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FOR

ARNOLD BERLEANT

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EDITORIAL

Mădălina Diaconu and Max Ryynänen

On 4 March 2022 Arnold Berleant celebrates his 90th anniversary. Anniversaries are ideal occasions to take a breath and look back and forward, to revisit memories and make plans for the future. Yet celebrations imply more, namely, to gather around the celebrated one in a festive atmosphere and breath in the feeling of togetherness. One looks around for friends and this "lateral view" – to borrow an expression by Maurice Merleau-Ponty – is what conveys depth or meaning to life. On his anniversary, Arnold Berleant neither has to seek for the traces he has left behind nor look around for friends. They are already here: his pathways, ineffaceable and deeply ground-in in the field of aesthetics, his friends, innumerable. This mesh of Berleant's biographical and theoretical trails as seen by friends and colleagues makes the object of the present *liber amicarum et amicorum*.

We are grateful to all those who, despite the tight deadline, could respond to our invitation to celebrate Arnold Berleant's anniversary. Others would have gladly joined us yet were finally impeded by health reasons. The present contributions build like sonorous and silent sequences the rhapsodic structure of this volume. The articles, authored by scholars worldwide and belonging to different generations, demonstrate how Berleant's wide vision of the aesthetic and lifelong effort of coagulating communities has strongly shaped the scope, methods and goals of aesthetic theory, as well as impacted other disciplines. Arnold Berleant himself honored this *Festschrift* with a paper. In it, he surprises us once more by reverting the common interpretation of (past) art from the perspective of (contemporary) philosophy and using an "enigmatic" artist of the 20th century in order to raise doubts on the argumentative "evidence" of an equally famous historical philosopher.

This Festschrift includes articles, memories and birthday wishes. Some texts provide clearly new knowledge and/or in-depth studies of Arnold Berleant's work, some work on reflections more or less based on his lifework, but together they show the richness of Arnold Berleant's impact, which ranges from research to establishing *Contemporary Aesthetics* and functioning as a mentor figure for many younger scholars. We hope that the issue that we have edited could function as a start for Arnold Berleant studies. During the process we realized that although we have read a lot of his work, his publishing resume (included here, too) is more extensive than what we have so far realized. Luckily many authors touched upon issues that have been less discussed, but all and all, the lifework of Arnold Berleant can support many further studies. This issue, we think, shows it.

DUCHAMPIAN REFLECTIONS ON DESCARTES

Arnold Berleant

Abstract
The work of Marcel Duchamp occupies a unique and enigmatic place in the history of modern Western art. Starting with his striking cubist painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, Duchamp quickly turned modern art upside down with the succession of *Readymades* that followed. These culminated in *Étant Donné*, presumably an environmental sculpture but more accurately an environment that incorporates the viewer. Using this as a model for a parallel analysis of Descartes' *cogito*, the claim is made that a similar presence is implicit in the method of doubt, and that this renders Descartes' argument circular. Recognizing this exposes the error of objectification in both cases and confirms the contextual character of art and knowledge.

Keywords
Circularity, Descartes, Doubt, Duchamp, *Étant Donné*, *Meditations,* Readymades, Voyeur.

1

The reputation of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) as a controversial artist has persisted for more than a century following the New York Armory Show of 1913 in which his "Nude Descending a Staircase" was first displayed, and his notorious "Fountain," one of a succession of "Readymades," that was first exhibited in 1917. Duchamp's art was shocking both in conception and execution, and continues to be enigmatic. Standing outside the conventional expectation of how painting and sculpture should look, these works remain difficult to assimilate into the history of visual art. Little has happened in the art world since then that can be considered more anomalous. Rather than ascribing these works to the scandalous intent of Dada, they have greater significance in the history of art. This is not so much as exceptions to the gradual unfolding of the technical and perceptual possibilities of painting and sculpture, but because they prefigure a dramatic change in our understanding of the experience of appreciation.

Duchamp's art is striking on many counts: it is enigmatic, disconcerting, even disruptive, yet strangely fascinating. Appearing near the close of Cubism and moving in the bizarre and even satirical direction of Dada, his work is both the culmination of that of his predecessors and an anticipation of what would follow. Duchamp's artistic innovations require more than minor adjustments to new forms of representation and execution. His art is deeply disturbing; it attacks us viscerally. His innovations prefigured many of the late twentieth century conceptually and perceptually disconcerting effects that art would come to have on the benign convention of aesthetic appreciation and the world that art evokes. Even given his originality, it may still seem strange to think of Marcel Duchamp as an environmental artist, much less one whose work has philosophical implications. Is there a master key that opens the many doors to Duchamp's art?

I would like to suggest that a hidden factor vitalizes Duchamp's art, a factor that it is important to recognize, not only in order to understand the art but, in point of fact, to complete it. While it figures in his early work, this factor is most dramatically present at the culmination of his creative trajectory. His late work, *Étant donné*, is the door, both literally and metaphorically, that provides the entry to his artistic project. A clue may be found in Duchamp's reflective comment on having largely given up painting after the *Nude Descending a Staircase*: "I was interested in ideas—not merely in visual products."[1] From his late work *Étant donné* we can read back to a guiding artistic insight in the succession of Readymades and even to the early *Nude*. Moreover, this factor has philosophical significance of overriding importance. But more of that later. Let us begin at the end with some observations on *Étant donné*.

Étant donné (literally, *Being Given*) preoccupied the artist from 1946 to 1966. It followed and was contemporaneous with the succession of Readymades, Duchamp's distinctive artistic innovation. *Étant donné* can indeed be thought of as the fulfillment of that artistic project: a more complex and complete Readymade. Consider how we encounter it. Approaching this work,[2] one is confronted by a heavy Spanish wooden door Spanish wooden door[3] with a pair of holes located at eye level in the center. Nothing else is visible until one approaches the door and looks through the holes. There the viewer encounters a physical scene[4] consisting of a female nude lying supine directly before one's eyes, sprawling disheveled on a bed of twigs and vegetation. She is holding a gas lamp in her extended left hand while, just beyond in a distant landscape, a flowing waterfall produces a misty vapor. It is left to *the* viewer to interpret the scene, but more than interpret it, for by peeping through the holes, *the* viewer inadvertently participates in the environment as a *voyeur*. Sometimes conveniently called an assemblage, *Étant donné* is better considered an inclusive environment comprising the observer, the door, and the scene beyond it. This is a disconcertingly clever construction.

Étant donné is further significant because it can be understood not only as a participatory environmental construction but as the elaborate and explicit culmination of the series of Readymades that preceded it. For in recognizing the Bicycle Wheel,[5] the viewer supplies the context of a bicycle in the manner of conceptual art, just as viewing the snow shovel of *In Advance of a Broken Arm*[6] requires the implicit presence of a shoveler to complete the work.[7] In a similar way though perhaps with a disconcerting twist, *Fountain*[8] implies a potential user to complete the context. This piece in particular can be seen as a vivid instance of what the perceptual psychologist J.J. Gibson called an "affordance," a design or environmental feature that invites a certain behavioral response in the perceiver.[9]

It is clear that these works anticipate conceptual art, for they need to be experienced as tangible parts of larger, more extensive virtual works contributed by the awareness of the appreciator. Viewing Readymades in the conventional way as contemplative objects not only obstructs the appreciative experience but misses the point. Moreover, there are also overtones here of found art and of performance art,

later twentieth century innovations that Duchamp remarkably prefigured. Taken collectively, moreover, these works may be understood most comprehensively as environments that incorporate the appreciator as a participant. *Étant donné*, then, makes explicit by overt behavior what is implicit in the extended series of Readymades that were fabricated during the twenty years over which it constructed.

Perhaps one may even suggest that Duchamp's early work, *Nude Descending a Staircase*,[10] was a graphic anticipation of the same intention to bring the viewer into the work. For encountering this painting can be a somatic experience. Because of its large size, the scene physically confronts the viewer, and the motility of the nude is represented with such dramatic intensity that the figure appears not only in motion but about to walk out of the painting.

2

These observations may be taken as a commentary on Duchamp's art. But we can go further by suggesting that it also has important philosophical significance. Let us turn to a different case, one that provides an improbable comparison with Duchamp. There is a curious parallel between Duchamp's innovative *oeuvre* and the strikingly original argument of an earlier transformer of Western culture, the French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes. Although Descartes lived three centuries before Duchamp, the influence of his innovative ideas grew over the intervening period to become, in the twentieth century, one of the dominant cognitive features of Western culture. In comparing their distinctive contributions, both men seem to offer parallel situations apparently in inverse form: While Duchamp revealed a hidden participant in the aesthetic encounter, Descartes made a case for the subjective self-substantiation of cognitive consciousness.

This is not the place to review the long tradition of subjectivism in Western philosophy, a history that had its beginnings in Plato's *eidos* and underwent various transformations over the centuries that followed. During that period, subjectivism became an entrenched and powerful influence in Western thought, achieving its consummation in the *cogito* of Descartes. From the seventeenth century on, subjectivism pervaded philosophical thought, culminating in the transcendental metaphysics of Kant and the pure phenomenology of Husserl.

Descartes' argument, reiterated by Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), stands as an exemplary statement of the basic claim for the subjective foundation of knowledge.[11] As he recounted it in the *Discourse on Method* and the *Meditations on First Philosophy,* Descartes resolved to review, under the most stringent conditions, the foundations of his belief. He did this by applying the test of doubt to every opinion he held. Only that which he could conceive clearly and distinctly and without a trace of doubt would he be justified in accepting as true. And conversely, whatever he found that he was able to doubt, he must reject as insufficiently dependable to be accepted as true belief. And so, on the basis of the *dubito,* Descartes began his inquiry by rejecting the veracity of nearly everything he had come to believe as true. At this impasse he found that there is only one thing he could conceive clearly and distinctly, one thing he could not doubt. That is the fact that he is doubting and,

consequently, that he exists as a thinking being. From this he proceeded to reconstruct the world with the reassurance of a God who could not deceive him.

Descartes thus proceeded by employing doubt methodologically: the *dubito* became the standard to judge the truth of an idea. From the uncompromising application of the standard of doubt to all beliefs and, with the reassurance of a God who would not deceive him, Descartes' inability to find a single belief which he could not doubt itself provides him with one: the fact of his doubting is the only thing he cannot doubt.[12] His rigorous method thus appears to have been successful, and Descartes was then free to reconstruct his familiar world. Most crucially, he ultimately arrived at a clear and distinct idea of his personal existence.

Yet on reflection, Descartes' argument is fundamentally circular. This is because his proof of his personal existence as a doubting, i.e. a thinking being follows, not from using the method of doubt, but from his decision to adopt that method. That is, doubt cannot be exercised before being recognized and accepted as a mode of thought. And doubt as mode of thought must be assumed, before it can be used. Doubt cannot prove its own existence; it must first be stipulated. The readymade *In Advance of a Broken Arm*, the snow shovel, cannot stand alone but presumes a situation of use by a prospective user. Similarly, doubt does not just appear in consciousness. It is a response to a previous perception, belief, or other thought. Just as Duchamp's art implies an omnipresent participant in relation to the readymade, so Descartes' doubt implies a doubter in order to be exercised. Each has a correlative participant. As the snow shovel presupposes a shoveler, so doubt presupposes a doubter. Thus in Descartes' *cogito* there lives a thinker present "in advance of doubting," so to speak.

The purity of Descartes' rationalism is impressive. Because his procedure rests on assumptions and leads to conclusions congenial to the tradition of subjectivism, it has been remarkably convincing. Yet the logic of Descartes' train of inferences is defective. While apparently plausible, it is inherently circular because it rests on assuming (a doubting being) in support of what he intends to prove (the existence of a doubting being).

Thus doubt cannot be a starting point because it presupposes a thinking being, just as Duchamp's art projects a participant, and the parallel of Descartes with Duchamp is not inverse but exact. A human presence is implicit in philosophy as it is in art. Nor can a mind begin the reconstructive process since, despite persistent mythologies, "mind" is not a free-floating entity but a concept that hypostatizes self-conscious awareness and inheres in biological, historical, cultural beings. The situation thus precedes the event. Similarly, Duchamp's art requires a user for its completion. It exhibits a mastery of aesthetic reciprocity, of what, in logic, would be called circularity. Like the cogito, it is self-justifying.

Can art be a guide to philosophy? Perhaps it may be concluded that circular thinking leads to sounder art than philosophy. It took three centuries for one French cultural revolutionary to comment so eloquently on another. Who, then, is the voyeur in the *Meditations*?

[1] Duchamp, as quoted in “Eleven Europeans in America,” James Johnson Sweeney (ed.), *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* (New York), vol. 13, no. 4/5, 1946, p. 20.
[2] *Étant donné* is in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
[3] https://philamuseum.org/images/cad/mediaDecks/1969-41-1v1-pma-CX.jpg, accessed December 29, 2021.
[4] https://www.philamuseum.org/image_bank/site_use/etant_donnes/clip_image002.jpg , accessed December 29, 2021.
[5] https://uploads4.wikiart.org/images/marcel-duchamp/bicycle-wheel-1913.jpg!Large.jpg , accessed December 29, 2021.
[6] https://uploads1.wikiart.org/images/marcel-duchamp/in-advance-of-the-broken-arm-1915.jpg!Large.jpg , accessed December 29, 2021.
[7] The choice of a snow shoveler to illustrate the claim of circularity in "On the Circularity of the Cogito” was a complete (and serendipitous) coincidence. See endnote 11.
[8] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/dd/Marcel_Duchamp%2C_1917%2C_Fountain%2C_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg/459px-Marcel_Duchamp%2C_1917%2C_Fountain%2C_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg ,accessed December 29, 2021.
[9] James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (1966).
[10] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/c/c0/Duchamp__Nude_Descending_a_Staircase.jpg, accessed December 29, 2021.
[11] This account summarizes the analysis offered in Arnold Berleant, "On the Circularity of the Cogito," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXVI, 3 (March, 1966), 431-3. http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/M6JW1F
[12] *Ibid.,* p.432.

CAN ARNOLD BERLEANT'S AESTHETICS OF ENGAGEMENT BE APPLIED TO "CONCEPTUAL DANCE"? EXPERIENCE AS ENGAGED PARTICIPATION

Lilianna Bieszczad

Abstract
The central aim of the article is to reflect on whether-and if so, how-Arnold Berleant's theory of aesthetic engagement can be applied to works described with the controversial term 'conceptual dance', in other words, to works that undermine the determinants of a dance performance. Berleant stresses the open nature of his project of aesthetic experience; however, he does not describe works that seek to destabilize perception in dance performances. With this in mind, the concepts of aesthetics and critical aesthetics are considered as indicating a possible direction for the further development of the ideas outlined in Berleant's Sense and Sensibility. This extension of Berleant's thought enables the problem of destabilization of perception to be grasped, and encompasses the issues of criticality and the political, which animate the performances of Xavier Le Roy, Jan Ritsema and Jonathan Burrows.

Keywords
Arnold Berleant, Aesthetics of Engagement, Aesthetic Experience, Xavier Re Loy, Jan Ritsema, Jonathan Burrows.

1. Experience as engaged participation

When Arnold Berleant proposed reforming Immanuel Kant's aesthetics, his critical arguments were to some extent based on examples from contemporary art. Berleant's aesthetic theory is centered on engaged participation and assigns value to the body and senses in aesthetic evaluation[1]. This proposal seems to have been particularly suited to the field of dance theory, where it became known as 'performative aesthetics', in the sense in which Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska used this term: as a symbol of the transition from the aesthetics of the object to process-orientated aesthetics[2]. Berleant criticizes the universalist aspirations of Immanuel Kant's aesthetic philosophy, along with its dualist distinctions and separations, and asserts that the notion of aesthetic engagement fits perfectly not only with the performing arts, but also—and this may at first sight seem controversial—with traditional, non-performative arts[3].

In this article, I would like to consider whether Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is sufficiently robust and flexible to encompass all possible art forms, and whether it is capable of dealing with the wide variety of dance forms that have emerged, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first

centuries; thus, not only classical dance forms, but also those controversial dance works that undermine all the basic conditions that allow them to be recognized as art. These are important issues because, firstly, Berleant understands experience in a specific way, framing it in terms of interactions or transactions, following John Dewey[4] and therefore in opposition to the dualistic distinction between subject and object. Hence, he stresses that experience is a process of mutual interaction, and of being subjected to influence[5], thereby opposing the subjectification of experience and stressing its unifying character, through integrating various factors from the aesthetic field (a theoretical construct outlined in his first book, *The Aesthetic Field*[6]. Then, secondly, in suggesting that art should be approached from the perspective of the experience of art[7], Berleant does not refer to pure facts, since he argues there is no such thing as pure experience[8]. Neither does he have a theory that provides a basis for the formulation of objective knowledge, due to his conception of interaction. Thus, his perspective is non-dualistic: he calls it the aesthetics of context and continuum[9]. Therefore, the question remains as to whether—and if so, how—experience[10] thus conceived can encompass controversial works occupying positions at the borders of art, which are aimed at destabilizing the viewer's perceptual process. Intentions such as these can be observed in 'conceptual dance', or in works in which movement—hitherto the basic determinant of dance—is abandoned, thus disrupting the prevailing conditions that allow a dance spectacle to be viewed as such. At this point, I must stress that the fundamental aim of this text is not to consider whether Berleant's aesthetics projects actually consider such controversial works, even if the author clearly declares his openness to such considerations. The aim is rather to explore how his research proposal can be developed as a tool for the investigation of subversive works. It goes without saying that the conceptual instruments of traditional aesthetics developed thus far are not sufficient for capturing the phenomena described as 'new choreography' or 'new dance'.

It is not possible to unravel all the threads that are interwoven in such works, but I would argue that it is possible to extend Berleant's theory, through its application to various phenomena emerging in the field of anti-dance, and that this theory can tackle the problems addressed by contemporary dancers/performers, such as engagement, politicality, criticality[11], etc. In his most recent work, Berleant refers to perceptual politics[12], and his conception of aesthetic places great emphasis on its critical aspect[13]. Although he does not consider these issues in relation to art, but rather to environmental experience, on the basis of the principle of continuity he has adopted, they can also be translated into this field of human activity, especially as he repeatedly emphasizes the unique capacity of this principle to define perceptual experience more clearly[14].

2. Aesthetic theory in *Art and Engagement* – the aesthetics of engagement in dance

When Berleant formulates the first outline of his aesthetic theory, he emphasizes how important the experience of contemporary art was for him, as it led him to formulate his notion of aesthetic

engagement. He cites various examples that primarily serve to confirm his main thesis, i.e., that disinterested contemplation (developed from Kantian and Schopenhauerian aesthetics) does not reflect the complexity of the phenomena of art; that in happenings the inseparability of an object from its surroundings is accentuated; and that increasingly the works of artists require participation and being active, and demand contribution, which he supports with examples of happenings and performance art[15]. On this basis, he concludes that aesthetic experience confirms the continuity of art and life rather than their separation, insisting on the process-oriented and incidental nature of art; its contextuality rather than autonomy. At the same time, when he describes the course of such an experience on the basis of examples from various genres, he uses expressions suggesting that, for example, its totalizing character should be considered[16], and he draws attention to its integrative aspect[17]. When Berleant turns to aesthetic engagement in dance, he writes about its vitality, the viewer's involvement in the event and the intimate relationship with what is happening (because, crucially, it is not an object, or a work of art, but a process, an event taking place)[18]. He describes viewers becoming unified with a work, suggesting fulfilled experience, emotional ecstasy, positive valorization, (and recalls the well-known notion from the phenomenology of dance, that one cannot distinguish between the dancer and the dance). This is evident from his continual insistence that aesthetic engagement is a living, vital experience, and his repeated reference to the notions of flowing energy, vitality and even kinesthetic/somatic empathy[19]. It is important that the notion of engagement (let us stress that it is somatic, involving all the senses, including the lower ones, memories, etc.) is a response to the concept of distance and disinterested contemplation—taken from the British empiricists, but detectable even in Aristotle—which is how the experience of art is conceived in traditional aesthetics. Berleant tries to undermine this, precisely by emphasizing proximity to the work/event[20].

In my view, the emphasis on vitality can lead to misinterpretations of Berleant's theory, giving the impression that when focused on dance he only takes into account the active, bodily sensation of the dancer's movements, full of energy and vigor, thereby favoring legitimized dance art forms. This preference excludes works based on stillness, which leads some authors, such as André Lepecki, accuse Berleant of betraying the essence of dance[21].

It is worth mentioning, however, that in *Art and Engagement* Berleant evokes various modalities of dance, not only ballet or modern dance, but also postmodern dance, such as that of Yvonne Rainer. Although he cites the examples of Merce Cunningham or Vito Acconci, he does not describe in detail the specificity of their works, limiting himself to casual remarks to the effect that they introduce everyday movement into art[22].

3. Performative dance – conceptual or 'just' performance?

Let me cite examples of artists associated with 'conceptual dance', because they are likely to be the target of the doubts that have been mentioned in the previous sections. It is worth mentioning that,

when considering dance, it is not possible to transfer the meanings of terms commonly used to describe other arts, and not only the visual arts; for example, this applies to postmodern dance or particularly conceptual dance. According to the performance maker and theorist Bojana Cvejič, when the term conceptual dance is assigned to this type of activity, it causes unnecessary confusion. In the panel discussion entitled "Not conceptual" (led by Jonathan Burrows with Jérôme Bel and Xavier Le Roy), it was argued that conceptualism tends to be associated with excessive theorizing, and therefore with a strong separation between what is thought and what is felt, between what is dance and what is not; with prioritizing the mind and reducing dancers' actions to a passive reproduction of the choreographer's ideas—this is one of the reasons why artists request that this term not be used[23]. Yet the works of such artists are "highly performative"; they constitute a conceptualization of the criteria of dance, rather than its negation as a practice of the body[24]. In an attempt to describe the relationship between conceptualism in the visual arts and dance, Cvejič lists some similarities between them, such as: self-reflection, criticism of institutions and the art market, and a rejection of the monopoly of art-dealers and intellectuals who claim the right to determine what is dance and what is not.

There is a lack of consensus and conflicting opinions among the theorists with regard to how the work of such artists should be described, given that artists themselves reject the term 'conceptual'. Nevertheless, there are discussions on this issue (e.g., *Is there such a thing as conceptual dance?*), the term 'conceptual dance' is in circulation, and artists use it themselves, (Cvejič, Le Roy): all this entails that the term still functions in linguistic practice[25].

In my view, the activities of the aforementioned artists deserve to be described as 'performative works'[26]. If we consider their specificity and diversity, they can be described as open, denying the boundaries between art forms, engaging in critical practice, self-conscious, and manipulating the process of perception. Cvejič enumerates these characteristics as specific to conceptualism, but I would argue that they are also a feature of performance art, in terms of these most general assumptions. This is due to the fact that in the second half of the twentieth century works straddling the borders of genres are typical. Hence the concept of intermediality, combined with happening (which was introduced by Dick Higgins), also seems to be relevant here. It rather suggests exploring the space of raw, undefined works, which cannot be easily located within the world of art, or cannot be pigeonholed in a particular genre that matches precisely to conceptual dance. (However, in the manifesto of conceptualism, attention is drawn to the *concept* as material for works). Perhaps Marco De Marinis is correct to write about performative dance rather than conceptual dance when dealing with Jérôme Bell's works, which are also referred to with terms such as 'non-dance', 'a-dance' etc.[27].

Conceptual dance, like performance, due to its evident critical strategies, aims to overturn conceptual boundaries. It is often politically determined. As Cvejič and Le Roy write, it falls into the paradox that, although it has its origins in the criticism of institutions, it also functions within them by exposing or dismantling ideologies[28]. It is supposed to be "in-between", to perform and to break

down genre or media distinctions, resisting attempts to name. This is how RoseLee Goldberg conceives it[29]. André Lepecki also thinks that a distinguishing feature of such artists is their lack of interest in the dance label[30]. When Goldberg refers to dance, he draws attention to those works of artists from various fields who cooperate with each other; dancers, artists and musicians, and thus works that are difficult to class as dance or a happening, dance or non-dance, that blur the boundaries between life and art[31].

It is precisely this aspect, namely that it is "difficult to tell the difference", which has become a conscious strategy of criticism and resistance on the part of dancers, but also an expression of their becoming involved in politics, which the practice of performance art is known for (this can be read "between the lines" of Jonathan Burrows' statement[32]. In Burrows' interpretation, the instability, the constant changeability of works, the fact that it is impossible to determine what kind of spectacle the performance can be classed as-all these factors are elements of artists' opposition ("to commodification")[33]. According to Burrows, the "performative confrontation of the dancers" (from performing alone, through to collective performance), struggling with superfluity in relation to what is "easy to quantify or to assess or to monetise", is the practice of resistance, "to disturb the comfortable", and is the evasion of "arrangements" (concerning both the relationship between art and institutions, but also allowing oneself to be subject to politically conditioned aesthetic evaluations)[34]. This is the purpose served by performative actions that are "difficult to understand" and "difficult to describe", about which Jonathan Fabius writes in the context of the actions defined by the controversial term 'conceptual dance'[35]. This means that what Burrows described as the "refusal of movement", demonstrated by the dancer and choreographer Erdem Gündüz, known as "The Standing Man" in Istanbul, is the "the opposite of a refusal to engage"[36].

In Mark Franko's interpretation, resistance is a "trope within which movement and representation are ambiguously articulated"[37], so in a single gesture dance can embody and oppose the effects of political power, can at the same time encode norms and the deviations from them. Ana Vujanović also describes the agential power of the dancing body in this way[38]. As a result of such thinking, many dance commentators[39] focus on "how dance works" to release the agential potential of the Austinian performative, by for instance the performative evasion of rules, norms or canons[40]. Franko describes this as "questioning the lexicons and syntaxes that have effected such constructions in dance"[41].

Among the features typical for conceptual dance, Cvejič lists the self-conscious strategies of artists who destroy borders and disrupt perceptual strategies, often in dialogue with the visual arts. (This is also often identified with the so-called performative turn, as outlined by Erika Fischer-Lichte[42]). Among the various forms of artistic activity, experimentation with the framework of perception is particularly noteworthy, being based, among other things, on destabilization, dislodging the viewer's habits from the matrices. (I omit detailed analyses of other important determinants—such as self-referentiality, politicality and criticality—of this type of activity, etc.). According to

Cvejič, these activities are characterized by "perceptual self-reflection", directed towards performative tools, towards their display conditions, the division of the roles of the spectator-artist and the procedures for their evaluation. I would especially like to focus on this issue, because the problem of perception is also crucial in Berleant's aesthetics.

4. Xavier Le Roy's *Untitled*

The representative works in this respect include Xavier Le Roy's *Untitled*, in which viewers are confronted with the fact that all the determinants of their interpretation - including those associated with the institutional framework - have been refuted. It is here that the theatrical conventions of traditional aesthetics regarding the division of the roles of viewer-artist, auditorium-stage are denied. At the outset, the viewer is deprived of the naming framework, i.e., the title, which allows the work to be interpreted within the framework of the conventions adopted by the artworld[43]. This leads to the creation of a space of "sensory deprivation", where the viewer, seated as if in a conventional setting before a black abyss, where nothing can be seen, gets a flashlight, seemingly for fun. Yet it is this flashlight that allows the viewer to partially expose some dummies that barely move (it is not clear whether they are disguised people or just impersonal puppets). This undermining of the border between the human and non-human is significant, but it does not seem to be the most important aspect of this work. In its entirety, the performance is characterized by the uncertainty of its message. It is not possible to discern exactly what is happening on stage; the stillness or partial movement of the puppets only reinforces the audience's consternation. There are no signs of dance here. The lack of a clearly defined message regarding the artist's expectations towards the audience causes impatience and dissatisfaction after around fifteen minutes. The viewers are in a state of doubt – are they supposed to become involved in the work and enter the darkened space, as is expected with performative strategies? They receive no answers to their doubts from the silent stage, where still nothing is happening, thus reversing the usually one-way direction of the stage's relation 'to' the audience. Here, it is not the choreographer, but rather the audience that makes claims on the stage/artist. The main problem for the viewers is therefore that they do not know how to behave. The residual and fragmentary nature of their perception, through the light of the flashlight and the fog which appears later on, the blurred border between the stage and the audience, the dummy crossing this border and coming into the auditorium – all this contributes to confusion and leads to a negative evaluation and dissatisfaction. The artistic work confronts the audience with their own expectations as to what tools they should use to recognize and categorize the performance. Even when, at the end, the puppet enters the auditorium, posing questions and thus indicating its own limited perception, this does not direct the interpretation of the work.

This is not the only thread that Le Roy has problematized in his artistic performative works. Apart from dismantling the dualistic division between the stage and the audience, and the one-

directional message in the relation between the viewer and the artist, he has also addressed the issues of the hybridity of bodies and the extension of the body in the surroundings. *Untitled* is therefore an example of the "discursive intervention"—to use Ramsey Burt's phrase —of an active, dancing body[44].

I have presented only a de-contextualized fragment of a work in which viewers were involved, where their role recalls the essential features of works that seek to shake viewers from their habitual perceptual matrices (an aim typical for performative strategies, e.g., in Fischer-Lichte's description of the experience of being "in-between"[45]. Thus, the audience is separated, on the one hand, from the customary conventions which were the source of the aesthetic satisfaction derived from the simple feeling of empathy with the energy of dancer's body, and also, on the other hand, from the clear message from the artist.

In terms of Berleant's theory, one could argue that, due to the lack of visible dancers as subjects of action (instead of visible movement, the viewers had to deal with largely motionless dummies, only one of which moved its head), in this performance it is not possible to speak of bodily empathy, in which the viewer and the dance become unified, through feeling the energy of the dancers' movements, because the viewer does not even know where such dancers are, or indeed if they are there at all. The stillness or minimal range of the mechanical movements further deepens the viewer's state of disorientation. The introduction of humanoid objects was not without significance, since it further problematized the relationship "between" the human and non-human, between the subjective and objective, and between who is watching and who is being watched. At this point, an interesting analogy with Berleant's aesthetics can be drawn, since he also undermines established dualisms and the separations based on them, such as illusion-reality, subject-object.

So can the model outlined in *Art and Engagement*, focused on body movement, be applied here? Did Berleant, who writes that space and time result from motion, only have a narrow understanding in mind – one reduced to the dancer's actions? Before we return to this question, let us look at a few other examples, which employ similar mechanisms, and which problematize the established dichotomies of thinking–action, theory–practice, mind–body.

5. Ritsema's and Burrows's *Weak Dance Strong Questions*

An excellent example of Jan Ritsema's and Burrows's re-performative re-thinking is provided by the performance *Weak Dance Strong Questions*, which aims to question itself. According to the declarations of its creators, it is a dance that constantly asks questions, but which does not expect answers. As the dancers claim, it undermines the basic principles associated with improvisation, such as bodily contact, but also puts it in a position "between what has hitherto been the domain of dance practice" and theory. According to Ritsema, the artists danced "questioning everything they did", thereby dismantling the previous determinants of improvisation as synonymous with the essentialist need to express oneself, and thus the hidden universal truth. Ritsema explained the assumptions behind

the performance by drawing on Gilles Deleuze's thought (invoking his concept of the body without organs, the body as affect, movement and intensities), using philosophical discourse to define the role of their bodies in the performance as disciplined, drilled thinking[46]. At the same time, he stripped the dance performance of the widely shared belief that the domain of the (dancing) body is action and not thinking. And although these artists declared that they wanted to reject the theatrical determinants of the performance, the established canonical rules of their evaluation/classification, they also implicitly referred to the politics of the theory accompanying them, its inadequacy and incommensurability.

The assumptions given expression in these works reveal a peculiar parallelism with the views of Berleant, who, while adopting the position of anti-dualism, renounces all of the following: the essentialist subject, the need to express emotions, the idea of the artist expressing themselves through dance, the reduction of the body to the name of an object (proposing, interestingly, in reference to Merleau-Ponty, that it be understood it in terms of a field[47]. Through the principle of continuity, Berleant indicates that the body does not exist without thinking that the body also thinks.

On the other hand, from the notes written by Ritsema to accompany the preparation of the performance "TODAYulysses" it is clear that the main goal was to blur and destabilize all the existing determinants of a performance, starting with the techniques of creation and decoration, as well as the necessity of expressing aesthetic values, such as beauty or emotion–feeling. According to Ritsema, the spectacle should be a plane open to destabilization, displacement, and decentralization, in order to shake the viewer out of all attitudes, expectations and habits, including aesthetic ones. In this way, the artists create a place, delineating an area "in-between" that allows, as they write: "to rethink and reconsider everything"[48]. It is significant that they thereby also broaden the space of the terms customarily associated with dance performance. In both works, Ritsema states that he is subjecting the determinants of the theatricality of performances to critique and improvisation, but in reality, they do much more. They create a kind of a new theoretical-methodological approach, a new language of movement, delineating new areas between the matter of the body and language (as writes Jeroen Fabius for whom the analysis of concepts in dance leads to the study of the embodiment of thought[49]).

7. Aesthetics as a theory of sensitivity

In his reflections, Berleant does not avoid examples from the field of contemporary art; on the contrary, it is by referring to them that he postulated the expansion of the field of aesthetics and broadening the understanding of art[50]. He does not analyze these specific cases from the field of dance in detail, but he does refer to minimalism, conceptualism, and performance art. When he wrote, for example, about conceptualism, he paid attention not so much to these works replacing a work of art with a verbal commentary, but rather to the attempt to stir the viewer's imagination. He does not reduce the interpretation of conceptualism to an analytical language of expression, as Joseph Koshut

does, but rather points to a new form of communication through visualization. This is because he is against the reduction of art to a merely intellectual message conveyed through cognitive symbols[51].

When Berleant turns to video dance, he highlights the importance of modes of perception that the camera makes it possible to capture; thus, the camera becomes an active participant of the dance, its extension[52]. When discussing the camera, he focuses specifically on filming the movement of bodies. His texts consider the new possibilities for manipulating perception by means of frames and filming, by zooming in and out of perception, by breaking down perception, dislodging habitual matrices. According to Berleant, video dance requires a new kind of perception and a fresh evaluation of artistic creation, since an element of surprise is introduced, with time-lapsed images, sudden slowdowns or accelerations of movement, all of which dislodge the viewer from of the perceptual habits associated with live dance works. Performance now incorporates the possibility of zooming in on the details of the dancer's body, the subliminal activation of kinesthetic feeling in motion, and extending the spectrum of sensations through the perspective of the camera's eye. According to Berleant, there is a communal experience here, because the camera captures from one perspective, for everybody, and changes the parameters of the perception of movement, widening the possibilities of the perception of its space-time continuum. In this description, Berleant still does not renounce empathy with the dancers' body movements, but he demonstrates that perceptual space has been expanded with new technologies. At the same time, he fails to notice the problems associated with the images moving bodies being processed through media. This problem came to the fore in the context of differences in the perception of live and filmed activities (e.g., with Fischer-Lichte's concept of performance[53]). Berleant touches on the aspect of manipulating perception in art in the context of performance art, conceptual art and dance[54]. He explains that one of the most valuable elements of art is the manipulation of perceptual material itself, since it reveals different ways in which experience is shaped and modelled. Berleant points out that such manipulation can also convey meanings. This is consistent with his distinction between sensual elements and meanings in experience[55].

The concept of perception is of key importance in Berleant's aesthetics; thus, he refers to its etymology – *Aisthesis*, sensual perception[56]. That is why, for example, when he describes theater and refers to empty space, he is writing about perceptual space. At the same time, however, he shows that there is no empty space in perception; it always has some significance[57]. One could say that when the viewers are caught up in the trap of experience, in the established norms that determine performance, as in Le Roy's works, the process of perception in the form of engaged participation still takes place (due to a non-dualistic way of thinking, empathy is also understood differently than it is by John Martin[58]), because perception itself is a movement of interaction. In effect, Berleant also wants to broaden the issue of the perception of works of art, which cannot be limited to a pleasant, holistic integration with them, but rather involves responding actively, stimulating the awareness of the intellect, through the mediation of the body and the senses. I would also understand Berleant's theory

in this way, since for him dance performance is a situation requiring interaction, as he writes in *Art and Engagement*.

However, in order to understand his perspective, one has to go back to the sources of his inspiration, which influence his view of perception as interaction. He is close to the positions of ecology, modern physics, and pragmatism, and it is in connection with these fields that he adopts the central principle of continuity (which does not permit the senses, imagination, intellect or bodily involvement to be separated). With this focus on continuity, therefore, Berleant did not reduce the experience of art to either the reception of an intellectual message or a response of bodily empathy, so he was unable to accept Martin's dualistic conception of empathy. The basic assumption - that there is no interior and exterior, that there exists only a continuum, that there is no subject and no object, no object and no environment; only continuity - entails that the entirety of dance interaction involves a wide range of factors.

In the context of inspiration drawn from ecology, one can understand why the notion of performance in dance tends to denote an event, a situation taking place "now", in specific circumstances. It is worth noting that it also emphasizes the understanding of perceptual experience as active. Berleant introduced the element of activation early on in his work, in *Aesthetic Field*, with the term 'performative factor', but his conception is different to that of the representatives of performatics, who use the similar term 'performativity'. In this regard, Berleant drew attention to the active attitude of the viewer, describing it with the terms 'activator' and the 'focused factor'. Thus, there are performative elements in Berleant's approach to performance, although he himself does not directly refer to the representatives of performance studies. He takes into account the transformative character, the inseparability of the situation from the circumstance in which it happens; he describes engagement as participation in a process, as one of the factors contributing to the happening situation. What matters to him is the atmosphere, the elements of the surrounding space, including objects, as with the case of puppets. This is due to the fact there is a continuity that encompasses the subject and the object, the self and the world, the object and the environment, etc.[59]. He also has in mind the situation's power of influence, as what is happening, the process. This is reminiscent of Marvin Carlson's description, who, when referring to John Austin's performativity, writes about the strength and power of agency[60]. In this inseparability of effects and results, there seems to be a resemblance to Austin's notion of performativity and the concept of agency[61].

For Berleant, the point is not that the viewer emotionally identifies with the dancer's actions, rather that even if the viewer reacts negatively, if there is a lack of satisfaction, this is still part of the work, or rather a component of the active experience of performance, which takes place in specific circumstances, "now"[62]. Therefore, it is of no importance whether or not the viewer reacts positively and is satisfied with the experience. Berleant is not interested in crowning the experience with fulfillment typical of Dewey's real experience. The fact that he criticizes Dewey's concept of formal unity

supports this interpretation. In his critique of the pragmatist's position, Berleant emphasizes that there are unfinished works, cites the example of camp, and shows that in art nowadays one must sometimes stop, reflect and consider[63]. Therefore, making an active contribution, participating in the experience of an event, means not only doing so on the emotional level of reacting physically, through empathy with the rhythm of a moving body, but also on the intellectual level, involving the imagination, intuition, etc.

Although ecology requires a holistic approach, in *Sense and Sensibility* Berleant makes clear that he also distrusts the concept of the whole[64], in spite of the fact he often employs it himself. His attitude can also be explained through reference to the perspective of pragmatism (Berleant wrote his PhD thesis on Dewey), in which functional distinctions are adopted, instead of ontological ones (Berleant writes about perceptual ontology). The notions of integration or the whole that he uses are functional, but do not assume a homogeneous unity; instead, they rather explain, in a useful way, the very process of interaction occurring in experience, based rather on co-presence, cooperation, involvement in the active process of the creation and reception of meanings created through the atmosphere of an ongoing situation. Involved in this process are the elements of space and objects, which create an energetic and perhaps sometimes uncomfortable situation of integration with concrete actions and circumstances.

It is also significant that in later works Berleant introduces the concept of negative aesthetics, incorporating it into criticism[65]. Admittedly, he does not describe this concept in the context of art, but in the context of aesthetics. Nevertheless, of crucial importance seems to be the notion of critical aesthetics, which sharpens perception and aesthetic meaning, critically demystifying the political determinants hidden behind traditional aesthetics embodied in the artist's message. This can be applied to the above-mentioned examples of artistic works.

Conclusion

In his declarations, Berleant argued that it is the privilege of the contemporary artist to challenge the aesthetician, to astonish, to challenge conventions and increase the possibilities of experience[66]. He showed that the point of aesthetics is to capture that which eludes constraints, conceptualizations, etc. He saw "the various moral bonds that link art to its social context"[67]. Generally speaking, he stressed the processes that are occurring, rather than the object-work of art, extending what is aesthetic "to areas of action and practice where until now these concepts were considered peripheral and inappropriate."[68]

It is worth remembering these assumptions, which are necessary to understand the great capacity not only of the formula of participatory engagement, but of environmental aesthetics in general. Because although Berleant did not analyze examples in detail, i.e., conceptual dance, this does not mean that he did not appreciate such art forms. In his later work[69], Berleant considers political themes, focuses on social implications, and highlights its critical potential. These are

categories that he does not refer to in the context of dance, but they are present in his project in the concept of aesthetic experience[70], which goes beyond the field of art. This is an advantage of his thought, in that it grapples with everyday life, and thus environmental issues; therefore, the conclusions drawn from his conception of aesthetics can also be suitable for the art of dance. It is precisely such issues, i.e., those of perceptual politics[71] and being critical, that are now especially relevant in dance, as evidenced by the excellent selection of Marta Keil's texts.[72]

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[1] Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts.* (New York: Routledge, 2004); "Zajmujący Dewey: Spuścizna Deweyowskiej estetyki", (Engaging Dewey – The Legacy of Dewey's Aesthetics), *Sztuka i Filozofia* 2010, (37).
[2] Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, "Perspektywy performatywizmu", *Teksty Drugie* 2007 (5) 87.
[3] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 5.
[4] John Dewey, Benthley A.F. *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949).
[5] Berleant is indebted to Dewey for this conception of experience, and although he rejects Dewey's biological approach, Berleant clearly acknowledges these inspirations and draws inspiration from pragmatism (Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 17). On the oversimplified approach to Dewey as a representative of biological reductionism, see: Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia. Rekonstrukcja filozofii sztuki Johna Deweya,* II wyd., (Kraków: Universitas, 2003).
[6] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field. A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* I wyd., (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1970), *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts,* 43; *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* St. Adrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs 6, Exeter Eng.: Imprint Academic, 10.
[7] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 3-6.
[8] It is worth mentioning that Berleant eagerly invokes Husserl and *epoche*, which seems to suggest that the ideal of phenomenology, that is, of starting from experience, is tempting to him. On this topic, see (Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 26-28). But he consistently emphasizes that there is no pure experience, that all experience is culturally, historically and contextually conditioned.
[9] Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts,* 22, 23.
[10] He understands aesthetic experience broadly, taking it to include not only phenomena from the field of art, but also everyday life.
[11] With regard to the conception of criticality intended here, I refer to Irit Rogoff, "Smuggling: An Embodied Criticality", *Transversal* 2006 (8) 11. On the issue of politicality in dance, see: Ana Vujanović, (2013). *Notes on Politicality of Contemporary Dances*, in: *Dance, Politics and Co-immunity. Thinking Resistances. Current Perspectives on Politics and Communities in the Arts*, ed. G. Siegmund, S. Hölscher (Zurych-Berlin: Diaphanes AG, 2013) 181-191.
[12] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 201-220.
[13] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 99.
[14] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 8.
[15] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 20-49.
[16] However, he does not mean the 'unity of form' that appears in Dewey, but rather what Dewey calls 'total seizure'. Berleant, „Zajmujący Dewey: Spuścizna Deweyowskiej estetyki", 67; *Art and Engagement,* 66, 67.
[17] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 32-50.
[18] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 49.
[19] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 168 ff.
[20] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 44, 45. The problem of the viewer's intimate contact with a work arises due to the fact that Berleant does not have a conception of a strong, subjective subject, because he is close to the position of ecology. Although he uses terms such as 'viewer', 'artist', etc. (following the example of pragmatism, I assume that he considers them to be functional), his main philosophical assumption is that there is continuity between the subject and the object. This results in interpretative difficulties.
[21] André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance. Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) 1, 2.
[22] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 41.
[23] Jeroen Fabius, *The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance*, in: M. Heering, R. Naber, B. Nieuwboer, E. Wildschut. (red.) *Danswetenschap in Nederland*, deel 7. Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Dansonderzoek. https://www.academia.edu/4060526/ (22.11.21).
[24] Quoted in: Fabius, *The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance*.
[25] Fabius, *The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance*.
[26] In terms of understanding performativity in relation to dance, I refer to Josette Féral's proposal and the distinctive features of performative theatre she mentions. For a more detailed treatment of this issue, see. Féral, 2011.
[27] Marinis refers to the basic determinants of performance that pervade the most recent theatre (similarly to Féral). Marco De Marinis, *Performans i teatr. Od aktora do performera i z powrotem,* in: . *Performans, performatywność, performer. Próby definicji i analizy krytyczne,* (E. Bal trans.), ed. E. Bal, W. Światkowska (Krakow, Poland: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2013) 8-40 https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/item/150002/ (11.11.21) 145.

