though the consummate of *Verstehen* cannot be achieved as in the work by Albers in Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Composition, Homage to the Square: Consummate (1969) by Josef Albers; Sara Hildén Foundation and Art Museum, Oil on Hardboard © Kuvasto 2013 ¹

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1. Inevitably, Josef Albers is best known for his works related to squares. With the *Homage to the Square*-series, Albers explores the subjective and aesthetic experiences of individual beings and personalities paying attention to colours and their interaction. However, he is also very formal: his paintings have a strict mathematically determined format. Hence, the abstraction, such as the consummate in Fig. 1, is presented very formally and rationally using some pre-determined conventions of using colours. In his world, the One (an object under examination) can be depicted very scientifically (nested squares with pure colours expressing chromatic interactions). He was convinced that various variations and testing on one theme are needed to approach the reality. The scientific methods provide a basis for artistic expressions (e.g. the interaction of colours in space). Indeed, the science and art are interwoven. Undoubtedly, our personalities and subjective interpretations affect the way we see the one particular piece of art (as a representation of the world) created by an artist such as Albers; its beauty, ugliness, and aesthetic characters.

In the world of modern rhetoric, ‘mechanical’ (demonstrating a worldview with clumsy internal norms and inherent practices) often represents something old-fashioned, less-valuable, or even outdated particularly if contrasted with the buzzwords of more dynamic endeavours and conceptualisations.

An actor (e.g. a scholar) should be ‘innovative’ in his/her attempts to create something new, not relying on the explanations and models which are too rigid or awkward representing the worldview of the mechanical world (emphasising strongly motion, forces, sequences, and systems in a well-defined framework created *ex ante*). Despite of its dynamic appearance, the reality (seen as a system) is often rather stable indicating certain state of equilibrium between the diverse – even contradictory – forces. The world is probably still more mechanical than organic. The harmony caused by the balance of different things can be a precursor of stability, not of instability.

Philosophically, it seems to be so that it is sometimes quite a difficult to deal properly with contradictions though for artists (in their artistic expressions) this dilemma can be a source of creativity. The artist (more benignly) works e.g. to convert the opposite (ugliness) into artistic knowledge – to a beautiful form. Consequently, the contrast of juxtapositions can allude for some bold endeavours rather than impeding them.

The writer of this paper is fully aware of the fact that aesthetics has always been under an intensive and well-documented research work (see e.g. Vuorinen 1996, Kuisma 2010 or Beardsley 1966 discussing the history of Western aesthetic theories and explanations). Therefore, in this study much of the past studies and their contribution are only referred to. Particularly this is true as related to classical philosophers and their work. Hence, it is beyond my philosophical abilities, knowledge, and skills to offer a detail portrayal of the various themes of this essay. Rather, this is an intuitive and subjective sketch of how to deal with aesthetics. However, I truly believe in scientific verification, not versification.

3. CONFRONTING THE ISSUES OF AESTHETICS IN SCIENTIFIC STANCE

'In approaching the truth, the science reveals the beauty' (Kinnunen 2000, 402 as translated by MN).

From scientific point of view, the discussion of aesthetics faces several problems. The non-rational stance of mind – scholars embracing their inner emotions, and affects – can be regarded as *'anti-intellectual in the existing, highly rational, culture of science'* (Girod 2007, 38). Indeed, in academic writings occasionally a distinction is made between artistic expression and aesthetical judgments on one hand, and scientific analysis on the other hand. Both of these traditions want to encounter the truth: science explicitly and art (as often) also implicitly. Goodman (1984, 255) wants to provoke the discussion by saying that *'truth by itself matters very little in science'*. If we presume that this statement is true (expressing, however, not the ultimate truth!), the two disciplines (scientific, artistic) seem to become closer and the relevance of a clear distinction is inappropriate.

Goodman (1984, 256) shed light on the potential differences by addressing the differences in domination of certain specific characteristics of symbols. This means that the difference between art and science is not that between *'feeling and fact, intuition and inference, delight and deliberation, synthesis and analysis, sensation and cerebration, concreteness and abstraction, passion and action, mediacy and immediacy, or truth and beauty'* but how the symbols are used and interpreted. It is worth noticing that on conceptual level, the list of issues by Goodman has quite a binary nature by contrasting a few juxtapositions.

Besides revealing the beauty, the science itself (exposing explanatory models or symbols of reality) can be regarded as beautiful though it is quite a difficult task to reveal unanimously and explicitly the beauties of science. Vuorinen (2001, 51-72) exemplifies this by uncovering e.g. the beauty of mathematics by discussing various attributes that can carry out this proposal. Some particular points of mathematics are interesting as this discipline can be characterised with expressions like elegant axiom (of showing that something is true – or not true) or fascinating mystery or enigma (as translated by MN).

Considering the discussion above, it can be claimed that aesthetics should reach beyond the art world as Naukkarinen (1998, 8) claims. This means that a refusal to see art as separate, even isolated, order of life can provide an appropriate point of departure for deeper scientific analysis. Therefore, it is not possible to discuss and analyse e.g. human concerns without paying proper attention to aesthetics as well.

As related to the historical roots of the discipline, some philosophers have connected aesthetics deeply with nature and environmental issues. Aesthetics environment as a context for perceptions can be pertained in a larger framework. Environment actually refers to the entire external world of an actor: besides the natural environment it also includes the cultural environment, and the constructed environment (Sepänmaa 1986, 17). Hence, more recently many writers have followed the classical scholars in that nature-oriented environmental aesthetics has become its own important strand within the field (Naukkarinen 1998, 8). This implies that there is a need to use the scientific methods for assessing the interplay between an observer and the surrounding reality (the natural and/or built environment). The aesthetics approach, by revealing the issues of beauty in some specified context, can be a strategic weapon in these efforts.

Undoubtedly, the aesthetic can just partially give tools for understanding more properly the world and its conformities. Kinnunen (2000, 397) even claims that actually the intention engaged in aesthetics is conscious illusion, and absolute, that can be crated but is unattainable – at least by analytical means. We approach our intentions and wills but emotionally cannot reach them. This idea is close to an aesthetic experience, though some scholars tend to underline that e.g. feelings or impressions are irrelevant to true beauty (and hence to aesthetics as well; see Holgate 1992, 3 for more discussion).

3.1. Using Categorization and Dualism

The following statement (by Natascia Festa as quoted in Williams 2009, 17) provides a basis for capturing the idea of classification: *'The very language of tesserae tells us that harmony is only achievable through the breaking and then the rediscovery of the mosaic fragments'* (compare to piece of mosaic artwork created by Julia on the cover page of this publication). Hence, at the embryonic stage in conducting scientific research, there may be a need for splitting up the phenomenon to certain parts (looking for the internal conformities; the breaking) and then for categorizing them (rediscovery of the fragments; searching for the internal coherence). This is needed, as the point of departure is often the One – the phenomenon that needs to be studied.

Indeed, the basic cognitive (reflecting the use of a scientific and rational method) process is that of categorization, which refers to conscious analytical stages (often sequential) of recognizing the essence of what is studied and its differentiation. This is done to increase the deep(er) understanding of the object that is in focus; actually its coherence in relation to other phenomenon. The simplest form of this method is using two categories. This means that the study object (and its character, and quality) is conceptually divided into two parts. Using dichotomies is actually a procedure of creating a sharp distinction, in which the whole (the oneness) is divided into two distinctive parts. The divided parts are first (analytically) separated and then isolated and there should not been any overlapping with the segregated

qualities of an object. Hence, the qualities are mutually exclusive. Subsequently, the two distinctive categories create their own entities and qualities expressing the prevalence of dichotomy.

In linguistics and semiotics, the dichotomy is associated with binary opposites. Indeed, a binary system is a dyadic constellation, a pair of related concepts, that are opposite in meaning. Finally, in this way of thinking, there is either a contradiction (or complementarities) at least related to basic terms that are used. The binary opposites can be used in categorizing the objects though a clear dualism generates, more or less, a simplified worldview of the issues under consideration.

In addition, the idea of binary opposites can be a carrier of even a bigger system. In so called Saussurean theory (according to de Saussure; a representative of structuralism) a binary opposition is seen as a *fundamental organizer*, not just of simple analytical attempts, but also of *human philosophy, language, and even culture*. Hence, the theory of binary systems has lot of parallels with the premises of the Chinese (e.g. Confucian) interpretations of how the world is fundamentally organized.