[28] Bojana Cvejič, *The End With Judgment by Way of Clarification*, in: *It Takes Place When it Doesn't. On Dance and Performance,* ed. Martina Hochmuth, Krassimira Kruschkova, Georg Schollhammer, (Frankfurt: Revolve 2006), 49-58.
[29] Rosalind Goldberg, *Performance Art. From Futurism to Present,* 3 ed., (Thames and Hudson, 2011) 141 i n.
[30]Artists deliberately unite, often creating collectives. André Lepecki, *Concept and Presence. The Contemporary European Dance Scene*, in: *Rethinking Dance History. A Reader,* ed. A. Carter (London-New York: Routledge, 2004), 174.
[31] Goldberg, *Performance Art. From Futurism to Present,* 141.
[32] Jonathan Burrows, *Politics,* in: *A World of Muscle, Bone and Organs. Research and Scholarship in Dance,* ed. S. Ellis, H. Blades, CH. Waelde, Center for Dance Research, (Conventry: Conventry University, 2018), 252-266.
[33] Burrows, *Politics,* 261.
[34] For example, he writes: "(...) we're working on cutting down the usual aesthetic judgements", Burrows, *Politics*, 254-256.
[35] Fabius, *The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance*.
[36] Burrows, *Politics,* 260-263.
[37] Mark Franko, "Dance and the Political: States of Expection", *Dance Research Journal* 2006, 38(1-2) 9.
[38] Vujanović, "*Notes on Politicality of Contemporary Dances"*.
[39] Franko, „Dance and the Political: States of Expection", 8; Fabius, „*The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance*".
[40] An important element is that performative strategy is consciously adopted by dancers and choreographers who dance and theorize simultaneously.
[41] Franko, „Dance and the Political: States of Expection.*",* 11.
[42] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Powers of Performance. A New Aesthetics*. (I. J. Saskya trans.), London-New York: Routledge, 2008).
[43] Bojana Cvejič, *Choreographing problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[44] Ramsey Burt, *Judson Dance Theatre. Performative Traces,* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2006), 18-20.
[45] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Powers of Performance. A New Aesthetics*.
[46] Jan Ritsema, *A Lecture on Improvisation,* lecture presented in Arnheim (6.10.2004), in program *Dance Unlimited*. https://sarma.be/doc/807 (23.11.21).
[47] Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts*.
[48] Ritsema, „ *A Lecture on Improvisation*".
[49] Fabius, *The Missing History of (non)conceptual dance.*
[50] Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts,* 8-10.
[51] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* 12, 163.
[52] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetic Engagement in Video Dance, Engagement: Symposium of Philosophy and Dance*, Texas State University San Marcos, Texas 8-10 September 2016.
[53]Andrzej Duda, „Estetyka performatywności według Eriki Fischer-Lichte", *Teksty drugie* 2007 (7/8) 187.
[54] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 202.
[55] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 36.
[56] However, he does not mean just the sensual character, but as he emphasizes, it covers a wider range of sensations, of a somatic, intellectual, imaginative nature, etc. He also always indicates its cultural conditioning and contextual location.
[57] Berleant, *Art and Engagement,*164.
[58] John Martin, *The Modern Dance* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1933), 13-16.
[59] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) 4.
[60] Marvin Carlson, *Performance. A Critical Introduction,* (Routledge: London, 2004).
[61] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), ed. J.O Urmson, Martino Fine Books, 2018.
[62] Berleant suggests abandoning the issues of emotion, expression or representation, which fragment the world into viewer, artist and work of art. Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts.*
[63] Berleant, „Zajmujący Dewey: Spuścizna Deweyowskiej estetyki*",* 67.
[64] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 11.
[65] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 163-181.
[66] Berleant, "Zajmujący Dewey: spuścizna Deweyowskiej estetyki*",* 69.
[67] Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts,* X.
[68] Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and Arts,* X.
[69] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World.*
[70] It should also be remembered that he believes that there is continuity, and therefore he did not sharply distinguish the experience of art from other experiences of a cognitive and religious nature, or art from everyday life activities.
[71] Berleant, *Sense and Sensibility. Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 201-220.
[72] Marta Keil, ed., *Choreografia: polityczność* (Choreography: Politicality), (Warszawa, Poznań, Lublin: Instytut Teatralny im. Raszewskiego, 2018).

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NEGATIVE / POSITIVE: WOMEN IN ACTION

Nathalie Blanc

Abstract
Care theory is concerned with invisible and undervalued social practices that reproduce the world in all of its ordinariness, such as taking care both of people and the environment. As regards the environment, environmental care practices highlight the strength of ordinary environmentalism and how it is rendered invisible. In this article, the denial of care corresponds to effacing ordinary environmentalism in its aesthetic and productive dimensions. The women in charge of this environment tend to experience it in this way, i.e. as a space devoid of qualities that does not warrant aesthetic attention.

Keywords
Care, Materialism, Ecofeminism, Negative Commons.

I first met Arnold Berleant, philosopher of environmental aesthetics[1] and then editor of *Contemporary Aesthetics*, in 2008, while I was conducting a survey of ecological art, with which he was not familiar. Since then, we have had the pleasure of meeting on several occasions, and I would like to dedicate this article to him as a way of expressing my gratitude and esteem. Arnold Berleant himself has not actually dealt with gender or the place of women in environmental aesthetics. I would like to use this article to illustrate the importance of this theme.

Care theory is concerned with invisible and undervalued social practices that reproduce the world in all of its ordinariness, such as taking care both of people and the environment. As regards the environment, environmental care practices highlight the strength of ordinary environmentalism and how it is rendered invisible. What is ordinary environmentalism? I will define it here as the set of social practices and representations that lie at the heart of given socio-political cultures and contribute to the transformation of the environment and of environments. In the field of the environment, the ordinary has recently been qualified as a body of unremarkable animal and plant species that populate territories[2]. This ordinary environmentalism also forms part of the social philosophy of Proudhon or Kropotkin's mutual aid, i. e. a certain idea of productive activities before they have been captured by capital, in the sense of ownership, as well the ability of third parties to subordinate productive labour. It gives a certain idea of emancipation in the sense of having control over the conditions of existence and reproduction. This question should also urge us to examine how the ordinary is simultaneously a by-product of capital, leftover or waste, or the ignored or invisible part of production which, itself is visible in what is monetised. This means according appropriate importance to numerous experiments or practices or events rooted in concrete practices, materially anchored in the territories. It is also about

embracing the spirit of an environmental aesthetic that is not content with spectacular gestures, but incorporates all of the multiple sensitive links to the environment.[3]

In this article, the denial of care corresponds to effacing ordinary environmentalism in its aesthetic and productive dimensions. In a constrained manner, women who take charge of the local environment as part of a process of extended domesticity in many countries, particularly in the South, try to improve this environment by focusing on issues bound up with ecology and collective subsistence. It should also be noted that women are more amenable to the policy of "simple reflexes" and responsible behaviour, to the point that ecology is perceived as feminine, which actually devalues male engagement in this domain. A study published at the end of 2016, headed up by Aaron R. Brough and James E. B. Wilkie, even advocates "masculinisation" of ecological advertisements and objects[4]. In our opinion, the important thing is not the policy of "simple reflexes", but broad consideration of all phenomena and productive dynamics that impact ecosystems. It is also about promoting politics that takes charge of these environments – particularly in the name of ecosystem dynamics – and promotes them as something worth preserving. The issue is undoubtedly to examine to what extent the dynamics of negation (or denigration) inherent in the development of our societies concern both the environments and the people who live in them, generating a negative aesthetic perspective.

1 Ordinary environmentalism and negative care

As we stressed in the introduction, due to the structuring effects of gender division of labour, women are often "at the coalface" managing the day-to-day activities of reproducing life and, consequently, they are required to manage the negative consequences of predatory activities. Take, for example, the struggle against the construction of dams. In both India and China, women have played an important role in this combat as water shortages in the local environment forced them to deploy costly solutions for getting water to their households. Vandana Shiva, a leading figure in the Indian feminist movement, believes that water is an essential part of ourselves and our environments. She uses the concept of Earth Democracy to stress the idea of the Earth Family and recognise the intrinsic rights of natural elements such as rivers. The idea of the law of return is also very important, whereby what is extracted from the Earth must be returned. Today, the extractivist mindset means that the economy destroys but does not give anything back. While the idea of caring for the Earth goes hand in hand with a dynamic of obligation and responsibility, women are often directly confronted with the deleterious effects of environmental destruction and development. Conversely, because of this same division of labour, ordinary environmentalism allocated to women – consisting of caring for the reproduction of the environment with a view to handing it over to future generations – is largely underestimated.

So how then should we think of this ordinary environmentalism? In my opinion, an analysis of ordinary environmentalism needs to cover devaluation and structural division of labour and authority according to the materialities and material flows involved. More generally, in an aesthetic

perspective based around 'sharing the sensitive', extensively developed by Jacques Rancière, the ordinary environment produced by the activity of people who are accorded little value in the community is itself subject to systematic devaluation. 'Sharing the sensitive' is defined from a philosophical perspective as follows[5]:

> To me, sharing sensitive experience means this system of sensitive proof that simultaneously depicts the existence of something in common and the boundaries that circumscribe the respective places and parts. (...) Politics is about what we see and what we can say about it, about who is qualified to see and to say, and about the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (our translation)

Therefore, the ways in which societies assign different values to people and to things are a function of interacting positivity and negativity. In her article *Masculin/Féminin* written from a structuralist perspective, F. Héritier claimed that the androcentric thinking that assigns a lesser value to women when compared to men is a mechanism that is reproduced regardless of the objects concerned[6]. She terms this structural mechanism 'gender differential valence'. The problem is not merely the relegation of women, but the ways in which a hierarchy of values is produced in society.

In a materialistic economy of symbolic production, Pierre Bourdieu describes *Masculine domination* as a process that produces power and domination in capitalist societies[7]. Indeed, this analysis is confronted with the denunciation by ecofeminism of the alliance between male domination and extractivism[8] at the heart of a social and environmental crisis. Bourdieu describes the polarities of gender construction as they relate to the constructions of nature, i.e., the moon is feminine, cold and passive, the sun masculine, warm and radiant. He writes that "gender division is present both – in the objective state – in things (in the house, for example, every part of which is 'sexed'), in the whole social world, and – in the embodied state – in the habitus of the agents functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action"[9].

In brief, we may think of the mechanics of relegation (or discrimination) as underpinning the valuation and recognition phenomena at the heart of our societies. Therefore, liking something or finding it beautiful is, by opposition, declaring that it is not worthwhile or has no value in deeply hierarchical societies. This construct is similar to that of the place and role of women throughout history.

This is particularly true of everyday experience of the environment, which is often considered much too ordinary to be aesthetic, a term applied instead to extraordinary phenomena. The women in charge of this environment tend to experience it in this way, i.e. as a space devoid of qualities that does not warrant aesthetic attention. More generally, even women tend to mask the environmental tasks they perform, relegating them to the background of what is worthy of attention. Thus, they are often entrusted with a dual burden: that of wife and mother, and environmental caregiver.

These observations give rise to three remarks. First, there is an aesthetic of familiarity which broadly refers to care of the domestic environment or management of local public spaces, or even

private spaces whose resources help smooth the routines of everyday life. Second, negatively perceived spaces are just as much a part of our everyday universe as positively perceived ones and cannot be excluded from any proposed solution for emerging from the social and environmental crisis. Third, ideas of differences and related values form part of the exercise of authority that naturalizes the production of hierarchies.

Such a position calls for a reflection upon the values we collectively associate with the idea of sustainability. For example, we need to include more broadly what is still negligible today in our life experiences and reflect upon the desire to agree upon what is good, beautiful and good for the future. Psychoanalysts believe that this collective desire for the future is thwarted by the self-destructive impulses of humans. And what about ecologists' view of humans as an invasive species which, like all such species, destroys its environment before collapsing and beginning again?

First, let us come back to the aesthetic of familiarity and the negative aesthetic. Everyday things and everyday environments are frequently devalued due to their familiarity, which does not engage our perception and makes us insensible to their qualities. This is not always true as there is a tradition of painting the ordinary and even the simple things in our environment, however an aesthetic perspective often accords major importance to exceptional events. In this sense, the importance of sensitive experience in day-to-day living is forgotten about. Moreover, environmental aesthetics writers have played a role in defending this aesthetic of ordinary things. By identifying aesthetics as 'the theory of sensitivity', Arnold Berleant rejects the general association between aesthetics and art along with its connotation of good or great art.

Second, there is a negative aesthetic perspective based on the idea of objects being inherently beautiful or ugly. For example, certain environments are devoid of any positive aesthetic value due to their complete blandness. And yet these objects, environments and processes are an integral part of how we live our lives. According to Arnold Berleant, examples include: “the many forms of environmental pollutions, among them, smog, noise, water, spatial pollution [...] High levels of sound, or noise, bad air, excessive visual stimulation and overcrowding are aesthetically as well as physically damaging.” [10] He refers to these as examples of ‘aesthetic deprivation’ because ‘deprivation can become so complete that it actually extinguishes our capacity for sensory experience’[11]. Nevertheless, this aesthetic approach contradicts the aesthetic tradition, which is primarily a theory of good taste rather than a theory of beautiful objects. However, this negative aesthetic raises other questions. For example, various forms of intrusion and pollution harm not only the environment and health, but our sensibilities as well. Examples include noise, the destruction of whole environments or elements of the environment such as trees and waste. In any case, there are a series of largely invisible negative experiences of the environment, corresponding either to the ‘ruins’ of our ordinary activities, such as waste, or to the destructive processes of the latter – primarily extractivist-type dynamics.

Thirdly, we wish to stress that there is a negative aesthetic not because of the quality of the objects or environments in question, but because of the manner in which the people who live in them or contribute to their production are rendered invisible. Regardless of whether these are objects, environments or people, we stress that the very idea of negative aesthetics or negative environmental care is bound up with the idea of the destruction of our world or negative commons[12] as well as with that of ordinary environmentalism, i.e. people who are rendered invisible in production flows, even though their labour is essential to the process of capital accumulation. This concerns a hierarchy of people and processes at the heart of the production of 'lifestyles'.

These three negative aesthetic polarities invite us to consider that waste externalised in the economic process is a negative commons that cannot be assimilated into the living matter reproduction loop that underpins our current economic system. We therefore need to factor in the ecological and territorial responsibility of negative commons production processes by admitting that these are part of the ecological living matter reproduction process. The destructive dynamic currently at work leads to equally destructive behaviour due to the violence involved – particularly of a psychological nature. The challenge is therefore to render visible and political what was not previously so, namely everyday productive dynamics that generate destructive flows.

Take faeces for example, which are treated in a way that renders them invisible, but removed from the cycle of living matter and from the Earth and therefore not recycled, even though biogeochemical cycles are severely impacted by the use of artificial fertilizers. What is the position of women in this regard? Here, 'care' refers to a theoretical corpus for revaluing the reflexes involved in the production of the ordinary. Care emphasises the importance of rendering visible everything that contributes to the production of our reality as being at the heart of our societies. So how then should we think about care? We wish to press the case for an analysis of care that overlaps with devaluation and structural division of labour and authority according to the materialities and material flows involved. First, let us revisit the whole notion of care.

2. Environmental care

Since the 1970s, care theory has evolved from Silvia Federici's Marxist analysis of reproductive labour into Virginia Held and Carol Gilligan's feminist moral theories and Sara Ruddick's concept of maternalism.[13] In 1991, together with Berenice Fisher, Joan Tronto developed a definition of care: "On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web".[14] The increasing importance of these reflections goes hand in hand with austerity and the dismantling of social protection which have intensified public debates over the place of health, education, culture and housing in the political arena. These upheavals have

led the neo-liberal state to withdraw from a whole series of activities that underpinned social protection and to fail to invest in appropriate solutions for tackling the current social and environmental crisis. They have rekindled protests calling for social and environmental justice and for environmental care, particularly among women and feminist movements. To take a simple example, in the region of Toubacouta, Senegal, women have been active since the 1990s in the fight to preserve mangroves. "Human lives depend on the environment, and I understood from a very early age that the environment was sacred", explains Yandé Ndao from Soucouta. Nicknamed "Mère Yandé", she set up a Female Economic Interest Grouping (*GIEF* in French) in 1998. As well as protecting mangroves and raising awareness, the *GIEF* empowers women by providing them with a source of income. It comprised 44 women when it was first set up and now has 94 members, 32% of whom are young women[15]. What is now needed is more in-depth reflections around materialist care that factor in the value of women's contributions to environments that go beyond mere activism. The aim is to analyse the spaces and temporalities involved and how these ordinary activities and practices contribute to the reproduction of the human species.

I reiterate that this work remains relevant today for two reasons: on the one hand, we need to factor in the ecosystemic reality of processes that produce earthly materiality, otherwise we risk overlooking the destruction at work.

On the other hand, we need to contribute to *de facto* equalities and understanding a socio-environmental justice concerned with the diversity of phenomena of exclusion from circles of justice. Furthermore, the technical and even technocratic nature of environmental issues, as well as the ranking of environmental causes tend to discredit the role of women and push them to one side of a policy of simple reflexes through ignorance of the structural problems at work. An ordinary environmentalism perspective tends to reflect possible overlap between social justice and environmental justice.

In France today, the idea of environmental care[16], i. e. the care given to both near and faraway environments, is based on the premise that the environmental crisis requires broader individual and collective responsibility. Care of the environment requires environmentally friendly individual or collective practices (whether with regard to living species and local natural areas, or to consumption practices for water, energy, waste, food, fossil fuels, etc., and lifestyles). Whereas the environmental movement has focused primarily on "iconic" spaces and species, women around the world are confronted with the protection of this ordinary environment[17]. It is essential to think about the issues of environmental care in terms of justice. Indeed, women are inventing ecologies that enhance food security and the conservation of stocks of plant material and seeds for both current and future production. We know that the mechanisation of agriculture, the large proportion of inputs (pesticides, fertilisers, etc.) and changes of scale in productive agriculture have marginalised smallholders engaged in subsistence agriculture. Similarly, women's role in creating and enhancing productive agricultural environments (agricultural diversity, plant selection, pest control and ecosystem management and resilience) is insufficiently recognised

and under-paid. Moreover, women frequently have less access to and control over land and forests than men (often due to customary laws and social norms). This problem is exacerbated by the increasing over-exploitation of forests for commercial purposes based on practices such as land grabbing, logging and the illegal trade in wild animals. A study carried out by Khadka and Verma (2012) in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal shows that biodiversity is preserved when women have a certain degree of control over forest management. Both knowledge of and interest in conservation are differentiated by gender. In Bhutan, the women responsible for collecting and preparing yam tubers in the forest protect wild yams and regulate both their use and the cutting of trees. These conservation strategies have helped to regenerate wild yams and yam vines in the forests.

In Bangladesh, women play a key role in seed production and storage and in maintaining genetic diversity. Know-how and techniques, such as using marigolds (*Calendula sp.*) as a barrier against certain insects, are passed on from one generation to the next. Because women are responsible for feeding the family, they grow a much wider variety of crops than men. Women in the region generally attach great importance to the nutritional, cultural and social aspects of forests whereas men value their commercial aspects (valuable timber and non-timber products). These differences can be attributed to gender-based division of labour, especially the multiple roles of women in the production and reproduction domain in the communities studied[18]. We need to reflect upon the internalisation of ecological practices within the diverse cultures and practices of nature based on the structural division of labour by gender, class or race.

While possibilities for accessing various resources are gender-based and highly restricted for women, the same is true of environmental reflexes which are often under-valued, except in the case of iconic spaces and species. It is as if ordinary things are not worthy of attention as this would mean having to transform lifestyles. Examples include care for the environment in the form of formal or semi-formal collective commitments to air and water quality, urban agriculture, biodiversity protection, preservation of parks and forests, waste management and recycling, and food and energy consumption patterns. The collectives involved have emerged from investments in the public space based on collective needs (i. e. recreational, food, nature, social) and they are primarily involved in local initiatives related to preservation, management, monitoring, advocacy and education concerning the local environment and the quality of urban life. Moreover, despite the modest and banal nature of their initiatives, these groups collectively construct the meaning of places and influence the development of local communities, based on alliances with elements of the environment that lend them a political dimension. And, although women are very present in these collectives, they are often headed up by men. However, a lot of research has shown that women are more environmentally aware[19] because of their potential impacts on others, the biosphere and themselves[20]. They display more environmentally friendly behaviour and attitudes[21] and are more likely than men to be conscious of and to practice sustainable consumption[22]. All of this research bears out the relevance of

an environmental policy that tackles gender discrimination. However, without gender-sensitive policy intervention, a greener economy will do little to reduce these deep-seated inequalities and may actually make them worse to the detriment of global sustainability[23]. As workers, women may be excluded from the growth generated by the green economy due to gender-based job segregation and discrimination. As consumers, they are more aware than men of the need to buy eco-friendly products but their purchasing power is limited. As citizens, women are essential to sustainable economy governance, however they have little influence, as very few women hold senior management positions in the public and private sectors[24].

3 Conclusion

Indifference to how ordinary environments is reproduced has masked what forms the very basis of human activities and how they are perpetuated. In particular, conceptions of morality and justice have long focused on societies and individuals by introducing a nature/culture divide between spaces that has escaped the sphere of ethical considerations because they did not concern the human community, apart from their exceptional components and heritage aspects, and social organisations and their victims and heroes, who are increasingly being turned into icons.

An ecofeminist approach to the environment is essentially concerned with what needs to be cared for in order to reproduce the universe around us and that of living matter, not only on the temporal scale of individuals, but on a human generation scale, which involves a considerable shift in ethical and political thinking. Regardless of how problematic it is, an approach based on the contributions of nature focuses on this very nature that generates essential relationships in the organisation of lives on an everyday scale.[25] However, by ignoring the cultural dimensions of lives within society, this approach, which extrapolates the ecosystem services approach, remains a reductive one.

The real urgency is to reverse this decades-long denial of human 'services' which ignored and wasted the natural and human resources that underpin societies. Research into the role of women in farm work, resource and biodiversity management, or the preservation of “workaday” lives are all potential avenues for clarifying the issues of justice associated with socio-ecological transitions and deconstructing a development concept that is essentially focused on preserving western lifestyles at a cost of over-exploitation or destruction of natural habitats and dominated populations. All studies agree that women's empowerment contributes to food security and responsible land management. It is therefore essential to combat the way in which care work is rendered invisible and support the active presence of women in decision-making bodies at all levels, especially as studies show that, because of their role in managing ordinary environments, women are often the people most likely to be severely affected by social and natural disasters.

1 Cf. Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). Arnold Berleant is an internationally published philosopher of aesthetics whose works have been translated into several languages. He has focused on extending the content of aesthetic experience into the relationship with the environment. He has been influenced

in particular by John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He strives through his writing to describe the aesthetic richness of the relationship to the environment without which human beings are meaningless. He makes this the core of a commitment that is itself a driver of social or community environmental mobilisation. Americans use the term "stewardship" to refer to this type of commitment.

2 For example, Catherine Mougenot accords considerable importance to "ordinary nature". It is "a cross-cutting nature that is increasingly ill-adapted to specialisation or sectorisation of space and cannot be satisfied exclusively with the attention of specialists, who used to be the sole guarantors" (our translation) (Mougenot, *Prendre soin de la nature ordinaire*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Institut national de la recherche agronomique, 2003, 16).

3 Nathalie Blanc, *Nouvelles esthétiques urbaines* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012).

4 Aaron R. Brough, James E. B. Wilkie, Jingjing Ma, Mathew S. Isaac, David Gal, "Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Volume 43, Issue 4, December 2016, 567–582.

5 https://www.multitudes.net/le-partage-du-sensible/: Accueil » Archives, etc. » Alice » Alice 2: Été 1999 » La fabrique du sensible.

6 Françoise Héritier, *Masculin, Féminin. La pensée de la difference* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1996).

7 Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, translated by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

8 Extractivism refers to a mode of wealth accumulation based on the extraction of natural resources, often for export (oil as well as forests, etc.).

9 Bourdieu, *op. cit.*: 8.

10 Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs, Saint Andrews: IA, 2010), 162 sq.

11 Ibid.: 164.

12 A. Monnin, "Les «communs négatifs». Entre déchets et ruines". S.E.R. *Études* 2021/9 Septembre, 59-68.

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24 Stevens, op. cit.

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LEARNING FROM AESTHETICS OF ENGAGEMENT

Emily Brady

Abstract
This article discusses Arnold Berleant's ground-breaking idea of 'aesthetic engagement', used in its broadest sense - that is, the ways in which this philosophical approach has supported forms of 'engaging with' environment. Berleant's philosophy is placed in dialogue with the theory of the 'integrated aesthetic', as developed by Emily Brady, in order to show the influence of his ideas. Brady's approach is inspired by various concepts and ideas within Berleant's thought which aim to dissolve the dualisms that hinder harmonious human-nature relationships, such as 'immersion', and 'aesthetic community'. The article argues for the deep importance of his views in shaping the field of environmental aesthetics, as well as their timely significance; more specifically, his attention to global aesthetic ideas and the promise of his 'descriptive aesthetics' for thinking through intergenerational aesthetics.

Keywords
Environmental Aesthetics, Arnold Berleant, Engagement, Relationality, Immersion.

So many of us working in the field of aesthetics owe Arnold Berleant a great debt of gratitude for his deeply important contribution to establishing the field of environmental aesthetics as we know it today. He has published many books, edited essential anthologies in the field, and co-founded and co-edited a major journal, *Contemporary Aesthetics*. Through all of these avenues, and more, he has influenced scholars across the world and conveyed his philosophical and phenomenological experiences of living in the landscape, aesthetically-speaking.[1]

I have entitled this short essay "Learning from Aesthetics of Engagement" in order to express how much I have learned from Arnold's philosophy. Here, I do not mean only his ideas about the ground-breaking idea of engagement in aesthetic experience. I intend to capture, also, the broadest sense in which his philosophy encourages ways of being in aesthetic experience that speak to *engaging with*. Those ways of being are, I believe, essential to establishing and supporting harmonious aesthetic-ethical relationships between human and more-than-human worlds.

I would like to touch on a few of the ways in which his ideas have shaped my own work and enabled me to think beyond the subject-object dualism that has been part of the philosophical heritage of aesthetics. My work does not follow Arnold's phenomenological approach, but rather draws on various concepts and ideas which nonetheless speak to breaking down that dualism in so far as it hinders harmonious human-nature relationships. Over the years, I have developed the "integrated

aesthetic" approach which looks to forms of aesthetic experience that are *situated*, *relational*, *participatory* and show *intergenerational* awareness.[2]

In aesthetic experiences beyond the arts, we are often positioned in such a way as to take in multisensory aesthetic qualities and multiple environmental changes on various temporal and spatial scales. Aesthetic attention draws us into our environs to exercise multisensory forms of focused perception. The *situated* perspective draws on many of the senses, sometimes in combination and at other time one by one. Such a perspective opens up the possibility for a full, rich experience and one which can disclose values and meanings of semi-natural and natural places. This situated approach fits with and is appropriate to a truly environmental aesthetic experience.

The attention of this situated positioning is shaped by environment or phenomenon, and can range from being directed by general or vague ideas and thoughts to concrete and particular qualities, meanings, things, lives, and processes. Arnold conveys such situated attention in terms of *immersion* when he describes a canoeing trip down the Genesee River:

> All of the senses joined in an acute awareness of the perceptual qualities of that environment: sight, smell, hearing, tactility, kinaesthesia, all inseparable in our sensory immersion in the riverine setting. This trip combined several interests – research, the practical demands of guiding the canoe and finding a suitable place to pull out each night, and recognizing animals, birds, and the other things we encountered. But most pervasive and powerful was the aesthetic character of the experience, a character that was always present and dominated all other interests.[3]

When situated attention is sympathetically directed, it is direct and paid to things. Just what we are situated in also captures our attention, draws our attention, and holds our attention. While brief sensory attention can be rich in itself, many kinds of attention have more duration. Sustained forms of attention, often articulated in terms of perceptual absorption, are a familiar feature of aesthetic theories across the history of the field. Here, the aesthetic experience is characterized not as an inactive state of mind or passive taking in. In so far as one's attention is sympathetic or focused on something for its own sake, it is not merely reactive. The subject is not detached but engaged, active and absorbed, with the body sometimes playing a role, too. As Arnold has put it, "Aesthetic engagement recognizes the primacy of our immediate perceptual experience, experience that is sensory yet colored by the personal and cultural dimensions that enter into all human experience."[4] This idea of engagement applies not only to natural environments but to all kinds of aesthetic encounters from the garden, to the city, to all kinds of everyday situations.

Conceiving of the aesthetic experience in this way, as situated, immersed, and engaged, opens up all kinds of opportunities for cultivating human-nature *relationships*. We might say that in a 'thin' sense, we are placed aesthetically in relation to environment. This is not merely a spatial relation, rather, being placed aesthetically is the basis for all kinds of aesthetic relations that emerge through

multisensory, imaginative, and affective attention. Elsewhere, I have developed a thicker sense of aesthetic relationality by drawing on Alan Holland's concept of "meaningful relations."[5] The value-space of meaningful relations unites evolutionary, ecological, and cultural forms of life: "life cannot be sustained in isolation…meaningful relations are those that enable life-forms to cluster in a way that is productive of further life."[6] Cultural or human relations will involve the aim co-flourishing, situated within a web of relationships populated by ecological, earth, marine, and atmospheric systems, and all kinds of living and non-living things. Arnold's ideas concerning the "aesthetic community" are very helpful for thinking through the ontology of relationality:

> Continuity is not absorption or assimilation, nor is it an external relation between separate things. It suggests, instead, connectedness within a whole rather than a link between discrete parts. Much as William James argued when he maintained that relations are not external connections but have an immediacy that is directly present and real to experience, relationships in a fulfilled community are not imposed from without but are inherent in the situation in ways that are concrete and functional. The aesthetic community exemplifies this.[7]

In contrast to rationalist or dualistic ontologies, connectedness, mutuality, and reciprocity are features of this fulfilled community. Here, Arnold is not reflecting narrowly upon environmental experience but articulates a concept of aesthetic community that reaches across all of our aesthetic encounters in the world. Still, I think it expresses very well an ecological ontology in a wide sense, if you will. Arnold's inspiration is not the science of ecology or evolutionary biology. Rather, he draws from pragmatism and phenomenology to craft this deeply original idea.

Many kinds of ontologies and cosmologies are relevant to conceptualizing, describing, or prescribing relationships between human and more-than-human. Learning from worldviews grounded in the interconnectedness of beings, community, kinship, gratitude and humility is something that Arnold has encouraged throughout his aesthetic philosophy. Countering dualism and its observational mode, he writes:

> I ascribe the observational landscape to the industrialized West because it is the dominant Western mode. But it is not the world of the poet nor is it the world of those peoples who live harmoniously with the earth and with each other. And it is not, I believe, the world we experience most directly, most immediately, and most intimately. Alternative traditions exist and their influence is increasing… Among them are Taoism and its vision of living in harmony with nature, the Native American tradition of a continuity between one's body and the land, and the Aboriginal belief that everything in nature is equally sacred. Although these traditions differ from one another, they share a sense of the fundamental and inviolable continuity of the human being with the natural world and its processes.[8]

Although Arnold sets up a contrast between some aspects of a Western philosophical approach and these other traditions, he does not set up a broader opposition. He suggests that there are many paths to aesthetic engagement, immersion, and relationship, whether through particular ways of being with nature, or through the artistic engagement of the poet.

Being situated or environed speaks to the potential interactions that occur and how such interactions lead to the discovery of aesthetic meanings and values. How might we characterize *participation* in the aesthetic context? One of the ways that I have sought to capture this element of environmental aesthetics is through the participatory engagement that occurs through the use of imagination. A variety of imaginative modes, exploratory, ampliative, metaphorical, revelatory, all show the potential for deeper involvement in aesthetic experiences of nature.[9]

In this respect, my approach is strongly influenced by the work of Ronald Hepburn. Interestingly, like Arnold, Hepburn was inspired by philosophers in the phenomenological tradition but also by British Romantic thought. Arnold does not dwell on the power of imagination, perhaps because his interests lean toward modes of bodily engagement with environment. For Hepburn, although the senses are crucial, thought and imagination can elevate experience in such a way as to move the percipient beyond a particular place and time.[10] This "thought component" includes the capacity to freely imagine, create, and improvise within aesthetic experience. Imaginative activity does not draw attention away, rather it is deeply engaged in the aesthetic situation. As imagination and thought become active, aesthetic experience may open out in some instances to wider narratives: artistic, scientific, cosmological, or metaphysical.

Interwoven through aesthetic experience, this activity of imagination grounds a relational rather than dualistic conception of aesthetic experience. Through imagination we engage a sense of ourselves, and how we are being shaped through the experience.

Although many of our aesthetic encounters have a metaphysical aspect to them, for example, when feeling awe in the face of the sublime, Arnold's ideas show how much the body figures in participatory aesthetics. In contrast to the distancing tendency of an observational approach, Arnold points to several ways in which participation occurs: "Viewing van Ruisdael's *A Forest Marsh* from a close position, for instance, we look under and past the large, gnarled limbs of the trees, and only then can we discern the figure of a boatman poling his craft through the marsh."[11] In the environment, paths can be an important way to draw participation:

> But what is most striking is the way in which paths as features of the environment, act upon us. Curves are enticing: they tempt the walker forward to see what lies around the bend. Similarly, a climbing path may invite the walker to move upward to reach its height. Then there are intrinsic delights that paths offer: the changing views, the feel of the ground underfoot, the multitude of details along the way.[12]

Like Hepburn, Arnold is also interested in the reflexive nature of participation but he treats this aspect of environmental experience more deeply:

> This leads us to a different conception of experiencing environment aesthetically. In this view, the environment is understood as a field of forces continuous with the organism, a field in which there is a reciprocal action of organism on environment and environment on organism, and in which there is no sharp demarcation between them. Such a pattern may be thought of a participatory model of experience.[13]

As in so many of Arnold's philosophical reflections, there is a concrete aim to reconceiving of the human-environment relationship. The context here is crafting a phenomenological aesthetics of environment which will enable co-flourishing. This last quotation is followed by a discussion of environmental design, and how important it is to create harmonious environments or places for both people and nature.

I have only managed to touch upon a few ways in which Arnold's work has shifted attention away from an observational aesthetic approach to one that is characterized by *engaging with*. I have learned so much both explicitly and implicitly, I believe, through reading his work. Recently, I have drawn upon his work in order to reflect on how the field of aesthetics ought to incorporate *intergenerational* thinking. As I mentioned earlier, for a long time Arnold has both encouraged and drawn upon a plurality of worldviews in his philosophy. He has also been a model of drawing usefully upon other disciplines to broaden and deepen his discussions in environmental aesthetics. Such openness is absolutely essential to the field going forward, as we face so many awful environmental problems and have made so little progress in solving them.

More specifically, I have recently drawn upon his conception of "descriptive aesthetics."[14] I first became interested in this idea, more generally, through my research on the sublime. Many 18th century philosophers and critics write about the sublime through rich descriptions of the natural world. Often, these descriptions are interwoven with their conceptual reflections. Arnold's writings in environmental aesthetics incorporate a range of forms of aesthetic description. He has written essays about his own environmental experiences such as we find in "Scenes from a Connecticut landscape: Four Studies in Descriptive Aesthetics," in his groundbreaking book,*The Aesthetics of Environment* (1992). Throughout his work, he draws upon literature and the arts to deepen and enrich his philosophical discussions.

In laying out his idea of descriptive aesthetics, Arnold distinguishes this idea from what he calls 'substantive aesthetics' and 'metaesthetics.'[15] The first concept refers to the familiar history of philosophical aesthetics and its various theories of the arts, while metaesthetics covers aesthetic distinctions, concepts, and issues such as the nature of aesthetic qualities. Descriptive aesthetics, by contrast, refers to "accounts of art and aesthetic experience that may be partly narrative, partly phenomenological, partly evocative, and sometimes even revelatory," and it can be found "most often as parts of other kinds of writing – novels, poems, nature writing, criticism, philosophical aesthetics."[16]

All aestheticians, surely, are familiar with the ways in which such accounts feature in our work. But I have found no better conceptual articulation than his. Arnold not only conceptualizes descriptive aesthetics well, but he also walks the talk.

Why is this significant? I have argued elsewhere that such accounts are indispensable tools for capturing aesthetic qualities of our world that have been lost through global warming or which we stand to lose (according to the best models and predictions available about the effects of climate change). Descriptive aesthetics can help us to formulate an environmental aesthetics that is intergenerational by drawing upon a global variety of stories and narratives, arts, forms of knowledge, cosmologies, and so on. Aesthetic theories and practices can thus be developed which are not only concerned with the here and now but, also, take seriously various temporal registers. Descriptive aesthetics can help the field to interpret not only the past but, also, to consider what future aesthetic values, disvalues, and meanings may be in store for future generations. In a climate-changed world, aesthetics will undoubtedly matter, and it is essential that the field works toward an understanding about what the future holds. Essential, because, as Arnold has shown throughout his writings, aesthetics permeates our communities and our relationships with natural and other kinds of environments. His work has been central to shaping the development of environmental aesthetics, and it remains deeply important for understanding the place of aesthetics in the shared futures of all beings on planet earth.

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[1] I have not yet had the pleasure of experiencing his musical compositions or performances, alas, but I look forward to that opportunity!
[2] Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).
[3] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 60.
[4] Berleant, 2005, 35.
[5] Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[6] Alan Holland, "The Value Space of Meaningful Relations," in Emily Brady and Pauline Phemister, ed., *Human-Environment Relations: Transformative Values in Theory and Practice* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 11.
[7] Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment (*Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 148-149.
[8] Berleant, 2005, 34.
[9] Brady, 2003, 146-172.
[10] Ronald Hepburn, *The Reach of the Aesthetic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).
[11] Berleant, 2005, 11.
[12] Berleant, 2005, 12.
[13] Berleant, 2005, 9.
[14] I discuss descriptive aesthetics in my article, "Global Climate Change and Aesthetics," *Special Issue: Philosophical Aesthetics and the Global Environmental Emergency*, ed. Jukka Mikkonen and Sanna Lehtinen. *Environmental Values*. 31: 1, 27-46, 2022.
[15] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environmen*t (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 25-26.
[16] Berleant, 1992, 26.

ENGAGEMENT AND EMBODIMENT

For Arnold Berleant on his Ninetieth Birthday

John Carvalho

Abstract
Among the many contributions he has made to contemporary aesthetics, Arnold Berleant invites us to question the assumptions about aesthetic experience and aesthetic value held dear by adherents to 18th century aesthetic theory in the face of challenges contemporary artists continue to pose by making artworks that test those assumptions. With his concept of aesthetic engagement, Berleant encourages us to embrace a form of life that thrills to the ecstasies of artworks and everyday existence and to glory in our embodiment of "the flesh of the world."

Keywords
Engagement, Embodiment, Aesthetic Field, Aesthetic Experience, Aesthetic Theory, Flesh.

The contributions Arnold Berleant has made to contemporary aesthetics are too often overlooked. These include, but are not limited to, questioning the hegemony of 18th century theory in aesthetics, introducing aesthetic engagement as an alternative to that theory, exploring the environment as a subject for aesthetic appreciation, appealing to phenomenology for a concept of aesthetic embodiment, and founding an on-line, open-access, peer-reviewed journal as an alternative to the official organs of the aesthetics societies in Britain and the United States. Berleant has given us inspired interpretations of music, literature, dance, and cinema insisting that the work of artworks is always an activity performed by the creator and the appreciator, both, not an object isolated from the world with others of its kind, collected and sorted to satisfy the demands of scholarship or the market. Beauty is often the focus of his interests in artworks, the environment, and the quotidian ecstasies of everyday life, and there is, often, a beauty in his way of communicating what interests him about his subjects.

In this appreciation, I focus on the introduction of engagement as an alternative to the dominant 18th century theory in aesthetics and the phenomenology that underwrites his concept of aesthetic embodiment. The latter is really a species of the former and both contain a sustained critique of the influence of Kant in contemporary aesthetics. Where contemporary aestheticians, bound by their 18th century roots, struggle to make sense of contemporary artworks, Berleant sees artists and their creations cutting their connections to those roots and branching out in creative directions. Turning their attention away from art objects toward perceptual consciousness and the conditions that affect it, Berleant says, artists challenge the demand that artworks be distinguishable objects possessing a special status that must be regarded in a unique way. This challenge, he argues, is evident not only in artworks like Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) or John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) but

starting with the Impressionists and in music since the Renaissance.[1] In fact, Berleant contends that 18th century aesthetics was not always discerning about the arts of its time and that it is patently anachronistic when it comes to the arts of our time.

There are two observations present in that claim. First, it might be reasonable to assume that aesthetics, as it emerged in the 18th century, was based on artworks created up to and including that time. As is well known, it was only at the end of the 18th century that the arts were distinguished from one another. Up to and including the formation of 18th century aesthetic theory, the prevailing distinction was between works of the fine arts, produced to exemplify a creative potential free from any utilitarian purpose, and works of the crafts, designed and decorated to be used for such purposes. Among the fine arts, the principal arts were what came to be distinguished as painting and poetry where artists produced works evidently distinguishable from everyday artifacts and affairs. An aesthetics attempting to make sense of these artworks would predictably dedicate itself to discerning what made these works distinctive and what was the best way of appreciating what was distinctive about them. Following a long tradition that preceded them, the 18th century theorists made beauty the quality that distinguished artworks from commonplace artifacts but, in line with a tradition we call the Enlightenment, made that quality an achievement of the properly contemplative regard of an artwork by a sensitive observer.

In the first place, then, 18th century aesthetics strains, says Berleant, to apply a theory based on the appreciation of painting and poetry to the sculpture, architecture, music, theater, and dance from the periods leading up to and including its own. Artworks in the second grouping must be experienced physically, not just cognitively, walking around the sculpture, entering into the building or attending works of the performing arts. Second, when it comes to contemporary art, where painting and poetry do not enjoy such a privileged status (except, perhaps, among a few traditional art historians and critics), an aesthetics based on isolating objects, however transfigured from commonplace artifacts, said to be distinguished by a beauty attributable to the contemplative regard of a properly sensitive observer is evidently out of its element. Of the innumerable available examples, one Berleant would likely appreciate is the suite of canvases painted by Mark Rothko and installed in the Houston chapel that bears the painter's name.

There are fourteen large, black but blue paintings in the eight-sided chapel, triptychs on three walls and single paintings on five, illuminated by interior lighting and by a narrow skylight. The paintings cannot be isolated from the chapel for which they were commissioned. They are not traditionally beautiful. And to appreciate them, you must enter the chapel and sit with them for an extended time through changes in the lighting, and adjustments of your eyes to the lighting, at different times of day, at different times of year, in different weather conditions, modifying the daylight streaming in from the transom and bringing out the variations of blue on black that makes each painting different from the next and makes a varying whole of the paintings collected at the site. You

appreciate the paintings not just by seeing them but also, importantly, by feeling the shifting affect at the site as people come and go, some just curious tourists, others dedicated visitors who meditate, some in lotus poses, their eyes closed, or who come to practice some other spiritual exercise, while you sit basking in your own admiration.

So, what have artists discovered that, by his lights, so many philosophers of art have not? Berleant calls it "aesthetic engagement." Under this heading he advances three main provisions that counter what he identifies as the three main tenets of traditional aesthetics. Where traditional aesthetics starts by isolating an object for aesthetic appreciation, Berleant recommends an attention to the *situations* where we find aesthetic experiences. These situations may include distinguishable objects but also may not. What they must include for the alternative model of aesthetics Berleant has in mind is a unified field of experience where such objects may or may not turn up. In this field, Berleant expects to find the interacting forces of perceivers, creators, objects or events, and performances "affected by social institutions, historical traditions, cultural forms and practices, technological developments in materials and techniques and other such contextual conditions" which animate the field and bring it to life.[2] Artworks and forms of life experienced aesthetically turn up for us, Berleant insists, in a context and are inseparable from their context.

In that context, what Berleant calls "the aesthetic field,"[3] there are complex lines of *continuity* to be explored "between artists and the social, historical and cultural factors that influence the kinds and uses of art, between aesthetic experience and the full breadth of human experience, between perceptual awareness and the range of meanings, associations, memories, and imagination that penetrate perception, between a dwelling in the aesthetic situation and the broader social and personal uses of art."[4] The work of artists and the aesthetic experience of audiences are, thus, integrated into the full range of human existence. They cannot be separated from the world where they emerge nor can they be distinguished by a quality, beauty, say, achieved by the properly contemplative regard of a refined observer. Whatever is remarkable about the work of artists and the aesthetic experience of audiences will be continuous with the world where they emerge demanding a different style of appreciation.

That style of appreciation is the substance of Berleant's "*aesthetic engagement*." This engagement thrives on the active character of aesthetic appreciation and what Berleant calls the "essentially participatory" nature of such appreciations.[5] Only the active exploration of the lines of continuity mapping the aesthetic field can begin to appreciate the artwork or an aesthetic experience in its situated richness. Only the active following of the lines connecting the artwork or experience to the forces at play in their situatedness can appreciate what is properly aesthetic about an artwork or experience. There is nothing disinterested about this engagement. Engagement does not just take an interest in an artwork. It takes part in it. It brings it to fruition as is demanded by so much of the work of artists in our times. Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963) is a good example as is Christo and

Jeanne-Claude's *Gates* (2005). In the first, we are asked to select the order of the chapters to form a narrative from the text. In the second, we are asked to walk through the "gates," draped and parted fabric hung on a series of frames erected along paved paths in New York's Central Park, in the company of others, to be observed from the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a second interactive artwork. So, situation, continuity and engagement are Berleant's answers to the standard practice of isolating objects possessing a special status to be regarded with disinterested satisfaction.

Aesthetic engagement was conceived to counter mainstream thinking in the philosophy of art. That mainstream takes as its source Kant's critical philosophy and especially the thought, promoted by Kant, that aesthetic experience was a cognitive affair measured by the standard of disinterestedness. Berleant bristled at this idea. In his Presidential Address to the International Association for Aesthetics, Berleant cites Nietzsche, who writes, "Kant, like all philosophers, just considered art and beauty from the position of the 'spectator,' instead of viewing the aesthetic problem through the experiences of the artist (the creator), and thus inadvertently introduced the 'spectator' himself into the concept 'beautiful.' I just wish this 'spectator' had been sufficiently known to the philosophers of beauty! – I mean as a great *personal* fact and experience, as a fund of strong personal experiences, desires, surprises and pleasures in the field of beauty! … Kant said, 'Something is beautiful if it gives pleasure *without interest*.'[6] Without interest!"[7] Nietzsche goes on to reference Stendhal who called beauty *une promesse de bonheur*.[8] With Nietzsche, Berleant seeks to turn our attention to the work of artists who fashion and situate what affords audiences who actively engage them properly aesthetic experiences, pleasures and happiness.

No doubt his training in music helped point Berleant toward this specific alternative to traditional aesthetics. In music, the performer is always present with the work, and that performer must be actively engaged in making music for *music* to be realized and not just a sequence of tones composed to be heard in terms of shared cultural expectations. As the performer plays music, she is also actively listening to the music she is playing and, as Nietzsche suggests, she listens with her muscles, tapping her toe to mark the time, cocking her ear attentively, nodding her head with approval, swaying her torso with the affect of the tune.[9] The musician engages her body in response to the music she hears the better to engage her body in making the music plays. She is actively engaged in making music at the same time as she is actively engaged in aesthetically appreciating the music she makes. Perhaps Eduard Hanslick listened to music with a detached, disinterested satisfaction, but there is no record of Hanslick making music whereas with Nietzsche, and Berleant, there is. The art of music demands engaged attention in the performance of it and in listening to it, otherwise it is just a background pumped in to fill an ostensibly empty space.

Given his expressed commitments to engagement and, as we have just noted, the role of the body in that engagement, we are not surprised by Berleant's turning to aesthetic embodiment.[10] Embodiment, for Berleant, is not reducible to the body that would be a vessel for the cognitive state

ordinarily associated with aesthetic experience. There is no room in Berleant's appreciation of aesthetics and the arts for substance dualism. Rather, there is, in Berleant's sense of embodiment, the body as a subtle continuum of thinking and being, a corporeal mindfulness that blends the mental and the physical. He cites Tantric Buddhism where the body *is* the embodiment of "corporeality, affectivity, cognitivity, and spirituality whose layers are subtly interwoven and mutually interactive."[11] In the Western tradition, he cites his own work on embodiment in music, especially in an appreciation of Claude Debussy's Prelude for the piano, "La Cathédrale engloutie," which, he says, makes the sunken cathedral present in "the stately progression of chords built on the interval of a fifth and their bell-like resonance."[12] He also refers, here, to the poetic question posed by William Butler Yeats, "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[13] His commitments to aesthetic embodiment will often lead Berleant to write about dance.[14]

Berleant brought out *Art and Engagement* the same year Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch published *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*.[15] Where Varela, Thompson and Rosch aimed to transform thinking in the philosophy of mind, Berleant sought to develop an intuition about aesthetic experience he first introduced almost twenty-five years earlier in "The Experience and Criticism of Art."[16] Ironically, since these studies have very different goals, both draw generously from the phenomenology of perception. For Varela, Thompson and Rosch, perception is an achievement, and this achievement would be expressed decades later as enactivism in cognitive science. For Berleant, perception is an invitation to engage artworks as a vital resource for human being, and, decades later, he would express that engagement as aesthetic embodiment.