Contrasting the Saussurean and Chinese interpretations, one must remember that in former theory (or rather: how it reflects the Western scientific tradition) there is probably a dominance of one opposite over the other. The constellation of the opposites is asymmetric and cannot reach state of harmonious equilibrium. In Chinese tradition, as can be seen in chapter 7, the glaring asymmetry and disharmony is not accepted. Therefore, there should not to be an existence of unequal polarities, but rather of equal bipolarities. The antonyms are required for increasing the understanding, but they are rather inclusive, not exclusive.

The impact of de Saussure is impressive, not just for the linguistics, but also on the way of contemporary Western thinking. Harris (translating and commenting the work by de Saussure 2000) points out that the work by de Saussure had a profound influence on the modern view of *homo loquens*. The radical character in the work (a single book published posthumously) by de Saussure is his scientific focus: he addressed that languages are collective products of social interaction and their therefore supply the essential conceptual frameworks for men's analysis of reality. Simultaneously, they include the verbal equipment for their description on it.

Related to discussion on aesthetics experience, it can be now suggested that our verbal and mental interpretations are rather reflections of social interaction through our embeddedness. Hence, in the studies on aesthetics the question is not merely on analyzing the complex cultural institutions in which works of art are embedded, but also how the actors (the observes) are embedded in their own spheres; that is in the social networks represented by e.g. their own (local) communities.

According to de Saussure, the concepts that we use (e.g. beautiful, ugly) are actually creations of the language we use. *Homo loquens* is a creator of *homo aestheticus*. The nature of these particular experiences is discussed more detailed in next chapter 4.

4. ON AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

'Everything for man is experience. This is not metaphysical postulate; it is a tautology. As men are sentient and conscious, vital and responsive, they are experiencing. Experience is the general condition of human life' (Berleant 2000, 85).

'Although we may rarely be conscious of it, aesthetic experience gives form, meaning, and, most important, value to everything we are and everything we do' (Hagman 2005, 16).

Discussion on aesthetics poses some considerable questions, the most significant of which is related to experiences. Concentrating on examination the aesthetic values and dimensions actually means that a wide spectrum of personal (subjective) experiences and their perceptions can (and should) be under scrutiny. For this reason, this phenomenon is deeply scrutinized as the essence of aesthetics is circumscribed by the experiences (see e.g Dewey 1934/1984 for a profound examination on aesthetic experiences added with many others). Aesthetic experience is a multisensory exercise and shouldn't be solely attached with seeing and visual perception.

Despite of difficulties in defining aesthetic experience by objective means, Denner (2008, 45-47) claims that some factors (external and internal) can give some guidance for a formal analysis. He reveals the following ones:

- ✓ informational factors implying aesthetic analysis focusing on formal character of aesthetic objects. Information can be genetic, comparative, and provenance (e.g. history) information
- ✓ subjective factors including psychological, and physical factors but also maintenance of distance (observer maintaining distance in his/her aesthetically-oriented behaviour; see chapter 6)

There is a wide range of associations a receptor is involved in an aesthetic experience to name recollective (one recalls some past experience), emotional (one associates a certain emotion with the object under attendance), and cognitive (in thinking rationally about the object; Fenner 2008, 49). This can be compared to the cognitive-affective-conative (CAC)- expression (as discussed in more detailed in chapter 6) which can be associated with psychic distance. In the CAC-model, however, the history and experiences of the past are implicitly embedded in analysis and their do not have an explicit content.

Indeed, Dewey as a classical philosopher in the field deeply calls for an experience. One of the most notable foundations in the work by Dewey is that his theory offers a deep freedom in understanding (and discussing) the true nature of aesthetic experience (Fenner 2008, 56). Dewey condemns the rigid separation between art and life characteristic of formalism. Hence, the audience recreates the experience expressed emotionally first by the artist (The Dictionary of Art 1996, 182). Indefinitely, he is powerful influencer: his book (Art as Experience) had ‘*a special Deweyan eloquence, with his characteristically oblique but steady and inexorable advance of argument*’ (Beardsley 1966, 332). Inevitable, the work is probably the most valuable book in the field of Western aesthetics.

On the other hand, this can be regarded as weakness as well as the relativism (probably) cannot give enough guidance for intelligible discussion and debate. Certainly, the observers have different ways to encounter the aesthetically the object making a construction of a descriptive model very difficult. Therefore, there is not yet any scientifically comprehensive theory that could explain (at least psychologically) these experiences (Leder *et al.* 2004).

Beardsley (1982) follows the suggestions introduced by Dewey as he proposes certain (uniform/universal?) features that constitute an aesthetic experience (slightly modified and commented by MN; also Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson 1990,7).

- ✓ object directness (focus): a person willingly invests attention to visual stimulus; subsequently accepted guidance over the succession of one’s mental states by phenomenally objective properties;
- ✓ felt freedom: a sense of release from some antecedent concerns – about past and future; also a relaxation and sense of harmony of what is presented or semantically invoked; the senses of harmony preempt everyday concerns and is experienced in freedom; there are tensions due to these stimuli but actually ‘*the cosmos works by harmony of tensions, like the lyre and bow*’ (a poem by Heraclitus in Fragments as quoted in Williams 2009, 42), the attempts to increased coherence are truly emblems of the features of the universe;
- ✓ detached affect: a sense that the objects – on which interest is concerned – are set a little distance emotionally; shortly, a certain detachment of affect. To exemplify this, Beardsley exposes the things of the other (non-pleasing) side (e.g. terrible things, and darkness) which we feel sharply, but they do not oppress us, but make us aware of our power to rise above them (compare to discussion on contradictions in chapter 5 including the presentation of Hegelian *Aufhebung*); the experience is not taken literally;

- ✓ active discovery: a sense of actively exercising constructive powers of the mind; these are challenged by a variety of potentially conflicting stimuli trying to make them cohere; a person derives a sense of exhilaration from such involvement;
- ✓ wholeness: a sense of integration as a person, of being restored to wholeness from distracting and disruptive influences; this requires both inclusive synthesis, but also exclusion: the contentment involves both self-acceptance and self-expansion.

Beardsley claims that any aesthetic experience must exhibit the first one, and three of the others.

One can ask with reasons, what the prominence of the theories by Dewey and Beardsley may be. Fenner (2008, 58) summarizes that both of the scholars realized that their projects were '*inherently inductivist and that such non-essentialist projects cannot be said to be (finally) correct or incorrect*' Hence, the only correct thing in scientific analysis is the ideal of the incorrect making all the efforts to endless attempts *ad finitum*.

Fenner (2008, 58,59) consolidates the major features (in his wording 'lessons') of aesthetic by saying that to define aesthetic is to understand why some experiences (and not all) are apportioned off from the others. This particular experience is relational. Every attempt to understand the nature of aesthetic experience without prejudice is to adopt an inductivist approach. For Fenner this approach is the right one. Hence, in scientific (formal) analysis, a plethora of data must be gathered to find the (some) patterns to it. The aesthetic consideration (including evaluation, appreciation, attention, experience) is conjoined with an attitude of disinterest (disinterest for an object, not for an appreciation itself). Nevertheless, the aesthetic experience is the core of our interest. As Dewey (1934/1984, 209) remarks, aesthetic refers directly to experience, and to perceiving, and enjoying.

Berleant (2000) listed various facts explaining the essence of aesthetical experience. He claims that there are five distinguishable facts as follows (Berleant 2000, 22-23; bolding in the text by him):

- ✓ situational facts: statements that describe *the conditions under which aesthetic experience occurs*; statements include descriptions of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested or distanced
- ✓ experiential facts: statement that presume to describe *the characteristics of aesthetic experience* itself; these descriptions are needed to distinguish from experiences that are only practical and cognitive
- ✓ objective facts: statements about *the objects which are involved in aesthetic experience*; they are the central focus of our attention

- ✓ judgmental facts: *the body of critical judgment about these objects and events*
- ✓ interdisciplinary facts: *the facts that have resulted from studies of aesthetic events and objects from the standpoint of various related disciplines*

Finally, a following preliminary proposal (originally created for experiences that deal with pieces of art in exhibitions) can be posed to depict the cognitive-processing stages. It consolidates the major characteristics of aesthetic experiences and the formation of aesthetic judgments (source Leder *et al.* 2004, 492).

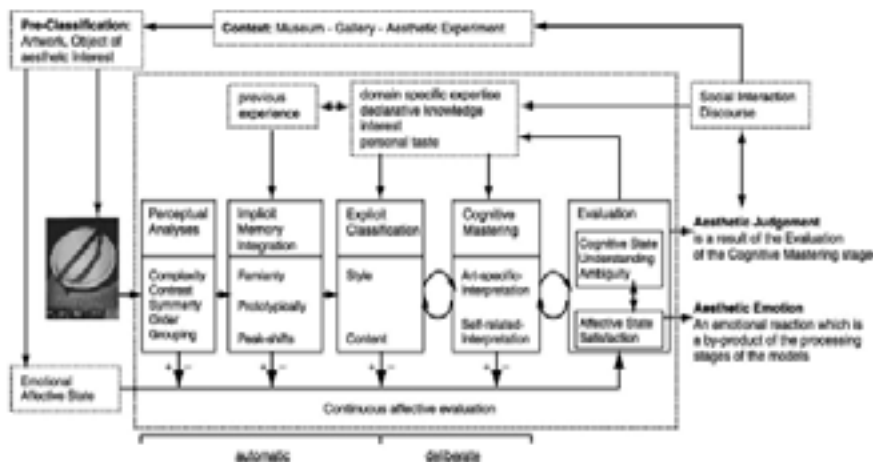


Figure 2. A Model of Aesthetic Experience

In his process model (from cognition to attention and finally to emotion), Markovic (2012, 7) makes a distinction between a perceptual level and narrative level. Also in that proposal as well the cognitive domain has central role because it controls and gives sense to the whole process.

As related to more pragmatic analysis, an evaluation of the sensuous aspects of experience (wording originally introduced by Beardsley) is needed. In other words, how to cope with sense impressions by analytical means? One must remember that the explicit classification (deliberately, often verbally) is a central for the model. It's actually forming the essence of the explanation.

As related to perceptual analysis, it is worth questioning how to assess and evaluate (and quantify) the major ingredients like complexity, contrast, and symmetry? What is the nature of explicit classification and how deep and comprehensive is

that? In the model (Fig 2) aesthetic emotion is both an outcome, a by-product of the processing stages of the model, but also a pre-requisite for experiences. Undoubtedly, the cognitive and affective states are interrelated. One reason for this is that in the stage-model the cognitive interpretation is highly addressed. Moreover, the model is mostly applicable with visual aesthetics in which the observer is not actively involved in the process of making e.g. art and inherent expressions. Hence, the model (probably) relies on the use of classical stimulus-response- type (SR) of behavior (art as a trigger influencing the observer in his/her affective reactions). Nevertheless, aesthetic experience is not a passive reception of an object's aesthetic qualities (as assumed in the SR-model), but rather a product of active interaction between the object/environment and the receptor.

One may ask also, how we, who live in Western cultural sphere, can truly capture the ideal of contemplative life that is presumed to be a prerequisite for deep(er) affections. If contemplation as a practice is used in a descriptive manner, it is used in a too liberal way. Our thinking is imbued by either rationality or loose spirituality with no the true contact to our inner (term is used here in a very generic manner) – to our emotions, feelings, and affections. For us, the spiritual life (represented by contemplation) is always somehow transcendental, not immanent. It is also beyond our senses (hence aesthetically difficult to grasp), far away, and unattainable. In this situation, (tracing the moments of aesthetic experience), it can be even impossible to capture the true character of the parallels (the opposites – beauty and ugliness - in one wholeness) and especially the rich tones of the interplay – the contrast caused by juxtapositions. On the other, one should not be naïve: we live in the world which can be characterized by a global shrinkage. On global scale, there is an ongoing process of syncretism (influenced by the Western thinking) smoothing e.g. behavioural differences and adjacent reactions.

Also, it is worth questioning to what extent the model can be applied in discussing the moments (and episodes) when an observer faces ugliness and its diverse characteristics. Ugliness can be seen is another facet of the beauty; the contrasting element that is needed to understand truly the beauty in its full consummation. Contrasts are, however, often the sources of artistic expression and they have multiple purposes; they are conjunctions, unifications, syntheses, of dissimilar, opposing constituents as Ross (1984, 309) lists. He sees that intensity is attained where the opposite is stronger or where the unification is exceptional. In his view, a distinction should be made between the art and science. The former is a manifestation of inexhaustibility, achieved through intensity of contrast. The later, correspondingly, seeks an understanding grounded in actuality and integrity as it emphasizes the complementarity of ordinal categories.

In the following subchapter two major contradictory elements of aesthetics experience – beauty and ugliness – are shortly discussed (compare to Fig. 5).

4.1 Beauty

'...beauty is finite, ugliness is infinite' (Eco 2007)

Beauty can be defined as a personal (thus subjective) and perceptual experience of something, which is considered as attractive, or pleasing. The positive emotion generated by the experience causes satisfaction and positive affections. The experience involving an interpretation is associated with an evaluation of harmony or balance either in an object itself (an identified entity) or between the object and its context. The object evaluated by an observer, can a real one (e.g. piece of art, musical tone, but also something quite ordinary) or its symbol or model (e.g. mathematical equation). Despite of its personal nature, one cannot deny the fact that the context of an observer do influences the judgments. Our interpretations should therefore be understood in close conjunction with the reality (the community) we live in and the norms stipulating and directing our behaviour (*sensus communis* – principle; see Kinnunen 2000 for more discussion). On the other hand, the artistic language providing stimuli for our aesthetic experiences is often created by the others influencing our interpretations too (*sensus communis* of providers). As Hagman (2005, 24) points out *'artists are embedded in a network of relationships'* The embeddedness as conceptualisation seem to be valid for examining the collective nature of actors in facing aesthetic experiences.

Hagman (2005, 22) uses a following definition for beauty when he claims that it is *'an aspect of idealization in which (an) objects(s), sound(s), concept(s) is (or are) believed to possess qualities of formal perfection'*. This proposal creates a sound basis for discussing the content of the definition in a more comprehensive manner. The idealization includes a transitional psychological process labelled by subjectivity. In this the beauty itself is the major carrier of this idealization. Despite of this beauty is interactive, not disinterested or passive. According to Hagman (2005, 56) idealization is a psychological investment of an object (also event, or even experience) with a high degree of value. Due to its nature, it can include strong affections, such as those of loving feelings.

Often the beauty has its manifestation when contrasted with other objects whether they are appealing or repulsive. In this essay particularly the balance and/or contrast between beauty and ugliness is under scrutiny. Hence, aesthetics experience is not only related to beauty itself (or its various descriptive attributes), but to dimensions of ugliness as well.

4.2 Ugliness

'Beauty is an important part of our lives. Ugliness too.' (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

'...ugliness is a dramatic symptom associated with the breakdown of sublimation and the eruption into consciousness of disruptive fantasy' (Hagman 2005, 118)

According to Thesaurus, ugly refers to issues which are unpleasant or have an unsightly appearance. In a more general way ugly is something displeasing or repulsive in any way (Collins 1992, 1084). Unlike with beauty, there seem to be a common tendency to reject ugliness; as Beech (2011, 5) sharply points out *'why is it that we have seen the rehabilitation of beauty in recent years but ugliness continues to be neglected?'* Despite of the fact that they are occupying the same (visual) continuum, there is not enough space and inherent articulation for discussing the issues of the opposite of the beauty. As already noted, and despite of the conceptual distance, we cannot isolate the opposites (or more frankly: we can although we should not). Both suggestions are required to understand aesthetical values. Ugliness doesn't deteriorate or destroy the beauty. On the contrary, it complements it. Finally, in aesthetical judgment two can become one.

One must remember, as Hagman (2005) points out, that ugliness is not a quality of things, but rather a (psychological) experience. It triggers intensive negative effects, behavioural reactions (repulsive in nature), and even moral condemnation. The ugliness as a kind of problem has caused lot of debate e.g. Plato and Aristotle claimed that it is simple an opposite of the pleasure of beauty. However, it was also argued that ugliness as an opposite can cause also positive aesthetic experience. Tragedy was morally uplifting, despite its often ugly content as Hagman (2005) remarks. Later philosophers tend to underline, at least to some extent, the character of the anti-aesthetic.

Hagman (2005, 105) continues by saying that *'ugliness cannot be described merely as the absence of understanding or some failure of vision; rather the experience of ugliness is more dynamic and personal. It arises not strictly from a lack of capacities, but rather from vulnerabilities in the aesthetic realm.'* Moreover, Hagman (2005, 109) claims, *'in the experience of ugliness, the expectation of beauty is radically disrupted. Instead of resonance, there is dissonance. The ideal is replaced by corruption and degradation. Harmony and wholeness are replaced by conflict and disintegration.'* Does this mean that there will be a total/partial collapse of idealization?