The phenomenology of perception in both cases is drawn from the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty did more than any other Western philosopher to argue for embodiment, beginning with his *Phenomenology of Perception* and ending with his last writing published posthumously as *The Visible and the Invisible*.[17] Already in the *Phenomenology*, which so inspired Varela, Thompson and Rosch and, later, the enactivism of Shaun Gallagher, Merleau-Ponty describes the body as *the* locus of intelligibility and compares the unity of the body to the unity of an artwork.[18] In *Art and Engagement*, Berleant references the *Phenomenology* to account for a continuity between perceivers and objects that is consistent with the physics of relativity theory that corrects the classical view of visual space assumed by 18th century aesthetic theory. In a text from the *Phenomenology* Berleant cites, Merleau-Ponty writes, "My point of view is for me much less a limitation on my experience than a way of inserting myself into the world in its entirety."[19] Space is not, then, a Euclidean volume where a perceiver discovers objects. It is a continuity of perceivers, objects and the connections between them that form an environment or a world.

On this view, there are several different worlds formed by the different perceivers and objects and connections that populate them each with a distinct "style," a distinct way of determining what belongs in that world and how its constituents hang together. At the same time, our "point of view"

has a style given a context by the functions of our body, and we insert ourselves into a world by adapting the style of our embodied point of view to the style of that world. Aesthetic engagement is an embodied point of view that inserts itself into a world of artworks and everyday experience. Citing the notoriously difficult "Working Notes" from *The Visible and the Invisible*, Berleant associates this embodied point of view with a "charged field," an energy reaching outward from the body that is no longer a container whose boundaries must be breached but an overfullness of force that cannot be contained. No longer bound by the limits of a body, aesthetic embodiment intertwines us in what Merleau-Ponty calls "the flesh of the world."[20]

Aesthetic embodiment, then, is not just for Berleant an overfullness of this or that body but an enfolding of corporeality, affectivity, consciousness, and spirit that is local with you or me but that also covers the environment we share. "This means," Merleau-Ponty writes, "that my body is made of the same flesh as the world …and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it, and it encroaches upon the world."[21] Berleant embraces this view, and, so, aesthetic embodiment is, for him, a way of actively and intimately engaging with artworks, with others, and with the world where we find artworks and other forms of life. With this view of embodiment, aesthetics itself is a form of life actively exploring the lines of continuity connecting the work of artists and the experience afforded audiences in contexts defined by the creative forces of perceivers and performers, objects and events unfolding across the full range of human life.

Now, accepting this ontology, is Berleant guilty of the charges he brings against mainstream aesthetics? Has he conceived an aesthetics based in 20th century philosophy and science that is anachronistic in the consideration of works created at a time when artworks appeared to be distinctive and isolated from everyday artifacts and Euclidean geometry ruled the conditions for producing perspective in painting? Berleant would likely respond that the general theory of relativity corrects the account of perception held by 18th century theorists and that we are justified in reconsidering that outmoded account in our appreciation of artworks created in our time and in times past. He would also likely point out that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception is prescient of the latest developments in the philosophy of mind that correct for a substance dualism we should never have adopted and would do well to drop. He would no doubt insist that the 18th century theorists were wrong to isolate artworks from the contexts in which they emerged, as recent developments in art history have shown, that appreciations of artworks from the point of view of a disinterested spectator mistake what is of value in the work of artists, then and now, and that beauty and the sublime do not exhaust what is distinctive about artworks or remarkable forms of life.

Finally, when we overlook what Arnold Berleant has contributed to contemporary aesthetics, we miss the opportunity to question assumptions about aesthetic experience and aesthetic value that are held dear in the face of challenges that artists continue to pose by making works that make trouble for those assumptions. The recent collaborative work by Matthew Barney, "Catasterism in Three

Movements" (2021), new movies by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car" (2021), for example, Pharoah Sanders performing "Promises" (2021) with the London Symphony Orchestra strings as well as renewed appreciation of drawings by Cézanne (Museum of Modern Art, June through September 2021) all point to the importance of considering aesthetic engagement as an alternative to detached observation in the enjoyment and understanding of the work of artists in our time and in times past.[22] And, with aesthetic embodiment, Berleant gives us another way to think about what Michel Foucault calls an aesthetics of existence. Where Foucault encourages us to give form to our life with ascetic practices, Berleant invites us to embrace a form of life that thrills to the ecstasies afforded by artworks and everyday existence and to glory in our embodiment of the flesh of the world.

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[1] Arnold Berleant, "The Historicity of Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 26, nos. 2 and 3 (Spring and Summer 1986) revised and reprinted in *Re-Thinking Aesthetics: Rouge Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* (New York: Routledge 2016), 29. All citations are to the revised text.
[2] Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 49.
[3] *Ibid*. Also see Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Springfield, IL: C. C. Thomas, 1970).
[4] "The Historicity of Aesthetics," 35.
[5] "The Historicity of Aesthetics," 35.
[6] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 2.
[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Third Essay, § 6. See Arnold Berleant, "Re-Thinking Aesthetics," in *Re-Thinking Aesthetics*, 15, citing Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. F. Golffing (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), Third Essay, § 6.
[8] Stendhal, *De L'Amour*, chapter xvii.
[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 809.
[10] Arnold Berleant, "Aesthetic Embodiment," in *Re-Thinking Aesthetics*, 83-90, from an address at the annual meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics, San Francisco, 2003.
[11] "Aesthetic Embodiment," 83, citing Miranda Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11.
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[19] *Phenomenology of Perception*, 345. *Art and Engagement*, 61, cites the Colin Smith translation (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1962), 329.
[20] "Aesthetic Embodiment," 86, citing *The Visible and the Invisible*, 267.
[21] "Aesthetic Embodiment," 87, citing *The Visible and the Invisible*, 248.
[22] See Jason Farago, "The Cézanne We've Forgotten to See," *New Yaork Times*, June 27, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/arts/design/cezanne-moma-drawings.html, accessed 12 December 2021.

ARNOLD BERLEANT: GUIDE TO MY RESEARCH ON ENVIROMENTAL AESTHETICS

Wangheng Chen

I fondly call Arnold Berleant my first American friend and he calls me his first Chinese friend. We first became friends in 1988, 33 years ago. 33 years is long time, enough for a baby to grow into a professor, a scientist, or even a national leader. For myself, these 33 years was an academic journey guided by Arnold Berleant along the path of environmental aesthetics. I feel humbled when my peers in the Chinese academia commended me as "the pioneer of Chinese environmental aesthetics" because I know I was guided by someone before me: Arnold Berleant. I am grateful to Arnold Berleant, without his help and guidance I could not have achieved the results, however meager it may be, on environmental aesthetics.

1. Leading the way

The story begins in the 1980s. At the time, a friend of mine was studying in the United States who knew I was studying aesthetics and sent my *CV* to the American Society for Aesthetics, applying for a membership on my behalf. Serving as the Secretary-General of the Society at the time, Arnold Berleant received and accepted my application. So I became a foreign member of the American Society for Aesthetics. Ever since the year 1988 onwards, we have kept in correspondence, as proved by the stack of envelopes I have saved till this day, all the letters from Arnold Berleant.

In 1992, I invited Arnold Berleant to visit Zhejiang University in China, where I was teaching at the time. Arnold Berleant gladly accepted my invitation. This was his first visit to China. The trip he has designed was to fly via Hong Kong to Shenzhen and to Chongqing, and then from Chongqing to Hangzhou via the Three Gorges. It was surely a magical and romantic trip. However, I was worried that the second lap of his trip would not be easy, so I sent my student Shu Jianhua who took a train to Chongqing and met Arnold at the airport. Shu took them for a ride on a ship from Chongqing across the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River, then landed in Yueyang, Hunan, and went to Hangzhou by train. At that time in China, public transportation was not as convenient as it is now, and buying ship tickets and train tickets was not so easy. Fortunately, being smart and resourceful as Shu Jianhua was, they overcame all the difficulties. Arnold Berleant really enjoyed the trip as he told me

upon our meeting all about the magical and magnificent views of the Three Gorges, and the diligence and shrewdness of my student.

For this first meet, Arnold Berleant brought me some gifts: his book *Environmental Aesthetics* in English and two of his papers that have been translated into Chinese, i. e. "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic" and "Aesthetic Paradigms for an Urban Ecology". It was his book and these two papers that opened up a new horizon in my academic career.

My first publication on aesthetics was in 1981, a paper titled "On Natural Beauty" (Seeker, 1981, Vol. 2). At the time, I was in Changsha working as an editor. In 1989, I was appointed as a professor by the president of Zhejiang University, teaching aesthetics. There was a journal called *Scenic Areas* in Hangzhou, in which I published travel notes and essays on landscape aesthetics. At the time, I had the concept of landscape aesthetics (natural aesthetics), but not yet the concept of environmental aesthetics.

Inspired by Arnold, I became interested in environmental aesthetics and urban aesthetics, and my new academic journey began:

First, expanding my academic interests from landscape to environment. Though both originated from nature, landscape aesthetic and environmental aesthetics are inherently different, as the former is for tourism and stresses the appreciation of scenery while the latter is for life and stresses a living experience. Arnold Berleant said something about this, which I think is quite classic. He said: "The environment is the natural process in which people live…the nature that people live in."[1]. This thought inspired me, and I began to think about environmental aesthetics from the perspective of living. I identified living as the subject of environmental aesthetics and further classified living into three hierarchies of being livable, easy, enjoyable. The key to livability is ecology, while living easily is utilitarian, and the most important thing about enjoyable living is happiness. The essence of environmental aesthetics lies in "happy living", i. e. people living happily and joyfully in nature.

I summed up these ideas in an article titled "Contemporary Mission of Environmental Aesthetics", published in *Academic Monthly*, a renowned Chinese journal, and the paper was then reprinted by *Xinhua Digest*, an important journal of academic quotations in China. Then, in 2013, an excerpt of the article became the reading material in Chinese test of the college entrance examination that year. This article was later translated into English and published in a Japanese journal, *The Contemporary Mission of Environmental Aesthetics*. The Journal of Asian Arts and Aesthetics, Vol. 3, 2010. On January 22nd, 2009, I gave a lecture at Stanford University under the same title, "The Contemporary Mission of Environmental Aesthetics".

Second, the subject of my research on environmental aesthetics shifted from nature to the city. I like to travel, and have a natural fondness for natural scenery. Arnold Berleant's proposal of "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic" drew my great attention and I began to think about the aesthetics of Chinese cities. In 1995, I wrote a paper titled "Aesthetics of Historical and Cultural cities" published in

vol. 4 of *Journal of Wuhan Museology*. The paper was reprinted in 1997 in vol. 4 of *Urban Development*, an important journal of urban studies in China. In May 2001, as the only representative from China, I attended the 3rd International Conference on Sustainable Cultural and Urban Development hosted by the Cheongju City Government of South Korea hosted by the United Nations University. The presentation I made on the conference was titled "Aesthetic Charm of Historical and Cultural City." On December 11th, 2008, *Guangming Daily* published the transcript of my public lecture in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province covering two full pages, titled the "Cities, Our Homes". This article was later reprinted by *Xinhua Digest* in vol.7 (2009) and had a significant impact.

After that, I published an article titled "Building the City into a Cozy Home – Reflection on the Modernization of Chinese Cities" (*Journal of Zhengzhou University*, vol.3, 2009). The English version of this article was published by a magazine in Japan ("The Establishment of the Concept 'Home': The Reflection of Chinese City Urbanization". *The Journal of Asian Arts and Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 2009). "Cities are our homes." The proposal was not of my creation. In his paper "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic", Arnold Berleant stated that "Urban design is a design of our homes."However, I did develop this idea a little by identifying the sense of home as the highest state in environmental aesthetics. I established "building a home" as the core of my environmental aesthetics thoughts. This idea was highly commended by Holmes Rolston III in his comments on my book *China's Environmental Aesthetics*: "Chen's great strength is his account of how in China humans and nature operate together in a creative dynamic with the differing elements in each supporting and reinforcing each other, resulting in a more beautiful China. … The Chinese have a strong sense of being 'at home' in nature. "The sense of home represents thus the highest level of identification with the environment."[2]

In 1999, at a conference on aesthetics held in China, I proposed "cultivating an environmental aesthetics". This paper was originally published in *Corporate Culture* (vol. 3, 2000) and was officially published in *Hunan Social Sciences* (vol. 5, 2000). In April 2007, my monograph *Environmental Aesthetics* was published by Wuhan University Press. I chose such a title intentionally to show its connection to Arnold Berleant's book *Environmental aesthetics*. Without Arnold Berleant's "Environmental Aesthetics", there would be no "Environmental Aesthetics" of mine.

2. Collaboration

Arnold Berleant is not only the guide of my research on environmental aesthetics, but also my mentor and a collaborator on our common academic pursuit. Our collaboration began during my work at Wuhan University. In 2003, I received the funding for my research "Fundamental Issues of Environmental Aesthetics" from the Humanities and Social Sciences Fund of the Ministry of Education of China. The project was conceived as early as in the year 1992 and was granted the funding after nearly 10 years.

To facilitate the development of environmental aesthetics in China, I recruited several doctoral students with environmental aesthetics as their research interest, which is the first time academically in China. The biggest difficulty at that time was the lack of literature and research materials. We decided first to introduce to China important Western literatures on environmental aesthetics. Therefore, I proposed to Arnold the publishing of a series titled "Translated Classics on Environmental Aesthetics", for which we served as editors. He was responsible for selecting the appropriate books, I was responsible for the translation and publication. Arnold Berleant appreciated and accepted my proposal and we immediately went in full swing for it.

After three years of hard work, the "Translated Classics on Environmental Aesthetics" was published. The first collection included six books: 1. *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Arnold Berleant), 2. *The Beauty of Environment* (Yrjö Sepänmaa) 3. *Nature and Landscape* (Allen Carlson) 4. *Art and Survival* (Caffyn Kelley) 5. *The Crazannes Quarries*" (Bernard Lasss) 6. *Living in the Landscape* (Arnold Berleant).

The publication of this series of books is our most important collaboration. This series of books is widely welcomed by Chinese readers not only in the fields of aesthetics and environment, but also in disciplines such as urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and design. The series has been included as a must-read for graduate students by the School of Architecture of Tsinghua University in China and many professionals outside the field of aesthetics know me rather because of this series of books than due to my personal works.

Another important collaboration between Arnold and me is organizing international conferences. In 2003, Yrjö Sepänmaa, the famous environmental aesthetician, planned to organize an international conference on environmental aesthetics in Finland and sent me an invitation. At the beginning, I hesitated because of some difficulties at the time, but Arnold Berleant insisted that I should go. I remember to this day what he said in his letter: Since you have chosen the field of environment aesthetics, an international conference like this is a must-go because it is of great importance to your future research. Thanks to his resolute and clear-cut opinion, I attended this session of the International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics. This was my first time to participate in an international conference held in a Western country. Since then and until 2015, I have participated in international conferences almost every year, trying to make the Chinese voice heard in the international academic circle of aesthetics.

The 2003 conference in Finland was greatly rewarding for me in the two following aspects:

1. Broadening my horizon. The theme of this environmental aesthetics conference was agricultural aesthetics. Agriculture is also the object of environmental aesthetics research, which I had never thought of in the past. Because of this conference, my environmental aesthetics research began to focus on agriculture. My *Environmental Aesthetics* has a special chapter on “Agricultural Environmental Beauty”. Here, I use the term "agricultural environment" instead of "rural environment",

which is meaningful. At the beginning of this century, the Chinese government proposed a national policy of building a beautiful China. My environmental aesthetics came in handy and has contributed to rural development and urban beautification in some places.

2. Making new friends. Through this conference, I made a lot of friends in environmental aesthetics from different countries, who offered rich international resources for my study on environmental aesthetics in China.

Later, I had the idea of organizing an international conference on environmental aesthetics in 2004. Arnold Berleant soon expressed great support for the idea. Originally, the proposed name of the conference was "International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics". However, due to the limited number of researchers on environmental aesthetics in China and the concern over poor attendance, the conference was renamed as "Beauty and the Way of Modern life" and "Environmental Aesthetics" became one session of the conference. Upon my invitation, Arnold Berleant agreed to be the honorary chairperson of the conference, and I served as the chairperson of the conference.

The conference was held in Wuhan University from May 14th to 16th, 2004. Arnold Berleant made a keynote speech on "Beauty and Contemporary Lifestyle". During the conference, he was hired as a visiting professor of Wuhan University, and the president of Wuhan University awarded him a letter of appointment.

Thanks to Arnold Berleant's great support, the conference was very successful. About 30 international scholars attended the meeting, including the Former Presidents of the International Association of Aesthetics (IAA): Arnold Berleant, Yrjö Sepänmaa, Aleš Erjavec; Jos de Mul, who later became President of the IAA; Chung-ying Cheng, President of the International Society for the Yi-jing; and Yoshio Shimizu, President of the Japan Society of Kansei Engineering. In China at that time, this attendance was surely of international distinction.

After the conference, on invitation of the publisher of the "Translated Classics on Environmental Aesthetics", Hunan Science & Technology Publishing House, and its supervisor, the Publication Bureau of Hunan Province, the six overseas scholars attending the conference (Arnold Berleant, Chung-Ying Cheng, Aleš Erjavec, Patricia Johanson, Johanna Hallsten, Yrjö Sepänmaa) and I visited Changsha and attended the "International Forum on Environmental Aesthetics". The conference venue was the Puri hotel on the West Bank of the Xiangjiang River in Changsha. At the time, the hotel was newly built and large parcels of the land in front of the building were going through landscaping. The conference delegates planted trees in the garden during their stay and Arnold happily planted a small tree in the open space. He said that it was meaningful and symbolic that the group of scholars engaged in environmental aesthetics planted trees to beautify the environment. After the Changsha Conference, the Hunan Provincial Tourism Bureau took us to the famous scenic spot Zhangjiajie. The Zhangjiajie Scenic Authority organized the "Wulingyuan International Forum on Environmental Aesthetics" with the seven scholars from the Wuhan conference as the keynote speakers.

The three conferences in 2004 had a huge impact. At that time China's environmental problems have not attracted enough attention, not to mention the environmental aesthetics, which was still a novel concept at the time. The three conferences on environmental aesthetics strongly promoted this idea with a high academic standard, and contributed positively to the cause of China's environmental aesthetics research, its environmental protection and beautification.

After that, I organized three international conferences on environmental aesthetics in China, in Wuhan University in 2006, Xiangyang in 2009 and Wuhan University in 2015. I invited Arnold to the three meetings, but unfortunately, he could not make it. Yet, he cared a lot for the meeting and gave me valuable suggestions and guidance. Looking back at my collaborations with Arnold, they were not only successful, but also wonderful. Arnold's contribution to China's environmental aesthetics not only lies in his books, which had a huge impact in the Chinese academic circles, but also in his participation in academic activities in China, including the academic conferences and lectures. He promoted the development of China's environmental cause with his unique efforts.

3. Encouragement

Under the guidance of Arnold Berleant, I published in 2017 a monograph titled *Environmental Aesthetics*. The book won the Second Prize in the China Scientific Research in College Outstanding Achievement Award (Humanities and Social Sciences). Since no First Prize was given for the year, the Second Prize was actually the highest prize in this category. I gave the good news to Arnold Berleant, and he soon replied with a letter of warm praise and encouragement.

In 2009, the British scholar Gerald Cipriani and his student Su Feng translated my book *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* into English and it was published by the internationally renowned publisher Routledge. This book has received attention in the Western world. The famous scholar Allen Carlson wrote an entry specially for my book in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. In addition, several overseas scholars including Holmes Rolston III, Jos de Mul, David Adam Brubaker, and Andrew Lambert wrote reviews and comments on the book (their articles were published in the Chinese journal *Poyang Lake Journal*, vol. 4, 2017). In his letter to me, Arnold Berleant gave the book great praise:

> Dear Professor Chen,
>
> I write to tell you that I am reading your book, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics,* with great pleasure and profit. The book is very well written. I recognize the positive assistance of Gerald Cipriani, which you were fortunate to have. The book is a wonderful source for understanding the Chinese tradition in environmental appreciation. It makes me understand why Chinese scholars find my work so congenial. There will be much for us to discuss when you visit here, and I look forward to that.
>
> With my very best wishes,
>
> Arnold

Later, he formally wrote a review of the book which was published online in *Contemporary Aesthetics*. His review is as follows:

> Wangheng Chen's *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*
>
> Environmental aesthetics as a focus of philosophic inquiry first developed in the West in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the UK, the US, Canada, and Finland. It gained increasing attention partly because of the growing environmental movement and partly because perennial questions in philosophy found new relevance and a fresh focus in aesthetic values in environment. While this new interest appeared in China only in the final decade of the last century, a profound awareness of nature and appreciation of environmental values are rooted in ancient Chinese culture. The fascination with nature has infused its art, its literature, and its religion. In *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, Wangheng Chen, Professor of Philosophy at Wuhan University, PR China, has opened the way for Western scholars to discover from a contemporary vantage point the richness of the traditional Chinese understanding of nature and the human place in the natural world. Chen has brought together a rich array of concepts, thinkers, poets, and artists who have contributed to forming the distinctive Chinese melding of nature and human life. His book provides a valuable counterpart to Western research in environmental aesthetics by developing an historical and cross-cultural account of Chinese thinking and valuing of nature.
>
> The only book of its kind in English, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* is an impressive achievement in its own right. Not only does Prof. Chen offer a clear, detailed historical account of the origins of environmental thought in China; he introduces Chinese concepts and practices, that express and apply that understanding, such as *Feng Shui*. This account develops into a philosophical discussion of environment and the Chinese words that express that traditional understanding. Central here is its fusion of what we in the West call 'subject' and 'object' as an inseparable unity in perception and understanding. This informs the idea of landscape and environment, more generally. Together with the unity of nature and humans that is integral to Taoism runs a moral strain, a Confucian concern for the social dimensions of environment.
>
> From this cultural grounding, Chen moves into particular kinds of environments: gardens, palaces, agricultural landscapes, and the urban environment, pursuing the idea of beauty in these different contexts. Not just a *tour de force* for its success in gathering and elucidating a long and complex tradition, the book is filled with expressions of that history in poetry, painting, and architecture. Numerous quotations and photographs of temples and landscapes embody as well as document this tradition. Although the quality of the reproductions does not do justice to the images, Chen's erudition is enhanced by Feng Su's careful

translation of his text and by Gerald Cipriani's fluent and graceful stylistic editing, so that the book reads as smoothly as if it had been written originally in English, a rarity in the translation of Chinese texts.

Contemporary Chinese research in environmental aesthetics is strongly informed by the Western literature that established this field of inquiry. Chen identifies congenial sources in the present author's idea of aesthetic engagement that develops an understanding of the unity of humans and nature that parallels the Chinese tradition. The more recent Western inquiries into the aesthetic dimensions of everyday life introduced by Yuriko Saito and Katya Mandoki also resemble the Eastern fusion of aesthetic values with the activities of daily life. From these beginnings Chinese environmental aesthetics has developed its own character and momentum. Prominent here is the concept of ecological aesthetics or 'ecoaesthetics,' as it is often called, developed in the work of Yongcheng Zeng, Fanren Zeng, Dingsheng Yuan, and Xiangzhan Cheng, among others. This uses the scientific concept of ecology to epitomize the contextual character of human existence as part of the natural world. While ecology provides a scientific grounding for the traditional Chinese understanding of living in nature, what it affirms is fundamentally a philosophical view that has struggled against the pervasiveness of the Platonic-Cartesian dualism that has dominated Western intellectual and scientific life. Much of the work on ecological aesthetics by Chinese aestheticians has been polemical, but from this grounding one may hope that original studies will emerge that show the fruitfulness of this contextualism in developing a fresh understanding and new ideas in responding to the environmental challenges of the present day, challenges as deeply serious in China as in the West. *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* can serve modern environmental researchers well by encouraging Western scholars to reciprocate Chinese scholars' knowledge of Western environmental philosophy.

The global environmental crisis is undoubtedly the most pressing consequence of the industrial transformation of the human world. Wangheng Chen's *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* is important for the background it provides through its historical account and cultural insights. Affirming the importance of aesthetic values for the human environment has at no time been a more pressing need. Chen conveys the scope of environmental thinking in China and the rich cultural meanings of nature and environment. The book offers a many-layered introduction to environment, both natural and human, and signals a fresh and productive turn in environmental aesthetics. Perhaps Chen's book will help stimulate efforts at collaborative inquiry by scholars working across traditions.

Arnold Berleant, 7/15/19

Since beginning my study on environmental aesthetics in the 1990s following Arnold Berleant, to the publication of *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics* in English in 2015, twenty years have passed. I felt particularly gratified because my achievement has been affirmed by Arnold Berleant, to whom I will always be grateful.

My research on aesthetic environment, just as Arnold Berleant said in the book review, has always stressed "the dual dimensions of nature and human in the interpretation of the environment", that is, the two dimensions of ecology and civilization, and the emphasis on the unity of the two dimensions. The proposal of this view was also influenced by Arnold Berleant. In *Environmental Aesthetics*, he pointed out that "any discourses on environmental aesthetics are bound to have what I call a cultural aesthetic" and "cultural aesthetic is a huge matrix of perception and it actually constitutes the environment of each society." (See Chapter 2 of *Environmental Aesthetics*). Arnold's notion of "Culture" here is synonymous with "civilization" in the Chinese language, but "civilization" seems to be of a higher state than "culture", as "civilization" is generally considered as the essence of "culture". I believe that any beauty is a manifestation of civilization, and beauty lies in civilization, not ecology. I think that it is necessary and important to incorporate ecology into aesthetics, especially into environmental aesthetics, but environmental aesthetics is not ecological aesthetics, and environmental beauty is not ecological beauty. As Arnold Berleant said, the environment is a "physical – cultural domain" (see Chapter 2 of *Environmental Aesthetics*). I think the environment should be the unity of ecology and civilization, and the unity of nature and culture. On this basis, I proposed the idea of "beauty of ecological civilization". Then, with the publishing of an article titled "Beauty of Ecological Civilization: New Form of Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics" in *Guangming Daily* (July 15th, 2015), the concept of "aesthetics of ecological civilization" was further proposed. Later, an article named "On Aesthetics of Ecological Civilization" was published in (vol. 1, 2017) and its English version was published in *Contemporary Social Sciences* (vol. 2, 2018), an English journal in China. Then, I published several articles on the aesthetics of ecological civilization in which it is emphasized that, although beauty lies in civilization, it is also embodied in ecology, especially in its original form – the wilderness. It is advocated that civilization and wilderness should not contradict each other, rather they should achieve "harmony with division" or "harmony on pact".

These articles attracted the attention of Gernot Böhme, a German scholar. In 2019, during his stay in Wuhan for an international conference, he had some academic communication with me and afterward he published an article titled "What's the relationship between ecology and aesthetics?". In it, Böhme commented on my thoughts of environmental aesthetics and gave a high evaluation. Arnold Berleant forwarded the article to me and congratulated me:

> Dear Wang-heng,
>
> Greetings! I hope you and your family are doing well these days. We are busy as usual. I am writing to send you as an attachment an article written by Prof. Gernot Böhme that was just

> published in *Die Zeit*, the most prestigious weekly journal in Germany, in which he discusses your work in environmental aesthetics, as well as mine. The article is, of course, in German, but perhaps you have a colleague who can translate it for you…

After reading Böhme's article, I found that Böhme actually criticized Arnold, but Arnold didn't mind the criticism and believed that academic argument was normal. He sent me this article criticizing him in order to congratulate and encourage me. But what I received was not only encouragement, but something much more. One of them is Arnold's attitude towards academic argument, which set a shining example for me. Through his article, Böhme on one hand gave me his praise and commendation; on the other hand, he also questioned and criticized some of my views.

Arnold Berleant will soon be ninety years old. Still, he stands on the forefront of aesthetic research. His book *The Asthetic Field* has been translated into Chinese by my students and is being published by Wuhan University Press. With the three previously translated books I have helped with, namely *The Aesthetics of Environment*, *Living in the Landscape*, *Re-thinking Aesthetics*, and the soon to be published *The Aesthetic Field*, four of Arnold Berleant's books are introduced to China and we expect still more. The above four books are testimony to my friendship with Arnold Berleant and his important contribution to Chinese readers and aesthetics research in China.

I sincerely wish Arnold Berleant to stay forever young at heart! Please keep writing books, and me and my students will continue translating them into Chinese. Let us keep the story going!

> Dear Prof. Chen,
>
> I did not receive your last letter and, apparently, you did not receive mine. I wrote you that my article was published in the current volume of *Contemporary Aesthetics, Vol. 17 (2019)* in the Short Notes section. Here is the link: https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=867
>
> I had not received the paper of Zhang Wentao before your present letter. I shall read it with interest and send you my comments.
>
> Thank you for telling me about the interest of Chinese scholars in my work on environmental aesthetics. I am grateful for this and I am very pleased that I can contribute to Chinese scholars understanding of environmental aesthetics just as I have learned much from work done by Chinese scholars like yourself.
>
> With warm wishes,
>
> Arnold Berleant, 7/15/19

[1] The qote is from the first chapter of Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).
[2] On the original lecture and its publication, see Rolston's website: https://sites.google.com/a/rams.colostate.edu/rolston-csu-website/environmental-ethics-rolston-bookspublications/environmental-aesthetics-in-china-east-west-dialogue. The quote is on page 75. See also 61-108.

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON ARNOLD BERLEANT´S IDEAS ON ECOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

Xiangzhan Cheng

Abstract
Berleant's participation in my research program back in 2008 inspired his turn towards ecological aesthetics, which features four components in an order of environment, aesthetics, ecology, and experience. The special order has given rise to an "ecological environmental aesthetics", which may be viewed as a restructuring of his established "environmental aesthetics" through an ecological prism. In contrast, my own eco-aesthetics may be defined as "aesthetics based on ecology," whose distinctively three components follow the order of ecology, aesthetics, and environment. The underlying logic for the difference lies in two different philosophical positions, i.e., phenomenology and ecological realism. Hence this article may shed some light on the unresolved problem of the relationship between environmental aesthetics and ecological aesthetics by juxtaposing and comparing these two approaches.

Keywords
Environmental Aesthetics; Ecological Aesthetics; Phenomenology; Ecological Realism.

1. Introduction

Arnold Berleant enjoys a broad recognition for his pathbreaking work in environmental aesthetics, a relatively new sub-field of philosophical aesthetics in which many practitioners take him as a representative figure of the so-called "non-cognitive views" in comparison with the "cognitive views" represented by Allen Carlson et al.[1] During the past two decades, Berleant (and Carlson as well) has been keeping in close touch with his Chinese counterparts and meanwhile playing a promotive role in the development of the emerging eco-aesthetics or ecological aesthetics there. His theoretical exchanges with and impact on Chinese eco-aesthetics have been succinctly summarized and commented upon in a latest article by Cheng Xiangzhan.[2]

But simply taking Berleant as an environmental aesthetician leaves much to be desired. With a more nuanced exploration into his involvement with Chinese eco-aesthetics, this article has revealed on his part a gradual but steady progression from an environmental approach to an ecological approach to aesthetics. The pivotal point is his participation upon the invitation of Cheng Xiangzhan into the latter's research program "Ecological Aesthetics in the West: Theory and Praxis" (funded by Chinese National Social Science Foundation, No. 08BZW013) in 2008. [3] His contribution to that program has been embodied by a chapter in the co-authored *Ecological Aesthetics and Ecological Assessment and Planning* in 2013 - "An Ecological Understanding of Environment and Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics".[4]

To illustrate the thesis abovementioned, this article will firstly reveal a long overlooked theoretical development on the part of Arnold Berleant from environmental aesthetics to ecological aesthetics. Then we will take a critical reflection on his stances concerning ecological aesthetics from the prism of Chinese eco-aesthetics developed in the past decade and best characterized as an aesthetics based on ecological realism. In the concluding part, we will return to the seemingly insoluble question - the relationship between environmental and ecological aesthetics, hoping to shed some light on a possible answer.

2. From Environmental Aesthetics to Eco-environmental Aesthetics

Ronald W. Hepburn's seminal article "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty" has set the agenda for the development of environmental aesthetics ever since 1966.[5] This fact explains why many have dubbed him as "the father of environmental aesthetics." [6] To put it into perspective, however, Hepburn's article is mainly concerned with what he called the "natural beauty". Therefore, the discipline as initiated by him might best be named as "aesthetics of nature" instead of the "aesthetics of environment". The difference between "nature" and "environment", however scholastic as it may first appear, shall never be dismissed as irrelevant because "environmental aesthetics" as a differentiating academic term was first proposed by Arnold Berleant in his essay in 1972, which legitimately inaugurated such a special field.[7]

Following his 1972 essay, Berleant has published a series of writings on "environmental aesthetics" (not natural aesthetics), such as *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (University Press of Kansas, 1997) and *Aesthetics and Environment, Theme and Variations on Art and Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). As can be seen, the keyword "environment" has threaded all these publications. It is against this theoretical background that Berleant has formulated his ecological approach to environmental aesthetics, i.e., seeing environmental aesthetics from an ecological prism. He has named this approach an "ecological environmental aesthetics".[8]

At the core of this approach lies the essential idea of taking environment as an all-inclusive context within which humans and nature (including natural forces, organisms, and inorganic objects) are wholly interdependent. Such an interdependence can be found both in urban and natural environments. Berleant reassessed such discrete concepts as "aesthetics", "environment", "ecology", and "experience" and found two ways to relate them to one another: one is logical and the other experiential. He claims that the aesthetic experience of environment goes all the way towards the largest perceptual context, i.e., the ecology. The implications of this approach may be considered for cultural sensibility, urban ecology, aesthetic engagement, and for translating ecology into experience. He concludes by recognizing that the aesthetic experience of environment is the perceptual counterpart of ecology.

Such a theoretical stance is best exemplified in "An Ecological Understanding of Environment and Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics."[9] In that essay, Berleant observed that the 1990s witnessed an ever-increasing popularity of environmental aesthetics among Chinese aestheticians, a phenomenon much in synchronization with the globalization of predominantly western academics. Despite the fact that varied cultures, traditions and living styles have conditioned the way people experience their living place, the environment, and ultimately the ecology, and that the environmental aestheticians have disclosed crucial nuances in the hermeneutics of many key concepts, Berleant still holds onto the idea that, through meaningful discussion and clarification, we may not only gain more common ground but also engage in promising collaborations. In this spirit, he proposes four key words about environmental aesthetics, with the first being "environment" which is viewed as an "all-inclusive context". And he further reckons that "the ecological concept" of an all-inclusive, interdependent environmental system has its parallel in experience in aesthetic engagement. In a word, *environment* is taken as the foundational and leading idea of his inquiry.

Then how can the environment relate to aesthetics to get "environmental aesthetics"? Berleant proposes that, out of a wide variety of concerns, people may take an *aesthetic* interest in environment which is fundamental in human-environment relationship because our sensory engagement with the environment precedes and underlies every other interest, and sensory perception lies at the heart of the meaning of aesthetics. Berleant proposes a return to the original Baumgartenian definition of aesthetics as "the science of sensibility" studying the experience of sensory perception. The catchword of Berleant's stance on environmental aesthetics is "aesthetic engagement" which, in his own words, can be understood as the experiential analogue of ecology since both are holistic, contextual, and all-inclusive. Although Berleant fully understands that "ecology" started as a biological theory highlighting the interdependence of organisms in so-called ecosystems and that social science and humanities have been largely indebted to natural science in their adoption of many ecological concepts, he still argues that ecological concerns are of little importance in the writings of Western environmental aestheticians. In contrast, ecology figures prominently in the discourse of what he called "environmental aesthetics by Chinese researchers". In a word, Berleant tries to depict an orderly progression of the leading ideas of environmental aesthetics - environment, aesthetics, ecology, and experience. This logical order gives rise to a special environmental aesthetics with a strong tint of ecology, or to put it simply, an ecological aesthetics. In this sense, Berleant's "ecological aesthetics" is actually "ecological environmental aesthetics".

3. A Critical Reflection from the Perspective of Ecological Realism

After the publication of their co-authored book *Ecological Aesthetics and Ecological Assessment and Planning* in 2013, Beleant and Cheng kept reflecting on the key ideas of ecological aesthetics. They frequently exchanged their ideas via emails, which gave form to a series of publications. Among

them, the first is Berleant's "Some Questions for Ecological Aesthetics," which considers the appropriateness of the uses to which ecology has been put in some recent discussions of architectural and environmental aesthetics. With the focus of linking ecology with aesthetics, Berleant develops a critique of Cheng's ecological aesthetics and summarizes it as "ecological cognitivism". He believes that Cheng is guided by ecological and ethical values rather than by aesthetic ones. "Indeed, it seems that by emphasizing biodiversity and ecosystem health as principles of ecological value, Cheng has entirely overlooked the aesthetic."[10]

As a response to Berleant's critique, Cheng in his essay "Ecological Aesthetics: The Legal Connection between Ecology and Aesthetics" asserts that ecological aesthetics does not overlook aesthetic issues as Berleant has criticized, because it defines its research object as "ecological aesthetic appreciation." Ecological aesthetics is an organic combination of two different disciplines - ecology and aesthetics. And its legitimacy is based on six ways of connecting the two.[11] Aiming at Berleant's series of critique of Kant's aesthetics, Cheng's paper "Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Eco-aesthetics" declares that Berleant's criticism of Kant's core idea of disinterestedness is a misunderstanding, and his conception of environment is not fundamentally sound. The future of eco-aesthetics is to take ecosystem rather than environment as a new aesthetic paradigm.[12] Given the fact that most of the literature on Chinese ecological aesthetics has been published in Chinese, Cheng tries to make it accessible to English-reading scholars in the West by offering an overview.[13] These writings have prompted Cheng in one of his 2019 articles to bring up "ecological realism," [14] which may function as a philosophical perspective to give a critical response to Berleant's critiques on ecological aesthetics.

Ecological realism is defined as a philosophical position trying to understand the reality through the model of ecology. This brief working definition includes at least three key points: 1. There exists an objective and real reality which can be described by ecology as a branch of science; 2. Key terms in ecology such as environment should be understood in its scientific sense; 3. The principles discovered by ecology such as the interactions between organisms and their environments should be viewed as universal ones and can be applied to the explanation of aesthetic phenomenon.
Based on the working definition of ecological realism, the following section will take a critical reflection on Berleant's ideas on ecological aesthetics.

Firstly, the starting point of ecological aesthetics is not environment, but ecology. Somewhat restrained by his environmental aesthetics, Berleant puts environment on top of his agenda and views it as the foundational and leading idea of his inquiry. However, from the perspective of ecological aesthetics, ecology should be at the top.

Secondly, aesthetics has intrinsic connections with ecology. The theoretical clue is contained in the definition of ecology itself. Scientifically speaking, "the science of ecology studies interactions between individual organisms and their environments, including interactions with both conspecifics and

members of other species."[15] There are three keywords in the definition of ecology, which are interactions, organisms and environments. Biologically speaking, human beings are organisms and keep interacting with their environments. The interactions fall into various types such as economic, political, practical, and aesthetic ones. The aesthetic interaction can be viewed as the subject matter of aesthetics.

Thirdly, in its everyday sense, the environment is the surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates. In ecology, environment means the air, water, minerals, organisms, and all other external factors surrounding and affecting a given organism at any time. So, environment is the synonyms for surroundings. However, based on his philosophical position of phenomenology, Berleant always rejects the everyday and scientific sense of the environment. He even views real and objective environment as "experienced environment." It is not possible for us to discuss the differences between realism and phenomenology here. However, we can take a very brief look at the following two issues raised by Rodney K. B. Parker: (i) whether the "real" world exists independent from the mind, and (ii) is it reasonable to see Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as a denial of the existence of mind-independent reality.[16] With these two issues in mind, it is easier to have a better understanding of the philosophical base of Berleant's works and their academic consequences. Scientifically, an ecological understanding of environment is ecosystem (a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment), not what Berleant calls "an all-inclusive context."

4. Conclusion: The Unresolved Problem - The Relationship between Environmental Aesthetics and Ecological Aesthetics

Allen Carlson ever observed that over the last few decades, a renewed interest in the philosophical study of the aesthetic appreciation of nature has developed into the field of "environmental aesthetics." More recently, a related area of philosophical study has arisen primarily in China, which is typically called "ecological aesthetics" or, as it is also labeled, "Eco-aesthetics." Carlson addresses the question of the relationship between Eastern eco-aesthetics and Western environmental aesthetics by considering the role given to ecological knowledge in aesthetic appreciation of environments.[17]

In contrast, based on his position of phenomenology and insisting on "the primacy of perception,"[18] Berleant as always rejects what he criticized as "aesthetic cognitivism," which emphasizes the role of ecological knowledge in aesthetic appreciation. The crucial point here is the differences and connections between knowing and perceiving. With his re-shaping the issues of the relationships between conceptual understanding (ecological aesthetics) and perceptual experience (environmental aesthetics), Berleant insists that "the former must be seen in the light of the latter." [19]

Ecological realism takes as its premise the existence of mind-independent reality, which has been constantly "put into brackets" by the practitioners of phenomenology. As a technique, more fundamental than that of abstraction and the examination of essences, *epochē* serves to highlight

consciousness itself. However, we must realize that *epochē* is not denial. So, to some extent, phenomenology might be viewed as a kind of "speculative realism,"[20] which is exactly the spirit of ecological realism. Ecological aesthetics is a new type of aesthetics based on ecological realism, taking ecology as the model of understanding reality, investigating humans' aesthetic interaction with various environments (with artworks too being viewed as items within the environment). So, both its spirit and essence are ecological, not environmental.

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[1] See Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/environmental-aesthetics/
[2] See Xiangzhan Cheng, "Arnold Berleant's Environmental Aesthetics and Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 9 (2021). Https://contempaesthetics.org/2021/01/05/arnold-berleants-environmental-aesthetics-and-chinese-ecological-aesthetics/.
[3] The other two members are Paul Gobster, Research Social Scientist with the U.S. Forest Service's Northern Research Station in Chicago; and Xinhao Wang, a professor of Planning and Co-Director of the Joint Center of Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis at the University of Cincinnati, USA.
[4] See Arnold Berleant, "An Understanding of Environment and Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics," in Xiangzhan Cheng, Arnold Berleant, Paul Gobster and Xinhao Wang, eds., *Ecological Aesthetics and Ecological Assessment and Planning* (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press, 2014), 54-72. See also, Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays* (Surrey: Ashgate 2012), chapter 11 "Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics," 117-130.
[5] R. W. Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty," in B. Williams and A. Montefiore, eds., *British Analytical Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 285-310.
[6] Emily Brady, "Ronald W. Hepburn: In Memoriam," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2009, 49(3): 199-202.
[7] Arnold Berleant, "Environmental Aesthetics," *Cakes and Ale*, IV, 8 (January l3, 1972), 3.
[8] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays*, Surrey: Ashgate 2012, 130.
[9] See Arnold Berleant, "An Understanding of Environment and Ideas for an Ecological Aesthetics". See also, Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 117-130.
[10] Arnold Berleant, "Some Questions for Ecological Aesthetics," *Environmental Philosophy* 13 (1):123-135 (2016).
[11] Xiangzhan Cheng, "Ecological Aesthetics: The Legal Connection between Ecology and Aesthetics—A Response to Mr. Berleant," *Exploration and Contention*, No. 12 (2016): 52-57.
[12] Xiangzhan Cheng, "Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Eco-aesthetics," *ESPES*, vol. 6, issue 2, December 2017. Http://www.casopisespes.sk/.
[13] Xiangzhan Cheng, "Ecological Civilization and Ecological Aesthetics in China: An Overview", in Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Madalina Diacon, eds., *Environmental Ethics: Cross-cultural Explorations* (Freiburg: Alber, 2019), 209-219.
[14] Xiangzhan Cheng, "Eight Positions of Ecological Aesthetics and Their Integration Based on Ecological Realism," Social Science Journal, Vol. 1 (2019): 186-194.
[15] Sahotra Sarkar and Alkistis Elliott-Graves, "Ecology," in Z. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition). Https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ecology/.
[16] See R.K.B. Parker, "The Idealism-Realism Debate and the Great Phenomenological Schism," In: R.K.B. Parker, ed., *The Idealism-Realism Debate Among Edmund Husserl's Early Followers and Critics. Contributions to Phenomenology* (In Cooperation with The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology), vol 112 (Cham: Springer). Https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62159-9_1
[17] Allen Carlson, "The Relationship between Eastern Ecoaesthetics and Western Environmental Aesthetics," *Philosophy East and West* 67 (1) (2017): 117-139.
[18] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, trans. by William Cobb, ed. by James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).
[19] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays* (Surrey: Ashgate 2012), 129.
[20] See Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

ENJOYMENT FULFILMENT SURVIVAL: ON THE VALUE OF ART AND BEAUTY FOR LIFE

Madalina Diaconu

Abstract
The discourse on vital values was once highly ambivalent in the history of Western aesthetics. The rationalistic mainstream condemned pleasure yet defended specific aesthetic enjoyment; only rarely was life itself uniquely seen as a source of pleasure. In the 20th century the focus shifted from pleasure and enjoyment to aesthetic experience, which was regarded as an enclave of everyday life, a process of life, and an extension of real life in the modus of as-if. Arnold Berleant's humanism sets forth this traditional ambivalence: on one hand, he opposes the contemplative subject with the living body and defines environments as inhabited life-worlds; on the other hand, he subordinates biological vitality to the ideal of a fulfilled and humane life. Nevertheless, based upon his statement about "the survival significance of aesthetic sensibility", I claim that the turn of aesthetics from subjective pleasure to environmental survival is imminent in the Anthropocene and that aesthetic theory will have to integrate vital values both with respect to the humans and the ecosystems.

Keywords
Pleasure, Enjoyment, Vitality, Fulfilment, Environment, Berleant.