Considering the discussion later (see chapter 5), it can be proposed that the dualism actually combines the both sides of aesthetic experience, often the positive ones with beauty and negative with ugliness. However, under dualisms, it is not a case of (total) disintegration, but rather of integration of these opposites. Hence, harmony is not replaced (as Hagman postulates) by (total) disintegration, but rather complemented by using the idea of (bi)polarities. Consequently, there is still a wholeness of 'oneness', not of 'twoness' as Hagman proposes.

According to Hagman, in an aesthetic experience, an observer is first embraced by an immediate cognitive/affective reaction (e.g. repulsive) for encountering ugliness. But then, paradoxically, this reaction can cause fascination and even attraction. The reason for this is (again probably) the power of dualism, when the opposites meet, and give sufficiently contrast to understand the issues of beauty more properly. The ugliness can truly be expressive, but it must be seen a

complement for beauty. Hagman (2005, 121) seem to hesitate with this as he say that *'it is not that ugliness acquires beauty; rather the person experiences as beautiful that which was once consider ugly'*. To complement this statement, one can say that it is the beauty that acquires ugliness. Also, ugliness can require beauty. Beauty of the ugliness means that this opposite can be understood only in relation to beauty. Hence, ugliness should (or can) be associated with attributes of beauty, not with attributes (and subsequent metaphors) of perverted linguistic expressions.

Regarding the last statement in previous chapter, a researcher must ask to what extent this proposal is evident in the analysis related to ugliness. It can be hypothesized that often ugliness is something very negative and therefore not truly discussed in conjunction with the issues of beauty. Ugliness is often a representation of something so unpleasant and disgusting (also for a scholar as well) that it must disintegrated from its conceptual entity breaking, thus, the essential (bi)polarity. The contemporary discussion of aesthetics is affected by psycho-analytic orientations influencing also the rhetoric and articulation. This implies that e.g. sublimation is seen as a key factor in understanding more comprehensively the logic (or irrationality) of human behaviour. Particularly in psychoanalysis, sublimation as a concept has quite a neutral connotation though it is often connected with forbidden traits. Under sublimation, a person converts the unacceptable impulses to more acceptable behaviour. Analogically, this means that that the experiences of confronting the ugliness (causing a particular mental state of mind at specific moment) are converted to acceptable forms of outcome. There is neither space nor interest for embracing something which is displeasing, even forbidden. Consequently, ugliness is also rejected in scholarly-oriented attempts. If not, this concept is located to the periphery of the examination having a residual role (compare to process model depicted in Fig. 2, in which the aesthetic experience is supposed to cause rather moments of pleasure through beauty rather than through ugliness).

Almost one hundred years ago, Hirn (1914, 166-170), discussed the dilemma of this aesthetic contradiction. Based on the earlier analysis made by Burke (An Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful), he proposed that one can distinguish between beautiful (caused by the delight or pleasure; *'mielihyvä'* in Finnish), and sublime (caused by resentment or annoyance; *'mielipaha'* in Finnish). With sublime type of reactions, a receptor is subject to confusion, because a state of mind is influenced strongly by fair. This state it is not accepted. Sublimation can cause sublime interpretations including also aesthetical ones.

At the end of last century, and after the studies conducted by Hirn, plenty of scholars have made their contributions for aesthetic theory-making, but the dilemma suggested here (and the adjacent parameters) need more proper analysis (to name a reaction of 'delight' as already mentioned by Burke and translated by Hirn in Finnish as *'ilahdus'*).

One can continue the above discussions with assessing the preparedness of an observer to face the contradictions (of beautiful and ugly). If a conscious mind recognises the prevalence of the contradictions, is he/she more prepared to understand the polarities in aesthetical judgments as well? Is it rather so, as Hirn claims, that a specific state of mind gives an actor necessary mindsets to see also the contradictions in the objects or in their symbols? The primary settings and adjacent reactions are illustrated in the following figure (Fig. 3):

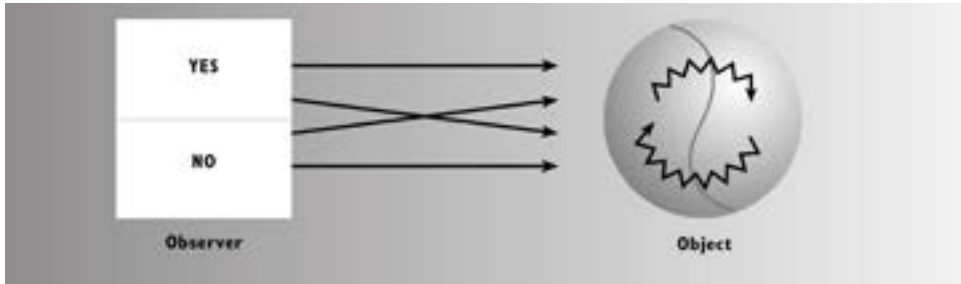


Figure 3. Alternative Measures Recognising the Contradictions of Mind Allowing Embrace to the Contradictions of an Object

One can hypothesise (though currently not proof), does the recognition of contradictions in the mind of a single actor truly contribute to understanding also the opposites in the objects in a more comprehensive manner. Also, is it so that these contradictions allow the observer the see more clearly the juxtapositions in the objects too? Or is it rather so that sublimation as a form of mental rejection provides a receptor less tools to handle the situations, in which too sharp contradictions are involved?

Probably, and as noticed in the interpretation provided by Berleant, the contradictions can cause exhilaration in the mind of an observer. The two polar concepts occupy the different sides of one entity creating contrasts. These contrasting elements arouse interest for the object as they generate the particularity of it. Often the particularities are seen and faced in some formal space (e.g. a gallery; compare to Figure 2), but they may have appearance also in everyday life.

5. LOOKING MORE CLOSELY THE CONTRADICTIONS & DIALECTICS ²

‘Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it has not been fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side.’ (Dostoyevsky in the Karamazov Brothers)

The dialectical method can be employed in examination as it aims at revealing the opposites and the dynamic interplay they might have. The way of thinking is often connected with the works of Hegel and his interpretation of *Aufhebung* (Fig 4.)

Despite the fact that dialectics can be also a rather neutral word and/or practice (originally in Greek language referring to discourse, discussion even to debate), the dialectic procedure addresses contradictions, conflicts, and strong disharmony, complementing the idea of benevolence and harmony. Particularly when examined mainly as a social phenomenon, dialectics can be summarised by the following three entities (modified slightly from Arbnor and Bjerke 1997, 162 and Cheng 2006, 36):

- ✓ unity and struggle of contradictions. Contradictions condition each other and bring meaningfulness to the poles; this requires effective use of polarizing concepts (like the dualistic concepts); actually, the entire world realizes itself in terms of opposition and conflict
- ✓ transition of quantitative accumulation into a new quality. By using some strong metaphors as a starting point, Arbnor and Bjerke here refer to quick changes into completely new qualitative configurations.
- ✓ everything undergoes development and becomes its own contradiction. To generalise this, it can be assumed e.g. that trust converts intrinsically into distrust, development in the relationship may be incrementally changed into dissolution. Subsequently, the conceived negation is later a basis for the next stage in relationship development (e.g. for a re-orientation); generally speaking the world will move according to sequences; the progression, however will ultimately reach an ideal perfection (state of equilibrium – or disequilibrium)?

2. Earlier, the relevance of dialectical examination is tested by the writer of this study as related to interorganisational interaction, relationships, and behavior (Nikkanen 2005) and organizational responsibility (Nikkanen 2012).

Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) use this three-wise procedure to explain the links between the features in the above-mentioned explanation: the theoretical start requires first a struggle of contradictions, which leads – with the help of accumulation of everyday language – to a new quality (descriptive and ideal-type languages as a result), which will negate what was originally given. Finally, the development leads to its own contradiction.

In the dialectical model created by Hinde (1997) two distinctive features are assumed: first, relationships exist only between successive levels of (social) complexity (e.g. interaction--relationship), but *not* between non-successive levels (e.g. individual-intergroup). Second, each level has properties that are not appropriate to the level below and requires specific explanatory concepts. The second assumption is often implicitly noted in research work, though not commonly accepted.