> *One day Dostoevsky threw out the enigmatic remark: 'Beauty will save the world'. What sort of statement is that? For a long time, I considered it mere words. How could that be possible? When in bloodthirsty history did beauty ever save anyone from anything? Ennobled, uplifted, yes – but whom has it saved?*
>
> *Solzhenitsyn*[1]

The first time I had the pleasure to meet Arnold Berleant was in 2003, while visiting a summer school organized by the International Institute for Applied Aesthetics on the shore of a Finnish lake near Lahti. At that time, I was preparing my Habilitation on a phenomenological aesthetics of the "secondary senses" (touch, smell, and taste), having already been persuaded by Wolfgang Welsch's and Gernot Böhme's reinterpretation of aesthetics as aisthetics, yet I was missing encouraging feedback: The project was either considered unfeasible because of its breadth or was regarded with indulgence, as a sort of exoticism that had to be put down either to my gender or to my non-Western origin. This also explains why Arnold Berleant's opening lecture at this summer school, in which he argued for a multisensory dimension of aesthetic experience, was like opening the windows of an old library to let fresh air in. This initial feeling of congeniality was enriched in the years to come with respect, gratitude and a deep sense of friendship. If it is true that some writers, artists or philosophers prompt

imitation, while others unveil potential and accelerate self-development, Arnold Berleant undoubtedly belongs to the latter category. Not only did he open new paths in aesthetics with his fresh views, but he is also a "catalytic" thinker endowed with the rare gift of mentoring ability. It is to a large extent to his broad understanding of aesthetics that I owe my own turn from Heidegger and a phenomenologically-inspired philosophy of art to a social and environmental aesthetics that explores the design of urban sensescapes or weather conditions.

Above all, Berleant's aesthetics is driven by a profound belief in humanity. In so many respects a modern thinker, indebted to the experiential focus of phenomenology and pragmatism, he distances himself, however, from the modern attempt at a strict separation of values. Constantly rejecting aestheticism, Berleant's philosophy is anchored in the tradition of humanism in its best sense, with its claim that aesthetic and moral values ultimately pursue the same goal: the flourishing of the human being. It is well known that humanism is challenged at present by loud voices that proclaim that the age of post- or transhumanism has come. In this context and with the background of an increased life expectancy in the developed world, vitality and life-enhancement become core values. Scientific, technological and medical progress, along with unceasing efforts of self-optimization under the sign of self-control and self-design are meant to help us live longer and better. What then can be more suitable to celebrate Arnold Berleant's 90th birthday than to raise the issue of whether and how art, beauty and aesthetic sensitivity can foster and enhance life?

Roughly speaking, art is the creation of living beings who are inspired by life and produce images or even illusions of life; their works have an impact on their own and other living beings' lives and vitality. Turning to beauty, both the authorship and the life-enhancing or life-atrophying effects must be reconsidered if we are to include natural beauty. Given the polysemy of the concept of life, the further question should be raised of how these concepts illustrate the relation between aesthetic and vital values or between beauty and vitality as energy, vigor, liveliness, or robustness.[2]

Obviously, Arnold Berleant, who has pioneering contributions in so many fields of aesthetics, did not outline any aesthetics of life, let alone a biological aesthetics such as animal aesthetics or evolutionary aesthetics. Nevertheless, he constantly makes the case for considering the living body and the living experience as in a lived space or lifeworld; he even renamed Heidegger's being-in-the-world as *living*-in-the-world and entitled one of his books *Living in the landscape*[3]. While these concepts attest to his phenomenological viewpoint, unlike most phenomenologists he emphasizes the interconnectedness between aesthetic and other kinds of values, such as ethical or political values[4]. Occasionally, he draws attention to the negative physiological effects of aesthetic harm and aesthetic deprivation and rather exceptionally uses metaphors of medical or organic origin. It is well known that the first generations of German phenomenologists deliberately avoided the concept of life in their strive to delimit the *Lebensphilosophie*, a typical example of this being Heidegger. Berleant does not share their concern, yet is not interested in biological life either, but only in its

"humane" fulfilling and elevation through art and beauty. As a result, the reader will look in vain for a definition of life in his writings; the "living" features he conveys with positive connotations are rather distinctive marks in his polemics against the intellectualist tradition of aesthetics. Does it then make any sense to search in these for an answer to the question of whether art and beauty can not only make life flourish, in the Aristotelian sense of a good life, but also enhance and even preserve it? And would Berleant subscribe to Dostoevsky's dictum that beauty will save the world?

In the following I claim that, on one hand, Arnold Berleant sets forth the tradition of the ambivalent evaluation of the vital values in the history of Western aesthetics and, on the other hand, that it is worth what I would call "weiterdenken mit Berleant": setting forth his expansion of the aesthetics in fields which have been traditionally excluded precisely because they are "tainted" with vital aspects. Moreover, if environmental aesthetics were supposed to support a sound environmental policy and inspire sustainable patterns of ecological behavior, then aesthetic theory has to complement the inquiry about the effects of art and beauty on human subjects by illuminating the consequences of aesthetic behavior (including art production and consumption) on our lifeworld. If humans are inseparable from their environments, their wellbeing is dependent on the "health" and even survival of predominantly natural environments. Dostoevsky's maxim appears in a new light in the Anthropocene.

In order to understand this presumably epochal transition in aesthetic theory from subjective pleasure to environmental survival, it is first necessary to sketch a retrospective of the discourse on vital values in Western aesthetics (with apologies for not having been able to include other traditions); for practical reasons, the discussion will be confined to the vital *effects* of art and beauty on *perceivers*. The second part focuses on Berleant's emphasis on the living experience and on his ideal of human fulfilment. The discussion ends with a few examples for how survival, health, regeneration or vitality have started to infiltrate into environmental aesthetics.

The rise and decay of subjective pleasure

In general, it is possible to connect the aesthetic with vital values either by emphasizing pleasure or by considering aesthetic experience as a life process; the second approach is likely to be more fertile, because it is less biased by the rationalistic tradition. Besides this, aesthetic theory appears to have shifted in the last century from the first to the second approach.

Pleasure, but which one?

From a rationalist perspective, claiming that art is nothing other than the creation of living beings with vital effects either disqualifies art or makes it dangerous. Both answers can be found in *Politeia*[5], where Plato devaluates the figurative arts as being purely mimetic yet acknowledges that gymnastic skills and music exert a strong impact on citizens' vigor and morality. According to Socrates, different musical modes and instruments are suitable for men and women, for warfare and diplomacy. Plato teaches us that when the aesthetic is subordinated to practical interests, vitality and morality could be controlled

by regulating art production. His philosophy inaugurated the history of an ambiguous appreciation of vitality which condemned crude hedonism but praised the higher forms of enjoyment produced by art – admittedly ones not as "pure" as those derived from the quest for the truth and the good.

Centuries later, Kant distinguished between (lower) pleasure and (elevated) aesthetic enjoyment. The fact that beauty and art have enjoyable effects is evident, otherwise we wouldn't seek them; whether, however, a life without pleasures would be worthy to be lived, is less certain. Anyway, the question remains whether life-sympathetic and life-enhancing effects are limited to what Kant called sensory pleasures or can be extended to specific aesthetic enjoyment. Rationalist aesthetics censors "primitive" pleasure yet encourages the bourgeois' self-cultivation through art; like Hegel, it defends the dignity of art and beauty (as being more than trivial amusement) only by sacrificing the body. In fact, vitality overlaps with *both* pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment; in particular, endurance and resilience are presumably inseparable from experiences of meaningfulness. Some pleasures are nocuous, others preserve or intensify the *joie de vivre*. As for art, aestheticism provides innumerable examples of how beauty can exhaust the body and weaken stamina, while moralism and didacticism, let alone ideologies like fascism and communism, can instrumentalize aesthetic experience as a means of a better (collective) life. How is it possible to avoid this alternative?

Life as source of pleasure

At the same time that Nietzsche was writing *Also sprach Zarathustra* Jean-Marie Guyau claimed that every physiological function can become aesthetic[6]. Against the hyper-intellectualization of beauty by Kant, Herbert Spencer and Maine de Biran, Guyau tended to consider beauty as coextensive with life: there is beauty in movements, sensations and sentiments, and utility represents a first level of beauty, when a need gives birth to a desire and its fulfilment causes satisfaction. Four basic necessities govern human life: breathing, movement, nourishment and reproduction – and all four can have an aesthetic character. Eating produces the "feeling of life that is repaired and renewed", of a "veritable and profound harmony", which is nothing other than beauty[7]. Similarly, the aesthetic pleasure of movement (including during physical labor) should be traced back to the feeling of our own vigor. Guyau not only integrates smell, taste and the sense of temperature in aesthetics, but also reverses the Western hierarchy of the senses: in his view, a thermic contrast with reinvigorating effects is more aesthetic than music. In this way his naturalistic aesthetics postulates the continuity between pleasure and enjoyment: "Need and desire, that is to say, the agreeable or what serves to life, is the primitive and rough criterion of aesthetics."[8] Finally, he anchors both enjoyment and pleasure in the process of life itself, rhetorically asking: "To feel alive, isn't this the basis of all art and pleasure?"[9]

Aesthetic = vital + personal

A more moderate rehabilitation of the vital values was undertaken by Moritz Geiger in 1926[10]. Against the "haughtiness" of those who used to compare art with religion and metaphysics, and the attempt of contemporary psychological aesthetics to level out any differences within the aesthetic experience, the

German phenomenologist distinguished between superficial and deep effects. According to Geiger, everyday aesthetics, along with bad art and the instrumentalization of art for the sake of pleasure, produce superficial amusement, excitement or sentimentality. These kinds of pleasure, distraction or agitation are varieties of vital effects. Real art, however, ought to be sought because of its provoking the profound effect called happiness. While common delight or joy remain momentary subjective states related to single events, happiness fills the ego with the feeling of equilibrium or elevation or, on the contrary, stirs and shakes the soul. Vital power and exuberance are derived from the elementary pleasures that accompany common life activities, such as eating and drinking, sport, sexuality, or thermic contrasts. Still, in contrast to Guyau, Geiger denies the continuity between superficial and profound effects; although he mentions the possibility of elevating or refining superficial effects, he stresses that in this case a new quality emerges. Admittedly, his theory is not exempt of certain ambiguities, yet his final option is clear: the ideal art combines both kinds of effects, in order to activate the spectator's vital forces and bring about the unity between person and life. Needless to say, Geiger was making efforts to integrate vitality in aesthetics without abandoning aesthetic quality, the difference between high and low art, or between art and the everyday aesthetics.

The aesthetic experience as life process and expanded life

Aesthetic experiences build enclaves, special sequences within the life-process with a high level of intensity. These peaks of vitality can only be endured for a short time. Living *with* art is in any case more bearable than living *in* the medium of art itself: the artists' biographies are pervaded by bipolar disorders; manic exhilaration alternates with depression, and both exhaust the individual's vital resources. This post-Romantic conviction was shared by several aestheticians around 1900, and the tragic lives of the *artistes maudits* confirmed it.

"Works of art arise from the full strength of a person and address all mental activities of the enjoyer; they are designed with the fool's exuberance and executed with the serenity of the wise; they shake the feeling and leave the clarity of mind unclouded; they excite and appease; they stand outside and inside life"[11] – this is how Max Dessoir in 1906 grasped the ambiguous relation between art and life. In the same vein, other philosophers of the 20th century described the aesthetic experience as a process in which intense excitement alternates with a quiet calmness, receptivity with knowledge, activity with passive contemplation, a sort of perceptual, mental and emotional movement with resting places.[12] Physiological reactions are mentioned more rarely; for example, Dessoir remarks that the first aesthetic impressions are accompanied by faster or slower breathing, a shiver running over one's back, blushing or paling, etc.

More elaborately, Dewey's aesthetics introduces a distinction between experiences which *occur* all the time, because life itself supposes an interaction between living beings and their environments, and other experiences that can be *made* by actively composing the raw material of life into *an* experience[13]. By calling the latter "real" or "vital" experiences, Dewey suggests that they have their own

quality and coherence, are complete and self-sufficient, having a beginning, a maturation and a natural fulfilment. The unity or the integration of different parts and qualities into a whole is called aesthetic by Dewey, and underlies *all* types of experience, be they predominantly intellectual, practical or aesthetic in the strict sense. As such, the aesthetic experience appears to be that special kind of vital experience in which self-sufficiency, the autotelic character and unity (form) achieve the highest development. On closer inspection, the vital and the aesthetic character tend to coincide, since both are responsible for unifying a series of states into *an* experience. When Dewey calls this experiential wholeness form or structure, the aesthetic quality is essential; when he, however, stresses the emotional quality of experience, consisting of a "circuit of energy"[14], then the vital dimension comes to the fore. Moreover, the completeness of experience is described in organic terms, as the inception, the growth, and the end of an energetic flow. Still, despite this *rapprochement* of the aesthetic experience to life, what finally counts for Dewey is to create and not merely to undergo an experience. If life is the condition of experience and energy its engine, its goal remains the understanding of life.

This short survey demonstrates that aesthetic theorists felt the urge to reconceptualize the relation between art and life, by leaving behind the concepts of pleasure and enjoyment. What may be called the demise of pleasure along with the rise of empathy as a means of expanding one's life is epitomized by Hans-Robert Jauß. "Whoever would have the courage to use the word 'enjoyment' (*Genuß*) […] for her attitude to art in our time would expose herself to the accusation of philistinism or – even worse – of satisfying mere needs for consumption and kitsch", he wrote[15]. In a time when the *enjoyment* of art was, according to Jauß, frowned upon as a privilege of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, he had the "courage" to reintroduce it within the triad *poiesis* (the pleasure taken in creating art), *aisthesis* (the enjoyment of perceiving and recognizing representations) and *catharsis* (the specific communication of affects that enables spectators first to get to know and then to appropriate norms of action). In this threefold aspect, aesthetic emotions are indirect, being mediated by perception and understanding. In particular, the specific enjoyment gained by the reader from her identification with the protagonist of a literary work lets us see the correlation between art and life in a new light. Certainly, biological life falls outside the scope of Jauß' investigation and both the receptive dispositions and the behavioral norms that a reader derives from her empathy with fictitious characters are either psychological or social skills. Nevertheless, on the whole, his *Rezeptionsästhetik* can be interpreted as making the case for art not only as a means of social pedagogy, but also as a way of expanding one's horizons and undergoing experiences which are otherwise impossible or dangerous. In this respect, all narrative art is a vehicle for indirect experiences and a "prosthesis" that extends the realm of daily life in a controlled way. This line of argumentation is common to hermeneutics. In some cases, narratives are explicitly assigned the power to "refigure" the reader's identity.[16] For Paul Ricœur, for example, fictions are proposals of worlds – or, in Berleant's words, "environments" – that can be inhabited by readers[17], offers of imaginative variations of our being-in-the-world,

suggesting possible ways of living in various life-worlds. This also explains the strong impact the commerce with art can have on life, molding us from within and influencing our behavior and acts. Berleant himself is anchored in this tradition when he asserts the artists' ethical and social responsibility. Nevertheless, imaginary life-stories that expand real lives in the modus of "as-if" or even perhaps reshape biographies represent only two further aspects of the complicated relation between art and life. At the end vitality remains different from beauty, and life-enhancing emotions are mediated by cognitive and identificational processes.

The aesthetic experience as impetus for a humane life

In our time vital values still play a mostly negligible role in philosophical aesthetics. In this context, Arnold Berleant's multifaceted aesthetics is an interesting case of praising life not in itself, but rather in its potential to make us more human. According to his "aesthetics of context and continuity"[18], the aesthetic experience varies with different sociocultural and historic contexts, and its subject is a living body who is immersed into environments instead of contemplating objects that stand aloof. If engagement and participation circumscribe the individual's aesthetic sensibility, it is however "the life of human cultures" that the subject is integrated in[19]. The biological lifeform is only indirectly relevant. Even when Berleant discusses clinical death[20], he is interested in the differences between art and philosophy and the specificity of artistic activity in the first place. His various examples for "death in image and word" and "the idea of death" lead to the conclusion that there can be no rivalry between fine arts and literature, on one hand, and philosophical reflection, on the other: art confronts us directly with the presence of death, whereas Socrates only reasons about it.

Love and empathy, too, fall for Berleant under the category of "aesthetic social situations"[21]. Aesthetic relations with small children involve suspending the judgment of bodily presence and enjoying merely their sensory qualities ("freshness, delicacy, fragility of expression, colouration"[22]), as when Rubens drew his son, Nicholas, as a child. No possible biological roots of the aesthetic experience are mentioned in this context, quite on the contrary, Berleant converts love itself into a subcategory of the aesthetic. In his view, close friendship and love present strong similarities to the seduction of music or the passion for art, which makes the relation between art and love appear as "a relationship of consanguinity, and one of siblings rather than parent and child"[23]. Both make boundaries melt, producing feelings of communion and engagement in relation; both acknowledge the other as a value in itself; finally, both "possess uniqueness without exclusivity"[24]. This kind of relation, Berleant states, is essentially aesthetic; therefore, instead of defining the aesthetic as love *for* beauty, we should see love *as* beauty and both, again, as aesthetic instances. The use of kinship metaphors for the isomorphism between art and love as instantiations of the aesthetic illustrate the reversal of the relation between vital and aesthetic values: the aesthetic takes precedence over life, and intimacy appears primarily as an aesthetic quality that can be cultivated in everyday life as well as by frequently experiencing art.

Other contexts endorse this interpretation. For example, Berleant characterizes the experience "that is intrinsically satisfying and fulfilling and that, at the same time, does not diminish the satisfaction and fulfillment of others"[25] as positive. If intrinsic satisfaction recalls the tradition of enjoyment in the history of aesthetics, this remains insufficient without *existential* completion (self-fulfillment) and the *ethical* condition (without impeding the others' pleasure and fulfillment). Both these amendments are necessary, given that the subject of aesthetic experience is a *human* body and a *social* subject. Let us take a closer look at them.

First, Berleant's humanistic aesthetic theory is not hedonistic. His lifelong engagement with art and aesthetics is deeply rooted in his belief that the aesthetic experience is able to give meaning to life: "I believe that the aesthetic provides the firmest ground on which to acquire an understanding that makes a meaningful and significant life possible", he writes in presenting his "aesthetic argument"[26]. His aesthetics rejects the intellectualist tradition and mind-body-dualism, yet not the human's need for meaningfulness; he could not make the case for the aesthetic so strongly if he were cutting the existential roots of our quest for art and beauty. The claim that the aesthetic can and should fulfill human existence is a leitmotif of Berleant's reflections.

Secondly, the human is a node in a web of relations. After having initially reinterpreted art as a field that engages several (f)actors, Berleant expanded this relational approach in his social aesthetics: "The aesthetic environment is everyone's medium, the art of environment part of the art of human living."[27] The aesthetic connects the theory of art with everyday life, the high with low culture, the expert's designing skills with the common pedestrian's "art" of co-constituting the life of a city through her walking routes and other daily practices. This entire tissue of relations can be imagined as a sort of organism and Berleant thus compares efficiently organized cities to healthy bodies: traffic has analogies with blood circulation, the distribution of goods and services to the digestive system, and a "vital city" that is "busy and prosperous" resembles a "strong and active" organism[28]. Leaving aside any metaphors, urban planning affects the citizen's wellbeing: "healthful living and working conditions safeguard human physical wellbeing," and low criminality "help<s> make a city livable"[29]. Yet all these conditions are considered "necessary but not sufficient for humane and elevating urban experience. Although a healthy body is a precondition for a good life, it hardly fulfills our human potential."[30] Berleant's ideal of a good life transgresses its material conditions; what is at stake here is no more or less than the realization of human potential, to improve life and to foster a "creative culture"[31]. In essence, the aesthetic seems to be only a *way*, even if it is a *via regia*, for achieving the ideal of humanism. In the case of urbanism, efficiency and prosperity must be completed by urban design that is conceived for humans and implemented at a human scale. Translated into perceptual features, the urban masses, volumes, and dimensions should be human-friendly; on the contrary, "overweight cit<ies>" can hardly meet the citizens' needs effectively, constructions at an excessive scale have intimidating or oppressive effects, and an uncontrolled urban sprawl is akin to "a cancerous growth that ends by destroying its

host"[32]. In its own way, environmental design is vital, because it goes beyond a decorative or recreational function and influences the inhabitants' comfort and happiness. Berleant's indebtedness to pragmatism comes to the fore here. Assuming that the core vital value is health in terms of functionality, life is subordinated to the humanization of the human; since health in general is inseparable from wellbeing, vitality integrates aesthetic values. Finally, both the vital and the aesthetic are oriented toward ethical action, and all three are inextricably linked in the case of fulfilling experiences.

Berleant explored the relation between different categories of values on several occasions. His basic concern is to reject aestheticism, yet at the same time, by drawing attention to the interdependence of values, he argues in favor of the dignity of aesthetic values and that it is useful to pursue them.[33] Mostly he dwells upon the "fundamental coalescence of aesthetics and ethics"[34]; aesthetic and ethical values are considered mutually supportive and together enhance human life. Nonetheless, their final convergence does not exclude conflicting situations in which concrete decisions have to give precedence to one or the other. In practice, at least in the case of social aesthetics, the consequences of design for the people's lives are decisive: "the ultimate criterion in assessing any human environment is how it contributes to the fulfillment of the people who are an inseparable part of it"[35]. Once again, the goal is human fulfillment or "to humanize urban life"[36]. Mere vitality, meaning purely psychophysiological vigor or health is insufficient, whereas spectacular destructive acts, such as terrorism, can fascinate only an ethically insensitive and irresponsible aesthetic subject. Neither of these cases fulfills the humanistic function Berleant assigns to art; for what ultimately matters is "facilitating living that is deeply satisfying through the fruitful exercise of human capacities", a goal which is according to Berleant both aesthetic and moral[37]. Similarly, he asserts that there is an "aesthetic underpinning of ethical values"[38] and is confident that aesthetic value is able to enhance human life, contribute to well-being, and reduce individual illness and social ills. Conversely, perceptually poor or offensive environments affect one's aesthetic sensibility and indirectly affect the entire body. For these reasons the aesthetic value "is worthy of support for improving the quality of life."[39]

Berleant does not avoid what he calls "the negative aesthetics of everyday life" and within it "aesthetic harm"; he is aware of the damaging effects offensive smells or air pollution have on our health, along with the depression that can be produced by environmental ugliness[40]. This situation, he claims, ought not to be confounded either with the unpleasant or painful experiences art confronts us with in the modus of as-if, or with the art's critical diagnoses of the society; only the first of the distresses, one could say, is malignant, the second one is, on the contrary, therapeutic – for individuals and collectivities as well.

Berleant hopes for the aesthetic dimension to improve not only individuals' lives, but also social life as a whole. With respect to this, on various occasions he has reiterated his affinity with Schiller's theory of the aesthetic state. Berleant also believes that the aesthetic can provide a model of a social and political order that would be characterized by justice, free participation, and mutual

support. Once again interdependence is the right word for the relation between the aesthetic and the social: the aesthetic would be able to lay the basis for a "truly humane community"[41], but itself depends on socioeconomic and political conditions. To paraphrase Dostoevsky, beauty can change the world for the better.

From living in the environment to environmental survival

Berleant's interpretations of art and social aesthetics have shown that he gives precedence to inner and communal life over biological life (in Greek concepts, to *bios* compared to *zoe*), and requires the human (as an individual and a species) to become humane. A somewhat different meaning of life underlies the concept of environment. It is precisely the reference to life that distinguishes the environment from the landscape, since "environment is the more general term, embracing the many factors, including the human ones, that combine to form the conditions in which life is carried on"[42]. Besides this general environment that resembles a framework of life and can be investigated scientifically, environments in plural are specific places people engage with or live in. In contrast to the visual-observational landscape, environments are engaged landscapes and locations of immersive experiences. The experience or direct knowledge of a living body in a lived space, as was often described by phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty, is crucial for the metamorphosis of landscapes from images to inhabited places – in Berleant's words: "what makes a place come alive as a presence to those who live, work, or visit it"[43]. This context also explains why often when Berleant mentions life and the art of living he actually means dwelling. He sporadically employs organic metaphors for the human habitation, as when he opposes Le Corbusier's "machine for living" to the environment: the latter is "'a place of habitation,' a place as part of which we achieve our humanity, a womb"[44]. Still the analogy with the organism ends here, since Berleant never yields to the temptation of personifying Mother-Earth; the womb is only a symbol for the human-friendliness of the environment and our reliance on it. Moreover, humans can never leave this "womb" as long as they live, so there can be no gaze from an abstract nowhere, outside the environment; Berleant's aesthetic theory remains in essence a theory of *experience*.[45] Even when humans contemplate or destroy landscapes, they cannot help inhabiting them: "Even the observational ones, in so far as they are part of human habitation, must be traversed. We are always *in* the landscape and find ourselves moving *through* the landscape."[46] Dwelling as living-in-the-world precisely names this strange relation of continuity between the body and its environment that never recedes into indistinction: humans naturally *belong to* the world, but they can and should deliberately engage *with* the environment. Subjective and objective aspects are intermingled here: on one hand we depend on environments, on the other hand these environments objectify our way of living, are graspable life-worlds, and are "embodiment<s> of how we live in the world and of the kind of world we inhabit"[47].

To conclude, the amalgam of vital and aesthetic values in everyday life challenges the modern quest for purely aesthetic situations and confirms Berleant's assumption regarding the interdependence

of values. Although the life-preserving and life-enhancing effects of the aesthetic can still be considered a marginal issue in contemporary aesthetics, it nevertheless has relevance for recent fields of investigation, such as the aesthetics of sport[48], the somaesthetics (including its legitimation of *ars erotica*[49]), the design of specific environments (think of health institutions), and evidently for the aesthetics of natural environments.

The field of environmental aesthetics that Arnold Berleant pioneered is particularly interesting. The use of organic metaphors has a certain tradition in environmental philosophy. Health, for example, was applied to ecosystems; in his late work, between 1938-1948, Aldo Leopold related the "land health" to the capacity of self-renewal and self-organization of natural environments and played with metaphors such as "the art of land doctoring" or "the science of land health"[50]. The concept of health was later criticized as an untenable organismic paradigm in ecology. According to J. Baird Callicott, however, Leopold never had in mind that nature would be a superorganism, but only used the health metaphor to make the dynamic and functional dimensions of environments more intuitive; in other words, health can be assigned to functional ecosystems in such a way that their dynamics does not affect their integrity and stability over long periods of time. Although ecologists refuted Leopold's idea that biodiversity and complexity would represent criteria and norms of ecosystem health, according to Callicott his concept of ecosystem health is still useful as long as it is understood as a metaphor; to demonstrate this, Callicott highlights its analogies to Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's concept of autopoiesis. Moreover, health in general includes both descriptive and normative aspects; basically, it refers to an "intrinsically valuable state of being"[51] irrespective of its subject: humans, social environments, or ecosystems. Nevertheless, Callicott adds that health has to be supplemented by further ethical and aesthetic aspects, including "the beauty of historic biotic communities"[52]. Berleant, too, claimed that the "health" (functionality) of cities is a necessary, but insufficient condition for the citizens' well-being. The similarities are evident; the concerns, however, differ: Callicott seeks arguments for the conservation policy of natural environments for their own sake, while Berleant is interested in the citizens' meaningful engagement with their medium of life. Neither of them endorses the trivial reduction of the aesthetics of natural environments to their recreational function. As Geiger emphasized for the art experience, the engagement with nature can reach an existential depth and through that foster life.

Another link between life and environmental beauty is topophilia, even if in such cases aesthetic appreciation often remains unarticulated. Topophilia goes beyond the artist's or tourist's taste for the picturesque and the invigorating effect of "beautiful" weather and includes the farmer's or fisher's deep attachment to land or sea and their gratitude for its nurturing resources, the physical intimacy with a landscape and the interweaving of the personal biography with the memory of places[53]. In Martin Seel's view, the engagement with aesthetically rewarding natural environments is "a form of intensified existential experience"[54] and an exemplary case of the good life. The

familiarity with certain places over a long period of time is beneficial in general[55]: The observation of seasonal cycles has decelerating effects. Gardening teaches patience and increases the awareness of transience and becoming, as well enabling the identification with non-human life forms. Exercising synchronicity with natural cycles can order life. Blossoming phases of vegetation become special, "kairotic" moments that make us praise the value of unique experiences. Spontaneous emotional resonance with natural environments or atmospheric conditions can trigger meditations on life and death or the human condition, etc. The boundaries of aesthetic experience are open; sensory pleasure grows into enjoyable and ultimately fulfilling experiences, in which perception, affectivity, and reflection are mutually enhancing, like a sort of communicating vessels.

Being less biased by the modern Western principle of the autonomy of values, non-Euroamerican cultures are likely to integrate the regenerating effects of natural beauty on humans more easily. In this respect it is worth mentioning François Jullien's reinterpretation of the landscape in his book *Vivre du paysage*[56], in which he opposed the classical Chinese theory of landscape painting with both the utilitarian understanding of the landscape as an exploitable resource and with the reduction of landscapes to an object of contemplation. In Chinese traditional culture, the experience of the landscape is a source of "revival and vitality", which is further described as an inner resonance and healing energy, an "invigorating tension" that creates life and maintains life[57]. Inspired by this model, Jullien suggests that natural environments are something one can live *from*, because they support, foster and enhance life. The Chinese conception of the landscape as a place where the ideal and the vital come together is indebted to a worldview that does not seek salvation in the afterlife or in politics but places hope in a long life and conceives vitality as capital to be exploited. Therefore, according to Jullien, it is a preference for the vital landscape and not for the so-called beautiful landscape that prevails in the Chinese culture. The term that he coins for this revitalizing potential of landscape is *ressourcement*, as a return to the sources of life[58]. This reviving and rejuvenating effect of nature is, in his view, also the reason why Europeans are able to rediscover the landscape given the current background of their weaker belief in the afterlife. However, the acknowledgment of the "healing power" of the landscape[59] depends on two presuppositions: not only to abandon mind-body-dualism, but also the static understanding of the landscape as a juxtaposition of discontinuous objects – I assume that both would be acceptable for Berleant. Landscapes can have an existential resonance precisely because they are only the "face" of environment as a dynamic interplay of forces. Familiarization with the traditional Chinese view of the environment can also help us better understand Chinese contemporary approaches to the environmental aesthetics, such as Chen Xiangzhan's "aesthetics of creating life."[60]

A specific field in which aesthetic appreciation and vital values interact with is the weather. A century ago the geographer Willy Hellpach accurately described the psychophysiological effects of weather on our well-being: an ideal winter day, the so-called "beautiful weather", fresh weather and the

moment the sky clears up after a storm have invigorating effects.[61] Later, the biometeorology confirmed Hellpach's observations and conducted empirical research on humans' physiological responses to environmental radiation, temperature, humidity or air currents. It is interesting that such studies mention aesthetic aspects only in relation to tourism, for example when researchers investigate the impact of climate change on tourism walkability or associations between biometeorological variables and the tourists' recreational preferences[62]. An analysis from an aesthetic perspective is still anticipated.

Related to this is the aesthetics of tourism, mainly recreational tourism that looks for fine weather (e.g., summer coastal tourism), but also the para-aesthetic practices of catastrophe tourism. In this respect, Berleant's concept of engagement can be put to work and its relevance verified in various contexts. Subjectivism – he stated – "is not only a misleading idea and a dangerous illusion; it is also an obstacle to a transformative politics"[63]; his forewarning was directed against the intellectualism of Western aesthetics which he rejected in favor of the phenomenological emphasis on perception and experience in general. However, we can apply this alert to the collective subject of the "experience society"[64] as well. What if the subject of aesthetic experience is not the open-minded and sensitive middle-class individual, but *masses* of people looking for blue sky and scenic views? What are the ecological costs of their practices? What are the environmental costs of the love for art itself, and how can aesthetic theory motivate artists to try to keep these as low as possible? Finally, how can aesthetics draw the boundary between an aesthetic *engagement* with weather, landscape and art and their *consumption* or selfish aestheticization (e.g., of catastrophes)? In a comment on the relevance of the aesthetic sensibility for human survival Berleant recalled Schiller and expressed his own confidence in the educational, pacifying and even community-building significance of the aesthetic.[65] In this context he asserted "the survival significance of aesthetic sensibility:"[66]

> The human species is so threatened by internal animosities that its self-destruction is imminent. For humans, reconciliation could mean not only peace but the greater likelihood of simple survival, the ultimate biological goal. The evolutionary significance of the aesthetic is compelling. A consistent naturalism can provide the ground and aesthetic sensibility the means.[67]

Far from the "subjectivism" that for centuries has made philosophers look for pleasure and enjoyment in art and beauty, Berleant *really* meant that the aesthetic can help the human species *survive*. Having the tourism industry, the debates around the loss of biodiversity and climate change, as well as the metaphor of ecosystem health in mind, I am tempted to push Berleant's "consistent naturalism" further and ask whether aesthetic sensibility would be able to contribute to the survival of endangered species or intrinsically valuable ecosystems, too. To return once more to Dostoevsky: Can our sense of beauty save the world? In my view, it would be unrealistic to give a positive answer to this question. Aesthetic values only overlap with vital values; the specific aesthetics of decay and ruins, the peculiar delight found in nostalgia and melancholy, and the ambivalence of tragical catharsis suffice to demonstrate that humans can aesthetically enjoy losses, even irreversible ones.

Nevertheless, given the ultimate convergence between aesthetic and ethical goals according to Berleant, we can claim that environmental aesthetics should be concerned with the "vitality" and "well-being" of natural environments, too. The aesthetic experience and aesthetic practices have the power to keep us alive, to foster life and intensify the feeling of being alive but we ought not to ignore that they can weaken stamina and destroy human and non-human beings as well. No, beauty does not suffice to save the world, yet it is worth trying. Arnold Berleant is right: it is not enough simply to live, but is also necessary to question how we live and how we let others live; the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility should be converted into an art of living that will fulfil our human potential.

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[1] Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Nobel Lecture. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1970/solzhenitsyn/lecture/ [17.11.2021]
[2] *The Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus* distinguishes three semantic fields of 'vitality': as 1. energy, vigor, power, intensity, force, liveliness, vivacity, *joie de vivre*, exuberance; 2. vital force, vital power, life force, vigor; 3. as vital stamina, hardiness, endurance, energy, strength, robustness (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 1721).
[3] Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Landscape: Towards an Aesthetics of Environment* (University Press of Kansas, 1997).
[4] Idem, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* [ABA] (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 100.
[5] Platon, *Politeia* 398-400, 404e, 410b-c.
[6] M. Guyau, *Les problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1904).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.: 24.
[9] Ibid.: 21.
[10] Moritz Geiger, „Oberflächen- und Tiefenwirkung der Kunst", in *Die Bedeutung der Kunst. Zugänge zu einer materiellen Wertästhetik* (München: Fink, 1976), 178–201.
[11] Max Dessoir, *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1906), 453.
[12] Ibid.: 159; Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica. Teoria formativității* (Bucharest: Univers, 1977), 243, 253.
[13] John Dewey, *The Later Works: 1925-1953*, Vol. 10. *Art as Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 42.
[14] Ibid.: 47.
[15] Hans-Robert Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 71.
[16] Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1990).
[17] Paul Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 53.
[18] Berleant, *Re-thinking Aesthetics*. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts [RA] (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), 18.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Berleant, "Death in Image, Word, and Idea", originally published in 1973, reprinted in RA 129-140.
[21] Berleant, "Getting Along Beautifully: Ideas for a Social Aesthetics", in: *Aesthetics and Environment. Variations on a Theme* [AE] (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 155sq.
[22] Ibid.: 155.
[23] Ibid.: 156.
[24] Ibid.: 157.
[25] ABA 45.
[26] Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* [SS] (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), 56sq.
[27] ABA 57.
[28] Ibid.: 113.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.: 114.
[32] Ibid.
[33] On the relations between categories of values see ABA 42, 97-103; SS 156 sq., 167, etc.
[34] ABA 45.
[35] SS 135.
[36] Speaking about the aesthetic-ecological city, Berleant formulates as goal "to humanize urban life" (Ibid.: 130).
[37] Ibid.: 191.
[38] ABA 198.
[39] Ibid.: 42.
[40] SS 169.
[41] AE 159.
[42] ABA 60.
[43] Ibid.: 77.
[44] Ibid.: 138.

[45] When he occasionally characterizes his philosophy as a naturalistic metaphysics, it is only for polemical reasons, in order to delimit it both from subjectivistic and intellectualist approaches in aesthetics (Ibid.: 90).
[46] Ibid.: 66.
[47] Ibid.: 90.
[48] Wolfgang Welsch, "Sport Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?", in Andrew Light, Jonathan Smith (eds.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 135-155.
[49] Richard Shusterman, *Ars erotica. Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).
[50] J. Baird Callicott, "Aldo Leopold's Concept of Ecosystem Health", in *Beyond the Land Ethic. More Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (New York: SUNY, 1999), 333-364, here 339.
[51] Ibid.: 334.
[52] Ibid.: 345.
[53] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia. A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitude and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 97.
[54] Martin Seel, *Eine Ästhetik der Natur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 308.
[55] Madalina Diaconu, „Entschleunigung, Lebensordnung, Erfahrungsqualität: Meditationen in Sinnesgärten", in *Sinnesraum Stadt. Eine multisensorische Anthropologie* (Wien: Lit, 2012), 81-98.
[56] François Jullien, *Von Landschaft leben oder Das Ungedachte der Vernunft* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2016).
[57] Ibid.: 59, 90.
[58] Ibid.: 73.
[59] Ibid.: 213.
[60] Chen Xiangzhan, "Contemporary Global Ecological Aesthetics: An Overview", lecture in the series "Save the Planet! Climate Change and the Role of Intercultural Philosophy" of the Viennese Society for Intercultural Philosophy, 28.10.2021.
[61] Willy Hellpach, *Geopsyche* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1939), 24–27.
[62] C. R. de Freitas, "Weather and place-based human behavior: recreational preferences and sensitivity", *International Journal of Biometeorology* (2015)59:55-63.
[63] SS 214.
[64] Gerhard Schulze, *The Experience Society* (London: SAGE, 2005).
[65] ABA 177.
[66] Ibid.: 178.
[67] Ibid.

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ARNOLD BERLEANT – A LIFE FOR NATURE AND FOR ART

Jale Erzen

Abstract
Arnold Berleant has been, since many years, both a friend and a guide in my work on aesthetics and in the IAA. His congenial approach to nature and his sincere and clear language has contributed to developments in environmental aesthetics and in attracting readers and students to his ideas that also implicate social values. Berleant's engaged concern about values of life and of the world have been pioneering efforts in ecological discourse. Berleant's own engagement with nature and with art gave fruit to his creative work in music, as he has been composing all along his academic career. Contemporary Aesthetics, a high-quality online journal that he created has been an indispensable international forum for all writers and readers of aesthetics

Keywords
Nature, Art, Engagement, Aesthetics, Contemporary-Aesthetics

Arnold Berleant's philosophy of environmental aesthetics has a wide scope covering many issues related to experience, yet I believe his central concerns to be nature and the arts. Two quite opposite realms: one being basically biological and the arts being humanly structured and cultural. Berleant's discourse that is straightforward and engaged sees these two realms related and often deals with both in connected ways that inevitably bring many other concerns into his discussion. Therefore, starting with my meeting Arnold Berleant fifty-two years ago, I will try to explain how I see these issues in his writing.

Arnold Berleant's *The Aesthetic Field – A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, which I believe was his first book, came out in 1970 while I was a painting student at the Art Center College of Design, also working at the library of the school. Being interested in the arts as well as in philosophy and art criticism, Berleant's book made a great impression on me with its critical stance on formalist and rationalist theories of art and its viewing the art object from the perspective of the artist, the perceiver and of society in general. I believe that today, half a century later, the book is still actual and should be read by art critics. In fact I assign it to my students who take my art theory and environmental aesthetics courses.

After reading the book I made contact with Arnold Berleant and the next time I was in New York I went to Long Island University to meet him. I think we had a congenial understanding and kept up contact and we have been friends ever since. I visited Long Island several times thereafter, even visited Arnold at his home where he was also composing music and playing the piano. It was an old two-story house with apple trees in the garden, visited by deer that came to eat apples. I remember the huge iron stove in the living room, which was scarcely lit even in the winter since Arnold,

even today, cannot tolerate hot weather. Today, reading his book 'The Aesthetics of Environment' I realize the landscape around his home in his poetic descriptions.

In the following years, having become a member of the International Society of Aesthetics, I had many occasions to meet Arnold at symposia and to invite him to Turkey for the international meetings we organized. In the Congress organized in Nottingham by Richard Woodfield, when Arnold Berleant was the president of the Association, Arnold suggested that I join the elections for the position of Secretary General. This membership occupied me with aesthetic issues for many years to come. I must also add that Arnold Berleant with his friendly and sensitive approach has drawn many people to the International Aesthetic Association and has also inspired many people to work on nature's aesthetics.

Arnold's 'The Aesthetic Field' was followed by many books over the years, mostly related to environmental issues and experiences of nature and of the world we live in. These texts on environmental experience, which Arnold sent me, greatly influenced my enthusiasm on the subject. When I returned to my home town Ankara to teach at the Middle East Technical University's faculty of Architecture I started a course on Environmental Aesthetics for architects, which I think was the first course in the world with that title, because I remember many people asking me what the title meant. Arnold Berleant's phenomenological approach to nature and aesthetics made me realize that I had to first introduce students to directly experiencing environmental conditions such as heat, sun, wind, light, coarseness, softness, etc.; many engineers also took the course and later confided that it had changed their approach to the world. Arnold Berleant has to be thanked for making many people aware of the primary values of the world around us.

Berleant's philosophy of aesthetics, mostly concentrated on sensory engagement in the environment or in the perceived object, whether it be art or nature, is elaborated in simple terms without philosophical jargon and involving the reader in a congenial way. Berleant explains how our vision directly connects us to the object we are viewing. As we walk, before we continue on our way, our body makes contact with what we see and extends our bodily apperception forward on the road in front of us. Berleant's theory of engagement reminds one of Merleau-Ponty's[1] theories about the corporeal engagement with space and how it is the body that gives space its coordinates.

Arnold Berleant develops his philosophy of engagement from many perspectives; not least is his strong criticism of political and economic values that are being imposed on society giving priority to immediate material benefits that undermine the intrinsic natural values such as the health of the planet as well as of its residents: animals and humans. In the book *Living in the Landscape* he elaborates on the superficial values of Disneyland and its mushroom copies everywhere in the world, that blind people to natural qualities that are being jeopardized by the soft-kitsch aesthetic created in these environments.[2] Berleant emphasizes that to appreciate and understand the values inherent in the environment we have to be actively engaged and have to make an effort. However, it is also important that certain activities in nature have to become a habit at a young age, for people to become

naturally aware of natural qualities. Berleant's aesthetic appreciation is open to contrasting values and goes far beyond established cultural prejudices such as the repulsive approach to rats and snakes, to disgusting matter as rotten flesh, etc. But as a deep-thinking phenomenologist, Berleant sees beyond prejudices and is open to the fact that tastes vary from culture to culture.

As a sincere pragmatist, Arnold Berleant's philosophy takes its place within the American Pragmatist approach that has been formulated since Pierce, encompassing scientific, psychological and aesthetic aspects of experience. He claims that our judgments about the qualities of nature are also formed by our moral as well as aesthetic views.[3] It is clear that today, ecological concerns and threats to the environment have created new ways of viewing nature. We have come to understand that valuing nature also means valuing life on earth; Berleant's philosophy has prophesized this from very early times. In his 1992 book, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, Berleant emphasizes that we are "*like our environment. In fact we are our environment*" implying the connection between our body and the earth, or our immediate environment, in many ways, and related not least to our health. [4] What is special about the aesthetics of the environment is that unlike objects or works of art, the environment is not bounded, its qualities can change, many of its perceptual aspects can change according to our movement, to the light and to many unperceived factors, thus it is difficult to describe or define environmental aesthetics.[5] Writing about our experience in nature he mentions that nature not only surrounds us but it assimilates us. This is an insight that has rarely been mentioned.[6]

I believe that the pragmatism of Berleant's philosophy goes quite deep even if not philosophically elaborated by Berleant in his texts. Many of Berleant's engaged interests and the ways he tries to find answers to important environmental questions echo the ideas of American pragmatists all the way from Thoreau to Dewey and certainly to the late Joseph Margolis, though neither Margolis nor Berleant mention of each other. Berleant openly affirms relations with Dewey' s pragmatist approach, especially in his realism and environmental experience. In his poetic descriptions of landscapes we can find echoes of Thoreau's approach to nature. In his explanations of how we experience the art object, we can find references to Dewey. But, Berleant has always been direct and lucid in his explanations. For him active involvement in any art experience changes the observer, but also the maker of the artwork. In this approach Berleant believes, as Dewey and also as Pierce, in the historicist flux that positions him close to Hegel and contrary to Kant's metaphysics.

In *Art and Engagement* where he deals with different kinds of artistic performance his elaborations on dance and music are especially insightful and confirm his phenomenological relation to art.[7] In trying to define these two arts that also relate to process and time, and in referring to texts that have forwarded explanations about these arts, Berleant finds difficulties in language, because definitions generally have to use terms like construction or structure that refer to material elements whereas both in these arts, even if there is an instrument that makes the sound or a material body that creates the dance, what we observe and experience is something immaterial. For both arts

Berleant gives historical examples that make diverse interpretations and descriptions possible, conveying the essence of the art in question. In all the arts, Berleant emphasizes the continuity between art and observer, or performer and spectator, which is central to a phenomenological understanding.

Besides nature, Berleant's ideas about aesthetic engagement also concern the urban environment. He says: "*In an insistent way, the aesthetic of the city is an aesthetic of engagement*."[8] Although he mentions all the negative and disturbing aspects of urban life, Berleant believes that more than any other environment the urban milieu strongly involves all our sensory perceptions and even if it can also become oppressive, it has in contemporary times the most inspiring effect on cultural creativity. The humanly created qualities of the city turn it into an aesthetic object all by itself, and as all art we get engaged with it in many sensory and mental ways. According to Berleant this aesthetic engagement with the city can weaken the hierarchic political power mechanisms by making people aware of different human values.

In many of his books Berleant talks about the aesthetic experience of music in depth, since he has always been involved in composing and interpreting. As a practicing musician Berleant's understanding of art goes far beyond philosophical conceptualizations; he understands how sounds affect us, as he also writes about sounds and noise in urban experience. In 2007, Arnold Berleant came to Ankara to participate in the International Congress of Aesthetics where he performed playing the piano to one of his compositions. His extremely sensitive approach could be felt through the sounds that he had created and executed, and made the audience feel the naturalness and his having absorbed the qualities of nature that he had all along written about in his books. Berleant's philosophy that shines through his sensitive approach to the world has been an important contribution to the changes that have developed in aesthetic discourse in the last decades.