Some philosophers have already increased the knowledge and power of juxtapositions: Socrates and his method of deep cross-examination and Plato's dialectic aiming at achieving the highest knowledge are some of the first attempts to use the idea. Engels' theory of dialectic materialism and dialectic model of history is a well-known example of how to express of the logic of the dialectical processes in general.

More accurately, the Hegelian dialectics are based on some basic concepts. First, everything is transient and finite, existing in the medium of time. Second, everything is made out of opposing forces/opposing sides (contradictions). This may lead to gradual changes which ultimately lead to turning points, where one force overcomes the other (quantitative change leads to qualitative change). Finally, it is assumed that change/s moves in spirals, not circles. This is sometimes referred to as '*negation of the negation*'.

Indeed, according to Hegel there is a triadic interplay between thesis, antithesis and synthesis or as he puts it: '*the evolution of ideas occurs through a dialectical process - that is, a concept gives rise to its opposite, and as a result of this conflict, a third view, the synthesis, arises. The synthesis is at a higher level of truth than the first two views.*' This Hegelian process of change implies that a concept (or its realization) can be fulfilled by its opposite. Undoubtedly, this also includes a critical investigation of the process itself. The logic of the Hegelian thinking (so called back-and-forth process) is presented as follows (Figure 4; original source Vuorinen 1996, 233).

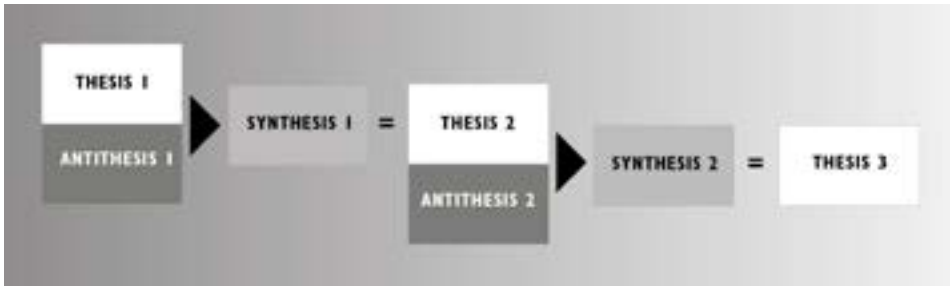


Figure 4. The Rise above Opposites and Contradictions: the Mechanics of Hegelian ‘aufheben’

In figure 4, the verb *aufheben* (and the inherent term *Aufhebung*) cannot be translated appropriately in English. Probably words like to deny, to neglect, or to contradict - or to sublimate - can give an impression of its content (Vuorinen 1996; translated by MN). Also verbs like cancel (with negative connotation) and preserve (a positive one) can probably capture the spirit of the term (Speight 2008). Despite its popularity e.g. in scientific debate, the thesis-antithesis-synthesis is often later incorrectly summarized by these terms as Hegel himself never used them to describe his progressive system (Speight 2008, 55). A concept *category* may refer to its opposite, or to the contradiction which leads eventually to a more comprehensive category.

The Hegelian view of reasoning implies that whenever thinking pushes the clear understanding of a term (or state of affairs as well) to its limits, its contrary is evoked. Subsequently, the opposition that results can be solved only by some kind of reflective or ; speculative consideration of the total picture. This method reveals (or more likely aims at doing so) the immanent contradictions. Hegel thought that all the logic followed a path, in which the internal contradictions were transcended. This, however, gave an option for new(er) contradictions that themselves required resolution (see Burbidge 2008 for more discussion). In all, the dialectical movement is progressive in nature heading for a higher and more desirable state of being/things. Hegel himself defines a moment as a dialectical when ‘*the universal...(…)...of its own accord determines itself out of itself to be the other of itself*’. This leads to a conclusion in which ‘*the very nature of thinking is the dialectic*’ (as quoted in Speight 2008, 56).

5.1 Bipolarity

At first glance, the bipolar nature of beauty and ugliness can be defined as an oxymoron as it deals with the opposite sides, which are separated (implying distinctive categories), but are actually different facets of the same category. At the point of departure, the oxymoron can be treated as a one unit. However, the Other Side (e.g. representing the oppositional attributes of beauty like ugliness)

cannot be understood without considering the beauty, and vice versa. In short, the negative opposite of the positive one can lead to a positive – more aesthetical – judgment. Similarly, Hegel argues his dialectic. In spite of the negative energy, in the end dialectic has a positive result because the speculative is the positive side of the dialectic.

Caused by a polarity, there is a contrast which is not asymmetric with dominance of one character over the other. Symmetry, correspondingly, has a profound significance – as Rydberg (1920, 108) argues symmetry is the most important regularity or norm of aesthetics.

The scientific method of classifying these issues separately hides the strong interplay between the Things. Hence, the dualistic (though unified) concepts should not be treated on disaggregate, but rather on aggregate level exposing the strong and sensitive coherence.

The next depiction (Fig. 5), providing a synthesis of the discussion in previous chapter, is expressing the dualistic nature of the two opposite sides.



Figure 5. Bipolarity and Rotation in Conceptualizing Aesthetic Judgment

The contribution of dialectic method is that it actually pays attention to the strong coherence of the opposite sides. It also addresses the true nature of both conceptual ends (pair of the opposites) in understanding more properly the wholeness of an aesthetic valuation and judgment.

A researcher/observer can turtle or rotate the bipolar entities as depicted in Fig. 4. At some specific point, the result is either a pure impression either of beauty or ugliness (but not both concurrently). Although hidden and invisible, the opposite is not absent, but present through the other side. Hence, there is a subtle immanence of the opposite. Bullough (1912/1984, 460), when discussing his proposal of psychic distance, notes that the observer often turn the same side towards us. This is the side which has the strongest practical force of appeal (often the beauty). He continues by saying *that' we are not ordinarily aware of*

those aspects of things which do not touch us immediately and practically, nor are we generally conscious of impressions apart from our own self which is impressed. He draws a clear conclusion: distance is a factor in all Art. Moreover, he argues that the opposites (also the others than a beauty-ugliness- constellation) find their synthesis in the conception of distance.

Considering the opposites, beauty and ugly, Adorno (as quoted in Kinnunen 2000, footnote) asks *'if there is any causal connection at all between the beautiful and the ugly, it is from the ugly as cause to the beautiful as effect, and not the other way around'* Kinnunen argues and asks what is (if any) the causality between beauty and ugly. In Fig. 5 the causality is actually engaged in the constant interaction between the opposites; there is no single causality (from one character to another) but a bundle of causalities.

Finally, it should be asked to what extent the beauty can be depicted or described. Santayana (quoted in Kinnunen 2000, 213 footnote) claims that *'beauty as we feel it is something indescribable: what it is or what it means can never be said'*. Hence, beauty is probably subject to perceptions (including personal telling and saying) and not for unambiguous definitions.

6. VARIATIONS OF DISTANCE

Distance can be defined as friction - impedance indicating spatial separation or segregation - between two points. Conventionally, this friction can be interpreted as an obstacle or hinder for interaction in space, thus reducing the amount and frequency of desired interaction. Scholarly, the major interest is to find a correlation between interaction and distance by using adequate variables (segregating factors). The correlation between distance and interaction can be depicted graphically with a distance-decay curve: a downward loping curve expresses a simple trade-off, in which spatial interaction tends to diminish with distance. This actual and measurable spatial distance can be seen as a precursor for metaphorical interpretations for distance. Hence, distance *per se* is an expression tool for studying the proximity between e.g. the actors or between the observer and an object.

Often, two distinct levels can be distinguished: either individuals as actors (disaggregate level) or groups of people (aggregate level) are under consideration. Distance is typically measured with concrete distance (close to Euclidean distance). These models are still more predictive than explanatory - actually these models do not tell much about the motives and reasons beyond the interaction. Particularly aggregate correlations predominantly express statistical probabilities and random distributions for behaviour.

In contrast to geographical distance, which locates facilities and assesses the amount of interaction, cognitive distance can be classified as *subjective distance*. This distance is an analogy from the real distant measures. Metaphorically, the researcher transfers the concept of distance to a different context.

In this sense, Piaget's developmental theory (Piaget's fundamentals: perception and conception of single items like space, or physical causality among individuals) can be integrated to aesthetical analysis. Every individual goes through different stages in his/her life - from infancy to adulthood - creating mental or cognitive maps from the surrounding reality. Information is filtered and it is a subjective perception of reality and real-life circumstances. Thus, an individual continuously assesses the alternatives, and with the help of cumulating knowledge, re-locates points in his/her mind, and consequently evaluates the distance e.g. with the help of mental maps (e.g. Novak 2002, p. 58-63 discusses the basic elements of Piaget's theory). In the constructive paradigm of behavioural sciences each individual creates new solutions and knowledge to a solid basis, which is (re)constructed over time. The cognitive distance is a result of personal experiences with attitudes,

values, norms, and preferences as critical forces and drivers. Individuals may have adopted new models when visiting this relatively more attractive place (e.g like an exhibition; see Fig. 2) or they have gathered more information of the place through media or personal contacts.

In general, the adoption of new behavioural features seems to have an impact on the perception of distance. Adoption is a process among individuals, having such aspects as full uncertainty and no knowledge before deeper awareness and even action regarding many options. This means that individuals' preferences go through effects on cognitive, affective, and conative (behavioural, experimental) levels (CAC-expression; see e.g. Novak 2002)³.

Consequently, cognitive distance can be utilised to measure and evaluate the sum of factors hampering the interaction between the points that are scrutinised. Berleant (2000) discusses this participation as a contribution that is part of our experience. In all, there is a complex interplay between some fundamental form of human behaviour such like action and reaction, and adaptation. Berleant claims that the natural experience actually calls for similar behaviour. One can even suggest that with the action-reaction scheme (implying contradictions), a researcher is close to the basic proposals indicating aesthetic juxtapositions – those of beauty and ugliness. Berleant (2000, 57) also notices that is quite a common for scholars to introduce notions like distance, but also terms like detachment and contemplation in order define characteristics of aesthetics attention and experience.

6.1 Psychic Distance as an Emblem of Aesthetic Distance

In his well-known seminal article, Bullough (1912, reprinted 1984) proposed a concept of psychic distance to describe the attitude of detachment with which we appreciate objects. According to Bullough the distance appears to lie between our own self and its affections. Affections are anything which affect our being (bodily or spiritually), e.g. as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea. Like the real (objective) distance, the psychic one has an inhibitory (negative) aspect. Nevertheless, there is also a positive side – the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of distance.

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3. Piaget claimed that all human beings undergo a series of transformations. Does an intensive aesthetics experience require this as well - a mental process from adulthood to childhood - and not vice versa? As related to works by Albers (compare to Fig. 1), Jean Arp wrote (1957 in Josef Albers: A Retrospective, published 1988; translated from the German original by Anni Albers) that '*the beautiful pictures of our ugly age should be seen and read with the eyes of a child....*'

This enables the observer to set aside our attitude toward things. Bullough mentions some things, which tend to diminish distance. On the other hand, there is a corresponding excess of distance which can lead to total absence of personal involvement. Finally, this causes something what he names as aesthetic irrelevance.

Though the concept of psychic distance often referred to Bullough, addressing his introductory attempts to become familiar with the practice, the novelty of the term is probably limited. As Berleant (2000, 58) points out:

‘For the notion of distance is a manifestation in modern aesthetics of the Aristotelian ideal of the contemplative attitude as mans’ greatest good, and of the Judeo-Christian ideal of the contemplative life. In Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Renaissance Platonism, the contemplative ideal possesses an aesthetic dimension.’

It is also worth noting that also in Chinese philosophies this ideal of contemplative life is strongly addressed. Hence, the dialectics of harmony must be connected to this ideal as otherwise we are confronting substantial impediments in understanding more comprehensively the logic. Occasionally, our thinking might be constrained by (too) analytical mind.

As related to distance, it can be proposed, that one can distance him/herself from an objects by increasing the distance from an object, but similarly reduce the distance to yourself (to be a bit more poetical: to your heart). Hence, there are to processes which run parallelly: the one of detachment, and the other of attachment. This proposal includes a suggestion in which the increased distance equals to disinterest.

Finally, the aesthetic distance is actually related to proximity as it is the distance between two realities: the one of the observer and the other of the object (e.g. piece of art). As noted, the distance is a friction, but also it is also a facilitator. Closeness can be an impediment for our perceptions as we are probably not well equipped to see the prosaic. The particularity requires that the observer distances him/herself from the object. Hence, there is need to redraw the interaction curve as mentioned in the first part of this chapter.

7. TOWARDS STABILITY: DIALECTICS OF HARMONISATION AND DISHARMONISATION

*'Sustainability is equity and harmony extended into future.....
(Mega and Pedersen 1998).*

Aesthetics, particularly if, (and often when), associated with topics of beauty (and the various attributes of the conception), is not distant from harmony. As regards the major concepts of this study and their apparent dualism, one can presume that there is - to some degree at least - an implicit assumption of harmony between the opposite sides. This harmony is based on the idea of transformation, which contains both sides of the opposites. In full harmony symmetry of the Things is resulted.

Aesthetic experience is relevant e.g. when an actor contemplates the optimal balance between the different dimensions of his/her own world aiming at finding a harmonious, well-balanced *status quo*. This mental process is as much emotional as it is cognitive, and is certainly beyond full conscious rationality. On the other hand, this can be misleading too: because the visual appearance of the model (as representation of beauty) is so appealing, it may lead to the naive conclusion that there is attainable harmony between the elements. The beauty of the depiction (at least the visualisation) hides the disaggregated and discrete, even fragmented nature of the things and adjacent concepts. Probably, there is no option available, at least theoretically, for deep harmonious integration.

In contrast to the western tradition, Chinese philosophy often stresses the need for balance between different, even distant topics (e.g. man and nature). Generally speaking, this encourages the virtue of magnanimity - a feature that is highly appreciated in this cultural context. This implies *inter alia* that actors must defuse complicated contradictions. The tensions between the things (the dialectical confrontation) must be released somehow, as they are not accepted.

Though Chinese philosophy places considerable emphasise on harmony, there are some variations and different interpretations of this concept. Basically, the Chinese philosophy is well-equipped to confront and examine the concepts of harmony (and conflict). Hence, the term harmony must be associated with conflict in order to go on with in-depth analysis. Two views and foundational schools are probably the most notable in the discussion influencing Chinese thought: Confucianism and Daoism. Presumable, these views stem from the same philosophical roots ('ancient cosmological experience') emphasising their philosophical and historical proximity.

The well-known yin-yang- constellation (representing Confucian thought) is actually based on the search for harmony as these terms can be seen as different and contrasting aspects of balance. As a principle, this means that there are always two opposite, but complementary forces or momenta in the process of change indicating the female and male aspects (Cheng 2006, 28). The other principles (as discussed in Yijing; Book of Changes) are in conjunction with expression of reality (the Dao or the Way), which encompasses e.g. Earth and Heaven, and which is both a process of change and an ordered structure. The Dao as manifestation is crucial as it is the source and origin of all momenta, but also the fountainhead of all polarities. (ibid., 29). Moreover, the difference (and differentiation) of things are actually manifestations of the interaction of the opposite forces – the yin and yang. On their attempts to understand the dynamics of change, humans can conform to its principles in their conduct. Finally, they can also achieve an all-comprehensive goodness in the world (ibid., 29). The imperfections caused by human's failures to understand the reality of change. Moreover, in this situation humans are also incapable in harmonising the world.

Hence, it is important to establish (conceptually, pragmatically) an appropriate relationship between two sets of opposite forces. The knowledge of how these contrasting forces can bring them eventually into balance expresses the depth of correlative thinking. In other words, things begin with harmony but they also end in harmony. All the imperfections (like conflicts) are regarded as misconceived due to incomplete sub-process of the interaction of (bi)polarities. The tension in the interaction is not resulted if the opposites are allowed to proceed in their inherent simplicity.

Despite of differences, the Confucians and Daoists have philosophically a lot in common. In both of the explanations harmony is explicitly recognised; the differences and conflicts have '*no ontological ultimacy*' as Cheng (2006, 34) claims. In fact they complete a state of harmony. From personal point of view, humans can overcome conflicts by developing their own understanding.