In his subtle way Berleant has influenced many young people in their understanding of the environment and relation to the earth. One of his contributions that will always be remembered in the realm of aesthetics is his founding the online journal of *Contemporary Aesthetics*. With its multifarious interests in the field of aesthetic experience this Journal that, in a very short time, became a journal of general high-quality reference on aesthetics, gave many young people outside the Western academic institutions the courage to speak their minds and to present examples from the world outside the West. I believe this Journal is a great feat that Berleant approached with success many years ago, without the support of established institutions without which many journals cannot live.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Arnold for his encouragement all along the way and for creating the background for many in the field of aesthetics to believe in the correct human and environmental values.

I wish him many more creative and enjoyable years.

[1] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Milton Park: Routledge, 2014.
[2] Berleant, Arnold, *Living in the Landscape*, University Press of Kansas, 1997, 41-56
[3] Ibid. 63
[4] Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, Temple University Press, 1992, 86
[5] Ibid., 138-144
[6] Ibid. 169
[7] Berleant, *Art and Engagement*, Temple University Press, 1991, on music and dance: 132-172
[8] Berleant, 1992, 97

BERLEANT AS EDUCATOR

Thomas Leddy

Abstract
Berleant was and is an educator in a variety of ways essential to aesthetics and philosophy of the arts. I use both tenses since Berleant's contribution to an environmental and holistic approach to aesthetics is both historical and ongoing. Foremost has been the impact of his key idea of "engagement" on a generation of younger aestheticians (he was unfortunately neglected by many of his contemporaries) in such areas as feminist, nature, landscape, architectural, and everyday aesthetics. Berleant was/is an educator of both national and international scope, not only for his contribution at the highest institutional levels but also for his creation and nurturing of the groundbreaking journal, Contemporary Aesthetics. But, more, through the great range of his writings he has touched for the first time a multitude of aesthetic topics, including, even, riding a canoe down a river. Finally, Berleant has educated by bridging chasms between many schools of thought on several continents. For some, he has played a role much like that of Schopenhauer for Nietzsche, hence the title of this paper, not so much in ideology as in being a philosophical exemplar. This paper is also a personal deeply felt Thank-you from a younger admirer, and, in a sense, follower.

Keywords
Berleant, Engagement, Aesthetic Field, Aesthetics, Philosophy of Art, Everyday Aesthetics, Aesthetics of Nature, Education

Arnold Berleant is a rebel, a radical. He wants to get to the root of things. His approach to aesthetics has scope. For him, the stakes are not just aesthetic ones. He is talking about philosophy itself. Like Dewey and the rest of the pragmatist tradition he seeks to dissolve boundaries, overcoming assumptions about strict categorical distinctions, and to overcome the myth of objectivism: dualism is anathema. He is not just attacking analytic aesthetics, but the entire essentializing and universalizing tradition of the Enlightenment. His greatest enemy is the concept of disinterestedness, which we inherited from Kant. He wants to rethink aesthetics in a non-Kantian way, one that stresses our embodied being: we are sensuous beings. He is also critical of other conceptual divisions. For instance, you cannot ultimately separate percept from concept.

As a result of this iconoclastic approach, Berleant has challenged the very boundaries of aesthetics, and on many fronts. Aesthetics is certainly not limited to fine art, neither is it limited to art. It expands out into the environment: it includes social relations. He wants an aesthetic criticism not only of the arts but also of culture, including knowledge. Aesthetics, then, is pervasive. But it has been largely misconceived. As opposed to disinterestedness, an idea first popularized by Kant's aesthetic theory, engagement is Berleant's central notion. We should not look at art just from the perspective of the detached observer. Instead, there is a dynamic relation between artist, artwork, subject matter, and audience. This approach to what Berleant has called the aesthetic field is originally Deweyan in inspiration. However, Berleant has taken stimulus from many places, including Nietzsche and Phenomenology, and even from the analytic tradition, from which he gets his clear style and his respect for scientific knowledge. Berleant, in testing boundaries, has opened up new areas of aesthetic exploration.

Rather than trying to arrive at strict procedures of evaluation, or to create a scientific aesthetics, Berleant stresses context and continuity.

OK, that's a quick summary. Now let's go back to the beginning. I title this paper "Berleant as Educator" as an allusion to Nietzsche's "Schopenhauer as Educator," a work that Nietzsche published early in his career, shortly after his great *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. At that time Nietzsche was still under the influence of Schopenhauer, although he was beginning to have some doubts, especially concerning Schopenhauer's pessimism, his dualism, his ethics and his metaphysics, which would eventually lead him to reject that philosopher almost entirely. And yet he was still inspired by Schopenhauer as his educator, as well as, of course, the educator of Wagner, Germany, and Europe. But Nietzsche's main interest was in Schopenhauer as an exemplar of philosophy, as someone who lived his philosophy, as Nietzsche tried to live his. Although Berleant would reject many of the same features of Schopenhauer that Nietzsche overcame (no doubt there being some, perhaps mainly unacknowledged, tie between Berleant and Nietzsche) it is Berleant as educator, as someone who, like Schopenhauer in at least this respect, has been a true philosopher throughout his life, a philosopher whom, in my introductory paragraph, I referred to as having scope.

Let us begin with a little Nietzschean praise of Berleant (setting aside all of the bad things about Nietzsche, for example his near-praise of cruelty, his anti-feminism, and his anti-democratic instincts, none of which, of course Berleant would endorse). Berleant, Nietzsche would say, has exercised his will-to-power most authentically as an outflow of creative cultural energy subtly seeking to impose his perspective on the entire field of philosophy, and especially on the field of aesthetics – all for the good, in my view. Berleant says "yes" to life, yes to "the earth," and "no" to "the last man," as described in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

So how is Berleant, as educator, to be praised? I will have nothing to say about his work as a professional teacher, as I know little about that. This essay will be more a personal memoir, and perspective, on Berleant, and perhaps a little struggle with him. What student does not struggle with their master? My first contact with Berleant came in another institutional context and I was never literally his student. Yet he has been my educator in many ways, as he has been for many other philosophers, academics, artists, and nature-lovers.

Nietzsche saw Schopenhauer as an educator not just through his books, but through his life. To understand Berleant as educator one needs to understand him through the broad scope of his intellectual life. He has educated through the breadth of his interests and activities, not simply as an aesthetician and philosopher of art, the scholarly areas in which he is most well-known, but as a musician, a connoisseur, an urban flâneur, and a cultural critic. He has never been an armchair philosopher. He always has done applied philosophy. One wonders, in Isaiah Berlin's terms, whether he is a hedgehog or a fox. The answer is, marvelously, both. He knows much about many things, AND he also knows one very important thing, although it has many names, one of which I have already mentioned: "engagement." His many essays on such diverse arts and aesthetic enterprises as architecture, gardens,

urban environments, everyday life, celestial aesthetics, environmental design, virtual space, and on and on, show that he is up for learning, and saying something about, just about anything.

But let us turn to his prominent impact on the institutional side of "aesthetics," which term, for me, here, will be used as shorthand for the combined disciplines of aesthetics and the philosophy of the arts, as well as the cultural criticism coming out of these, and even the political theory coming out of that. Berleant's scope is ever-expanding. There are three areas, perhaps four, that I know of, in which Berleant has had monumental impact on the institutional side of this hybrid discipline. There is his work as Secretary-Treasurer of the American Society for Aesthetics, as Secretary-General and past President of the International Association of Aesthetics, as founding editor of the online journal *Contemporary Aesthetics*, and finally, his development and nurturing of a vast network of scholarly connection, which itself goes beyond the four strictly institutional contexts mentioned: this last making Berleant himself an institution.

My first encounter with Berleant, which I cannot remember precisely, would not have been in person, but by way of becoming a member of the American Society for Aesthetics in the Fall of 1974 while I was a graduate student in Humanities at San Francisco State, and had taken a class from the late Anita Silvers in aesthetics, which set me on the path that led me to a career in philosophical aesthetics, which also meant a teaching career. He was a Trustee of the ASA at the time, as I can see from my copy of the Fall issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, which was, and still is, published by the ASA. But my first direct encounter with him was probably at my first national conference in Banff, probably in 1978, when I was a graduate student in Philosophy at Boston University, writing my dissertation under Marx Wartofsky and Erazim Kohak. Berleant was still a trustee then, and continued until 1979. But in 1980 he became Secretary-Treasurer, and it was surely *then* that I first got to know him, since Hilde Hein was then editor of the society newsletter, and she needed some help. She lived in the Boston Area, and Wartofsky was a good friend of hers. So I became her assistant, and later, co-editor, and later still, editor of the newsletter. So, for a while, Berleant was my boss. He was gracious, organized and encouraging – a good boss for a graduate student and, later, for an assistant professor.

This part is more personal, but I will say it here, that Berleant was my educator in a special way at a time when I made a major career mistake by writing an editorial criticizing the American Philosophical Association for not having enough papers on aesthetics at their various meetings, a criticism I made, not thinking about who might be the leading figure behind the Pacific Division of the APA (the same Anita Silvers!), someone who might see my editorial as a direct criticism, and who, at the national meeting of the ASA in Montreal, that October, challenged and castigated me in front of the society business meeting. Berleant tried to mediate, and probably did ameliorate the situation, for which I owe him. But, more than that, in something like a reversal of the situation of C.S. Peirce, who always had a nemesis blocking his career-path unknown to him, I somehow think, surmise, or perhaps just imagine that Berleant acted as a kind of guardian angel for me in my career,

helping me get accepted to various things, for which I am also thankful. He was my educator in that he made it possible for me to continue as an educator myself.

But I am not the only one, and Berleant's way of nurturing the younger academics he mentored went far beyond these merely personal matters. I remember once being at a conference and picking up, and purchasing, a copy of, I think, Living in the Landscape, and seeing Berleant in the same room being visibly pleased that I had done so. That would have been, probably, in 1997 shortly after I published my first piece on everyday aesthetics, i. e. on neatness and messiness. I offer here a list of these younger academics, necessarily incomplete, for almost all the people who did work in the English-speaking world in the aesthetics of the environment or, more specifically, of the natural environment, were influenced and/or nurtured by Berleant during the 80s and 90s. Names would include Allen Carlson, Glen Parsons, Noel Carroll, Stan Godlovitch, Yuriko Saito, Emily Brady, Marcia Eaton, Cheryl Foster, Ronald Moore, John Fisher, Donald Crawford, and Thomas Heyd, all of whom appeared in his anthology, edited with Carlson, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, published in 2004, but based on a special issue on Environmental Aesthetics that was published by the *JAAC* in Spring of 1998. Other names include Sally Schaumann, Kevin Melchionne, Barbara Sandrisser (the architect), Judith Miller (the artist), John Carvalho, Ivan Gaskell, David Goldblatt, Mary Bittner Goldstein, Kathleen Higgins, Jo Ellen Jacobs, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Estella Lauter, David Macauley, Mara Miller, Jos de Mul, Monique Roelofs, Larry Shiner, and Julie van Camp. But that is only scratching the surface, since, as previously mentioned, Berleant cultivated a larger community from every country of the world (it sometimes seemed) at least from Poland, China, Finland (Ossi Naukkarinen, Yrjö Sepänmaa, and Arto Haapala), Mexico (Katya Mandoki), and no doubt many others, including the editors of this issue of *Popular Inquiry*.

So, in fact, Berleant, through his many writings, his conference papers, his institutional involvement, his personal loyalty, and his many correspondences, has been an educator not only as a teacher and as a mentor but as a world-class organizer and instigator of aesthetic investigations. Moreover, his capacity to cross boundaries between different philosophical traditions, styles and contexts, always combatting the misunderstandings arising from prejudices within the philosophical world, almost literally made "World Aesthetics" as a concept and a reality possible. As a consequence, I suspect, I found myself in the 1990s teaching a textbook called Perspectives in *Aesthetics* by Kathleen Higgins, the first text to approach aesthetics from a World perspective, including articles on Japanese, African, Aztec and Chicano aesthetics, among others. Later, Michael Kelly edited the great *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, originally four volumes, now six, which significantly expanded the field in terms of what are considered to be legitimate and serious areas of inquiry, and in a way that is both cross-cultural and capacious. Neither of these forays would have been possible without the internationalizing efforts of Berleant.

The last area of an institutional sort in which we can say that Berleant has been our educator is through his founding of the online journal, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, in 2003, which continues

to be free, open-access, blind-refereed, and nurturing of its authors. Full disclosure: I am a member of the Board. The journal publishes several articles a year as well as issues put together by special editors. Berleant was its founding editor, the editor now being Yuriko Saito, while Berleant retains a seat on the Board. The journal exemplifies many, or perhaps all, of the virtues I have already ascribed to Berleant himself. It is international in scope and not tied to any specific school of thought. It does cutting-edge work in emerging new sub-disciplines within aesthetics, offering an alternative, or supplement, to the more established, and mainly analytic *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and the similar *British Journal of Aesthetics*. It has been the main source of work in the relatively new field of everyday aesthetics, but has also made significant contributions to a number of other sub-disciplines within the field.

Now I wish to turn to Berleant as educator in another sense, more related to my opening paragraph. An educator in the deepest sense is someone who reshapes a field. Berleant has been, and still is, an educator in this sense. Throughout his career he has taken on a number of key causes. Perhaps the most central is his advocacy of engagement over disinterestedness. The idea of "engagement" seems as though it would find its origins in existentialism, a school of thought popular amongst American intellectuals when Berleant was just getting started. For those who accept the definition of it, "existence precedes exists," it can easily be seen that the emphasis is on the actions of humans as embodied beings in a surrounding environment, terminology which also reminds us of Dewey. One could speak of Berleant as a phenomenologist, an existentialist, and a pragmatist, among other things. In any case, it was a great innovation on his part to stress engagement in all of its manifestations.

For the rest of this paper, I will, for the purposes of not, myself, being overwhelmed by Berleant's vast corpus, focus on one book, *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (2005). However, Berleant's overall corpus is highly consistent, and one could do the same with almost any of his works. In this book, as he enters into his most extended discussion of engagement, he shows how the scope of his thought is not only international but expansive in so far as it connects to ancient, tribal and primitive traditions. So, here, he draws on Taoist, Native American, and Aboriginal belief, (34) stressing the continuity of the human and the natural. Here he asserts that these traditions approach nature through engagement, and not, as is true in the Western tradition, through objectivist and distanced assumptions. Berleant also features the idea of "continuity," drawing from Dewey. For him, "Aesthetic engagement recognizes the primacy of our immediate perceptual experience, that is sensory yet colored by the personal and cultural dimensions that enter into all human experience." (35) Another quote sums up the challenge Berleant poses to the entire tradition of philosophical aesthetics, and even to philosophy itself "we have been taught by those who organize perceptual space, such as environmental artists, landscape painters, and landscape architects, not to distinguish too sharply between art and nature." (35) One thinks immediately of the sheer pragmatist impulse of this statement: let's go to people engaged in real-life practices for guidance in these matters!

To test the significance of this move, one should note that a great philosopher in the analytic tradition, Arthur Danto, makes the mistake of going in the opposite direction, holding that there is something problematic about sensuous beauty and that something becomes a work of art when it is taken out of the realm of "mere real things" and enters the realm of art, the "artworld," where it achieves art status just by being there, observed by those with appropriate art-historical knowledge as being art, and as having the "is" of artistic identification, thus breaking any notion of continuity shared by the American Indian, the Taoist, the Aboriginal, the landscape architect, and both Dewey and Berleant. For Danto, art is all about aboutness: two pieces can be indistinguishable and yet completely different merely because of having different titles. Thus, on Danto's view, aesthetic difference makes no difference in terms of artistic identity. This key notion of discontinuity, and the attendant downgrading of the material sensuous side of art, can also be found in the work of Collingwood, writing at the same time, but not in Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art," which is more a forerunner of Berleant's assumptions. And, of course, Berleant does not limit engagement to one narrow form of practice, but acknowledges that there are many different kinds of engagement, ranging from the one we take in a French formal garden to the kind we take in an English garden, for example. Both of these, by the way, are taken as "arts" in a broad sense that includes crafts and practical arts. They could not have been sanctioned by Danto or his followers who saw art as distinctly institutional and, even, one could say with slight exaggeration, New York-based. Berleant goes so far as to distinguish two types of landscape, observational and "of engagement," each generating their own concepts of design and experience, as exemplified, for example, in the participatory garden of the maze in contrast to the observational formal garden of symmetry and control. (38) Problematic here is that the participation evoked by the maze can be strangely formal, whereas the best way to appreciate a formal garden may itself be participatory in its own way. Moreover, gardens in general are experienced in more participatory way then movies, although, maybe we engage in movies in a very different way, with its own validity and distinctions. Berleant, of course, recognizes this, holding that even the "observational garden" can evoke engagement insofar as, to view it, we must move through it. (38)

Another way in which Berleant is an aesthetic educator, exploring new territory and challenging embedded tradition, is in his advocacy of an expanded approach to the sensuous appreciation of nature. In a phenomenological description of a canoe trip down a New York State River, Berleant makes clear that engagement between human body and nature is not simply a matter of sight: it is also a matter of hearing and smelling. (58-60) Nor is it simply engaging with a thing called "nature" itself, abstracted from human incursions. Instead, he speaks not only of the sounds of birds, but also of the roar of traffic as he and his fellow canoer approach a bridge or highway; not only of the pleasant smells of fresh water and verdant surroundings, but also of the uglier odors of sewage effluent – that is, of the negative aesthetic as well as of the positive.

I had spoken earlier about Berleant's expansive treatment of aesthetics, not only in his international scope, but also in the very notion of engagement. So too, the incorporation of all the senses into his idea of sensuous engagement exemplifies this expansiveness. (150) Whereas the typical move of the traditional contemporary academic philosopher in the English-speaking world is to analyze, to break down, to categorize, to logically order, and to bring under control, Berleant's typical move is to expand, to break out, and to soften categories by subjecting them to awareness of grey areas, transitions and continuities. Another area of his expansive aesthetic is the notion that perception is not just a matter of situation of material in space and time, as Kant thought, but also of movement. (71) Hence Berleant appreciates the environment of the Genesee River by slowly moving through it in a canoe with a friend from upstream to its ending in Lake Ontario. This conception of "lived time" is distinguished from mere chronological time, which has its uses, but is phenomenologically limited. (71) It is by way of this concept that Berleant returns his readers to the arts, which, as Dewey had said, intensifies and concentrates the rhythms of ordinary experience. He observes that, in recent art forms, time has also been increasingly manipulated in a variety of ways through memory and imagination. (71) Again, following his expansive approach, Berleant not only stresses movement and change, but also the modalities of movement, even, most recently, the coordination of the actual movement of eyes and hands with the virtual movement of the cursor on a screen in the electronic worlds we now so much inhabit. (72) To sum up: "Every environment, virtual or otherwise, has its own characteristic aesthetic" (72), and, further, "time is environment-dependent and never isolated, separate and self-contained." (72) Thus, the foundations of Kant's aesthetics are overthrown by a pragmatist/existentialist alternative. Berleant concludes from this "that there is no virtuality at all, and…what we have are different modes of reality." (72) Drawing from Buchler, he asserts that no complex is more real or natural than any other, including realms of make-believe and fiction, and from Spinoza, that we live in one world which, however, has many modalities.

Berleant is a deceptively easy writer to read. His writing style is not sublime, although sometimes it is lyrical and approaches beauty in his phenomenological descriptions. His philosophical style is another thing, for, as I have argued, he has amazing scope. One could say that his writing is simple, and yet his vision is sublime. This may have been to his disadvantage in the academic races to stardom. I know of no seminars devoted to him, although there should be. Seminars tend to dwell on matters of interpretation, and yet Berleant is not particularly hard to read or understand. When it comes to fascinating obscurity, he is no Nietzsche, Heidegger or Derrida, or even Dewey, Danto or Goodman. His being radically democratic, no doubt, prompted him to write in this way, for he speaks to every woman and every man. If there is any aesthetic philosopher who has taken a similar approach, in terms of writing style, and democratic impulse, it has been Tolstoy in his *What is Art?* Over the years, I have constantly been amazed by how strongly undergraduates can respond to Tolstoy, only matched by their enthusiasm for Weitz's attack on the project of defining art. Similarly,

with Berleant, perhaps the seminar room is not the first place to present his ideas to the people. And yet there should be seminars, for Berleant has thought deeply and radically, like any significant philosopher: it takes time to see the complexity of his thought beneath the simple-seeming surface.

The last chapter of *Aesthetics and Environment* is a case in point. Throughout his intellectual career, Berleant has done a good job of encapsulating his philosophy in key concepts which both secede each other and enrich the previous ones without erasing or engulfing them. These root concepts can usually be captured by the titles of his books. For example, the concept of the aesthetic field, and the concept of engagement. By the time he had written *Aesthetics and Environment* he had come to the twin notions, "aesthetics as contextual" (149) and "social aesthetics," to encapsulate the latest version of his ever-changing, yet unified, theory. 'Aesthetics as contextual' becomes the broad name for the theory, and 'social aesthetics' becomes the new domain which, when added to the previous featured ideas, such as 'field' and 'engagement,' requires the renaming of the overall theory. It is in this concluding chapter of my text here that Berleant gives the best sum-up of his theory so far (the book came out in 2005 and, of course, he has written much since then.)

So, under the heading of "contextual aesthetics," again, in a deceptively simple way, Berleant lists nine features of his aesthetic theory, followed by the idea of a social aesthetics, divided into three sections. The nine features, together with my characterization of what they mean to Berleant, are: (1) acceptance (openness to experience without judgment, and expansion of the range of aesthetic appreciation), (2) perception (sensory experience as never purely sensation; but sensation as at the center of perceptual depth – findable in our appreciation of, not only art, but of nature, both small and large, as well as social occasions, including love), (3) sensuousness (sight and hearing as not the sole aesthetic senses, although they served the purposes of a distanced, contemplative aesthetics: hearing, touch, taste, smell, kinesthetic, and synesthetic sensation are equally important), (4) discovery (ordinary experience with its practical orientation may reduce perceptual content, but the aesthetic character of the everyday can be rediscovered; aesthetic experience, thus, opening to unexpected objects), (5) uniqueness (that every experience is perceptually unique, is essential for understanding aesthetic appreciation), (6) reciprocity (in aesthetic experience the object, the beholder, and the artist reciprocally influence each other), (7) continuity (the distinction between elements in the aesthetic field, which seem so strong from the traditional, contemplative, perspective, dissolve into continuities), (8) engagement (this concept, still central, summarizes what has preceded, where separations between appreciator and the aesthetic object, as well as other separations, dissolve), and (9) multiplicity (there is no restriction of aesthetics to certain types of object, thus leading to the expansiveness that Berleant will now take into the realm of social aesthetics. But this is not to say that everything is aesthetic, since there are also the religious, the practical and the technological domains. Berleant adds that not only should object, appreciator and artist all be considered in

relation, but various elements and aspects of the creative process, broadly conceived, including creation, recreation, and performance, should be taken into account).

All of these ideas, theses, topics and themes had been set forth before in Berleant's writings, but, here, they are marshalled to introduce the newest expansion of the aesthetic, what I take to be the most compelling and original aspect of his thought in recent years (or at least up to 2000), summed up in the idea of 'the social aesthetic.' Berleant is, here, taking his lead broadly from Schiller; although Plato, Marx, Nietzsche, William Morris, Tolstoy, Adorno and Marcuse had all previously explored this territory in their own ways. My theme, and thesis, throughout this paper has been Berleant's complex status as educator by way of the scope and expansiveness of his conception of the aesthetic. But that scope and expansiveness is not simply spatial; it is also temporal – and not just in an additive, but in a developmental sense.

As has so often happened in previous moments in Berleant's career, his recovery of the thought of a much earlier great thinker has served as impetus for a new development. For instance, Baumgarten's original conception of aesthetics, virtually ignored by the rest of the discipline, perhaps largely because he had not been translated into English (and still is not) played an important role in providing one of the lynchpins of Berleant's aesthetic theory: the conception of aesthetic experience as both sensuous and a form of cognition.

Schiller provides a starting point towards development of a social aesthetic. Berleant, as I have suggested, following the footsteps of Marx and Marcuse, has adapted Schiller's idea of 'art as play' to modern times. More specifically, for him, Schiller saw the ability to harmonize the sensuous and spiritual aspects of ourselves as essential to liberation, this found already in childhood play, and issuing forth in the experience of beauty and harmony brought by taste, which is to say by 'developed sensibility,' or by a harmony of "all aspects of human perception," (154) i. e. a "full integration" of the social and the personal.

When does a social situation exhibit aesthetic character? When the aesthetic features of it are predominant. This happens with, as Berleant puts it, "full acceptance of the other(s), heightened perception, particularly of sensuous qualities, the freshness and excitement of discovery, recognition of the uniqueness of the person and the situation, mutual responsiveness, and occasion experienced as connected and integrated, abandonment of separateness for full personal involvement, and the relinquishing of any restrictions and exclusivity that obstruct appreciation." (154) In other words, Berleant has applied his nine elements of a contextual aesthetics to his theory of social aesthetics in which we see, much as with Dewey, that aesthetic experience, at its best, is closely associated with the synthesis of democracy and freedom in an ideal social situation.

Berleant goes on to offer some concrete examples of a social aesthetics: (1) Etiquette can sometimes be cultivated to the point that it achieves grace. An example of this, that he does not mention here, is the Confucian ideal of the ritual dance as practiced by the ideal scholar in conjunction with

possession of *ren*, or humaneness. But more than Confucius, he stresses the way in which aesthetic delight can attend such rituals, even in the more formalized ones associated with religion. We are not talking here about a low-level form of etiquette, which is all about form and no real content or soul. (2) Moreover, also like Dewey, Berleant finds a living exemplar of a social aesthetic in certain primitive societies, in this case the Papua New Guinean tribe of the Foi, where "society is constituted aesthetically," (155) and the boundaries between mind and body, and life and death, are never established. (3) Within family life, there is, too, an aesthetic, almost totally neglected by contemporary theorists, associated with how we (adults and older children) relate to small children especially in terms of the delight we take in their "freshness, delicacy, fragility of expression [and] coloration," expression of such delight taking the form of belief in their beauty. Rubens captured this in some of his paintings. (4) The nine elements of the aesthetic may also be found in friendship. (5) And in love. As Berleant says, "the deepest and most intense occasions of a social aesthetic occur in the many forms that love may take," (155) this point hearkening back to Plato's *Symposium*, and particularly to Diotima's account of love, as related by Socrates in that famous drinking party devoted to love and beauty.

Berleant, surprisingly, does not mention Plato, Socrates, or Diotima at this point, although he does in another context (to be discussed below). He says, again forgetting not only the *Symposium* but the *Phaedrus*, "'beauty' is a common term in philosophy but not in describing human relations," (155) which is false, at least for Plato, although true today. Instead, Berleant simply refers to Aristotle's inability to distinguish friendship from love (155), which is certainly not a problem for Diotima, Socrates or Plato, who provide precisely what Berleant considers original with himself, i.e. "a philosophy of love about beautiful relationships and…a philosophy of beauty about the relationship of love." (155) Our Athenian trio also inspired Berleant's idea that "both beauty and love are relational ideas and not formal features of objects." (155), although I suspect Berleant would not accept this characterization of Plato's thought. The neglect of Plato as the originator of this way of thinking may be because Berleant associates Plato, rather, with *The Republic III* where, he says, Plato observes "the seductive power of beauty with distress. [my italics]"

So, did Berleant ignore the Plato from whom he borrowed so much (perhaps unconsciously) in order to trounce the Plato of *Republic III*, i.e. the notorious scold and art censor, who was perhaps the most disagreeable Plato (i.e. Plato as constructed by interpreters) we know? Plato here is a puritan who worries that art is seen as radically separate from love. And yet, if we follow Diotima and Socrates up the ladder of love, we follow them through the love of institutions and sciences, i. e. of cultures in general, which could easily incorporate not only what Plato would have called the arts (techne), but also what we would call the fine arts. Remember that Plato was never opposed to art or the arts, contrary to a multitude of undergraduate essays, but to what he called "the imitative arts" or more briefly, to imitation. Although, to be sure, neither Socrates nor Plato explicitly apply the

ladder of love to the philosophy of art…Diotima, in fact, does, when she speaks of love as a desire for everlasting fame, which was certainly a motive, as she saw, for the poets.

Our (Berleant's and mine) interpretive disagreement about Plato is perhaps deeper than one might first think, which can be seen in the fact that Berleant does mention the *Symposium*, but gives what I consider a shallow reading of it, one that hides his actual deep affinity. As he puts it, his theory of love "is not love of the beautiful or love as the path to the beautiful, which Plato's Socrates learns from Diotima in *The Symposium*. It is rather love as beauty, together both manifold and irreducible." (157) Yet 'love as beauty,' is very much present in the idea of the dialectic between the lover and the beloved which leads, not only, to apprehension of Beauty itself, but, more importantly, to the capacity to shine forth in beauty and love, in and through virtuous progeny and the progeny of virtue, so necessary for redemption in the world of change. This nicely sums up, in my view, Plato's great contribution to social aesthetics, which Berleant has now (unconsciously, again) brought (by way of his being influenced by essentially Platonistic transcendentalists like Thoreau, and romantics like Schiller) into the 21st century.

In any case, Berleant, in speaking of the intimate relation between art and love (in a way that Plato never explicitly captured) has certainly broken through an intellectual barrier, i.e. not so much in the interpretation of ancient aesthetics as in the scope of contemporary aesthetics, and, moreover, in the range of possibility for contemporary cultural advancement. He sees this relation as like one between siblings (156) since both art and love have in common the nine elements of contextual aesthetics. And, as he observes, following Thoreau, this refers to all the things we can love: "landscape, a place, a home, or an object." (156)

I take this to be the place in which Berleant establishes himself as one of the founders of the new philosophical sub-discipline of everyday aesthetics, for a description which see Saito (2021) and Leddy (2012). One might note that Thoreau has been lurking behind all of the considerations of this paper, and that there is something literally geographical about Berleant's affinity with Thoreau. Sometimes Berleant reads like an American Transcendentalist come alive again in our own time. He is, in this sense, an educator specifically for and from America, which is to say the cultural entity of that country called the USA. (Cf. Berleant on Thoreau, pg. 157)

So Berleant finds that, in both art and love, there is a dwelling on the object: the appreciative engagement with the object of art and the beloved is in some ways similar. This shows that the idea of 'the social aesthetic' was always there, implicitly, for example in his idea of engagement, which he spells out for several of the arts; for instance in the "intimate involvement in the sequence of movement in…dance." (156) Similarly, in love, we also find "a sharing of dynamic progression, perhaps a sense of dramatic development, the awareness of a rare human situation or condition that may take the form of…epiphany, or a feeling of…human empathy," (156) as well as a dissolving of boundaries.

Another reason why Berleant renounces Plato is that, unlike Plato, but like Dewey and Jesus, Berleant emphasizes empathy. Jesus was, with Plato, an equally important proponent of love in the Western tradition, although of a different sort, as when directed to God or to our fellow human. Berleant speaks of art and love as being "the two most important human experiences," (157) and finds a "structural similarity" (157) between them, as they are equally "aesthetic situations." (157) As he says, "[b]oth involve acceptance without judgment and, at their best, both exhibit free value." He further says that "[a]fter we excise the negative elements of possessiveness, exploitation, insecurity, egoism, jealousy, and power, much of what is left in human relationships is its aesthetic character." (157) This, fundamental to his philosophy is a vision that has its sources also in the tradition of philosophical aesthetics going back to the 18th century.

And yet, it is a vision of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics which is quite the reverse of what is usually assumed: it is a vision of ethics as something that, through following the Golden Rule, as initiated by Jesus through empathy (and not out of duty, as in Kant), we clear the path for aesthetic experience. Thus, aesthetics gains primacy over ethics: quite shocking, this, for most Anglo-American philosophers.

This is a point at which I would argue for Berleant as an educator of the highest order. By expanding aesthetics into the realm of social aesthetics he, in fact, instigates something like what Nietzsche referred to as a transvaluation of values in which life is only justified as an aesthetic phenomenon. Love and art take us to a separate realm, not the realm of the artworld that we found in Danto, but to something far more significant: love and art bring us to "the perceptual domains of sense, imagination, and memory…[while] attentive to the sensory qualities of the situation." That is, to use Nietzschean language again, they call on us to be "true to the earth." And yet Berleant is not a Nietzschean since the Jesus element, which Nietzsche always opposed, is equally present in the idea of empathy.

Berleant is not only stylistically like Tolstoy but is also, like Tolstoy, in his own version of Christianity. Berleant really would like to evaluate everything aesthetic in terms of whether or not it is conducive to the brotherhood of man, or, even better, of all nature. Again, he writes that ideally "[d]ivisions and separations disappear and are replaced by a sense of empathy…for both art and love evoke a sense of shared living, a certain continuity and oneness…[or]…intimacy." (157)

This vision leads naturally to the final section of his essay titled "The Politics of Social Aesthetics," where Schiller, again, leads the way insofar as he holds that the reign of taste makes autocracy impossible, and that all should live in an aesthetic state as having equal rights, since, as Berleant says, "[t]he social equivalent of the willing acceptance in an aesthetic situation lies in recognizing the intrinsic value of every person…[which] is the precondition of a social ethics." (158) In both realms, that of aesthetics as narrowly conceived, and that of social aesthetics (aesthetics as broadly conceived, including this) hold that "judgments of worth…be based on the immediacy of the experience to which they lead…" (158) Further, there is an emphasis, in both, on particularity as opposed to

classification: “People are flesh and blood creatures, not statistics, blocs, classes…” (158) That is, human beings are “ultimately never commensurable” and “individual people possess ultimate and irreducible particularity.” (158)

The other elements of aesthetics are also found in social aesthetics: for example, reciprocity and continuity. Moreover, “the aesthetic community does in fact exist in…limited forms” (199) for example in the above-mentioned Foi community, in situations of familial love, in communal life, and in friendship.

Most essays of this sort end by repeating what has already been said, but I trust the reader to have paid attention. Berleant should receive acclaim for his astounding career, mainly as a kind of universal educator who, not only on an institutional level, or through his many books and other writings, but also through his mentoring of a large tribe of, if not followers, at least admirers, in many disciplines, not just philosophy, in many countries, not just the USA, in many schools of thought, not just phenomenology or pragmatism, in many directions, not just with one idea, and so forth. He is, in short, a true educator of our time.

Note on Bibliography
With the approval of the editors, I would like to limit the bibliography here to just one item. The others are easily accessible through Google.
Berleant, Arnold. Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme. Routledge, London and New York. 2018. [originally published 2005 Ashgate Publishing.] All page citations are to this book.

ARNOLD BERLEANT MASTER OF THE ART, LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

Aleksandra Łukaszewicz

Abstract
Arnold Berleant is one of our contemporary philosophers: not just scholars in philosophy, a philosopher is a person who, according to the Greek etymology of the term philosophy (*philósophos* meaning "loving knowledge") loves wisdom. In this definition should be stressed not only *knowledge* or *wisdom* – which used to be in myopic focus in Western reflection, and could be called the 'Faustian curse' of pursuing knowledge while overlooking ethical values – the same importance should be recognized in *love*, which entails the emotional and sensory engagement of the whole human being. Being ethical goes hand in hand with being wise or knowledgeable, which is presented throughout all his life in his oeuvre by Arnold Berleant.

Keywords
Wisdom, Pragmatism, Aesthetic Engagement, Mindfulness

I have always looked for masters, for the wise, good, admirable people who would guide me in understanding life and in being a better person. That is why I looked for philosophers and the same reason I am a philosopher, trying to better my stay in the world. To be a philosopher is different from being a scholar in philosophy, though being a scholar inevitably helps in making one's own path through various worldviews and in knowing how to argue for them. However, nowadays, especially in the Anglo-American world, it is much more common to be a scholar specialized in some concrete branch of philosophy, and it is most useful for one's career when this branch is applicable to some fields of everyday life, such as is the case with environmental or business ethics.

To be a philosopher, according to the Greek etymology of the term philosophy (*philósophos* meaning "loving knowledge"), is to love wisdom. In this definition should be stressed not only *knowledge* or *wisdom* – which used to be in myopic focus in Western reflection, and could be called the 'Faustian curse' of pursuing knowledge while overlooking ethical values – the same importance should be recognized in *love*, which entails the emotional and sensory engagement of the whole human being. To be a philosopher, for me, is to pursue understanding of the world (in whatever way that may be defined) as well as being a person emotionally engaged with the world in which we are bodily present, without such unnecessary division between these two approaches as dualist theories tend to create by separating body and mind, emotions and reason, etc. The knowledge that we possess is strongly influenced by the kind of sensory and emotional experiences we have; reciprocally, the kind

of experiences that we have are structured by our prior beliefs. This kind of approach is presented by Arnold Berleant, one of my masters.

I have been honored to meet along my way a few masters who have guided me on my philosophical journey: from my early years of studies focused on philosophy of language and social philosophy with Jerzy Kochan at the University in Szczecin, during doctoral studies on epistemic function and ontology of photographic image with Alicja Kuczynska at the Warsaw University, while working on my habilitation thesis in transhumanism and in transcultural aesthetics with the late Joseph Margolis at Temple University, during my postdoctoral period in pragmatist aesthetics with Krystyna Wilkoszewska at Jagiellonian University, and with Arnold Berleant – Professor Emeritus at Long Island University.

Krystyna Wilkoszewska introduced the pragmatist approach [1] and openness to interdisciplinarity into Polish philosophical aesthetics, inspiring many scholars in pragmatism by establishing John Dewey Research Center [Ośrodek Badań nad Pragmatyzmem im. Johna Deweya] in 2007. She also put forth a series of translations for Aesthetics in the World [Estetyka w Świecie] containing, among others, works by Richard Shusterman [2] and Arnold Berleant: *Re-thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* from 2004[3] and *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* from 2010.[4] She introduced transculturalism[5] and aesthetics of non-European cultures as well, in initiating the series Aesthetics of the World [Estetyki Świata], which was published by Universitas and included focus on aesthetics of Aborigines, Africa, China, Indigenous tribes from South America, and Japan. Always up to date with current subjects in aesthetics and art, in 2013 Wilkoszewska, as the Chair of the Polish Society of Aesthetics (of which she is also a founding member) organized the 19th International Congress of Aesthetics, "Aesthetics in Action" which was held in Krakow on the centennial anniversary of the first congress.[6] There, I met Arnold Berleant for the first time, about which I would like to share an anecdote.

In 2013, I was a PhD student at the University of Warsaw, and a single mother on the PhD stipend. 350 euro for the conference fee was not affordable to me, and my institution was not willing to pay it either. I decided it would be easier to organize a panel and art exhibitions, so I could put my presentation into it and then find funding, than to struggle to pay the fee individually. And so I did, and in hot July, with promotional materials from the local government and banners from a private company, I travelled to Krakow. I had leaflets, the right to use the ICA2013 logo for the panel on "Performativity of images in social context", and a series of art exhibitions dispersed in a great building of Auditorium Maximum which were an integral part of it.

In Krakow, first I walked into the restaurant at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow (MOCAK). There, my friend Rebecca Farinas straightforwardly introduced me to Arnold Berlant, and asked about my PhD. It choked me. I was sitting next to this philosopher and writer I admire, and I had to – right then and there, just arriving – present substantively the essence of my doctoral research.

I think I did it so poorly, but perhaps not too bad, because during the reception prepared with Rebecca Farinas, in a cute condo in the center of Krakow (thanks to all the heavy banners and the right to use a logo for the set of events I was organizing), I further explained my ideas on the epistemic function of photography to Arnold Berleant while standing at the fridge, for at least an hour. I think Berleant understood and liked my ideas enough to support them, regardless of the quality of my English or proper-enough structure of argumentation, because Berleant is an open-minded person, supporting others' open-mindness: he is of the opinion that the technical details can always be corrected. His belief in me allowed me to polish my argumentation practice in English written philosophy (with the first paper on "Epistemic Function and Ontology of Analog and Digital Images" published in Vol. 13 (2015) of *Contemporary Aesthetics* – the first open-access online journal in aesthetics, published in the United States of America since mid-2003, which Arnold Berleant edited personally for many years, until the controls were passed to Yuriko Saitoin in 2017) which is notably different from the more essayistic style previously common in Polish philosophical literature.

From this fridge at ICA2013 we went further, initiating many years of acquaintance and building cooperation. One of the products of this was my edition of the monograph issue of the scientific journal ESPES, "Aesthetics between Art and Society. Perspectives of Arnold Berleant's Postkantian Aesthetics of Engagement" 5(2), 2017, published by the Society for Aesthetics in Slovakia and Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture at the University of Presov. The journal is on Berleant's aesthetic perspectives, showing the development of his thought from an essential critique of Kantian perspective in aesthetics, leading to his proposal of aesthetics of engagement (e.g., *Re-thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts*, 2004), and later to its applications (e.g., *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World,* 2010), and various lines of research inspired by him. It is important to inspire, to show perspectives: this is what Berleant's philosophy does by combining deep aesthetic sensibility with visionary, inspiratory horizons and strategic movements. It inspires philosophers in many fields: dance (e.g. Lilianna Bieszczad, Katarzyna Nawrocka, David Davies), gardens (e.g. Mateusz Salwa, Beata Frydryczak, Mara Miller), environmentally (e.g. Allen Carlson, John Charles Ryan, Sergey Dzikevich, Cheng Xiangzhan, Madalina Diaconu), urbane (e.g. Jakub Petri, Sanna Lehtine, Vesa Vihanninnjoki, Sanna Lehtinen, Max Ryynänen), and in everyday aesthetics (e.g. Yuriko Saito, Thomas Leddy, Adrian Kvokacka, Maria Korusiewicz).

Even our email exchange is very important to me; apart from the essential working element, we always share aesthetic experiences related to nature and the season as well as amusement with the world, which is a balm for my soul. In addition to email exchange and meeting at a few conferences (such as "Challenges at the Intersection of European and American Philosophy" at Fordham University in New York, 2015, which I co-organized with Rebecca Farinas, Leszek Koczanowicz, Philipp Dorstewitz, and Judith Green) I had the pleasure and honor to visit Arnold

Berleant and his wife Riva at their home in Maine. There, I was completely enchanted by the subtlety of manners, modest refinement, and pedantry in the charming cottage overlooking the fjord where one can walk from the garden down to the shore, imbuing oneself with the calm, clear, airy, and uplifting atmosphere. Walking on the gravel, I was the only one making noise in the neighborhood, which makes one mindful of each move, gesture, step, and thought.

Two visits that I paid to Arnold and Riva Berleant allowed me also to better understand the method and objectives of Arnold Berleant's philosophical reflection, especially the parts that are more hidden, or underneath the main current, structuring the flow. I mean here mostly the function of language in culture, which Berleant usually leaves out. The reason for such is not, however, neglecting the function of language for human culture, but is a kind of a strategic move. Berleant expresses that this thread has been frequently discussed and there are poor chances that it will be forgotten;[7] whereas the sensible aesthetic experience has not received enough attention, and so there is a need to stress it, bringing forth clues from it, influencing in mutual relations also language and culture as such. To this end, Berleant writes about engagement with objects of art or with the environment as about "ecological event or ecological cultural phenomena" (Berleant 2011, 135-136), usually binding the two supposed opposites and showing us not just one side of the coin, but the coin itself.

A perfect harmony of nature, art, and philosophy is the accord that resounds in everyday activities in Berleant's home. Riva Marcel reading Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* while Arnold washes the dishes after the meal can be a metaphor for this combination. Berleant's engagement with the world presents in his life in myriad ways: through his environment, being in gardens, walking the mountains, contemplating the landscape, while also feeling oppressiveness regarding our sense for consumerist capitalism;[8] with art, while practicing piano in the afternoons, or participating in community musical events (like at the Collins Center for the Arts in Bangor); while reading masterpieces of literature with his wife, or while watching dance performances. In all these ways, he expresses the aesthetic and sensitive part of his personality, while another rational and enlanguaged part argues in a theoretical manner. These parts are compatible and coherent; together they are directed towards a more sensible and just relationship with oneself, others, and the world. This creates the perspective of social aesthetics.

> A social aesthetic may characterize personal relationships, vocational situations, educational, therapeutic, and creative activities and, ideally, political processes. Because human life is thoroughly and pervasively social, social aesthetics offers a basis for a humane world view, one that both redeems our humanity and guides us in fulfilling it. (Berleant 2017, 15)

The extreme weight and novelty, in my opinion, lies in this social perspective, especially in how Arnold Berleant approaches the democratization processes and the idea of democracy. Democracy, or its lack, he perceives through the lenses of aesthetic experience and not just as a kind of political formation. The ideal of democracy is played by him in a key of co-inhabiting the same space and

sharing aesthetic everyday experiences. Its lack is visible in unequal distribution of positive and negative aesthetic experiences related to places, air quality, and sound spaces for example – sensibility and the environment need to be minded in thinking about the democratic arrangement of human society (Berleant 2010). In this innovative and important way he continues here the line of other pragmatist thinkers like John Dewey, who stressed that democracy is not "simply and solely a form of government" (Dewey 1968, 246) but a social ideal based on social relations, considering the distribution of franchises leading to formation of an ethical community. Like Dewey and other pragmatists, Berleant connects various lines, perspectives, and approaches in order to come closer to understanding the human condition and the condition of a human cultural world. Aesthetics, philosophy, and social reflection are combined, being oriented to harmonious and fulfilled everyday lives of human beings; together they show us "how to create and live in a human world: how to humanize the world" (Berleant 2017, 15).

It is this delicately balanced connection, mindfulness, and subtlety which characterizes Berleant as a person and a philosopher, and assures ever-growing interest in his works, particularly in the realm of Eastern philosophers (for ex. Chinese thinkers Zeng Fanren[9] and Cheng Xiangzhan[10] developing eco-aesthetics in reference to environmental aesthetics, and Japanese philosopher Yuriko Saito, who shows extensively how the aesthetic and ethical approach of Berleant's philosophy is compatible with important aspects of the Japanese worldview, aesthetic, and art practices.)[11] Berleant presents a focus on sensible dwelling in the environment, on the art of appreciation, on experience and engagement, connecting Eastern and Western tradition by pushing modern idealistic Western tendencies toward fixing identity into the multiplicity of drives, relationships, and experiences immersed in our densely interconnected world.

> People are embedded in their world, their life-world, to use an important term from phenomenology. A constant exchange takes place between organism and environment, and these are so intimately bound up with each other that our conceptual discriminations serve only heuristic purposes and often mislead us (…). As an integral part of an environmental field, we both shape and are formed by the multitude of forces that produce the experiential qualities of the universe we inhabit. These qualities constitute the perceptual domain in which we engage in aesthetic experience. (Berleant 2005, 115).

Life is a philosophy, and philosophy is a life – at least for Arnold Berleant – for this he works tirelessly (although he does not overwork) as an editor, until recently, and as a theorist. Confirmation of this can be found in the book he is currently preparing, *Critical Social Aesthetics. Essays in Social Philosophy* to be published by Bloomsbury, which combines into a whole his considerations from the earliest works to the most recent, including issues related to aesthetics of terrorism, aesthetics of violence, and problems with postmodernism. Berleant trespasses wonderfully, as usual, not breaking anything but rather wandering through the garden and traveling new paths.

Of course, I am not the only theorist fascinated with Berleant's thought: others find their inspiration in it too, but I can sincerely say that I *love* his thought, which is an integral part of his person – a good, and very wise person, and a great teacher of life.

I always keep him close to my heart, nevermind how far away he may be.

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[1] Here should be paid tribute also to Professor Bohdan Dziemidok, who introduced American aesthetics into Polish philosophy, pragmatism within this. His last book summarizing his research is: Bohdan Dziemidok, *Amerykańska aksjologia i estetyka XX wieku. Wybrane koncepcje* [American axiology and aesthetics in 20th century. Chosen ideas]. (Warszawa: PWN, 2014).
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[6] From 2019-2022 she was also the First Vice President of the International Association for Aesthetics, of which Arnold Berleant is a former Secretary-General, Past President, and Honorary Life Member.
[7] See for ex.: Arnold Berleant, "Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics". *ESPES* 5(2), 2017.
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AN ASYNCHRONOUS DIALOGUE ON CORE IDEAS

Katya Mandoki

Abstract
I had the privilege of enjoying a dialogue with Arnold Berleant as we met during congresses on several occasions and by writing to each other on various questions throughout the years. All of these have been precious to me. On the occasion of his Festschrift, a new opportunity opens up in which I revise some of his ideas on aesthetic field, aesthetic disinterest, aesthetic engagement, and negativity along his career. Even if we both have focused on similar subjects and approached them through a pragmatist framework, our common starting point has taken each of us through very different paths. Berleant's utopian views of aesthetics projected into the political somehow echo Frankfurt School's emancipatory demand on the aesthetic, and I do hope he may be right. Although we may dream for a better world, whatever values and directions aesthetics takes requires us to underline its specificity well aware of political and ethical implications in which it is always already entangled with.

Keywords
Aesthetic Field, Aesthetic Disinterest, Aesthetic Engagement.

In his clear, accessible and ordered writing, always illustrated by examples, Arnold Berleant's work is of interest to both specialists and early students of aesthetics. Since the beginning of his prolific trajectory, his critical approach directly confronts controversial subjects opening a door to revise well established credos in mainstream aesthetics such as the Kantian concept of aesthetic disinterest and Bullough's psychical distance.

Berleant[1] attempts to retain what is valuable in the concept of "aesthetic disinterest" and re-invigorate it examining its association to universality, contemplation, objectualism, distancing conditions, traditionally linked to aesthetic attitude (in Stolnitz's term). He criticizes Bullough's notions of "psychical distance" derived from Kant's conception of disinterested delight (as well as from Addison, Hutcheson, Shaftsbury) and proposes to replace it by "situations where experiences occur and which frequently, but not invariably, include identifiable objects."[2] This is an effort to adjust and update aesthetics so that it can account for current artistic phenomena such as conceptual art, performance, installations, mail, land, body and digital art. As I wrote three decades ago:

> In a sharp attack on contemporary aesthetics, Arnold Berleant[3] attempts to destroy three predominant myths in works published in this field: 1) that art consists primarily of objects, 2) that works of art have a special status, and 3) that they must be viewed in a special way. His critique stems from contemporary artistic expressions, such as happening, ready-mades and conceptual art that cannot be considered as objects. He denounces the incompatibility of objectualist presuppositions in aesthetic theories with contemporary art. ... Lastly, he

> denounces Bullough's notion (1979) of "psychical distance," and Aldrich's "prehension" that derive from Kantian ideas of contemplation and disinterest.[4]

The aesthetic experience is, for Berleant, neither disinterested, nor contemplative, nor detached. Given the immobility of established ideas on traditional aesthetics, Berleant's criticism contributed to the necessity of exploring artistic processes under the light of new production and of including real experience into the conditions of art appreciation, rather than reproducing the idealization of some pure aesthetic state of contemplation. Dewey and Merleau-Ponty are certainly antecedents to his pragmatist and phenomenological framework from which he intends to examine "what remains of value in the traditional approach once its misleading assumptions and claims have been set aside."[5] He points out the three main concepts of Kantian aesthetics: the idea of taste, of disinterestedness and of the beautiful:

> Taste in the beautiful is alone a disinterested and free satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent … Taste is the faculty of judging an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful.[6]

Note that beauty is for Kant in this specific paragraph of the "Explanation of the beautiful resulting from the first moment" of the *Critique of Judgment,* a name, a category we use to qualify a reaction to an object that produces an emotional effect of satisfaction, not a metaphysical or ontological entity. This definition seems univocal enough as a signifier denoting such reaction despite Kant's other contradictory definitions of beauty. The same can be said of the term "taste" as the faculty of judging disinterested satisfaction extracted from an object we call beautiful demanded by its universality based on *sensus communis*. Taste discriminates between adherent and pure beauty and between the good, the agreeable and the beautiful, as well as between more refined subtleties in the judgment of artworks.

Berleant considers that "we can forgo the requirement of universality with an easy conscience" and I would add moreover that given the fact that such Kantian universality was in fact heavily eurocentric, it is even easier. This does not necessarily take us to purely relativistic aesthetics in all cases: a beautiful well-done necklace can be appreciated among very dissimilar social groups. However, other objects judged as beautiful are culture specific such as tattoos, phosphorescent painted hair, Mursi expanded lower lip, abstract art, barbies, neck lengthening among the Kayan, heavy metal music, piercings etc.

In the Transcendental Aesthetics of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as the science of the laws of sensibility, Kant followed Baumgarten's concept of aesthetics as inferior gnoseology beginning in sensation and space and time a-priori intuitions as conditions for the development of rational knowledge. By the third Critique, Kant not only disassociated the aesthetic from the cognitive but

contrasted both, therefore renouncing to a fundamental grounding for aesthetics as the theory of *aisthesis*, sense perception, and reorienting the focus upon the beautiful, the sublime and the artistic.

For Kant, an aesthetic judgment is by definition non conceptual. "The judgment of taste is, therefore, not a judgment of knowledge; thus, it is not logical, but aesthetic, if we understand by this that the determining base of which cannot be but subjective."[7] However, the fact that we are dealing with experience does not necessarily exclude the cognitive as the difference lies in the categories applied to perception.

Experience in itself may not produce rational concepts, but it is a condition to rationality. Starting from experience we form models of the world which can then be abstracted into categories and laws (in what Peirce's semiotics defined as "secondness" and "thirdness"). Aisthesis as sensibility or perception, "firstness", the feeling of something as something particular, the qualia, constitutes the dimension that characterizes our discipline, from which beauty and art are derivative, not central. Aesthetics as the study of all processes involved in aisthesis encompasses the whole spectrum from the simplest sensations which are physical processes at neurological terminals, to wider perception and to experience up to very subtle sensitive distinctions biologically and culturally determined.

If aesthetics would deal only with beauty as its primary and foundational object, then it would have to study beauty in all its forms: human beauty, animal beauty, vegetal beauty, mineral beauty, intellectual beauty, cosmic beauty, technological beauty, even conceptual beauty or cellular beauty. Such studies would benefit if the field is defined as "beautology" or "kallology" (to use the Greek root καλλονή) rather than "aesthetics" and thus concentrate on this category only. As I have repeatedly argued[8] beauty is one among many categories applied to qualities of perception and experience most of which we have barely begun to explore. This is strictly consistent to Kant's idea, as in the paragraph quoted, that beauty is a term we use, a semiotic category, and not an entity.

As Eagleton[9] clearly stated, what is implied in the idea of disinterest is basically a disgust with utilitarianism and expresses an idealized image by the bourgeoisie of itself dreaming in leaving aside the vulgarity of practical calculations. In the act of disinterested satisfaction according to Kant one must act not through egoism, advantage or benefit but enjoy the artwork independently of our interest in its existence. However, isn't the idea of "disinterested delight" an oxymoron since such delight provided by the artwork is exactly the benefit we are interested in?[10] In short, Berleant's putting the questioning of these two ideas to the fore was a much-needed step.

On the aesthetic field

The relevance of analyzing artworks in their conditions and situations was clear to Berleant already in 1970 when he presents a contextualized approach to aesthetics by the interaction of various factors such as the biological, psychological, material and technological, historical, social and cultural. He proposed the idea of "aesthetic field" composed of four factors: "the creative factor represented primarily

by the artist; the appreciative one by the viewer, listener, or reader; the objective factor by the art object, which is the focus of the experience; and the performative by the activator of the aesthetic occurrence" instead of the psychology or biography of artists as was practiced in art history and criticism.

Even if we may not agree in the factors he suggests, contextualizing is a much-needed approach to understand the aesthetic. Berleant's "aesthetic field" brings to mind Danto's concept of the artworld (1964)[11] and Dickie's (1974)[12] institutional analysis as well as Bourdieu's "intellectual field," (1969) later "cultural field", all probably influenced directly or indirectly by Thomas Kuhn's concept of "scientific paradigm" in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* originally published in 1962.[13] This, too, may have derived from Saussurean concept of language "system" or "paradigm" in semiology, as later termed by Roland Barthes. Arnold Hauser (1951) initiated the contextualization of artistic production in its social environment through his three volumes of *Social Theory of Art* (or rather social history of art). Cultural conventions, professional specialization, specific sites for exhibition and presentation, a system of evaluation and valuation, and of course an economic and social demand are necessary for artistic works to exist and condition their outcomes.

Berleant's concept of "aesthetic field" can be understood perhaps as a sort of magnetic field at the center of which may lay configurations that attract sensibility. He writes: "On the view taken here, value is inherent in an aesthetic field or situation and is not a feature or quality of any particular part of it, such as the object or the appreciator."[14] Yet it seems to me that it is precisely the receptivity of the appreciator's sensibility in that point and moment that enables a situation to become an aesthetic field. A numb person may be present and not notice anything, neutralizing any aesthetic value possible no matter how spectacular (as bored, lumped, and tired tourists even at the Sistine Chapel).

As he defines it: "this I shall call the aesthetic field, the context in which art objects are actively and creatively experienced as valuable."[15] I would suggest that since it is referred to art objects and not to sensibility in general, it would be more specifically denoted as "artistic field". On the other hand, as I have proposed in my work, there is a whole aesthetic dimension that is not circumscribed to the artistic although it encompasses it among other phenomena that touch, so to say, our sensibility in delightful or painful, nourishing or poisoning ways. It is not the objects that define what is aesthetic, but as Kant and Baumgarten stated, the subject's receptivity.

On aesthetic engagement

In common language, an engagement is taken between two persons committing to remain together or making a formal agreement to get married. In Berleant's work it has been a half a century approach to a new way of defining art appreciation that can encompass also contemporary forms of art. "If there is a distinguishing characteristic of traditional as well as contemporary art, it is their ever-insistent demand for "appreciative involvement."[16]

He considers that distancing is no longer pursued in contemporary arts, from Grotowski's theater to Nitsch's performances and proposes instead aesthetic engagement to characterize the most fulfilled stage of aesthetic experience: "I call such appreciation 'aesthetic engagement', and when it is achieved most intensely and completely, it fulfills the possibilities of aesthetic experience."[17] Berleant conceives aesthetic engagement as the perceptual experience of a cultural ecological process.[18]

There are problems, however, with the concept of "engagement" and with "situations where experiences occur". First, engagement is not an exclusive concept for aesthetics, as in Webster's various definitions: "an arrangement to meet or be present at a specified time and place a dinner engagement; a job or period of employment especially as a performer; something that engages: pledge; the act of engaging: the state of being engaged; emotional involvement or commitment; betrothal; the state of being in gear; a hostile encounter between military forces."

This exemplifies our struggle with words and the theoretical effort to clear ambiguities into such polysemic terms. The traditional notion of "contemplation" is not exclusively aesthetic either, as it seems to have been borrowed from theology (as the notion of "inspiration" probably derived from theological "revelation"). So is the idea of aesthetic redemption in Frankfurt School aesthetics, particularly Adorno and Benjamin. From religion we too inherited Burke's idea of the sublime, closely related to the biblical sense of exaltation or elevation שגב. We can see that the relation between the religious and the aesthetic is as complex as that between the aesthetic and the ethical and the moral, no less than the political.

My work certainly faces the same problem. I tried to deal with this concept in everyday aesthetics from a phenomenological approach and my proposal was the term of *prendamiento* or *latching-onto* as the drive for sensorial openness and craving for life metaphorically taken from a baby's latching onto the nipple in full sensorial experience. Reconsidering this term fifteen years later, I suspect that it could have carried an ambiguity as the term of *latching-on* may be used for other situations, particularly psychological as in toxic symbiotic relations. What made me propose it then was that *aisthesis* involves (or engages?) an appetite for life, and an openness to feeling and sensation. It is both a receptive activity and active receptivity.

As I am not a native English speaker, I am somewhat deaf to the connotations the term *latching-onto* may have, so I will use *prendamiento* instead. I remember that when my father was hospitalized in his final month, a talented man full of curiosity, originality and a lover of enigmas to solve, my preoccupation was, apart from medical issues, that he must latch onto something significant to him (music, a movie, a book) to overcome being latched-by pain and anxiety. *Prendamiento* is our condition of vitality, our will to live, our sense of gratitude and joy and occurs even without an object to focus on and certainly not exclusively with an artistic object. It means full receptivity, as the term itself denotes, and occurs by just being aware of the moment, of our condition of being alive, of letting our sensibility appear like the sun among the dense clouds of constant thinking. Through Greimas'

semiotic square of contraries and opposites, I discovered other related conditions such as *prendimiento* to refer to the situation of sensibility sequestered by stimuli that requires our closing up from experience too painful to undergo (using Dewey's term). Being engulfed by a problem not in a playful manner but in a desperate one is *prendimiento*, a form of encapsulation or numbness, of obsession or addiction. There is also *desprendimiento*, when one's sensibility is finally liberated from being passively latched-by, and *desprendamiento*, losing the nipple, the object of pleasure falling out of the joyful experience and leaving us with a sense of being lost and disoriented.

Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience, to which Berleant's *engagement* is closely related, struggled to establish that art is not a mere object but a form of experience depending on the activity of the subject as a live creature. He vividly described the wide spectrum of experience as a foundation for the aesthetic and then deviated from this experiential ground to establish the uniqueness of *an experience* circumscribing the aesthetic as artistic experience. Berleant remains close to Dewey's sense in this approach of aesthetic engagement as principally related to the arts, if not only, as he opens up the scope to environmental aesthetics that encompasses both natural and urban environments.

Berleant refers to "situations where experiences occur" mostly in relation to art or beauty and within an aesthetic field, situations in a museum, appreciating a beautiful landscape, a theater performance, a well-designed space etc. In my view, no matter what we do, sensibility is always already involved even if we numb ourselves to protect our senses from aggressive or dull stimuli as a noisy drill in the street or loud cheap music in a restaurant or neighbor. As I have argued in my work, experiences occur in all situations as sensibility is ever present, it is our basic life condition, even when we wrap ourselves within obsessive thoughts. Life itself is experiencing, no matter how dimly, fragmentarily or without conscious awareness of senses involved, as in our dreams during sleep. Life is aesthesis.

Berleant understands such situations as "aesthetic urban ecology": "Thus an aesthetic urban ecology denotes an integrated region with distinctive perceptual features: sounds, smells, textures, movement, rhythm, color; the magnitude and distribution of volumes and masses in relation to the body; light, shadow and darkness, temperature." What he demands is the need to build a more humane, aesthetically friendly urban ecology, an old art that stingy and cold functionalism has stolen from us in exchange for aseptic environments if not simply hostile. I hope his voice will be amply heard by urban planners ... if such a thing really exists given the chaos of city building fully dominated by economic interests.

On negativity of aesthetics and aesthetic violence

The common honorific usage of the term "aesthetic" – as if by itself refers only to a positive value instead of a topic for research – has hindered inquiry on how sensibility can be manipulated and violated. Berleant has been questioning this very serious problem and exposes another side of aesthetics, what he calls "negative aesthetics", an issue in which we both converge.

Quoting Berleant's definitions and descriptions of negative aesthetics as follows: "We can give a name to sensory experience that has no clear positive value, the underside of beauty, so to say, and call it negative aesthetics…when an aesthetic occasion is perceptually distressing, repellent, or painful, or has effects that are harmful or destructive, then understanding the aesthetic obliges us to acknowledge negativity." In other words, "we can speak of negative aesthetic values, of negative aesthetics when, in the primacy of perceptual experience, the experience as a whole is in some sense unsatisfying, distressing, or harmful." "What I want to call negative aesthetics refers to whole domains of sensibility suffused with negative value…works with no redeeming qualities, from those that are trite, baldly unsubtle, overly sentimental or maudlin to those that are sadistic, degrading, or damaging."[19]

Urban conditions can be very violent and aggressive to any person's sensibility, as being daily crushed within a multitude in crowded subway wagons, stressed to overcome traffic to get on time for work, living in utterly sordid spaces in dark, poorly ventilated little boxes, or having to work in over-illuminated offices or visually or acoustically strident malls, streets and restaurants as the many other examples described by Berleant among conditions of aesthetically hostile environments.

Yet there also situations where aesthetics can be pleasurable and yet negative. In order to distinguish the full spectrum of aesthetic negativity, we must separate its immediate emotional effects, moral consequences, religious values, ideologies and sensorial intensity. In my view, the most deleterious of all negative aesthetics is in poisoning lives, often as irreversible as love famined childhoods. In dictatorial regimes, children are often victims of ideological, religious or militaristic indoctrination teaching them to hate and enemy train to murder as an ideal. It may even be fun for kids to play as martyrs and heroes, priming them into hatred from a very early age and so irreversibly affecting their sensibility and who, as those with severe love deprivation, never quite recover.[20] This is not an exclusively psychological problem as it determines their openness or closure to others and to different worlds, their attitude to life, to their own life and its value. Criminal customs like selling girls to old men and other forms of child abuse, parents and school teachers exerting physical violence against children and the monstrous practice of clitoral ablation still practiced around the world with impunity make negative aesthetics seem trivial when in fact they are extreme manifestations precisely of it. It is the victims' sensibility that is at stake here, and destroyed.

As Berleant notes: "Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish aesthetic negativity clearly from the aesthetically positive, as well as from the different forms that it takes and from moral considerations." There certainly can be conflict between what is legal and what is legitimate, what is moral and what is ethical, what is aesthetic and what is artistic; we could expect aesthetic negativity to be problematic. For Berleant, in the "negative sublime" the aesthetic and the moral are inseparable, and yet I would add that morality is not the rod to measure negative aesthetics but sensibility, because it always implies the vulnerability of the other, it is an assault against life, the ultimate value. Being alive is being with others, not just *Dasein*.

Apart from moral implications, terrorism as negative aesthetic principally attests to the degree of mutilation and rottenness of a human being's sensibility by ideology in the case of the perpetrator to commit such acts, and certainly to the degree of pain, horror, and irreversible damage such terrorist causes to the victims. Even if the systematic cultivation of such mutilation is prevalent and even a motive of pride in different social groups, such catastrophic situation should never be taken as normal or culturally relative.

We must keep in mind that the delicate problem in coping with both the aesthetic and the moral is the moralization of aesthetics or the aesthetization of morality. At the same time, we cannot ignore their imbrication.

On a personal note

My first encounter with Professor Arnold Berleant was through his paper on "The Historicity of Aesthetics". I was surprised and greatly pleased to find such a fresh and critical approach to traditional aesthetics very much in tune with my own concerns. During the 2004 International Congress of Aesthetics at Rio de Janeiro I had a chance to meet him personally and discuss with him several ideas. I mentioned quoting him on my work on everyday aesthetics ten years earlier on a published book in Spanish (1994) and how I appreciated his new approach.

Again, we coincided at several congresses, one of them a meeting in Lahti precisely on the topic of applied and everyday aesthetics. Arnold there presented a paper on the negativity of aesthetics, with which again we coincided. Such negativity, as phrased by Berleant, is precisely what drew me towards the study of aesthetics. To say it very briefly, from a young age, when I learned about the Holocaust, I was impressed by the theatrical and visual display of Nazism and wondered about its power of manipulation for any ends, even genocide. I was interested to find out how this power of aesthetics operates to the degree of mobilizing entire populations and even a continent to support an obvious psychopath with fits of rage. That was part of my Ph.D. dissertation which required also a previous step proving that there is such a thing as non-artistic aesthetics apart from the aesthetics of nature. In other words, in order to approach this dangerous side of aesthetics, I had to argue first that aesthetics has not only a positive value and second that is manifested not only to the artistic but in the everyday, most saliently in the political. The wide array in the social use of aesthetics in everyday life, in official and military displays, in religious and athletic events, in how the belief in occult superstitions is created, in common interactions and presentations of identities, has been neglected in our philosophical field. My first book *Prosaica*, published in Spanish in 1994, was this first step.

Even if I do not converge with Berleant's utopian views of aesthetics projected into the political, which somehow echo Frankfurt School's emancipatory demand on the aesthetic, I hope he may be right. Although we may dream for a better world, whatever values and directions aesthetics takes

in different situations requires first to understand its specificity apart for moral and political considerations with which it is always already entangled with.

I must end by acknowledging how much I appreciate his editorial initiative for stimulating a diversity of positions in *Contemporary Aesthetics* journal, the freedom to open up and generously support non-conventional approaches and most of all his friendship and encouragement. I joyfully join to celebrate with my students and colleagues such a bountiful, didactic, courageous and prolific trajectory.

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[19] Berleant, 2010: 143.
[20] cf. Mandoki, 2019.

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THE AESTHETIC FIELD: ARNOLD BERLEANT'S PHILOSOPHY AS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF EXPERIENCE

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Abstract
The essay aims to identify the original matrix of Berleant's aesthetic thought by deepening his initial research on the notion of "field". Berleant analyzes the "aesthetic field" by considering it as a dynamic texture that stands outside the dualisms that have characterized modern philosophy. At the core of this analysis is the fruitful convergence between different traditions from which Berleant draws for laying out his philosophical program. In particular, if phenomenology leads him to thematize the connection between experience and judgment, pragmatism leads him to establish the cornerstone of the experiential (and above all perceptual) character of the aesthetic as such. Thanks to this, the perspective developed by Berleant since the seventies of the twentieth century still proves to be largely vital, as it is capable of delineating an anthropological horizon centered on the analysis of the "environmental" practices of the so-called "aesthetic engagement".

Keywords
The Aesthetic, Field, Experience, Engagement, Valuation.

1. The past and present context of Berleant's research

In the past half century,[1] Arnold Berleant stands as a prominent figure in the landscape of American philosophic aesthetics. *The Aesthetic Field,* first published in 1970, is his first organic contribution on art and aesthetics.[2] Since then, his research has continued in broad and significant continuity with these analyses,[3] exploring theoretical scenarios much prior to their current ubiquity, from *Environmental Aesthetics* to *Everyday Aesthetics*. Yet *The Aesthetic Field* rarely appears in the bibliographies of works retracing salient stages of recent Anglo-American aesthetic reflection. And neither was its 2001[4] reissue successful in changing this state of affairs. The reason for this neglect, however, as will here be argued almost paradoxically, is the trait that makes this author current.

Berleant's first monographic work has its roots in a special terrain. Within it resound phenomenological accents, as its subtitle (*A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*) articulates, as well as pragmatist accents, documented emblematically by Berleant's use of the Deweyan term "transaction" to indicate the actual occurrence of aesthetic experience. What is more is how Berleant manages to harmonize these accents by tuning into frequencies of the analysis of experience; meaning that "experiential aesthetics"[5] programmatically frustrates any attempt to resolve the aesthetic in categorical or linguistic frameworks. The original context of *The Aesthetic Field* is the same context against which the lines of research animating the prevailing character of philosophy at the time were

going, when the takeover of the *linguistic turn* was transforming the aesthetic debate into an analytic philosophy of art. Consequently, aesthetics' focus shifted onto a plane of investigation far from the description of experiential structures found in *The Aesthetic Field*. It is therefore easy to understand why those scholars who have reconstructed these events, starting from this same context,[6] have marginalized, or even pushed beyond their horizon, Berleant's very first crucial and organic work.

However, today the situation has changed. In philosophy, it is not unusual to witness in these last years the re-emergence of instances similar to those promoted by Berleant as part of a comprehensive re-conception of the mind, experience, and language itself. Analogously, in theoretically systematizing the results of the most up-to-date experimental researches, some scholars are moving beyond the empiricism that still thrives in laboratories and on the field. Even the heirs of analytic thought have increasingly shifted their research focus towards experiential structures. Thus, in general, the reasons and strategies that Berleant tried to bring about and to the fore through the notion that entitles this volume, that of "aesthetic field", are corroborated. What stands out is the proximity between Berleant's first work, where we read that aesthetic experience "brings us back to the noncognitive perceptual root of our concepts and our beliefs"[7], and recent projects aiming at grasping the roots of meaning by focusing "on qualitative and affective dimensions of experience that have usually been regarded as operative mostly in our experience, appreciation, and creation of various arts".[8]

2. Between phenomenology and pragmatism: the non-cognitive character of the aesthetic

The protracted inattention to *The Aesthetic Field* stems from the tendency to neglect a specific line of research. As a student of Marvin Farber, one of Husserl's most significant promoters in the United States, Berleant develops a reading of phenomenology that has since its beginnings dealt with the horizons of pragmatism, at least on the basis of an in-depth study on the issues of "naturalism" and the "naturalization of philosophy". In light of this peculiar revival of Husserlian themes, mainly linked to *Experience and Judgment*, Berleant's original theoretical context appears all but sterile, as well as less elementary or naive than one might think. Presuming that the aesthetic can be resolved as a subclass of the linguistic and/or cognitive is one of the most striking reasons that hindered and hinder the correct reception of Berleant's work. Re-examining the afore mentioned context can therefore aid in the overcoming of such reasons.

The theme around which the general layout of *The Aesthetic Field* revolves is the complex relationship between the holistic and *lebensweltlich* components of human experience, as well as the predicative and evaluative articulation realized on the reflexive plane of the noetic, cognitive, or even theoretical elaboration. It is in looking at this nucleus that the richness of Berleant's text emerges. It belongs to the same plane on which is etched the darker side – so to say – of the perceptual thematized by a philosopher such as Wilfrid Sellars: another great philosophical example stemming from the same phenomenological root grafted by Farber into the American philosophical ecosystem. In fact, as it has been observed:

> despite Sellars became renown as one of the fathers of conceptualism, he always held that his own description of the conceptual and normative content of our perceptive abilities should be completed by a theory of their sensory and non-conceptual character, and this distinction, anything but marginal, shows itself right down to his latest works.[9]

With the notion of "aesthetic field" Berleant refers exactly to this problematic junction. The entire research supporting the *The Aesthetic Field* is marked by the intent to subtract the aesthetic from the predicative, and *therefore* from the cognitive, starting from the frank recognition of its sensible-perceptual (but not constative) nature. This "inherently non-discursive experience"[10], which "takes place on a pre-reflective level, contextual rather than fragmented, and therefore undifferentiated by any conceptual distinctions"[11], is immediately revealed as an overall horizon of presence, rather than as a single instantaneous datum or collection of data:

> To say that aesthetic experience is immediate, then, does not mean that it is fleeting. It is to utter a denial, to assert that there is no intermediary in our encounter with art. As qualitative experience, art is felt with a compelling directness in which detachment, deliberation, and all other intermediate states have no place. Symbol and substitute, therefore, do not yet exist, nor does propositional truth. There is forceful presentation rather than representation. Sensory qualities predominate in their immediacy and directness, and even when experience intensifies to the degree of rapture or awe, sensation is not transcended but lies at its very heart. The experience of art is neither religious nor mystical; it is eminently worldly. Not only are sensory qualities present in the immediacy of aesthetic experience; relations are often there as well. However they are felt rather than cognized in the context of qualitative immediacy which distinguishes the experience of art. The qualitative nature of aesthetic experience, its sensuousness, and its immediacy thus complement one another.[12]

And shortly after:

> aesthetic experience, for all its significance and profundity, never substantiates propositions for which we can claim literal truth. Moreover, the powerful sensory presence of aesthetic intuition is alien to the direct apprehension of propositional truth that is the distinctive mark of intellectual intuition.[13]

This highlights how questionable it is to resolve the complex content of experience in a linguistic framework. And this is the point where, in *The Aesthetic Field*, phenomenology meets pragmatism. In fact, for Berleant, the aesthetic modality of experience, precisely because not predicative, embodies salient aspects of the primary interaction between the human organism and the environment, a direct echo of a Deweyan formulation of experience. This experiential mode, and with it art, is "presentational rather than representational, immediate rather than mediate, perceptual rather than conceptual, unique rather than abstract, intuitive and contextual rather than analytic and fragmented, and above all, neither

cognitive, inferential, nor discursive"[14]. The thesis derived from this complex framework establishes the extraneousness of the aesthetic to the dimensions of meaning (denotative), of truth (discursive) and, more generally, of the cognitive in the strict sense; i.e., instead of having or acquiring meaning and truth, the aesthetic is meaningful and manifestative.

However, this does not mean expelling every cognitively determined or determinable content from the horizon of the aesthetic. A cognitive element, despite carrying out its cognitive function, can still possess relevance and significance in the aesthetic field by characterizing its overall density. The aesthetic significance of a symbol, for example, is independent of its symbolizing power, that is, of the cognitive function it performs (vicariousness with respect to an absence). Its import lies in the operative mode it promotes (the aspectual character of a presence). From an aesthetic point of view "artistic symbols do not *do*; they *are*"[15], or rather, they do not refer to, but manifest. This is made possible by implementing in a phenomenological environment a precise pragmatic lesson: the work of art is understood verbally as a "working"[16], therefore distinct, in a Deweyan fashion, from the art object. Instead, it is equivalent to the transaction itself in virtue of its experiential endowment:

> The work of art in its fullest dimensions is, in the final analysis, the aesthetic transaction in its entirety. It is a transaction that occurs in the context of an environment involving, in minimal terms, an art object and an individual who activates its aesthetic potential.[17]

3. Aesthetic experience as perception

The tension between experience and judgment, characterizing the phenomenological matrix of *The Aesthetic Field,* finds its own catalyst in the acknowledgement of the experiential status of aesthetics in general, and of art in particular.[18] The result is the individuation of the area in which the non-cognitive character of the aesthetic is expressed: the dimension of the perceptual praxis. Complementary to the thesis of the extraneousness of the aesthetic to the cognitive is that related to its perceptual character: "the aesthetic field is a perceptual field."[19] The goal of *The Aesthetic Field* is an analysis of perception capable of rightly emphasizing its performative, interactional and collusive components that vastly exceed perception's subordination to cognitive determination, and further its reduction to a stimulus for ascertaining categorically defined or definable content. If the aesthetic must be rethought as perceptual, perception must be rethought as aesthetic, reconsidered as a praxis of *aesthesis*.[20]

Alongside phenomenological and pragmatist motives, the deliberate resumption of the register of *prehension* described by Whitehead plays a primary role[21]. It expresses the aesthetic root of experience in perceptual terms, as primitive as the logical-cognitive one. On the one hand, prehension coincides in Whitehead with the perceptual praxis of a sensible complex; in its fulfillment this latter enjoys itself, is "self-enjoyment" as an "occasion of experience" by absorbing in its own texture the many aspects in which it manifests itself.[22] On the other hand, within it unfolds the potential that Whitehead explicitly attributes to the aesthetic modality of experience – with respect to the logical mode – as its

distinctive trait. An energetic potential connoting every artistic configuration in virtue of the very same aspectual, and therefore also dynamic, relationship between whole and parts that is in force within it.[23] The conjugation between these theoretical matrices, as already noted, is not exclusive to Berleant's research. Also as regards the further enrichment in perspective in light of reference to Whitehead, a direct precedent can be identified. It consists of yet another overlooked work, mostly in the last few decades, explicitly recalled by Berleant. It concerns *Philosophy of Art* by Virgil Aldrich,[24] published less than a decade before *The Aesthetic Field*. Starting precisely from "aesthetic perception" as "prehension", Aldrich develops a programmatically phenomenological inquiry generally oriented by Dewey's pragmatism,[25] in order to respond to the need, felt later also by Berleant, to escape contemplativism and, more broadly, the Kantian shadow commonly hanging over descriptions of aesthetic experience. The advantage derived from the rereading of such texts – texts that have been generally marginalized in the framework of the debate originating in the twentieth century's last decades – should by now be clear: they help identify possible bases taking leave of the gnoseological constraints of modern aesthetics. The horizon they trace significantly coincides with that of current neo-cognitivist philosophical agendas revising the model of mind, committed as they are to overcoming the dual opposition between mind and world. It is exactly at this crisis and inflection point of modern thought that Aldrich and Berleant converge. Urging the emancipation from formal transcendentalism as well as from classical metaphysics, in it is disclosed the possibility of a description of the "perceptual integrity of aesthetic experience"[26] in a usefully anthropological and material key.

The consequent theoretical turn deriving from these general assumptions deserves further emphasis. The strength in the concept of field adopted by Berleant comes to light when the material density it expresses is recognized. In the field, the various subjectual and objectual[27] vectors manifest in their co-implication. It is therefore not only a question of rejecting specific options in the philosophy of art, such as for instance the spectatorial principle of aesthetic contemplativism. Rather, what emerges is a radical discontinuity with respect to the Cartesian matrix of modern thought, as Berleant expressly declares with a reference precisely to Aldrich[28]. And, of course, leveraging the prepredicative (instead of cognitive) and interactional status (instead of oppositional) of the field aligns completely in line with turning toward an experiential modality freed from the lapse into knowledge. This is precisely a practice "that solicits an involved, responsive receptivity in the appreciation of art, a genuine participation in an experience of primary, qualitative perception"[29]. It is for this reason, and certainly not for slipping unexpectedly into a form of psychologism, that the phenomenon of the aesthetic field is forcefully directed to dealing with the complex figure of the *perceiver*: a sort of relational functor. His or her sensitive practice has the character of immediacy, not because it instantaneously renders accessible for a subject a perceptively given object. Rather, it coincides with the manifestation of an intricate network of mediations materially informing the complexity of the field, and which – situated in the sensible as the domain of phenomenological categorial intuition – find a reflexive expression in *perceptual*[30] rather than "conceptual or analytic" *categories*.

4. The perceiver's praxis

Now a brief technical remark aimed at emphasizing the centrality and relevance of the notion of "perceiver". One might assume a blunt coincidence between this term and the noun participle "percipient" (from Latin: *percipiens*, present participle of *percipere*), also used in *The Aesthetic Field*. Yet, pausing where "percipient" occurs in Berleant's dictation, shows how this is not the case. Berleant makes use of this latter word only in reporting Bullough's psychological theses[31] or in isolating, for the sake of analysis, the intrasubjective side of experience[32]. Conversely, throughout the rest of the book, the text pivots on the *perceiver*. The perceiver is more than a mere subject who perceives by placing him or herself against a world of already established objects. This is why it is necessary to avoid the reduction of the subjectual pole to the percipient, to prevent the investigation from being relegated to a psychologistic equivocation.[33] This passage is delicate since it coincides with the possibility of focusing on the phenomenological differential between two different approaches to subjectivity, both implicated in the aesthetic field.

Indeed, to find one's self in the position of the perceiver is not the consequence of the purely subjective adoption of an attitude. It is the unfolding experiential relationship that establishes "the manner in which the perceiver functions in the aesthetic field"[34] as he or she corresponds to the related appeals of meaningfulness. That is, this position is defined on the basis of modal constraints constitutive of the correspondence that is carried out in the field as such, based on the specific material qualities configuring the interaction that is taking place[35]. In this way, the aesthetic experience appears different from the effect of psychic activity. If anything, it is the so-called subject that tendentially takes shape for how it is passively constituted, that is to say, it emerges from the particular modalities of environmental relationships in which it is enveloped and engaged. Therefore, the *modal* appraisal of the *perceiver's subjectuality* must be kept separate from the *substantialist* appraisal of the *percipient's subjectivity*. Between them runs the same difference dividing "actor" and "agent". The first is irreducible to the second because incompatible with a Cartesian subject defined by its "intensional" endowment, and it is rather defined by the role it is called upon to play, in how it is asked, is allowed, and is able to participate in the field. Similarly, whilst percipient is only the subject of an act of perception, perceiver is the subjectual condensed nucleus of a perceptual practice whose *ownership pertains to the field itself*.

There is another facet that Berleant exploits to show the modal nuances of the aesthetic field. This facet is the delicate distinction between perceiver and appreciator. The appreciator is aware of the beauty of the aesthetic to a degree that exceeds the perimeter of the mere operative perceptual life, given his or her savouring of the aesthetic as it takes part in his or her experience. More than an aesthetic perceiver, the appreciator is an *aesthetically aware* perceiver, whose evaluative judgments proceed from his or her valuing efforts, which – as will be seen later – characterize and passively constitute the subjectual pole of aesthetic experience. We must surrender to the fact that the introduction of the

concept of field forces the description to insist on complex relational connotations; which are themselves difficult to capture in a theoretic lexicon marked by clear boundaries separating subjectivity and objectivity. We must endure a certain linguistic and conceptual discomfort once we accept the invitation to try a new codification of the components involved in the description of perception.

Moreover, even this last aspect has its roots in the general strategy inspiring *The Aesthetic Field*. The complex phenomenological reality of the perceiver flares up once the consideration of perception as practice is assumed over against perception as act. As an act performed by an agent, perception can almost docilely flow back into the channel of cognitive activity, canonically attributable to the perimeter of a replaced subjectivity. As a practice that stages a procedural field, that is as an enactive-performative dynamic that shapes he or she who is its actor, perception exhibits unavoidable externalist characteristics. It is a correspondence, perhaps even an expressive one, which involves on equal terms the subjectual pole and the objectual pole. It is primarily a relationship, actually an embodied one[36], irreducible to the designation of isolated juxtaposed contents according to the dualistic subject-object scheme. It is in this sense that Berleant notes the unsuspected complexity of aesthetic perception, since "the art object and its perceiver, to be sure, do function in the aesthetic field, but in ways not explained or even suggested by the usual common-sense account"[37]. In fact, aesthetic perception consists in a "transactional relationship in which perceiver and perceived are functionally inseparable, each becoming what it is on the basis of its intimate dependence on the other"[38]. As a praxis, perception is a path unwinding along a ridge from which related slopes extend. It makes little sense to try to establish whether the ridge belongs *de jure* to this or that side, even in the awareness that the ridge does not represent a further side.

This is why Berleant peremptorily issues a perceptual charter to the aesthetic. Some passages from *The Aesthetic Field* are unequivocal in this regard. For example: "when the experience is direct and immediate, when it is thoroughly qualitative, it remains immersed in the perceptual sphere"[39]; or again: "each art, in its own way, derives from the infinitely fertile matrix of perceptual experience and replenishes its source in an endlessly enriching cycle"[40]. It is thus reiterated how the aesthetic is not a plane or level added to those that intersect in a usual experiential field. The aesthetic experience is the overall mobilization of the field's vectors based on a qualitative *interrelation* that is carried out as *aisthesis*. Consequently, as Berleant distinguishes the perceiver from the subject who merely performs a perceptual act, so does he, like Dewey, distinguish the art object, an atomic objective content, from the work of art: an objective experiential whole that with the "dynamic character of the aesthetic situation", of which it is a vector, "includes the active involvement as well as the passive receptivity of the person experiencing art."[41]

5. The operative nature of the aesthetic field

The description of the aesthetic field is therefore more concerned with its operative factors than with isolated thematic vectors – or rather: indeed, with vectors, but only as they are outlined by and within

the peculiar operative character of the field, not *per se*. The goal is the ability to "see the aesthetic qualitatively rather than substantively"[42], with adjectival and adverbial terms rather than substantive or substantialist terms (cf. also *ibidem*, in footnote). The reader can see what, on the subjectual front, this implies for the various functional nuclei surrounding the perceiver, artist, and critic; and on the objectual front what it implies for the work of art, form, content, media and materials.

In relation to each of these nuclei Berleant strives to remove the aesthetic from the danger of its dissolution brought about by the ossification implicit in substantialist thematizations of its pervasive operativity. These latter lead to define the aesthetic in general on the basis of elements that in some way belong to it yet, once absolutized, inevitably distort it. In so doing, the dynamic tensions that make up the aesthetic in its operativity become fixed juxtapositions between mutually exclusive substantialist principles. And the consequence is not simply that of obscuring factors of complexity in the phenomenon. A far greater fault is to replace the very same phenomenon with a content that no longer serves as a processual moment of the whole, precisely because it tends to render the whole a part of it, its domain, its exemplification. Then, from the dense structure of the field, integrated in its aspects, we move toward a discrete succession of incompatible views: nuclei made fixed because detached from the texture of the field once foundational links are presumed. In so doing, the so-called "surrogate theories" emerge, which *The Aesthetic Field* polemicizes. It is no coincidence that their various determining principles are deduced, not always consciously, from specific conceptions of experience based on extra-aesthetic principles (metaphysical, gnoseological, religious, social, psychological, etc.), as is the case with the dogmas of disinterest or distance in appreciation.

Opposing these forms of substantialist unilateralism, Berleant insists on aesthetic praxis as an overall *engagement* that the perceiver assumes with the field, a collusive and integral transaction *with* the other nuclei that operate therewithin. A commitment, therefore, which implies a properly environmental and immersive surrounding, instead of juxtaposed canonical schemes that generate distance:

> Aesthetic experience transcends psychophysical and epistemological dualisms, for it is the condition of an engagement of perceiver and object in a unified relationship that is forcefully immediate and direct. [...] Instead of a fragmented concatenation of independent elements, the aesthetic field reveals a perceptual order and unity. Thus we can properly describe aesthetic experience as integral. It is experience which achieves its own unity when its boundaries can be defined functionally by the way in which the appreciator and the art object combine with the other factors in the aesthetic field to form a unified perceptual environment, an experiential totality."[43]

In the aesthetic engagement with the environment, activity and passivity, as well as subjectuality and objectuality, continually blur with one another. On the perceiver's side, there is an incessant oscillation between sensible receptivity to the ways in which phenomena manifest themselves and the performativity that stages it. The effusive commitment to the aesthetic experience is therefore the

exercise of skills that enables a non-thematic increase of competence in the praxis of *aisthesis*. It intensifies awareness before generating new knowledge. Certainly not instrumental to the acquisition of thematic knowledge and therefore to the awareness of "what", the aesthetic engagement remains intertwined with sensory manifestation in a never suspended contact with the awareness of "how". Working aesthetically, even as creators, means knowing how to proceed by groping[44]; therefore, the aesthetic is in itself *perfomance*, and can be fully carried out only in new praxes of *aisthesis*, in a progression of aesthetic knowledge that concerns exclusively the way in which the experience unfolds. The engagement remains a direct contact, *awareness*, without ever transfiguring into categorical or propositional knowledge, at least as long as it retains its own aesthetic nature.

The notion of engagement and its close coupling with the environment, inducing one to speak of "ecosystem"[45], acquired an explicitly growing relevance in Berleant's subsequent reflections.[46] But its phenomenological-pragmatist, anti-Kantian and anti-Cartesian root, is already fully exhibited in 1970. Here, the emphasis falls on its relational and modal trait, resisting any psychological or merely contextualist characterizations, without excluding both psychological and contextual implications or aftereffects. A point in case is the abandonment of the notion of pleasure, favoring instead the description of gratification provided by the aesthetic engagement. Through the redemption of the "sensuous character" of the aesthetic[47], Berleant replaces the intellectualized "aesthetic pleasure" with a factor of sensible intensification that does not disdain its own bodily affectivity, confirming the emancipation from modern dualisms. And it is precisely because in *The Aesthetic Field* this engagement reveals a physiognomy characterized by such traits, that its notion contributes to crediting Berleant as an exemplary reference if one is to develop, even today, an aesthetics that proceeds from *material engagement*: that is, from the paradigm of "experience-with", according to non-Cartesian models of the mind.[48]

The comparison between two theological metaphors which, in opposite contexts, are called to express the peculiarity of the aesthetic, helps express this change of scenery. Arthur Danto, ever since the famous essay initiating his reflections on art, to illustrate the thesis of the *ontological* duplicity of the work of art (supported by the semantic-cognitive character denied in *The Aesthetic Field*) uses the metaphor of the acquisition of celestial citizenship in addition to terrestrial citizenship.[49] Assuming a hiatus as radical as that which separates two ontological levels, he thus separates the aesthetic (or better: the artistic) and the sensible. Instead, Berleant invokes their convergence where he observes that, if anything, "what is needed is a reformation in aesthetic theory that would be achieved by supplanting the priesthood of the surrogate theories by the protestantism of direct communion with experience that art is able to furnish"[50].

6. The value and aspectual articulation of the aesthetic

Bringing the aesthetic back within the horizon of the praxis of *aisthesis* is, however, far from confining it to a perceptual content among others. It means recognizing it as a process of experiential

intensification marked by its overall qualitative relevance to the sensory register, in which it inscribes any subsequent analytically enucleable property or content. One could say the aesthetic consists of a orthogonally perceptual texture with respect to the conceptualization that the cognitive gives rise to. Consequently, although not due to some specific nuclear properties, it remains in principle distinct from experiences which, despite recruiting perceptual contents, move primarily towards other dimensions[51]. And it is based on this configuration that Berleant proposes an original approach to the controversial question of the normative in the aesthetic and therefore of its value.

Although it may serve instrumentally, even if honorifically, in itself, the *recognition* of aesthetic value (an experiential praxis) is independent of the implicit or explicit *attribution* of a determined value (an act of judgment). With respect to the subjectual pole, it is passively constitutive rather than actively constituted. It coincides with the feeling of being engaged in its perceptual praxis, which precisely because it requires such a responsive and collusive engagement, without referring to other dimensions, manifests itself as innervated by the sense of value; it appears of value (*valuable*): in the aesthetic field "the very experience is valuable—value is not something added to it or derived from it"[52]. Therefore, Berleant states that "the field in which each object of art is an element possesses its own experiential qualities, and aesthetically it is its own justification"[53]. The awkwardness we feel when asked to motivate the aesthetic import of an experience is due to the fact that any reasons we adduce express only aspects of it, and not institutive stimuli, nor projected mental contents. It is more an analytic than synthetic nexus. In other words, the field justifies itself for the way in which it manifests. This stands in contrast to a justification based on a material or an ideal that would be attained through it but itself situated outside its perimeter: "such intrinsic experience has a self-sufficiency; it is its own justification. Leading nowhere beyond itself, it never leaves itself behind. Aesthetic perception is essential perception, perception at its fullest and most complete"[54].