Generally speaking it is quite a difficult to identify the major principles of Chinese dialectical epistemology. To some extent the contents have been found out but the major characteristics have seldom explicitly theorized (Peng and Nisbett 1996, 6). The next discussion depicts some of basic assumptions of the dialectical thinking. It should be remembered, however, that under the Chinese tradition a multitude of concepts exist and the articulation is highly flexible, with a multiplicity of meanings and functions. It is also worth questioning, how well the Western (modern but traditional) scientific methodology (involving high analytical rationality, and decomposition) is suitable for understanding *truly* the logic of Chinese thinking (e.g. explicit assumption of persons own mental and spiritual development for gaining more knowledge). Hence, a demarcation line can be drawn to separate the analytic thinking from the Confucian dynamism, in which opposites complement each other and which relies on the use of synthetic and contemplative thinking.

Consolidating the earlier discussion on the Confucian and Daoist metaphysics, a unified characterization can be made expressing a common dialectics. The dialectics of harmonization can be depicted as follows (Cheng 2006, 35; also Peng and Nisbett 1996, 7):

- ✓ all things come into existence by way of polarities and relativities
- ✓ anything regarded in isolation is distorted because parts are meaningful only in their relations to the whole
- ✓ polarities at the same time contain relativities, opposition, complementation, and mutual generation; nothing is isolated and independent, but everything is connected (compare to Fig. 6.).
- ✓ all differences and distinctions of things are generated by (and explained by) polarities of principles, forces, and aspects; because change is constant also a contradiction is constant
- ✓ polarities specifically produce the unlimited creativity of life, a process of return, and the mutual transformability of things, as well as reversion
- ✓ conflicts can be resolved by locating a relevant framework of polarities and their generative relationships in which the ultimate reality of oneness and the ontological equality of all things can be asserted
- ✓ humans can relate to and discover ways of resolving conflict through understanding reality – and themselves

The Hegelian dialectics, correspondingly, demonstrates real and objective conflicts, which take form between a state and its negation. This implies e.g. antagonism, enmity and non-cooperativeness (Cheng 2006, 37). The whole must be realized as the limit of dialectical progression. Finally, (at least in dialectical materialism), there will be a struggle and a clash in order to eliminate the harmful contradictions. Hence, the opposites are not tolerated as they hamper the linear progression towards a new state – kind of perfection caused by triadic interplay between thesis (e.g. beauty), antithesis (e.g. ugliness), and synthesis. Moreover, the opposites can represent such an unpleasant things and qualities that they must be ignored or rejected (Nikkanen 2005). It seems to be so that under the Western tradition, it is argued that it is possible to decontextualise propositions, which means that contradictory propositions are unacceptable by the laws of formal logic. As already noted this leads to a decision-making situation in which it must be elected which of two propositions is true – and which is not (Peng and Nisbett 1996, 4). There is a law of non-contradiction which implies that a satisfactory solution to contradiction is a non-contradictory one – not the contradictory one.

Unlike in the dialectics of harmonization, the disharmony type of articulation addresses conflicts as essential targets and elements in transition from one state to another. Under Chinese traditions (whether Daoist or Confucian), conflicts can be resolved – or avoided. Under the Western interpretations, actually disharmonization is resulted. As noted, it can be even a tool for evolution and progression.

The following depiction (Fig. 6) reveals the major differences between these two optional views.

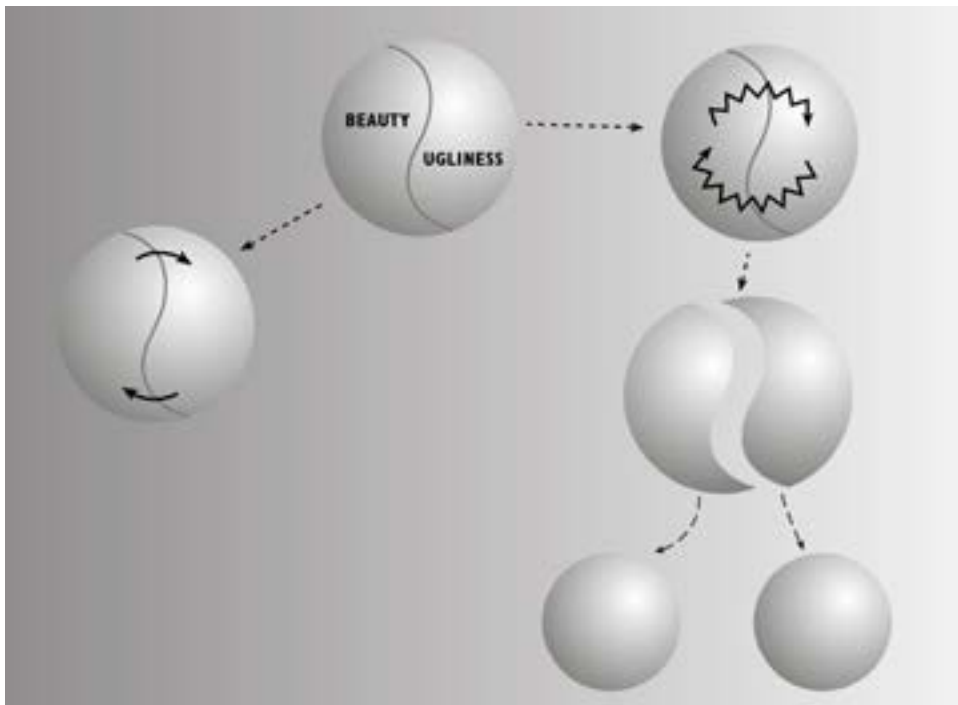


Figure 6. Contrasting Dialectics of Harmonisation ('oneness'), Disharmonisation, and Segregation as a Form of Discrimination in Progression ('twoness')

As related to aesthetics under harmonization, the founder of Daoist school (Lao-zi) nicely describes the essence of the dialectics by saying (as quoted in Peng and Nisbett 1996, 7) that *'when the people of the world all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness; When they all know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil. And so, being and non-being produce each other*' Undoubtedly, this declaration is unacceptable according to Western tradition; e.g. in the Aristotelian logic having appearance in the law of non-contradiction denies the statement which is both true and false. Hence, there cannot be a concurrent existence of between beauty and ugliness. If something is considered as ugly or non-beautiful, logically it cannot be beautiful at the same moment. In order to avoid the logical dilemma, in Western way of thinking the things (contradictions) are separated, isolated and then categorised. This is to ensure the conformity of the law of the non-contradiction.

With some premises, the Aristotelian categorization is clear. He claims that feature (in employing categorization) are binary implying, as already noted, either-or-situation. Hence, an entity (like beauty) either belongs to a category or not. Besides, the categories have clear boundaries as all members of a category have equal status (Taylor 2005). The boundary is impermeable.

In Figure 7, the different settings are illustrated in order to synthesize the discussion so far.




SETTING A:		$X = X$
SETTING B:		$X \neq \neg X$
SETTING C:		$X = \neg X$

Figure 7. Three Symbolic Presentations of Dealing with Contradictions

Settings A and B represent the classical and well-known Aristotelian interpretations and laws. Under the Western tradition, the setting C is absurd as it is logically irrational and hence infeasible. To some degree, the depiction presenting setting C is subject to scientific syncretism as it consolidates different non-Western worldviews, though a distinction should be made between e.g. different Chinese philosophies for coping with contradictions.

If an observer pays attention to particular features in the object in order to make an aesthetical judgment, he/she often separates one character from the others. This isolation (implying disintegration) can be an expression of an aesthetical attitude. Indeed, this preconception of an actor can guide the interpretation. Mainly this can be regarded as something positive as it gives the observer a more vivid and multifaceted picture of the cognition. The fragments of the objective are not neutral but rather influential. As Stolnitz (1960, 35) remarks, we often see those features which are relevant for our purposes and *‘the aesthetic attitude, by contrast, ‘isolates’ the object and focuses upon it’* Does this encourage the observer (even e.g. a scholar) for isolating sharply the contradictions as well? The result can be ‘twoness’ with two distinctive categories for an object of the ‘oneness’ (compare to Fig. 6).

Moreover, there is a process of inter-reflection between the polarities (the contradictions); two reflecting contradictions are continuously in reciprocal relation to each other. For an observer, the contradictions reflect through their multiple attributes.

The Chinese philosophical belief (a synthesis of the major ontological features of various explanations) claims that the above-mentioned law of non-contradiction (and the inherent formal logic) is relevant only in the realm of concepts and abstraction. However, then the rejection of conceptual contradiction cannot be accepted, because concepts are reflections of things (Peng and Nisbett 1996, 9). Hence, I believe, a researcher is even obliged to include the opposites for the scientific work, not to exclude them.

From analytical point of view, it might be reasonable to disintegrate the elements (the things under scrutiny), probably in the very first phases, though one must remember that this arbitrary as it is not based on the real character of the object. Isolation separates artificially and hides, so to speak, the sensitive and subtle nuances of the phenomenon. Objectively, and following the paths of the Chinese philosophy, a too clear distinction should not be made as the beauty can just be understood as related to the ugliness.

8. IMPLICATIONS & EPILOGUE

Research on aesthetics must always deal with the balance between the dimensions of the study whether the elements are visible (e.g. balance between man and nature) or, as often, more invisible and abstract. This is also true with the contradictions as well. They must be handled as well. In this rehearsal, a decision was made to use the power of dualism. Binaries, opposites and juxtapositions, occupying the different areas (even the extreme ones) of the research object under consideration, provided a suitable basis for discussing the dimensions of aesthetics. Particularly, this is evident in studying the beauty-ugliness- constellation. Beauty is present everywhere. On the other hand, it can be said that is not truly attainable with philosophical or analytical means. Hence, it is (also) there, in the world of invisibility, with no words or skills to be approached to. In the study like this, however, acceptance of immanence must be a precursor of the analysis. In aesthetical experiences, we deal with the questions that can be captured through our senses.

In the further studies, instead of paying attention only to the aesthetics of the visible (e.g. products, artefacts), also the question of how individuals (as actors) interpret their outer reality and how the idea of that which is perceived as aesthetic (not just beautiful, but also ugly) is worth analysed. The influence of the values and perceptions and inherent behavior of the actors/observes need to be evaluated. There are different kinds of manifestations through which aesthetics can be experienced - the question is how long (or short) a time the manifestation is present (Naukkarinen 1998, 154) Often, and historically prevalent, these experience/s are in conjunction with contemplative efforts of a man or an actor. However, the true state of contemplation is beyond the abilities of a modern human being.

It seems to be so that ethics (of doing good) and aesthetics (of seeing and feeling beauty) can be combined. In this sense, e.g. the concept of altruism or philanthropy (expressing a form of behaviour) can even be categorised as a form of aesthetics: selfish motives and inherent behavior cannot provide any skills for morally valuable and aesthetically sound activities. Indeed, in aesthetic ethics (one branch in the flourishing tree of the subject) it is presumed that the entire spectrum of human conduct and behaviour can be understood through that which is attractive and beautiful. We embrace the world with our perceptions influenced by the (subconscious) aesthetical judgments. Some scholars claim that beauty corresponds with the Truth. Hence, the consideration of aesthetics is one way to build a world of scientific explanations.

Despite some efforts to integrate the issues of 'non-art' (applied aesthetics) to discussion on aesthetics, there still seems to be a scarcity of related studies

especially if the bipolarity (giving space for discussing ugliness too) is examined in a comprehensive manner. However, the use of retrospective screening and inherent methods together with the unconscious mind is difficult to handle in pragmatic research work - *'traces of moment of active and conscious use of aesthetics sometimes persist very long even at the tacit level'* as Naukkarinen (1998, 155) points out.

Unlike an observer (rejecting the unpleasant and repulsive issues), a researcher is obliged to cope with the opposites. On the other hand, this can cause 'ilahdus' in the mind of a researcher. Hirn (1914, 263) claims that the impressions may lose their ability to create counterforces; this is evident in the situation in which an actor unilaterally feeds his/her aesthetical emotions. But also, bipolarities cause contrasts, which can provide a valuable and intellectual source for further analysis. Undoubtedly, there is some area between the extremes, making scientific approaches even more fascinating. The appearance of 'rumankaunis', as Vuorinen (2001, 21; providing an example of an ashtray admired by Frida Kahlo!) proposes can give some refreshing mindsets for the next attempts. This 'rumankaunis' can be interpreted as the beauty of the ugliness (compare to a snail- model: Fig. 8).

Consequently, these indifference areas require also proper attention as next figure depicts:



Figure 8. Quest for Harmony: Symmetry, Interactions, and Interplay of Interwoven Bipolarities

Nicely, both of the extremes influence each other, nearly symmetrically, continuously and very closely. The construction, a shell of a snail (in this picture, however, rather an *escargot!*), is perfect as it looks so balanced. The contrasts create a visible harmony, a need (even an obligation) to touch and feel it. Everything, including the shape, form and texture, is perfect and harmonious – despite of the minor indifferences (like bumps) on the surface and apparent asymmetries.

A snail is often bilateral, radial or (a)symmetrical. The spiral symmetry stems from asymmetry, not of symmetry, at least if defined in conventional manner. In aesthetics experiences, an observer deals with 'symmetries of asymmetries'. The asymmetry (caused by interplay between the opposites) causes perplexity and need to see and wonder. Hence, we are looking symmetries (or harmony) though basically they can be seen only at some particular moments of our life, representing internal intentions for embracing the particularities.

Indeed, symmetry as a term is close to commensurability. In art, the common kind of symmetria is bilateral (reflection with respect to a single/a vertical axis in the core) and rotational (reflection with respect to a center; The Dictionary of Art, 171). Metaphorically, a snail can be a carrier of a/symmetric elements influencing our aesthetical judgments and paying attention both on beauty and ugliness.

Aesthetic judgments are often based on assumptions, which have relevance in real world (though also non-perceptible is evident). The world of experiences is always reedy. This can cause dissonance, but also moments of pleasure and exhilaration. This motivates the future endeavours in the field of science and the field of aesthetic life.

In this study, aesthetics - particularly when emphasising the harmony of the Things - provides a stabilising worldview for the contrasting elements of the reality. It is assumed that there can be harmonious conceptual co-existence of the issues under consideration in spite of severe difficulties in consolidating concisely the terms and their content. The aesthetics, at least implicitly, are also supposed to be strongly (though invisibly) involved, not just in experiences, but also in most of the decisions made by the actors. Therefore, a *bouquet* of methods are needed to understand (or in attempts to do so) the sphere of aesthetical experiences, and their influence for human behaviour.

Hirn (1900) clearly addresses that the psychological examination must necessarily be supplemented by a historical one. But also, the theories of psychological and sociological origins may furnish, as he says, the aesthetic suggestion. These disciplines (historical, psychological, social) must replace the dialectic treatment of aesthetics in the form of disharmony. He strongly feels that art as an objective of aesthetical valuation, cannot be deduced but it must be studied using the methods of inductive psychology; in short, the art of human behaviour. Would it be so that he calls for substitution rather than for complementing the theoretical articulation?

He continues that beauty cannot be considered as semi-transcendental, but it must be interpreted as an object of '*human longing and a source of human enjoyment*'. Theoretical assumptions (reflecting the dominance of highly speculative Western philosophy of *logos*) must be added with psychological and sociological data of aesthetic life. What would be a contribution of the aesthetics of the enjoyment - and pleasure? Also, is there need to cover the areas of aesthetics ethics with some new suggestions?

Aesthetics as a general study of what is immediately pleasing - to visual perception, to our imagination, and to our life - can support the scientific analysis with subtle tones. Naukkarinen (1998, 203) nicely highlights the specific role the aesthetics (or 'aestheticization' as he proposes) can have as he writes that

'Aestheticization' refers to the notion that more and more things get absorbed into aesthetic sphere, and that aesthetics matters are becoming increasingly important in our daily life. This suggests that it is aesthetics ideas, skills and conceptions - in short, aesthetics - that are used as means of navigating in the world. Criteria for choosing and doing things are above all aesthetic,'

In the worldview of aestheticization, contradictions (and controversies on them) must be embraced to provide a solid basis for understanding the conformities of aesthetical values, judgments, and experiences. Though typical in conventional scientific studies, disseggregation of the units that are studied (including the use of inherent conceptualisations that stem from the basic separation) is probably not an appropriate way in analytical attempts to gain new knowledge. Dialectical examination, particularly if related to issues of harmony (and hence, *not* to dialectics of disharmony), sees more ultimate entities than random fragments. This requires, however, more analytical attempts to understand than to describe. I think the following poem can give guidance in these endeavours labelling the silent fascination by the researcher:

*'Before writing, learn to think,
As what is well understood is easily described,
And words to say it come naturally,
Proceed with a slow haste, and without losing courage,
Twenty times revisit your work,
Improve it incessantly, and improve it again,
Add a few things, and erase often'* (Boileau in *L'Art Poétique* 1674 as quoted in Leseure 2010, 192; his translation).

Consequently, we'll see how twoness facilitates oneness. Finally, two is one.

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