It is especially in the last chapter of *The Aesthetic Field* that Berleant insists on the need to distinguish between the attribution of a value that, as the result of a judicative activity, has propositional content, and the qualitative, non-propositional experience which is of value in that it urges and demands in its fulfilment the experiential absorption of the perceiver, engaging him or her in the participation of the unfolding field.[55] In the second case, there are no explicit or implicit evaluative acts that function as cause for inferentiality or extrinsic justifications, nor is there recourse to norms and criteria of judgment, these latter being determining or reflective. Instead, one experiences the very emergence of the necessary experiential relevance in its peculiar perceptual modality simply by participating in a flow of sensibility *as* it emerges in transactional correspondence. Therefore, the aesthetic field is described as "the context in which art objects are actively and creatively experienced as valuable"[56], not judged or evaluated as such in advance.

This reflects another conceptual distinction that might be worth focusing on. The praxis of the aesthetic perceiver is considered extraneous to the evaluative paradigm of "evaluation", and on the

other hand homogeneous with the experiential paradigm of "valuing". It articulates the value inherent in phenomena in the sense that it expresses it, stages it, and thus contributes to its visibility, which is very different from predicating or in any case, enucleating the value of the phenomena. This makes fatally double, or ambiguous, the aesthetic value, which is "*experienced as intrinsic and judged as extrinsic*"[57]. And if the predicative inherence of the (extrinsic) value can be suspended, the pervasive immanence of the (intrinsic) value is unavoidable. Anything but grafted onto a neutral perceptual fact, the valuative sense operates transversely with respect to the praxis of *aisthesis*. It feeds its development because it prevents simple irrelevance. Furthermore, every experiential modality must possess a criterion of relevance to be experience and not mere occurrence, and the peculiarity of the aesthetic modality is that the criteria which govern the field are intrinsic, and therefore themselves perceptual: independent of otherwise determinable atomic contents (be they axiological, cognitive, metaphysical, etc.). Therefore, any experience of field has aesthetic potential to the extent that it has sensible operativity, although certainly not every sensible experience is appreciated in aesthetic terms.

Precisely this operative texture, showing its ineluctable necessity in the intrasensorial salience of perception, endows with value a field as experienced and not judged, therefore as perceived in its pre-predicativity. And from the moment that the intrinsic value of the field finds expression in "relationships felt in the immediacy" that inhabit it[58] every hypothesis of a subjectivist justification is denied. It is these relationships that shape the subjectual pole, rendering the aesthetic operativity agent of passive syntheses, as such irreducible to an inert sphere of exercise of the faculty of judgment. In the aesthetic experience we are "judged" by beauty, and not vice versa. It is in this form that the tension between experience and judgment that was found at the basis of the phenomenological-pragmatist conception of Berleant[59] is summed *sub specie aesthetica*, which he expresses with great clarity where he compares the two roles of the perceiver and the critic: "thus while the perceiver in an aesthetic situation may be said to engage in aesthetic valuing, the critic as critic is concerned with the quite different function of aesthetic evaluation."[60].

In line with what we have just seen, what distinguishes aesthetic experience from non-aesthetic experience is for Berleant something far other than some normative element or propositional content. More than a region, "aesthetic" qualifies a modality of experience: "the aesthetic is not a separate kind of experience but rather a mode in which experience may occur", where it should also be remembered that "the modes of experience are not ontological"[61].

It is to the complex descriptions of modality, which cannot be hypostatized because operative, that phenomenology must be patiently aimed at, avoiding shortcuts toward some ontology. This is reflected in how Berleant deals with the distinctive marks of the aesthetic. Unlike others who, to avert the danger of taking on definitive tones, spoke of "symptoms" or "indicators" of the aesthetic,[62] Berleant speaks of "characteristics" and "characters"; these obliquely demonstrate an entire operativity according to a modality with no reality other than its own concretizations. The characters

reviewed are then connotations of the whole, similar to those that make a physiognomy familiar even in the absence of precise correspondence between two specimens, allowing at most a "matrix definition" of the aesthetic as a "syndrome" of experience[63]. They are *aspects* of a dense whole, of the "undulating iridescence of an integral experience"[64], not yet elements of a discrete compound. The entire "static phenomenology" carried out in the third chapter of *The Aesthetic Field*[65] must be read in this light, if we want to do justice to its implications, and its accordance with the subsequent chapter: a sort of "dynamic phenomenology" of the field as regards experiential concreteness, wherein the characteristic aspects unfold their fluidity and transversality, even in their possible interrelation with other experiential modalities.

Therefore, in conclusion, it would be improper to consider the heuristic choice made by Berleant – to start from the survey of the "aesthetic facts" – as an unexpected endorsement of art centrism. If so, there would be a patent contradiction with various programmatic declarations that are introduced in the 1970 text as well as in the development that his complex aesthetic reflection has known in subsequent decades. The "facts" from which Berleant moves have nothing to do with presumed data. They are "statements", ways to express linguistically, and therefore propositionally, signs of the aesthetic field which are not *per se* propositional[66]. Their theoretical relevance lies in the problematic tension that informs them, the easing of which necessitates that the thematic be returned to the operative. Thus, reanimating in their superficial evaluative propositionality the experiential fabric that is expressed, that is, by travelling back from "facts" to "phenomena"[67], we come to meet the aesthetic far beyond the cultural enclosure of Western Fine Arts; its historical concretization one among the possible many[68]. And this is definitely a capital ingredient of the perspective outlined by *The Aesthetic Field*, not in the least for this reason still relevant.

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[1] A first development of the contents presented here is in my introductory essay to the Italian translation of *The Aesthetic Field*: Arnold Berleant, *Il campo estetico* (Milan-Udine: Mimesis, 2021), 9-29. I am extremely grateful to Aisha Pagnes for the English translation and to Gioia Laura Iannilli for the final revision.

[2] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field. A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Springfield: C. C. Thomas, 1970).

[3] As further evidence of this continuity, see the recent recovery of the extremes of the theoretical program exposed in *The Aesthetic Field* found in A. Berleant, "Aesthetic Sensibility", *Ambiances [Online]* (2015), http://journals.openedition.org/ambiances / 526; doi: 10.4000 / ambiances.526. For a general survey of this perspective, see the contributions collected in two monographic issues dedicated to Berleant's thought: *Espes* 6/2 (2017), and *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 9 (2021).

[4] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field. A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Christchurch (New Zealand): Cybereditions 2001). All the quotations refer to this second edition; the relevant page numbers are provided directly in the text.

[5] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 121.

[6] To recall only two of the most significant cases, see the contributions reconstructive materials collected in "Aesthetics: Past and Present", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993), and Jerrold Levinson, "Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview", in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), 3-24.

[7] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 115.

[8] Mark Johnson, *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought. The Bodily Roots of Philosophy, Science, Morality, and Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 51.

[9] Filippo Sanguettoli, "'A sympathy laced with disagreement'. Wilfrid Sellars e la fenomenologia", *Discipline Filosofiche* (1/2020), 245. - For an updated survey of Farber's phenomenology, see in the same issue of *Discipline Filosofiche* the essay by Antonio M. Nunziante "Marvin Farber e il progetto di una naturalizzazione della fenomenologia", 135-58.

[10] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 46, 106.

[11] Ibid., 104.
[12] Ibid., 101.
[13] Ibid., 103.
[14] Ibid., 161.
[15] Ibid., 114.
[16] Ibid., 54.
[17] Ibid.
[18] It could also be said that this catalyst involves the divergence of Berleant's program from other phenomenological strategies in aesthetics. First of all it neutralizes that passage to ontology which instead, to give an authoritative example not ignored by Berleant himself, marks Mikel Dufrenne's investigation, as shows the architecture and the development of the second volume of his *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*; cf. Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Engl. ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 335 ff.
[19] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 71.
[20] Ibid., 47.
[21] Ibid., 103-104, 174.
[22] See Alfred N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1966), 151.
[23] See first of all ibid., 61-2.
[24] Virgil C. Aldrich, *Philosophy of Art* (Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice Hall, 1963).
[25] Without directly mentioning either Husserl or Whitehead, Aldrich reports the aesthetic object to the content of a "prehensive mode of perception" in the context of a description that he defines, in fact, as "phenomenology of art" (see ibid., respectively 23 and 19-20). See also the following programmatic step: "the only philosophy of art that has a chance will dwell upon and among the perceptible phenomena of art without tearing and eventually annihilating their delicate tissues. This sort of scrutiny, and the theory that takes shape in this contagious intimacy with the phenomena, I call phenomenological" (ibid., 4). On the other hand, Aldrich's references to Dewey are frequent and always decisive.
[26] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 84.
[27] In this context, it is at least worth distinguishing accurately between "subjective" and "subjectual" and, in parallel, between "objective" and "objectual". If "subjective" qualifies an experiential content insofar as it depends on the act performed by a subject, and thus implies a previously constituted "subjectivity", by "subjectual" I aim to indicate those experiential moments that tend to cluster around a "subjectual" pole that is in the process of being constituted; these moments define, that is, a "subjectuality" (not "subjectivity") that does not belong to a subject, since it rather identifies the subject's position within the field. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the distinction between "objective" and "objectual". In a pragmatist perspective, as well as in a phenomenological one, this distinction cannot be neglected, while, for example, a psychologist position would certainly conflate the subjectual into the subjective. Hence the technicalization of these terms, which makes some passages of the text somewhat laborious to read, and for which I apologize.
[28] Ibid., 108 (cf. note 98).
[29] Ibid., 160.
[30] Ibid., 131.
[31] Ibid., 76.
[32] Ibid., cf. 54, 80, 94, 142.
[33] Berleant's anti-psychologism seems evident, for example, when he writes: "Proposals for aesthetic disinterestedness, isolation, psychical distance and the like have been put forward as ways of characterizing the aesthetic attitude and setting it off from one that is scientific or cognitive, practical, moral, or religious. While there is no question of the historical importance of these concepts in contributing to the identification of an aesthetic mode of experience, it may be useful to reexamine them in the light of the manner in which the perceiver functions in the aesthetic field. For when these ideas are set against the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, the limitations imposed by their excessive concern with the psychology of attention becomes plain". Ibid., 56.
[34] Ibid., 56.
[35] As the examples illustrate: ibid., 55.
[36] Ibid., 72.
[37] Ibid., 51.
[38] Ibid., 139.
[39] Ibid., 121.
[40] Ibid., 157.
[41] Ibid., 54.
[42] Ibid., 87.
[43] Ibid., 129.
[44] Cf. Ibid., 99.
[45] Ibid., 81-82.
[46] In addition to the volume A. Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), see the essay "What is Aesthetic Engagement" (two pages that should be reported in full for their programmatic character and,

as a whole, emblematic) which opens the thematic forum that appeared in *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013), www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/journal.php?volume=50 A critical comparison between this Berleant's notion and Dewey's perspective comes traced by Thomas Leddy, "A Dialectical Approach to Berleant's Concept of Engagement", *Espes* 6/2 (2017), 72-8.

[47] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 95 ff.

[48] For the notion of "material engagement" see first of all Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement* (Cambridge (MA) and London: The MIT Press, 2013). For the experience-with paradigm, cf. "Book Forum on Aesthetics and Human Nature" (Questions by S. Chiodo, R. Dreon, S. Gallagher, T. Griffero, J. Levinson, C. Paolucci, R. Shusterman; Replies by G. Matteucci), edited by Gioia Laura Iannilli and Stefano Marino, *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 12/2 (2020), 593-639, http: //www.metajournal.org / article_details.php? id = 438. But cf. also Nicola Perullo, "The Experience-with: Steps Towards an Aesthetics from Within", *Reti, Saperi, Linguaggi* 18 (2020), 241-58.

[49] See Arthur C. Danto "The Artworld", *The Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1964), 582.

[50] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 47.

[51] Ibid., 101-103.

[52] Ibid., 150.

[53] Ibid., 120.

[54] Ibid., 122.

[55] In this regard, see also Arnold Berleant, "The Experience and Judgment of Values", *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 1 (1967), 24-37, where this distinction is indicated with extreme clarity: "Specifically, *our* difficulties in dealing with values follow from the failure to distinguish clearly and effectively between values as characteristic kinds of human experiences and value judgments as statements about such kinds of experiences. The first are the actual occasions of valuing themselves and, like all direct and immediate experience, are non-cognitive. Value judgments, or the other hand, are of a distinctly different order. They are statements which are framed *about* our value experiences; they offer a conceptual formulation and ordering of the valuational mode of experience. This being the case, such statements can be verified by placing them against the value experiences of men, and consequently these statements take on a cognitive character".

[56] Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 50.

[57] Ibid., 157.

[58] Cf. Ibid., 101.

[59] Particularly significant, from this point of view, is the passage in which we read: "valuational experience of art is not identical with evaluative judgment, and such judgment is the product of that experience, not its source." See ibid., 151.. An advantage of phenomenological treatment is that the circularity usually reproached of whom usually describes the operative, non-thematic normativity of the aesthetic is resolved, and dissolved. With the consequent suspicion that this impression of circularity is only the byproduct of theoretical approaches not calibrated on the concreteness of the phenomenon.

[60] Ibid., 140.

[61] Ibid., 87.

[62] See the comparative synopsis of two of these approaches, namely those by Nelson Goodman (who talks about "symptoms") and Ossi Naukkarinen (who talks about "indicators"), carried out by Gioia Laura Iannilli, *The Aesthetics of Experience Design. A Philosophical Essay* (Milan-Udine: Mimesis International, 2020) 16-8.

[63] Cf. ibid, 87-88, 133-134.

[64] Ibid., 91.

[65] Ibid., 49 ss.

[66] Cf. ibid., 22.

[67] Cf. ibid., 23-24.

[68] Cf. ibid., 31.

THE WAY OF BOGS, MIRES AND MARSHLANDS: MYTHS, SYMBOLS AND KNOWLEDGE[1]

Mara Miller

Abstract
Recent problems in environmentalism, globalization, and global warming reveal the interconnectedness of the various biomes and types of communities within and across them. Difficulties in respecting or understanding even one of these biomes/environments contributes to the perpetuation and exacerbation of problems, at the expense of solutions. Reinterpreting bogs in the light of philosophical approaches that acknowledge their advantages and benefits, such as those of the Japanese, therefore, may be profoundly useful. The social and political difficulties often encountered today in conserving and restoring bogs stem not merely from a lack of scientific knowledge, or the lag in the dissemination of scientific knowledge to the public and decision-makers, but arise primarily from two distinct but related problems arising in relation to bogs understood symbolically and philosophically: first, bogs are a symbol of what we fear and loathe, not merely because of their inherent characteristics and the ways we interact with them, but, more importantly, as a result of the cultural shaping of our understanding; second, bogs do not easily fit into the most prevalent pattern of thinking we have, namely dichotomous or binary thinking. This paper analyzes bogs and swamps, which are disparaged and dismissed in the West, as a culturally constructed symbol in Japan, where positive valuations contrast strongly with the widespread Western aversion. It explores the ways this symbolism, emerging largely from Yin-Yang theory, Daoism, and Buddhism, and reinforced in art and literature, both shapes and is shaped by the intersections of philosophical and customary ways of thinking.

Keywords
Myths, Symbols, Knowledge, Japanese Art, Japanese Literature, Kojiki, Yatsuhashi / Eight-Plank Bridge, Tales of Ise, Dichotomies / Binary thinking, Yin-Yang, the Way, Daoism, Phenomenology of Bogs, Lotus Symbolism.

1. Introduction: Purposes and Plan

This paper analyzes bogs as a culturally constructed symbol in Japan, and explores the ways this symbolism both shapes and is shaped by the intersections of philosophical and customary ways of thinking. Recent problems in environmentalism, globalization, and global warming have shown the interconnectedness of the world's various continents and regions, and of the various biomes and types of human communities (biological and built/constructed environments) within and across them; difficulties in respecting, and in some cases even understanding, even one of these biomes/environments, therefore, contribute to both the perpetuation and the exacerbation of problems, at the expense of solutions. The widespread Western distaste for, aversion toward, and dismissal of bogs and swamps (on the part of nearly everyone except environmental biologists and a few aestheticians and other theorists[2]), therefore, can introduce and worsen many environmental problems—or help resolve them. (Note that in this paper I use the terms "bogs," "peatlands," "mires," "swamps," "marshes" and "wetlands," interchangeably, not because the distinctions are unimportant scientifically, but because they *are* relatively unimportant culturally. Most of the time I will use "bog" because it is the shortest word in English.)

Reinterpreting bogs in the light of philosophical approaches that acknowledge their advantages and benefits, such as those of the Japanese, therefore, may be profoundly useful.

The social and political difficulties often encountered today in conserving and restoring bogs stem not merely from a lack of scientific knowledge, or the lag in the dissemination of scientific knowledge to the public and decision-makers, but emerge primarily from two distinct but related problems arising in relation to bogs understood symbolically and philosophically.

The first problem is what Allen Carlson and Oliver Rackham call bogs' "bad press." Bogs are a symbol of what we fear and loathe, not merely because of their inherent characteristics and the ways we interact with them, but, more importantly, as a result of the cultural shaping of our understanding. The construction of bogs as a threatening and disgusting symbol began over the past two and a half thousand years or more, since (at least) the Axial Age (around 500 B.C.E.)—at least in the Western world, by which I mean the Graeco-Roman, Judaeo-Christian, and Middle Eastern (from ancient Mesopotamia through contemporary Islam) "worlds." This is not to say, however, that these are the only, or most important, or most widespread, or most persuasive ways of understanding bogs, for there are enormous differences in this cultural shaping between Europe and North America on the one hand and China and Japan on the other, which this paper traces. In Japan, unlike the West, bogs function as an enormously *positive* symbol.

The second—and related—problem is more subtle and abstract. This is that bogs do not easily fit into the most prevalent pattern of thinking we have, namely dichotomous thinking based on the logic of negation (A≠-A), the Law of Excluded Middle -(A & -A), and the logic of binary oppositions, which has become increasingly important over the past three hundred years, with the rise of modern science—where, however, it has proven annoyingly unhelpful in the analysis of human biology and psychology (as the forced choice between the opposing terms of the "nature/nurture" debate repeatedly reveals). Dichotomous thinking in the sciences has, fortunately, undergone substantial modification recently with the increasing sophistication of statistical methods, which allow for the necessary qualification of "mutually exclusive" categories.

Binary thinking expresses thoughts in terms of pairs of mutually exclusive qualities, states, or actions: nature/culture, body/mind, physical/mental, material/spiritual, real/ideal, active/passive, assertive/receptive, free/determined, the "raw" and the "cooked," land/sea, freshwater/saltwater, wet/dry, hot/cold, hard/soft, etc. Western binary oppositions in particular, frequently attach positive valuation to one of the pair and negative to the other. This valorization is opposed to Chinese-style Yin/Yang thinking and its subsequent concepts in Korea and Japan, in which both elements of a given pair are viewed as equally valuable, their positive and negative attributions emerging only when they are out of balance or out of sync, or appearing in the "wrong" situation or time.[3] This makes it easier to accommodate both sides of the equation.

This pattern of mutually exclusive binary opposites is not exclusive to scientific thinking, of course, as Claude Lévi-Strauss showed in his book *The Raw and the Cooked*, nor to Indo-European languages. In China, where it is known as "Yin/Yang," it has a political dimension (Big states/Small states, Important states/Unimportant states, Action/Inaction, Stretching/Contracting, Ruler/Minister, Above/Below, Speech/Silence, etc.), and indeed is raised to the level of metaphysical principle in Daoism and Confucianism, where, however, the oppositions are thought not to exclude each other but to include each other:

> The way that is bright seems dull;
> The way that leads forward seems to lead backward;
> The way that is even seems rough.
> The highest virtue is like the valley;
> The sheerest whiteness seems sullied;
> Ample virtue seems defective…
> The great square has no corners…
> The great image has no shape.[4]

The "Way" of this chapter's title refers to the "Way" (Chinese *Dao*, and Japanese *Doh*) of ancient Chinese cosmology, of Daoism and Confucianism, the Way of Heaven, that is, the way things are, the "flow" of the universe, in which both human beings and the natural world participate with "Heaven." Daoism recognizes a fundamental harmony or correspondence among the way of Heaven, the way of the Earth, and the way(s) of humankind, that is, between the "divine" or cosmic order, the natural order of the physical environment, and the human or micro-cosmic order.[5] (Note that we have three, not two, components here, which messes up the dichotomy.)

This Dao means "way" in the sense of a route or path (cf. English "highway," "by-way," "right-of-way"); the character used to write it is identical to that used ordinarily for "road." In this sense, bogs often do not support "ways!" (This lack of support does more than compromise human coming and going: it imperils human habitation/housing, and agriculture and other kinds of work as well—although interestingly its very unreliability was utilized as an asset by Finns who knew how to traverse their bogs when they were at war with the Russians, so as to ambush them into inescapable traps.)

And bogs do get edged out of the metaphysical picture in China; they are marginalized philosophically, and are not much represented in painting, other than Buddhist lotus ponds (which, of course, are Indian in origin, rather than Chinese). By extension the Way also has come to mean a way of doing things, a manner or pattern or process—from which it was extrapolated to the full range of Daoist significance.

In English, these two meanings have come to diverge, so that we speak of "finding *my own* way," or "doing things *your* way," two ways of speaking that allow English-speakers to jettison a third component of the term, one that remains essential to Daoism, the implication of a common or shared route. A highway, bi-way, or right-of-way is what it is if and only if more than one person uses it.

Finding the Way in Daoism—or in the Way of Tea (*sado*), the Way of Calligraphy (*shodo*), the Way of the Warrior (*bushido*), the several Ways of martial arts (*aikido*, *judo*, *kendo*, etc.)—is not at all the same thing as picking one's way across a vacant lot or bush-whacking through a jungle. Rather, it is a way that, however demanding it may be, has been made easier for us precisely because others have gone there before us.[6] It is, in a sense, a "path of least resistance," the way that, provided you follow it, will permit you to realize your goals, to do what must or should be done, with the least effort, without encountering the resistance that is otherwise—and usually—so characteristic of human action and achievement. (It is in this sense that people sometimes speak of Daoism as non-action—a term I must object to since it sets up a dichotomy between action and non-action, a dualistic way of thinking that is precisely what Daoism objects to.)[7]

The specific conceptions of how these dichotomies are related differ in Daoism and Confucianism, and have changed throughout Chinese history as the schools of thought have developed. But in general, two important differences persist between the Chinese Yin/Yang dichotomies and the Indo-European ones. First, the Chinese pairs are not true opposites, not mutually exclusive, but are complementary, with each containing within it the seed of the other, and each giving rise to the other;

> Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
> The difficult and the easy complement each other;
> The long and the short off-set each other;
> The high and the low incline towards each other...[8]

Second, as already mentioned, the Chinese systems do not include good/evil, or positive or negative valuation, and do not associate one of each pair with life or death.

Regardless of which dichotomous pattern we examine, however (Chinese, Indo-European, or another), bogs do not fit readily into such dichotomies. As a result, once we adopt such a logic, bogs are difficult to make sense of, and difficult to know. Thus, we will not be surprised to find that systems that reject the logic of negation and the Law of Excluded Middle, such as Buddhism, and systems that consistently open up third terms, terms of mediation to oppose the dichotomies, as does much of Japanese thought and practice,[9] will prove much more receptive to bogs and are able to view them more positively. The salvation of bogs may well depend upon utilization of a new conceptualization (new to the Eurocentric West, that is) based on Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism or Japanese models.

2. Bogs in the West

In the Eurocentric West, bogs have almost exclusively negative connotations, associated with either chaos which must be overcome, with evil, or with loss of control leading to death. These connotations obstruct our efforts to conserve and renew bogs as much-needed environments. In the Americas, the only good swamp is a drained swamp. All three capital cities of North America, Washington, D.C., Ottawa, and Mexico City, are built on former swamp-land—widely regarded as triumphs of engineering

and good reason for self-congratulation (indeed they make good capitals because landowners donate acreage that is unusable as is and too expensive for an individual to drain); in the latter case, the Aztecs who originally founded Mexico City believed the site for the city was chosen for them by the gods. Bogs' capacity to resist even modern efforts to subdue them give them a notorious and legendary—almost mythic—place in the folk culture of North American industrialization. The terrors of the Panama Canal, where the mosquitoes of the malarial swamps killed thousands of workers, and the both ludicrous and tragic attempt to build the Canadian trans-continental railroad across the boggy shore of Lake Superior are recorded in the history textbooks of North American schoolchildren.

In the myths of many cultures, the primordial chaos that preceded the world as we know it is often characterized as a bog, a swamp or a soup, and civilized life begins with the separation of the bog into water and dry land. (*The Book of Genesis* is a little murky on this division.) In ancient Egypt, the marshlands were the original, primeval chaos; culture and human society came with agriculture, with the creation of the garden out of chaos, which was subdued. In ancient Greece, we are told: "First Chaos came into being, [next...Gaea (Earth), Tartarus and Eros (Love)]. From Chaos came forth [Erebus and] black Night. Of Night were born Aether and Day...and Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Dreams; also the Hesperides and Blame and Woe and the Fates, and Nemesis to afflict mortal men, and Deceit, Friendship, Age and Strife, which also had gloomy offspring."[10] Perhaps understandably, given her depressing legacy, "there were no cults of Chaos."[11] (For the Greeks, the separation of Earth (Gaea) and water (Oceanus) occurs only much later, after Earth has given birth to Oceanus.[12]) In China, too, everything originates in a sort of primal "soup," *hundun*—literally the word from which "*wan-ton*," the word for dumplings, is derived. The wan-ton is that which has not yet been differentiated into solid and liquid, in which distinctions of the Yin-Yang system are not yet apparent. In this sense, the bog precedes the Yin-Yang system.

In everyday English, we speak of being "swamped" when we are overwhelmed by something unpleasant (we are "swamped" with work, but never with joy). We say we "bog down"—or more often, "*get* bogged down"—in problems, worries, traffic. The significance of that expression "to get (+Verb past participle)" is that it is something that happens *to* us, over which we have no control, as opposed to something that we do or that is under our own control; bogs and mires are places where control is threatened or taken away. (The fragility of our control is mirrored in the apparent lack of "control" and constancy on the part of the bog itself, which is often subject to tidal and/or seasonal variation.) Similarly, we get "mired" in the legal or prison system, in the bureaucracy, in requirements, etc. The use of these verbs implicates fate and other forces beyond our control, and resistant to our wills. Bogs, therefore, exemplify our inability to resolve that excruciating yet crucial intellectual and spiritual dilemma that Western man recurrently faces: is he free or determined? active or passive?

I use the masculine pronoun "he" here deliberately: the Western philosophy that has discovered and framed the problems of free will and determinism has in fact been written almost

exclusively by men. Now, not all philosophy written by men finds free will and determinism to *be* a problem; Roger Ames in lectures has pointed out that this problem does not occupy much of a place in East Asian philosophy, perhaps because, as we have seen, the seeming opposition between activity and passivity is understood so differently.

But the issue can arise for men in ways that it does not for women, since for women one of the most important, even paradigmatic parts of their *active* experience, pregnancy, is also *simultaneously* and inherently a *receptive* (and in some ways even passive) experience as well.

There are going to be, in other words, sex- and gender-based threads in the warp of this discussion, as in any analysis that takes as its subject the dichotomization of the world and of human experience. For we have a long human history, in many different cultures, not simply of dividing the world into pairs of opposites, but of associating those sets of opposites with men or women exclusively: active/passive, strong/weak, hard/soft, rigid/flexible, straight/curved, etc. In China, the binary oppositions (which, remember, are complementary and mutually dependent, rather than opposed to each other, and which do not lead to Good and Evil) contain a number of pairs that are specifically associated with landscape:

Yang/Male	Yin/Female
Above	Below
Heaven	Earth
Spring	Autumn
Summer	Winter
Day	Night
Mountains	Water
Rain	Clouds[13]

The specific associations assigned to each pair (sex) are not universal—and I want to make clear that I am certainly not advocating *either* the general habit of associating characteristics with one or the other of the sexes *or* any of the particular assignments made, since I believe them to be both mistaken theoretically and hurtful in practice.

3. The Phenomenology of Bogs

The habit of postulating such oppositions is hurtful to bogs—because bogs are neither one thing nor the other, or they are both one thing *and* the other: water/land, wet/dry, soft/hard, reliable/unreliable, freshwater/saltwater, permanent/changing, etc. They are prior to the dichotomies of myths, and outside those of language. Defying our usual dichotomies, bogs mediate between these more common and familiar categories. (We may speculate here, as mentioned above, that the Buddhist logics that either allow accommodation of *both* A *and* -A, or insist upon *neither* A nor -A, or both, might be part of the reason that bogs turn out to be viewed more positively in the Buddhist countries of East Asia.[14])

Not only do bogs both bridge and fall between the pairs of our binary oppositions, they also occupy very ambiguous status with regard to sexual symbols. (See the work of Professor Seppo Knuttila for his exploration of the many layers of connection between bogs and dangerous or perverted sexuality.[15]) They often lack such archetypal phallic symbols as mountains and trees. Those phallic symbols bogs do sustain, snakes, are themselves very ambiguous-—and threatening enough to have stolen the elixir of immortality from Gilgamesh and become in Judaism and Christianity the very symbol of evil and of Satan, in the Garden of Eden, which is also the site of the triumph over chaos. Bogs have threatened, moreover—and indeed they have come close to *preventing*—a number of archetypal masculine projects of industrialization and colonial expansion, such as the ditch for the Panama Canal and the Canadian railroad mentioned earlier.

The primal or archetypal association of bogs with sexuality of a disturbed and disturbing sort may be seen even in the mythology of Japan—a culture I discuss at length because it generally has such *positive* views of bogs. But in an early myth, the first copulation of the primal couple, the female deity Izanami and the male deity Izanagi, produces a most distressing "child"—a leech, a creature of the swamp. This leech-child is deemed illegitimate and must be discarded; the couple must go back and try again.

Now, what has caused such a distressing thing as this leech-child? Why have things gone so wrong? It is nothing other than the woman having violated sex-based behavioral and linguistic taboos. She has acted like a man, by both initiating their relationship by speaking before he does, and commenting on the male deity's sexual desirability. (What she said was, "What a lovely young man.")[16] They have to go back and do it *right*, letting the male speak first; interestingly, they start over by going behind a phallic symbol and coming out to meet each other again.

We meet this leech again in 20th-century philosophy, as Margery I. Collings and Christine Pierce analyze the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre:

> In his analysis of slime, Sartre insists that it is a horrifying image, soft, clinging, leech-like, and, regardless of its docility, threatening. Normally, the phenomenon of possession is characterized by the For-itself asserting its primacy, yet the slimy reverses these terms:
>
> > The For-itself is suddenly compromised. I open my hands, I want to let go of the slimy and it sticks to me, it draws me, it sucks at me… It is a soft, yielding action, a moist and feminine sucking… I cannot slide on this slime; all its suction cups hold me back… it is a trap… Slime is the revenge of the In-itself. A sickly-sweet feminine revenge which may be symbolized on another level by the quality sugary.[17]

Collings and Pierce point out that Sartre associates the (bog-like) soft and slimy both with the female and with the inability to assert the freedom and choice proper to the For-Itself. Sartre develops this association of the slimy and that which threatens self-control and self-assertion into philosophy per se.

Some of what Sartre sees as threatening about bogs is grounded in physical experience. Bogs can be physically treacherous; they can suck the unsuspecting traveler down to her death. Bogs are slimy, full of dangerous predators, and unstable. This instability is especially important phenomenologically, for precisely *because* they are *terra infirma,* bogs are also *terra incognita*. Because they are unstable, they are difficult to explore, at least for outsiders. (Hence their value as hiding places for refugees, escaped criminals and soldiers, and so on; swamps' history of trapping Russian invaders has endeared them to the Finns, as my Finnish colleagues tell me.) It is in part because they are represented to the outside world *by outsiders* who do not know them that bogs, like deserts and jungles, have acquired often negative connotations and are regarded as dangerous. The story of bogs, like the stories of the Gobi and the Sahara deserts, is not told by the residents, by those to whom it gives life. It is told—and I'm speaking here of world history—by those who pass through (if they are lucky enough to get out alive), who have been raised in other ecological niches, who don't know how to make their living in and by means of bogs, or even necessarily how to find their way out of them.

Yet what seems so treacherous to an outsider need not be so to one who knows the terrain. The people who live in the area know the specifics, know where to go—and they have often developed techniques that enable them to deal with the dangers in quite reliable ways—to render familiar and safe what remains treacherous to those who do not know it.

But to the extent that they are unexplored, bogs remain unknown, and what we don't know, we fear. That is, as psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung has shown, we project onto the unknown what we cannot face in ourselves. This principle can be seen in relation to bogs in the work of many writers and film-makers, most famously American novelist Ray Bradbury and British director Alfred Hitchcock.

In addition to their potentially treacherous physical instability, bogs may change a great deal—we may call this their *temporal* instability. We see this in the United States, in housing developments built on wetlands. Once again, as such, they are unlike things that belong to permanent hard-and-fast categories. As a result, (third) utilizing bogs successfully and even surviving in them depend upon *local* knowledge rather than abstract or absolute or objective knowledge.

For several reasons, then, bogs are inherently hard to know—because they are unstable, and because they change so much through time, they are hard for outsiders (the ones who write science) to explore, and therefore difficult to fit into patterns of objective knowledge. For this reason and because they fly in the face of our deeply entrenched habits of thought, specifically, as we have seen, the habit of dichotomization, or thinking in terms of pairs of opposites, bogs do not fit easily into scientific knowledge. Thus, they pose a challenge to our familiar ways of thinking, at the same time that they physically resist our attempts to explore them, and therefore remain open for the projections of our deepest fears. The words "bogs," "swamps," etc., are not merely objective references to particular types of terrain or environment. Like mountains and deserts, forests and jungles, oceans and rivers, they are as much symbols as they are physical spaces, and like these six, they touch the deepest cores of our

individual and collective psyches. In fact, such symbols don't merely touch our psyches, they structure them, they give basic shape to the confusing stews of our deepest longings, desires, and fears.

What is dangerous about wetlands, then, is that they cannot be approached by outsiders, by strangers. To find one's way in a bog, one must know the area, must have local knowledge. The Way of the Bog, then, is a kind of particular, local knowledge difficult to reconcile with the universal, objective and absolute standards we prefer for modern thought.

4. Bogs and Mires in East Asia

These symbols, however, are not God-given, universal, or unchangeable. They are the product of cultural shaping. In East Asia, for instance, bogs are treated—and understood—quite differently than in the West. In China, Korea and Japan there is a wide range of positive connotations and depictions to be found—in the language, art and literature.

A. China

First, China. Chinese gardens and landscape painting are based on the Yin/Yang framework developed within Daoism and Confucianism. In both, the Yin forces of water and clouds must be balanced with Yang forces of mountains and land.

The word for landscape in Chinese, as in Japanese, is literally "mountains and water." (It is commonly acknowledged that the Japanese learned from the Chinese painters of the Song dynasty (960-1160) types of landscape painting that were quite different from their own earlier native styles, as seen, for example in paintings of Shinto shrines.)[18] Both the Chinese and the Chinese-influenced Japanese traditions of painting show the same combination of contrasting (Yin/Yang) qualities, but the physical topography of China has kept the two terms in sharper relief, and Japan, as we will see, has developed a much richer tradition of bog-painting.

Miniature landscapes inspired by the same Song-dynasty school of landscape painting but created of real rock are found in the Japanese gardens known as "*karesansui*" or dry landscapes. Such paintings and gardens represent what we call "ideal" landscapes, by which we mean not that they are perfect (in our contemporary vernacular use of the term "ideal"), nor that they represent ideas in some Platonic or eternal or absolute sense, but that they are images of actual landscapes *as they have been internalized by the mind of* the painter. In the ordinary course of events this would typically have been a Confucian scholar and/or Buddhist monk or Daoist devotee, one who has spent time in the mountains immersing himself in the Way of the universe. (I must point out here that Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism are not mutually exclusive practices and beliefs in East Asia, especially not since the so-called “Song Synthesis” of the three philosophies during the Song Dynasty, when Chinese landscape painting escaped the strictures of Persian-influenced Tang painting.)

The practice of such a painter was to spend hours, days, months, even years alone (although sometimes with a servant or two) in a wilderness retreat, contemplating the universe, the Dao, and

the writings of other great scholars and monks who had preceded him. He would write poetry, practice calligraphy, and paint, meeting occasionally with friends to exchange poems and paintings.

The literal copying of a scene would be utterly beside the point, for the classical Chinese approach is to see in such a mind the very shape of the cosmos itself. Within this Chinese philosophical and artistic framework, the depiction of the mixed-up mess that is a wetland is *relatively* uncommon, although it is by no means as rare as art historians' discussions (which are framed largely within the philosophical context of Yin/Yang), would lead one to expect. There is in China a far richer history of visual celebration of wetlands than has been recognized.

These images, in other words, represent less the physical topography of a place than the perfect fusion of that physical world with the human mind, the harmony or interpenetration between the macrocosm and the microcosm, the physical and the spiritual, whose realization is the Dao.[19] From earliest times Chinese civilization took its shape from the distinctive extremes of this topography: it originated along the northern plain of China, the most intensely cultivated and thickly populated part of the country (which supports about a third of the population), through which the Yellow River flows:

> The plain is really one great delta created by the silt of the river, and no other river in the world brings with it so much silt. The Nile contains 1.5 kilos of silt per cubic meter of water, the Yellow River an average of 37 kilos [over twenty-five times as much], and there are tributaries in which as much as 760 kilos have been measured. At its mouth, the river creates 23 square kilometers of new land every year.[20]

Before reaching this plain, the river has sped through 2,400 miles of winding valleys in the Tibetan Himalayas, and eventually clears the hard rock of the mountains that have contained it, opening out across the plain for the last seven hundred miles of its journey to the sea. On the plain it widens and loses speed, allowing the silt to sink to the bottom, thus raising the level of the riverbed and the level of the water. In some places, the riverbed now is raised more than thirty feet above the surrounding plains, and the only thing that prevents constant flooding is the system of embankments people have built over the centuries to contain the water. Even so, floods are frequent and devastating. They have entered the mythology, and the first emperor of the legendary Xia dynasty, Yu the Great, earned his reputation as a true emperor for his willingness to lead the people in their building of dikes and canals after the great flood of 2298 B.C.E. Constant records that have been kept since 602 B.C.E. reveal a pattern of severe flooding two out of every three years for the past two and a half millennia. These waters are not friendly—although they are desperately needed. They irrigate and kill; they provide food and take away shelter and livestock.

This pattern of flooding and receding suggests the significance of the "mountains and waters" of the Chinese term for landscape. The two live in a constant dynamic interplay: the mountains are all that resist the waters, they remain visible even during the flooding. A polar opposition is set up

that reverberates throughout Chinese thinking, albeit always with the recognition that each pole of an opposition is necessary to create the other, and that within each term lies the seed of its opposite.

At the same time, while mountains and waters, dry and wet, hard and soft, firm and flexible, are always apparent as reciprocal forces within the Chinese landscape, the timing of the flooding is such that they take turns asserting themselves and yielding, becoming more prominent or receding. This is a landscape pattern that encourages the recognition of change—a recognition that is essential, of course, to the Chinese Yin/Yang worldview and to Chinese philosophy. The only sure thing in an uncertain world is change itself.

Whereas the Chinese landscape paintings for the most part focus on the dramatic mountains and rivers so characteristic of the Chinese landscape, the Japanese paintings have developed a genre of their own—largely unsung in precisely these terms until our Environmental Aesthetics conference—that celebrates the far less dramatic landscapes of the marshes.

B. Japan

In all world history, the Japanese have been perhaps the most enthusiastic appreciators of the aesthetic possibilities of bogs and wetlands—although the fact that it is bogs and wetlands that Japanese painting and design single out has gone largely unnoticed by art historians. That is, the field of academic art history and aesthetics has focused largely on the ways in which Japanese art, especially landscape painting, has been influenced by Chinese landscape painting. Chinese landscape painting celebrates sublime and dramatic mountains, rivers, and waterfalls. While much of Japanese painting does emulate this style, there is another important stream that is quite different—that focuses on the *lack* of drama, the subtleties of marshes and their patterns.

> There is an old story, celebrated even today in gardens and crafts:
>
> Once a man who had decided that he was of service to no one resolved not to stay on in the capital and to seek somewhere to live in the East. He set out with one or two old friends as companions. None of the company knew the route, and they wandered lost, as far as a place called *Yatsu-hashi*—Eight Bridges—in Mikawa Province. (The name derives from the eight bridges built to span the rivers that fork like spiders' legs and drain the water from a large marsh in that area.)
>
> They dismounted by the edge of the marsh and ate a meal of dried rice in the shade of a tree. In the marsh, iris flowers were blooming prettily. One of the group, on seeing the flowers, said, "Shall we make a travel poem, each line beginning with the syllables of the name of this flower?" So, he recited:
>
> In the capital is the one I love, like
> Robes of stuff so precious, yet now threadbare.
> I have come far on this journey,
> Sad and tearful are my thoughts.

> All were moved by this same sadness, and wept, their tears falling on the dried rice and making it sodden.
>
> They continued on their journey and came to a wide river, called the Sumida, which divides the provinces of Musashi and Shimosa…"[21]

Perhaps no piece of secular narrative literature in world history has had greater impact on the decorative arts than this brief passage from a 9th-century Japanese book of fictional tales called the *Tales of Ise*.[22] It is of particular interest to us here today because it takes place in a marsh, because it is an indication of the millennium-old interest the Japanese have taken in bogs and of the decidedly positive value the Japanese ascribe to wetlands, and because it leads in the end to some deep truths about not only the values that bogs hold for all human beings, but about the difficulties we encounter in trying to think about them using our accustomed ways of thought. Let us consider some first-hand data to work with upon which to judge my generalizations and philosophical abstractions.

In English the motif from this story goes by the name "Eight-Plank Bridge" (*Yatsuhashi* in Japanese), and there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands, of illustrations of it, in paintings and woodblock prints, on textiles and ceramics, and in these days of photographic reproduction, on the coasters and headscarves and umbrellas available from museum shops. This Eight-Plank Bridge motif from *The Tales of Ise* recurs in Japanese garden design as well as in pictures, up to the present time. The Japanese penchant for reducing complex images to utter simplicity, even minimalism, and the lush colors of the irises contrasted with a background for the marsh itself of either neutral or gold-leaf, often obscure for Westerner viewers the complex emotional responses the image is meant to evoke. One *sees* only spare yet rhythmic compositions. Yet remembering the story that inspired them, one *feels* the complex and subtle emotions of the original hero—he wasn't even given a name—and his friends: their loneliness, their sense of isolation in this all-but-incomprehensible wilderness landscape (remember they were until this moment urbanites, voluntary exiles from the Court), adrift (for reasons that are lost to us but must have been easily comprehended by the original readers)—adrift in the *anomie* that comes from not having a place in the world, yet finding oneself responsible for one's own situation in the world, without the normal social bonds and responsibilities that tie us down but also give meaning to our lives. They are in a peculiarly Modern situation, in a sense, for they have decided to try to take their fates into their own hands, to leave the Capital city (Kyoto) and they find themselves in, of all things, this marshland.

The moment acquires its intensity as much from what is not said as from what is said. (One is reminded of the Yin/Yang pair "Speech/ Silence.") There are only four sparse lines, only four direct references to feelings or values: "the one I love," "so precious," and the contrasting "so far," "sad and tearful." The visual arts tradition is even more elliptical in the way it passes the story on to us: in most of the so-called "illustrations" of this episode, the human beings themselves are eliminated — they have become unnecessary, for they live on in *our* minds (in fact, are they not us? They are our

minds!), and there are no actions. Even the few objects that do appear in the tale, like the rice cakes, the tears, are omitted from the depictions.

Yet the travelers whom you think of when you see these garden marsh landscapes, for all their loneliness, have two noteworthy consolations—their ability to write poetry, and thus to give voice to their desolation (which, of course, causes them to be remembered forever, and not only by their own countrymen, but by any of us who share this moment through the artistic evocation of their loneliness)—and also their *camaraderie*, their friendship, the fact that their loneliness is shared (and they know that it is). We might imagine that these two strengths, their art and their friendship, provide them with the firm ground that keeps them alive in the treacherous waters of a tenuous existence.

It is, in other words, the peculiar combination of solidity and fluidity in their position that has made this a story worth repeating, reimagining, and re-imaging, for over a thousand years.

It is therefore, I would suggest, no accident that this most poignant and persistent of stories takes place in a marsh, in a landscape that combines countless oppositions—land and water, hard and soft, reliable and treacherous, static and flowing, known and unknown, human and alien, warm and cold, beauty and desolation, friendship and loneliness.

But the marsh does not merely, like the Chinese and Japanese term for landscape, *sansui*, juxtapose terms for two opposing forces. It combines them, mixes them together, allowing for their mutual fertilization and enrichment, allowing for altering proportions, allowing for commingling and separation, for solution and dissolution, for the delirious unknowable ebb and flow of encroaching water and reassertion of dry land in what is, if we dare to submit to it, one of the most penetrating and poignant experiences of human life. The marshland is the perfect setting, the perfect physical counterpart (and therefore symbol) for a story that itself combines opposites: loneliness and camaraderie; being tossed about by fate, and taking fate into your own hands. It is this ambiguous physical environment that turns out to give birth to great art, and by means of art to a meeting of minds and spirits across the centuries. It is in the marsh that our lonely travelers find their voice as poets.

This marsh-story is only one of a number of important *nexus* of positive connotations for bogs in Japanese culture. Indeed one of the most poignant words in the whole Japanese language, *uki-yo*, is also a reference to marshland. It means literally "floating world," and it is the Buddhist term (albeit written with different characters) for this life which is inevitably full of sorrow and disappointment and suffering, since it is ever-changing, invariably transitory, like water. The most common image associated with the root word *uki-* is of reeds, rushes or weeds floating in water—a marsh. It has come to stand for a whole aesthetic, if you will. For the term *uki-yo* or floating world has been taken over by the culture at large to connote a general aesthetic—or rather, to connote two related yet ultimately opposing aesthetics.

First, "*ukiyo*" may be taken as a metaphor for the inevitable sadness of life—given that every life contains moments of parting and irreparable loss—loss which is so penetrating it inescapably

colors all the rest of one's life. Here the aesthetic draws us back to the Heian period of the *Tales of Ise*, in which the term was used by Buddhists, and to the aesthetic developed by secular writers like (Lady) Murasaki Shikibu, author of the famous classical novel *The Tale of Genji* (c. 1000-1020 C.E.), the last section of which is entitled the "Floating Bridge of Dreams" (*Yume no Ukihashi*). Therefore, although the "floating" refers originally to the ephemerality of life itself (as the Buddhists see it), it comes, in this first aesthetic, to be attached to a number of words that collectively acquire a distinctive aesthetic quality by means of which the Japanese recognize the beauty to be found even in sadness, and celebrate the brevity, loneliness, and paucity of even the most restricted lives.

By the late seventeenth century, the Japanese began to use the word in an ironic sense, to denote life in the newly-instituted "gay quarters," a life devoted to enjoyment, to fashion, to pleasure, to love-making and sexuality, to newly developed (and relatively inexpensive) arts, especially performing arts and mass-produced visual arts, to fashion. It was the antithesis of Buddhist (and Confucianist) solemnity, and the floating here refers not only to the lightheartedness with which people involved in it—the newly-emerging middle class of merchants and tradesmen, performers and artists—took themselves, and to their determined lack of gravity, but to their relative lack of weight within the existing religious and philosophical systems.

Thus, we have (to give only the examples available to an international audience) the "Floating Weeds," the title of Yasujiro Ozu's 1959 film (*Ukigusa*) about a ragamuffin band of traveling entertainers, and the "Floating Bridge of Dreams" (*Yume no Ukihashi*) which is also used for a short story by the early twentieth-century novelist Jun'ichiro Tanizaki.

As it is used in Buddhist metaphysics, (that is, outside this transforming Japanese aesthetics), the floating world has exclusively negative connotations. It is the world of suffering in which we are mired, and a world we have been born to transcend, through a variety of practices such as meditation and the cultivation of personal insight to the point of Enlightenment.[23]

The image of the mind in its state of aspiration toward Enlightenment is also an image from the marsh: the lotus blossom, which becomes a constant reminder of the potential of the human body-mind to transcend its muddy and undesirable roots and reach for the light that enables it to culminate in a beautiful and pure blossom.

The lotus blossom, like the Eight-Plank Bridge, becomes a motif for gardens, as at the royal Korean garden at Anapchi (c. 674), in the pond in the outer garden at the Zen temple Ryoanji in Kyoto, and in the pond in the Japanese Garden by Koichi Kawana at the Denver Botanic Garden.

This Buddhist metaphorical use of the lotus in its marshy silt juxtaposes beauty and ugliness, purity and filth, transcendence and the material world, joy (or *nirvana*) and suffering, light and dark, flow and solidity, graceful elegance and compaction, reach and self-containment, insight and blind ignorance, the ethereal and the solid, above and below. Born in India and nurtured in China, it is a less nuanced and more oppositional understanding of the marsh than that of the Eight-Plank Bridge

episode from *The Tales of Ise*. But the marsh in which the lotus grows is the environment that not only combines opposing forces but allows for the transformation of what is basest into what is best. It is insistently positive.

The Japanese love of marshes is not restricted to depictions of *The Tales of Ise* and the Buddhist lotuses, these two peculiar combinations of desolation and richness. The language itself has of course a number of words for the various kinds of wetlands and their related topographical forms:

SHOH (Nelson2521)	swamp, lake
numa	bog, swamp, pond, lake; and the compounds:
shoh-taku	marsh, swamp
shoh-ko	swamps and lakes
shoh-ki	methane, marsh gas
numa-chi, *shoh-ki*	marshland
numa-ta	marshy rice field
TAKU (Nelson2503)	swamp, blessing
sawa	swamp, marsh, dale, valley
sawa-mizu	swamp water
sawa-be	edge of a swamp
sawa-chi	marshy land
taku-an	pickled *daikon*, or radish
sawa-da	flooded rice fields or rice fields near a swamp

Because of this association of swamps with the flooded rice fields, the *sawa-da* and *numa-ta*, the connotations of the Japanese vocabulary, unlike those of English, are overwhelmingly positive: we also have TAKU meaning "blessing" and the ordinary everyday word *taku-san*, meaning "many, a large quantity;" and "plenty, abundance."[24]

Perhaps this is why the Japanese have invented virtually an entire art of landscape devoted to various kinds of wetlands, spanning five centuries.

5. Conclusion

Japanese art history, gardens, literature, and language provide an opportunity to rethink the bog, to reinvent the symbol, in order to render it productive for the new millennium. The art, literature, and everyday language of Japan prove that bogs can be enjoyed as a positive symbol. And bogs' precarious existence at the margins of dualistic or dichotomous thinking suggests that, while they may be difficult to include, their inclusion in our systems of thinking might be just the infusion we need to improve our porblem-solving capabilities and our capacity to recognize reality as it is.

Professors Richard Clymo, Harri Vasander, Tapio Lindholm, and others[25] have suggested a number of scientific and historical reasons to increase our appreciation of bogs:

their capacity for infinite renewal, most notably their capacity to clean and restore water;
their history of providing refuge from outside invaders;
their extraordinary persistence—ten thousand years was mentioned—in similar physical form (ten thousand years of the same shape suggests that the Buddhists may not be right after all—maybe it's *not* the case that everything is transitory!)
a major form of plant life, sphagnum, that "nothing eats voluntarily;"
a form of life in which decay is extraordinarily slow;
a plant ecosystem which has very little need of animals and is therefore nearly self-sufficient.

Outside of Japan, the appreciation of bogs is in its infancy. Perhaps we can nurture it to productive adulthood for everyone's benefit.

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[1] A shorter early version of this chapter was read at the 3rd International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics: "The Aesthetics of Bogs and Wet-lands," Ilomantsi, Finland (1998), organized by Yrjo Sepänmaa and appeared in Finnish, in Kirsi Martikainen and Yrjö Sepänmaa, eds., *Suo On Kaunis* (Ilomantsi: Maahenki, 1999) 132-143.
[2] Such as those presenting at the above-mentioned 3rd International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics: "The Aesthetics of Bogs and Wetlands," Ilomantsi, Finland.
[3] A.C. Graham. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989), 331, and discussion chapter IV, *passim*. Both spellings of 'Dao/ism' have been in use. I have used the more current.
[4] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. D. C. Lau (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1963), Book Two, XLI, 102. The political dimension of the seemingly paradoxical interconnections of the opposites can be seen in section XXII of Book One: "Bowed down then preserved;/ Bent then straight;/ Hollow then full;/ Worn then new;/ A little then benefited;/ A lot then perplexed./ Therefore the sage embraces the One and is a model for the empire./ He does not show himself, and so is conspicuous;/ He does not consider himself right, and so is illustrious;/ He does not brag, and so has merit;/ He does not boast, and so endures./ It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him./ The way the ancients had it, 'Bowed down then preserved', is no empty saying. Truly it enables one to be preserved to the end." (Quote on page 79).
[5] "As a thing the way is/ Shadowy, indistinct. / Indistinct and shadowy, / Yet within it is an image;/ Shadowy and indistinct, yet within it is a substance. / Dim and dark, Yet within it is an essence. / This essence is quite genuine/ And within it is something that can be tested." Ibid., Book One, XXI, 78.
[6] David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987).
[7] Roger Ames points out another aspect of the Way, namely that each person who follows the Way expands it and deepens it for those who follow; in this sense to follow the way is both a deeply social or ethical activity and a creative one. "Putting the 'Te' back in Tao Te Ching," J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 113-144.
[8] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Book One, II, 58. Note the differences in views of the relationships between the oppositions: sometimes conceptualized as appearance versus reality (as in the first quotation above), sometimes as causal (mutually producing each other), sometimes both preceding or following each other, etc. Translators largely agree with each other on which is appropriate in each given context.
[9] I have in mind such mediations as the verandah for the dichotomy of inner/outer in Japanese architecture: and gardens, *bonsai* (tray gardens) and *ikebana* (flower arranging) in relation to natural/artificial and nature/building. While such mediating categories exist in the West as well, it seems to me that they have proliferated in a different way in Japan—a claim I have no room to defend here.
[10] From Hesiod's *Theogony*, perhaps (in its present form) the later 8th century B.C.E., translated by Michael Grant. *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*. (New York: The New American Library, Mentor Books, 1962), 87.
[11] ibid., 95.
[12] ibid., 95.
[13] A.C. Graham. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989), 331, and discussion chapter IV, *passim*.
[14] For a solid and clear exposition of this philosophical issue in Buddhism, see Thomas P. Kasulis, *Engaging Japanese Philosophy*: *A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018).

[15] Seppo Knuttila, “Suoviha ja muita tunneperaisia luontoseikkoja,” presented at the above-mentioned 3rd International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics: The Aesthetics of Bogs and Wet-lands," and published in Sepänmaa et al, eds., *So on Kaunis*, 68-76.
[16] *Kojiki,* 712 C. E. Translated by Basil Chamberlain, https://www.sacred texts.com/shi/kj/index.htm
[17] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1972), 776-777; quotation and introductory comment provided by Margery I. Collings and Christine Pierce, "Holes and Slime: Sexism in Sartre's Psychoanalysis," in Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky, *Women and Philosophy: Toward a theory of liberation*, (New York: Perigee, 1980), 117. Note that the press name is misspelled as ‘Perigree’ on the website: https://www.carolcgould.com/books.html
[18] The Chinese-style landscapes, called *sansui(ga)*, or "mountains-(and)-water (paintings)" are painted in monochromatic ink or a combination of ink and mineral pigments.
[19] Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that the images so created are independent of the actual terrain. This becomes very clear when we contrast the "ideal" monochromatic landscapes of the two countries, allegedly in the same style. The Chinese landscape paintings emphasize the dramatically contrasting qualities of the tall hard mountains and the rivers. This derives on the one hand, from the actual topography of China. Even more influential, however, has been the impact on the Chinese experience of the events caused by this topography.
[20] Cecilia Lindqvist. *China: Empire of the written symbol*. Tr. Joan Tate. (London: Harvill/Harper Collins), 1991, 51.
[21] Ki no Tsurayuki, *The Tales of Ise* (no location listed, Jiahu Books, 2014), chapter 8/9.
[22] Surprisingly none of the other chapters from the book acquired anything like this passage's impact on the visual arts.
[23] There are four prominent metaphors in Buddhism for the mind in its quest for Enlightenment: the extremes are represented by the dust-free mirror of the enlightened mind on the one hand and the ox or monkey on the other; the other two both have to do with water: the reflecting pond and the lotus.
[24] These definitions are taken from Andrew N. Nelson. *The Modern Reader’s Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, revised edition. (Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1966).
[25] Again, in papers presented at the 3rd International Conference on Environmental Aesthetics: “The Aesthetics of Bogs and Wet-lands," and published in its *Proceedings*.

SOCIAL AESTHETICS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Michael Musalek, Guenda Bernegger, Oliver Scheibenbogen

Abstract
Social aesthetics is an aesthetics of the social situation as it is lived and experienced. As humans we are always and everywhere social beings, so the question no longer arises as to whether we live socially but rather *how* we live socially. This question of the How – how we experience and structure our life together – determines the core field of work and research in social aesthetics. European intellectual history teaches us that beauty is not just an adornment to life but is also a major source of strength for our life. Moreover, the positive aesthetic experience also has healing power. That beauty is a highly effective antidote to life's suffering, i.e. acts as an "anti-depressant". Social aesthetics that wishes also to be understood as the science of beauty in interpersonal relationships provides us with knowledge that in medical-therapeutic practice becomes a key pillar of human-centered approaches to prevention and treatment.

Keywords
Social Aesthetics, Mental Health, Power of Beauty, Aesthetic Anthropology, Hospitality, Human-based Medicine.

"Social aesthetics is, …, an aesthetic of the situation. … Like every aesthetic order, social aesthetics is contextual. It is also highly perceptual, for intense perceptual awareness is the foundation of aesthetics. Furthermore, factors similar to those in every aesthetic field are at work in social aesthetics, although their specific identity may be different … creative processes are at work in its participants, who emphasize and shape the perceptual features."[1] These words from an article by Arnold Berleant on "Ideas for a Social Aesthetics" were and are visionary for the development of research in the human sciences that focuses on the interpersonal encounter and relationship, which has culminated in the creation and operation of two Institutes for Social Aesthetics and Mental Health at Sigmund Freud University, first in Vienna and then in Berlin. With his ground-breaking work on social aesthetic perspectives, Arnold Berleant has not only made a significant contribution to art theory, and not only has he fertilised philosophical everyday aesthetics to an extraordinary degree, he has also opened the doors to new fields of work in the area of prophylactic and curative medicine in general, and that concerned with mental health in particular. For this, we owe him our thanks to this day, and will continue to do so.

In an email reply to a lecture invitation to Vienna issued by the authors, he wrote in 2016 in all modesty regarding our social aesthetic treatment project entitled the "Orpheus Programme for Addicts": "Knowing little of your field, I had never before come across the idea of humanistic medicine, and your discussion of social aesthetics in guiding treatment of addiction seems to me to present a powerful and convincing argument … It is, of course, extremely gratifying to learn that my work in social aesthetics has borne such fine (and unexpected) fruit. Since first presenting the idea of social aesthetics, I have developed it further in several directions, especially in social (and cultural)

criticism."[2] On the one hand, it documents how far-reaching his philosophical impact is, and on the other hand it also expresses his openness to new developments, ideas and their practical implementation. The highly interesting and extremely stimulating discussions that followed his brilliant lecture in Vienna in 2017, and the wonderful moments of the meeting at the subsequent dinner at a typical Viennese inn will always remain in our best memories. We would also like to express our gratitude for this. We wish the jubilarian and his family the very best for the future, and especially many more such fruitful conversations and beautiful experiences, which may further increase the effectiveness of his abundant philosophical knowledge.

The main tasks of our two institutes for social aesthetics and mental health are the research of concepts, models of mental health from a social aesthetic perspective, as well as the development of practical implementation possibilities in everyday life. Social aesthetics is understood here to go far beyond superficial aspects of beauty and attractiveness, which also encompasses all the effective ranges of deep aesthetics[3] in the context of human encounter with the attainment and maintenance of mental health. The term aesthetics is derived from the ancient Greek word "aisthesis", which means sensual experience. In this broad sense, social aesthetics is also understood by us as a science that deals in general with the sensory experiences of interpersonal coexistence. Particular focus is placed on the areas of successful, i.e. beautiful, interpersonal encounters and relationships, so that, in short, social aesthetics can be defined as the science of the sensorially beautiful experience of people coexisting, of feeling and sensing in being with one another.

Human beings are at the centre of social aesthetics: the human being as a social aesthetic living being. The human being is a *homo communicans* or *homo socialis* from the very beginning (whenever we place the beginning of human life). With and within their possibilities they are a living being that in principle is open to purpose and capable of independent further development (they are not only what they are; they are also always what they could be). As a living being, as a living entity, they are able to live and also to experience life, *their life*. In social aesthetics, as we understand it, the human being is understood as a highly complex community being. Thus, it is always also a form of anthropology, an anthropology for which the question of the How of the human being – how is the human being, how does the human being live, how does the human being experience their life, how is the human being possible, how does the human being shape their life, how can the human being shape their life – becomes the focus of interest.

The human being is a fundamental community being according to the main thesis of social aesthetics. They are always and foremost a community being, even when they forget to be one. Today we live in a time of "individualisation", of the isolation of people, in which many think that man is a genuine individual, who only in the course of their life must painstakingly learn to become a community being. This must be countered by the fact that the human being lives in community with other people from birth (and even before), indeed, as an unfinished being coming into the world he is even dependent on living with and from others – first she is in symbiosis with her mother, then she lives together with her loved ones who are close to her. And only later does she become independent step by step; she believes more and more in wanting to and being able to do everything on

her own – a delusion born of her *forgetfulness of community*. For we are constantly reminded that without community we cannot solve the many problems that come our way. This is particularly evident in the Covid crisis – here too, some thought that they were able to cope with the crisis alone, and then had to realise that overcoming this crisis is only possible through broad-based solidarity.

An aesthetics that is oriented towards the human being in its entirety can and must therefore always be a social aesthetics – just as a human-oriented ethics can only ever be a social ethics. Social aesthetics thus becomes fundamental aesthetics. Even if every aesthetic must necessarily be a social aesthetic, it still makes sense to distinguish between an individual aesthetic and a social aesthetic in particular. Individual aesthetics focuses its research on the individual sensory experience of beauty or on individual possibilities of experience for the individual, while social aesthetics, conceived in a narrower sense, is primarily concerned with the aspects of encounters and relationships from an aesthetic perspective. In other words: Individual aesthetics and social aesthetics in the narrower sense differ in the focus of their research projects. At the same time, individual aesthetic perspectives must be included in social aesthetic research programmes because individual aesthetic forms of experience constitute social relationships and the aesthetic experience of social relationships – that is, they are inseparable from encounters and relationships, they are one. Therefore, if the focus in what follows is primarily on social aesthetics in everyday life and, above all, on their relationship to mental health, this does not mean that individual aesthetic aspects are lost sight of.

Following the definition of social ethics by Ulfig[4], the term social aesthetics stands for a kind of aesthetics in which community values are at the centre (contrast with: individual aesthetics). Community values become superior to individual values. Possibilities and impossibilities of the human being are only considered and determined with regard to their relevance for the community. Aesthetic forms of experience and beliefs are formed and are relevant above all in being with fellow human beings. If one understands the human being as a genuine community being, then questions arise first and foremost about his or her encounters and relationships with other people[5]: How does s/he "function" as a relational being? How does s/he meet other people? How does s/he experience other people? How does she perceive herself in the community with other people? How does she shape her life in the community with other people? Social aesthetics understood as social aesthetic anthropology thus does not really pose the question of *what* man is, but rather of *how* man is: How is man as a community being? How does he live together with others? How is community life possible for people? How can he shape his life in common togetherness? How can he cultivate his relationships with others?

The main tasks of the Institute for Social Aesthetics and Mental Health therefore lie in dealing with all those fields of research and teaching that can be located at the point of intersection or at the areas of overlap between the fields of interest of social aesthetics and those of mental health research. As an interdisciplinary research institute and university teaching institution, the Institute for Social Aesthetics focuses on all those aesthetic aspects, fundaments and dimensions of the health sciences – especially medicine, psychology and psychotherapy – that are indispensable as a knowledge base for the development of human-based medicine. It is the How of dealing with life and

with fellow human beings that is the main subject of the Institute's scientific endeavours and teaching activities. This knowledge of the How in our coexistence in general and in prophylactic and curative medicine in particular also provides the indispensable social aesthetic basis for human-based and human-focused therapeutic action, in which the human being again becomes the measure of all things and activities.

The WHO defines health not only as the absence of disease, but also as complete physical, mental and social wellbeing[6]. Since illness is understood as a dysfunction or a reduction in function, mental wellbeing cannot relate solely to functioning in psychological sub-areas. This raises the question of when the state of mental health in the sense of complete mental wellbeing is reached. The WHO states that mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community[7]. Whitbeck notes in this context that health is understood here as the ability to set activities autonomously and participate in the community[8]. This ability to be active in a self-determined manner is equivalent to what Gernot Böhme understands by a confident way of living: The individual is capable of acting, reacting and shaping in a self-determined and confident manner in the circumstances of his life[9]. Nordenfeldt goes beyond Whitbeck's claim to autonomy[10]. In his definition of health, he emphasises that it is not only a matter of setting activities, but above all of setting so-called vital goals. For him, these vital goals are all matters necessary for the realisation of an essentially joyful life. This also makes it clear that we can only speak of mental health when a state is reached that makes it possible for the individual to lead his or her life essentially autonomously or confidently, and also succeeds in experiencing it largely joyfully[11].

It is no coincidence that "Social Aesthetics *and* Mental Health" was chosen as the name of the above-mentioned Institute. Martin Heidegger in a lecture on "Hölderlin's Earth *and* Heaven" explains the meaning and understanding of the word "and": "The expression states a connection. The connective word "and" expresses it, but does not say what the reference is and how it can be – whether it exists for itself, whether it comes from far away…"[12]. It is similar with the "and" in our institute's name. It signals that there is a close connection between sensory perceptions in general and those related to community life on the one hand, and mental health on the other; but it also points to the two main tasks of our institute's research: on the one hand, to explore the effects of everyday social aesthetic aspects on our lives and experiences, and on the other hand, to illuminate the constellations of conditions of mental health and to record the influences of different social aesthetic ways of life on our health.

As community beings, since we are always and everywhere cultural beings, too, social aesthetics is also always cultural science. It is impossible to "imagine a human being outside of culture"[13] and this culture is always a shared culture, a jointly created and communicated culture. We are the ones who create our world. How this world of ours is constituted, how we can live and experience it, depends on all of us. It is only when someone removes themselves from this creative process and simply leaves the creation of the world to others that it is the others who create this world of ours.

For those working in social aesthetic research, the question "How do we humans create and shape our culture?" is thus always posed, making social aesthetics the central cultural science.

In the last two decades, various concepts have been developed in connection with the main questions of social aesthetics listed so far, such as concepts of place, time, narratives, dialogue, shame and guilt, the attractive and the possible, to pick out some of the essential ones. They all grapple with the three main areas of social aesthetic research: touch, atmospheres and hospitality. The theme of touch was ultimately also the starting point of Arnold Berleant's social aesthetic concept[14]. As he so impressively explained in the above-mentioned lecture during a symposium on the topic of "Hospitality", his reflections on social aesthetics began with the observation that when we are confronted with a fascinating image in an exhibition, we not only approach this image, but this image also comes towards us at the same time. Not only do we touch the image with our gaze, the image touches us, too. When we enter into a relationship with the painting, the contemplation of a painting is thus not a one-way relationship, but always a two-way relationship, an encounter in the actual sense. The same thing happens when we encounter a human being. Again, as is often mistakenly assumed, this is not a one-way relationship. Not only do I encounter the other, but in this encounter process the other also encounters me.

However, such an encounter is only possible if we also allow an encounter by the other. Encountering the other in the sense of touching each other can only succeed if we allow the other to touch us, on the one hand, and are willing to open ourselves to the extent that we can also touch the other, on the other. This touch can be a physical touch, but it can also be a mental touch. We can touch somebody and have them touch us. But we can also smile at someone physically distant and have them smile at us. In both cases, we are immediately emotionally moved and simultaneously move the other emotionally. Encounter is emotional touch. The question of how we touch others, how we meet them, becomes the central question of our community life.

We have thus already immersed ourselves in the second main topic of social aesthetics, namely that of hospitality. Hospitality is therefore not only a theoretical concept invented by people or a way of living invented by them that they can choose or reject. Hospitality is an immediately tangible phenomenon and one that can be lived, without which human existence would not have been possible in the first place[15]. Hospitality also plays an important role not only in migration and refugee issues. It is also above all a central theme in encounters in medicine. Seeing and recognising as a guest a patient who is initially still a stranger, and also experiencing him or her as a guest, allows an understanding of the other that is indispensable for therapy. Hospitality and hospitableness are of particular importance in the area of inpatient treatment.

In the Middle Ages, hospitals were still chiefly general places of hospitality for people who needed a roof over their heads. They were poor houses for the destitute, or hostels for exhausted pilgrims, in other words, places where people in need were taken in and, if necessary, also (well) cared for. In English, this can still be traced linguistically: Hospital, hospice, hostel and hotel all have the same origin. The latter originated from the former and is derived from the Latin *hostis* or *hospes* – the words used by the Romans for newcomer, stranger, foreigner. *Hospitium* is also derived from

hospes, which in English then became hospitality and denotes the special relationship between guest and host, between the one seeking protection and the one offering protection. Hostility is the antithesis of the hospitable relationship between host and guest.

The close conceptual connections and multiple transitions between hospitality (*hospitalité*), hostility (*hostilité*) and hostipitality (*hostipitalité*) highlighted by Jacques Derrida[16] are also related to this: The stranger is always received either as a guest (*hospes*) or as an enemy (*hostis*); usually even as both, but with different focuses. In addition to these qualitative/quantitative transitions (one stranger is more of a guest and less of an enemy, the other stranger more of an enemy and less of a guest), there are also possibilities for temporal transitions: With the help of hospitality, a threatening stranger can become a familiar face, a guest, while a primarily friendly guest can become an enemy due to a lack of or rejected hospitality. This dual figure of the guest/enemy, the enemy/guest, constitutes the discourse of hospitality.

When we take up the topic of hospitality in social aesthetics, we do not just mean a superficial "welcoming", we use this term in the strong sense of Derrida[17] and Levinas[18]. Both understand hospitality as meaning stepping back from oneself, from one's self, in order to create space for oneself and one's self for the Other or the Others. The Other can then enter this space and in turn step back from herself, from her self, in order to create the space for herself and her self that the first needs in order to be able to enter it in turn. Hospitality in this sense is always a two-way relationship, a relationship from the host to the guest, who in turn must also become the host in order to allow the first to become a guest herself.

Referring to the customs of ancient Greece, Derrida distinguishes unconditional hospitality from partial hospitality. Such an "unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this."[19] In his view, partial hospitality follows the "concept of 'invitation'. If you are the guest and I invite you, if I am expecting you and am prepared to meet you, then this implies that there is no surprise, everything is in order". Although such unconditional hospitality cannot always be implemented in all situations of life, in the discourse on hospitality we mean one which comes close to this unconditional hospitality, namely one in which the other is fully valued in his or her particular humanity, regardless of his or her origin, social status and approach to life. This does not mean that one must always agree with everything the other thinks and does.

However, the first encounter with the other person should take place in full appreciation as a human being without prejudices and pre-judgements. In the encounter with the person who is still a stranger, the questions then arise: How do I deal with the stranger? How do I approach the stranger? How do I deal with the stranger as a human being, how do I deal with the stranger as a characteristic? How do we deal with people from outside the family in general and in specific situations? How do we meet the newcomer? How do we welcome others, how do we invite them, how do we grant them the right to host, how do we accept them, how do we reject them? In other words: It raises questions not only about the nature and ethics of hospitality as found in the discourses of

Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, but above all questions about an applied aesthetic of dealing with the Other in general and in the medical context in particular.

In medicine, one encounters the Other, the stranger, everywhere. Harmful, threatening, even hostile scenarios lurk everywhere. As a result, hospitality is often a problem in medicine. It is an intrinsic part of medical practice, even where it is not perceived or negated. Hospitality as a natural, life-determining moment of human togetherness with the Other and medicine as the epitome of human assistance in states of the greatest helplessness and highest vulnerability are inextricably linked in complex interactions. Hospitality is therefore not only a luxury to be indulged when all the necessary medical care is already in place; It is an integral and integrative part of any medical activity. The question is therefore not whether hospitality has or should have a place in medicine, but only how it is lived, how it is introduced into the medical system. In other words: The only question is whether and how it succeeds, or whether and how it fails. Successful as well as failed hospitality affects us all: as therapists, caregivers, patients, clients, relatives or, quite simply, as people who cannot and will not look past the illness of their fellow human being. To refuse hospitality, to deny it to someone, to not make use of it not only leads to suffering, but can even threaten the person concerned in his or her previous being-in-the-world. The "How" of hospitality in medicine thus becomes an existential question beyond the aesthetic aspect.

The issue of hospitality and mental health is, of course, not limited to medicine. Questions about how I meet the other, how can I meet someone, how can I build relationships with others, don't just arise in medicine. Hospitality moves us all in our lived and experienced daily lives. Especially when we lose it, its absence moves us emotionally to a great extent. Particularly in times of crisis such as the current Covid crisis, we feel how the chronic stresses that accompany it lead to an increase in irritability, inner tension and even dysphoric mood or dysphoria, which in turn make successful hospitality difficult or even impossible. But also certain atmospheres can jeopardise the success of hospitality or make it impossible, which brings us to the third main topic of social aesthetic research.

All interpersonal encounters and relationships arise and exist in certain atmospheres – some of these atmospheres may favour the emergence of relationships, others are inhibiting or obstructive. They are often difficult for us to grasp, and yet they have such an impact on us. In his work "Atmospheres", Gernot Böhme explains: "One has the impression that atmosphere is meant to denote something indefinite and difficult to say, even if it is only to mask one's own speechlessness. It's almost like Adorno's *More*. This also hints in an insinuating way at a hereafter of what can be rationally accounted for, and with emphasis, as if the actual, the aesthetically relevant begins there … Atmosphere simultaneously denotes the basic concept of a new aesthetic as well as its central object of knowledge. The atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived. It is the reality of the perceived as a sphere of his presence and the reality of the perceiver, insofar as he, sensing the atmosphere, is physically present in a certain way."[20]

Atmospheres are all around us and yet are actually physically experienced. We can perceive them in a highly differentiated way. We can distinguish between frightening and calming atmospheres. We can also differentiate between exuberant, mysterious, secretive, embarrassing, pleasant,

unpleasant, irritated, magical, seductive, destructive, solemn, familiar, unfamiliar, intimate, non-committal, neutral, threatening, melancholic, strange, tragic, dramatic, dreamlike and expectant atmospheres, to mention but a few of the myriad possible atmospheres at random. It is not uncommon to equate the term atmosphere with that of aura. "What, then, is the aura?" asks Walter Benjamin in his paper "The work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility", and immediately gives the answer himself: "A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be. To follow with the eye – while resting on a summer afternoon – a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch."[21] But this peculiar web of space and time gives us an intense sensory impression. We feel the atmosphere or aura long before we become aware of it. We feel them as a kind of radiance, halo, charisma or air[22].

"And the aura is obviously something that spatially flows out, almost something like a breeze or a haze – just an atmosphere. Benjamin says that we 'breathe' the aura. So this breathing means taking them in physically, letting them enter into the bodily economy of tension and swelling."[23] But we cannot only feel such atmospheres and auras perceptively, we can also create, produce and reproduce them ourselves. Within the framework of social aesthetic work, certain atmospheres can be repeatedly created and then experienced in the same way by different people again and again[24]. Especially in a therapeutic situation, such atmospheres play an important role. The right ones can make successful medical treatment possible, but those that are not suitable can also make it tremendously difficult.

The production and reproduction of atmospheres presupposes an "*aesthetic attitude*"[25], namely an attitude that allows atmospheres to have a distanced effect on oneself, to recognise their constellations of conditions and then to create them based on this knowledge. Such a social aesthetic attitude in turn presupposes the formation of a social aesthetic subject. Social aesthetics is thus not only a science, but also an art that can be unfolded and developed as applied social aesthetics. This form of social aesthetics, juxtaposed with theoretical social aesthetics, finds its main task in the application of social aesthetic theories and maxims in lived and experienced everyday life.

A practical implementation of social aesthetic theories, concepts and maxims has already been carried out in the Orpheus programme, a treatment programme for addicts[26]. The aim of this therapy programme is to enable addicts to live an autonomous and joyful life again. Living a joyful life is, on the one hand, a typical social aesthetic goal, and at the same time it is nothing other than – as already explained above – a concretisation of what we understand by mental health. Attractive forms of treatment are also needed to achieve such an attractive therapeutic goal. It is not enough to deal only with the defects and dysfunction of the addict, but rather, above all, to create and open up spaces in order to make what is possible for the individual possible[27]. To this end, treatment modules have been created which enable the addict to explore and develop his or her own resources to enable a life that is beautiful for himself or herself. The social aesthetic maxim is: Create a life that is beautiful in itself – but not only for you, also for others, because only if it is a life that is beautiful for others can it also become a life that is beautiful for you.

At the beginning of this treatment programme, which in the meantime is also being developed into an Orpheus project for everyone[28], there are attentiveness and mindfulness modules, followed by various experience and creativity modules that are designed to satisfy the preferences and interests of the individual. The culmination of joy is reached by means of enjoyment modules, whereby *Genießen* and *Genuss* (enjoyment, pleasure, delight) are understood as both the highest and deepest form of experiencing beauty. These modules, which are ideally completed together with others, are not training or educational programmes, but rather spaces and protective zones for the dialogical unfolding and development of the individual's own beauty[29], which in turn can become effective as a source of strength in the therapeutic process[30].

The ultimate aim of this social aesthetic project is to create a world that is beautiful to us, in successful commonality. Social aesthetics and mental health are thus inextricably linked. Arnold Berleant[31], with his outstanding theoretical work for the development of such a social aesthetic in the service of mental health, has created a solid foundation and at the same time extremely fertile ground – thank you Arnold Berleant!

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MAKING THE WORLD BIGGER

Ossi Naukkarinen

Abstract
The careers of academics are typically evaluated in respect to their own publications, the number of citations their works receive, awards, positions, their students' achievements, and sometimes their ability to raise funding. However, they may also have other kinds of interests and activities. I will focus on Arnold Berleant's role as the founder and long-time editor-in-chief of the journal Contemporary Aesthetics and emphasize his importance as an "enabler" who has opened possibilities for numerous others to broaden the field of aesthetics.

Keywords
Berleant, Contemporary Aesthetics

The careers of academics, if not their whole lives, are typically evaluated in respect to their publications, the originality of their ideas, the number of citations their works receive, awards, positions, their students' achievements, and sometimes their ability to raise funding. Quite understandable. All these, among several other issues, are relevant when considering how important and impactful a scholar is. Successful academics excel in most or all of these areas, and so has Arnold Berleant done over his long career. That is admirable, and not everyone achieves the same level.

However, there is at least one strand in Arnold's many-faceted career that is not mentioned in the list above: his role as the founder and long-time editor-in-chief of the journal *Contemporary Aesthetics*. Arnold and CA have created something extraordinary; something that makes the world feel bigger and brighter for us fellow aestheticians.

The first issue of the journal came out in 2003. Arnold told me about his plan earlier in the same year at one of the environmental aesthetics conferences organized by Yrjö Sepänmaa – another open-minded colleague – in Lepaa, Finland. The concept must have started to bubble up in his mind much earlier, of course. I congratulated him for his excellent idea to broaden the field of aesthetics through a new journal that would operate in a different manner compared to its more traditional predecessors. However, even if the plan sounded vaguely good, back then I didn't quite realize how important the step really was. Now, when more and more publications are open-access e-books and journals, and many research and funding organizations even require openness, it is easy to see that CA was a forerunner in something that has later become mainstream in many respects.

This is important. For good reason, it is typically the written and spoken ideas and concepts of scholars that are discussed and debated and that build the foundation of their long-perspective reputation, their legacy – at least in philosophy. There are exceptions who are also known for their other kinds of achievements, for their deeds, such as John Dewey for his educational activities. As Dewey and other early pragmatists pointed out, ideas can also be developed and made real in non-

or more-than-verbal practices, and this is exactly what *Contemporary Aesthetics* also does: it is a philosophy of aesthetics realized as an e-journal, through editorial practices. It is *contemporary* not only because contemporary philosophical themes are addressed in the essays published in it, but because it is also contemporary in its practices. This underlines the overall philosophy behind it: to understand the world around you, you must be engaged in and with it on several levels and in many ways. Don't just think, talk, read, and write, but do, make, experiment, test, play, show. Dare. Like it or not, in the contemporary world, a lot happens via digital media, and Arnold started to take this into account earlier than many others. However, this did not and does not mean that he would have forgotten the more tangible and bodily aspects of our lives, a theme that has been addressed repeatedly in his own texts and in CA. The digital and material merge, forming their own kind of whole that can be approached from a pragmatist, phenomenological, analytic, or some other point of view, and CA shows one way in which it can happen.

Arnold was the first editor-in-chief for 2003-2017 and it is impossible to overestimate his efforts. There was no ready model to apply or imitate, but he needed to create the whole concept and practices out of scratch. What should the publication policy be to make sure the journal would have its own character and role in the field? What should be said and done? There was no point in doing the same thing that others had been perfecting for decades. How should one manage the ever-changing technical issues? And what does it mean if the journal operates on this technical platform rather than on some other? Tools and regulations will not remain the same for long and all of them have their ethical and aesthetic implications. How do algorithms guide the writing process and who owns and controls servers? Technologies are worldviews. Where does one get the funds if there are no subscription fees? And how much is needed, after all? What is the political message of open-access publishing? Perhaps most importantly: how does one encourage colleagues to submit articles to a journal that does not yet have a reputation and does not directly help them to prove merit in their careers in the extremely competitive and conservative academia? How does one make the overall philosophy of the journal visible, understandable, and tempting? This, all this and more, is what it means to put philosophy in practice. Starting something completely new is much more demanding than sticking to old, well-established practices (without questioning their importance), but little by little everything was figured out.

I was not involved in developing the journal over the first years although I did happen to introduce the idea of and guest-edit the first special volume of CA (on aesthetics and mobility) in 2005. I have no idea how much Arnold discussed with other colleagues and what he did and pondered on his own, but be that as it may, I take it for granted that his role was fundamental. Without his vision and effort, the journal would not have been born, grown, and found its identity.

For its readers and authors, it quite soon became clear that the journal is something else. I am by no means saying that the more traditional journals don't have their place, but it was also quite

evident that there was an urgent need for an alternative. There was a niche – or Arnold created this niche – for a publication that has a more open, diverse, curious, and positively relaxed attitude than others. It simply felt like fresh air, and it was saying "yes", instead of "no." "Yes" to all kinds of themes and approaches – without compromising quality. It was meant for sharing carefully developed thoughts about the world around us, not for showing off that you know how academic games are played and that you have studied exactly the same classics and fashionable names as everyone else. In a way, this was not a surprise, given Arnold's own articles and books that show the same kind of spirit. But it is still one thing to make it real in one's own texts and another to open the same possibility for others and encourage them to take the jump. I was and still am as impressed and influenced by Arnold's publications as many others are, but I'm equally excited about his role as the founder and main engine of CA.

Currently, I have the pleasure and honor to be a member of the editorial board of CA – now chief-edited by Yuriko Saito – and I would say that even if all the questions mentioned above still require constant attention and the journal is never ready, Arnold managed to lay a solid foundation for it. Its role and policy are clear: it offers a channel for texts in (and near) aesthetics that don't necessarily follow the most traditional practices of many other journals as regards the themes addressed and the style of writing. It is forward-looking rather than backward-looking. It does a lot to cover the field of aesthetics very broadly, thematically, methodologically, geographically, and to some extent even language-wise. It allows variations and is inclusive, both for readers and authors. To use concepts Arnold also favors: *Contemporary Aesthetics* is a conceptual and intellectual virtual environment that offers plenty of possibilities to be engaged in and with.

One could maybe try to describe Arnold's role in creating this environment as one of a publisher. But it is not only that. Arnold is a scholar himself, a musician, teacher, and whatnot. More than a standard publisher. His different roles interlace and support each other, and even though there is no one word that would describe his role especially as the primus motor of CA, what he has done especially through and with it has to do with making things possible for others and for the whole field. If "enabler" didn't have negative connotations, it might be the word.

I appreciate and admire "enablers" of Arnold's type a great deal. They make others better, make it possible for others to shine, to grow. In team sports, there are always the big stars who score goals and points and receive the biggest headlines and most attention. They are admirable, of course. But often there are more silent team-mates without whom the whole team, stars included, could not excel, even if their crucial role is not necessarily noticed by as many. I believe it is safe to say that in his role as an author, Arnold is a star himself. But he also has his role as an enabling team-mate, especially through CA.

He has created a context where experiments are welcome. Where – I think we can admit this – not every experiment is quite excellent but where we can also "fail" and learn from that. Where

diversity of thinking is welcome. This requires plenty of hard work. It is easy to come up with ideas of all kinds of journals and events, but it is quite a different matter to build them up and keep them running in practice. But this is what great enablers do. Through this, their impact can be even more wide-ranging than through their own works, and certainly different. This is by no means saying that Arnold's publications would not have great impact. But on top of that, his influence is affecting and his legacy is constantly growing in this way.

I would like to congratulate Arnold for his long career and great achievements – which will continue to prosper in CA for the years to come, as a many-layered practical philosophy of aesthetics.

WELL-CONSTRUED EXAMPLES: A SHY NOTE ON ARNOLD BERLEANT'S ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS

Max Ryynänen

Abstract
Abstract: Many discussions in aesthetics have, although aiming for universality, through their choices of examples represented only e.g. the middle class and the upper class of/or the Global North, if not only Western Europe and North America (e.g. examples of art in aesthetic theory). Environmental aesthetics looks far more international and open for all kinds of people when one looks at its choice of examples. One major reason for this is Arnold Berleant's work.

Keywords
Environmental Aesthetics, Everyday Aesthetics, Philosophy of Art, Berleant.

In two distinctive essays in *On Philosophy and Philosophers: Unpublished Papers 1996-2000*, "Philosophy as Ethics" and "Philosophy as Spectatorship and Participation," Richard Rorty develops a strain of argumentation about philosophers. Although one can ask how much this really is the case with aestheticians (I think otherwise it is highly probable that Rorty is on the right track), he claims that one becomes a philosopher as one first ponders ethical questions. (We might all do this before other parts of philosophy, but to claim that this is the route to philosophy itself, I find lacking evidence, and for sure, this is not how I became an aesthetician.) Then, on the other hand, to become a professional philosopher (this reflects Rorty's lifelong interest in meta-philosophy), one has to, in a sense, not just become a spectator of life (and culture), able to look at it from a distance, but also become a spectator of philosophy itself.[1]

The duty of the philosopher to their humankind is to not become too detached, so they can have something to say about life and the world, but on the other hand they need to become detached enough so that they can become a spectator sufficiently to be able to build argumentation which is not based on too much subjectivity. "It throws him into an aesthetic rather than an ethical attitude toward philosophy," Rorty adds.[2]

The contemporary aesthetician, in this sense, of course deals with a twofold turn to becoming a spectator. Being a spectator of philosophy might not make a difference to what Rorty writes about, but being a spectator of the world increasingly becomes an aesthetic endeavor.

Aiming for universality, non-aestheticians, in philosophy, often pick absurdist examples, as they mostly just aim to support their argumentation with 'any valid examples.' They are there to

support their meta-driven remarks on reality. Wombats, beggars asking for money on the streets (typical of discussions on ethics) and pens in the hands of the philosophers are classics of philosophical examples – the wombats being an inside joke in logics, and the two others just being routine examples, which might sometimes show the lack of imagination of the speaker/author, but might also function as safe examples, that do not lead the minds of the listeners/readers astray from the topic discussed.

Aestheticians need to be more example-sensitive, as much is gained from dialog with them. Just think about Arthur C. Danto's endless return to the *Brillo Box* or Martin Heidegger's way of building a whole philosophy of art on remarks about the Greek Temple and a painting by Vincent van Gogh. Aestheticians have, however, their own routines, and I recall as a student laughing to the excessive use of Kasimir Malevich's paintings in the philosophy of art. I also remember how much respect I felt toward Noël Carroll, when he, suddenly, as (I believe) the first analytic aesthetician, covered film and other less discussed 'popular arts' in his *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (1999), just among other examples, most of them taken from highbrow arts, without accentuating the issue (so making it, popular culture, 'natural'). If many aesthetic issues could be as much about film or pop music as they were about theater and painting, why not use those examples, too? This widened the scope of aesthetics maybe nearly as much as argumentation about their aesthetic nature did some years before (in Carroll's and, for example, Shusterman's work), as a key name (Carroll) just decided that it was time for them to make it into the canon of examples. Of course, argumentation needed to come first, but one cannot underestimate the normalization of popular culture in aesthetic discourse.

A philosopher accentuating detachment could, in the way already hinted upon above, say that examples are not meaningful, and they should not be read that way – as they only help to support philosophical points made. And to some extent this is true, even if some examples (*Brillo Box*) have also been fruitful as companions to philosophical dialog. But with the history of white/European upper-class thinking/experience and (Western Central) European art practices of the privileged that aesthetics hosts, it easily turns so that even the professionals in the field start to read the consistent use of only certain kind of examples as a philosophically substantial paradigm or an ideological statement. And for anyone external to the system, the use of only one kind of example (i. e. highbrow) show – partly following, of course, incorrect interpretations – what culture(s) aesthetics aligns itself with, whose experience matters and what kind of artistic products in the end really can be discussed with the help of aesthetics.

Everyday aesthetics, which is a late tag for a discussion which I believe popular culture aestheticians started way earlier (Benjamin, Marcuse, Eco, Sontag, etc.), has a similar problem with examples. I am not the first to note this and the note applies broadly to everyday studies, not just aesthetics. Ben Highmore writes:

> Everyday life is a vague and problematic phrase. Any assumption that it is simply 'out there', as a palpable reality to be gathered up and described, should face an immediate question: whose everyday life? Often enough, however, such questions are purposefully ignored. To invoke the everyday can often be a sleight of hand that normalizes and universalizes particular values, specific world-views. Politicians, for instance, are often fond of using terms like 'everyday life' or 'ordinary people' as a way of hailing constituents to a common culture: people like us, lives like ours. The underside of this, of course, is that this everyday life is haunted by implicit 'others', who supposedly live outside the ordinary, the everyday.[3]

Aestheticians, who did not yet form a major part of the tradition Highmore criticizes in his introduction to *The Everyday Reader* (2002; the aesthetic tradition grew to be a phenomenon in the 2000s), have in the everyday aesthetics discussion focused absurdly much on Western (/Global North) (upper) middle-class lifestyles. Like Carsten Friberg, Elisabetta Di Stefano and I note critically in our introduction to the Forgotten Everydays special issue of *Popular Inquiry: The Journal of the Aesthetics of Kitsch, Camp and Mass Culture* (2021: 1),[4] even if some authors mention possible life-worlds that they admit that they cannot in the end understand,[5] and so turn reflectively to plainly more theoretical notes or examples that are from their own lives, working-class life, the life of the poor, and also the life of the really rich are visibly absent from the territory marked as everyday aesthetics. As much as in the philosophical discussions about art, dominated classically by mainly white middle-class and upper-class artists with (Western Central or Southern) European heritage and the taste of the educated people of these groups, the way design objects are on the table,[6] the way we go jogging (not everywhere can people, especially females, walk/jog on the streets, not even in the US, which is today one of the main countries where everyday aesthetics is written[7]) and/or examples of dinners (cooking and watching TV[8]) and car rides make this discussion somehow hard to penetrate if one is from a life-world with a much less Westernized lifestyle in Chennai in India, or if one lives in a marginalized nomadic Roma community or is just too rich to still get the fascination with design objects that so many middle-class people experience. One can of course ask if there is an everyday in prison camps and where people are doing forced labor (in sweatshops, illegal brothels, and the like) – at least when we think of our everyday use of the concept, which accentuates only certain everydays to be referred to with the concept. Just as middle age is not in everyday language often reserved for criminals or Keith Richards (but more for working-class and middle-class people, especially parents), everyday life is not just dominantly a concept used to explain the life of unprivileged African Americans in Northern Philadelphia or beggars in Mumbai, India. I do think, though, that no one's life is intentionally left out from the discussion in aesthetics (I have no reason to doubt this), and that there is a genuine interest in understanding the topic as a whole.

Tom Leddy defines everyday aesthetics as a philosophical discussion that concerns "objects that are not art or nature,"[9] and in Leddy's case, as he has studied roadside clutter, for example,[10]

this makes sense and it is well-supported by his own work. Many theories of aesthetics are of course based nearly totally on meta-level argumentation and not on notable features and/or objects of the everyday per se. Kevin Melchionne discusses the "ongoing" and "common" as features of everyday aesthetics.[11] Arto Haapala accentuates "familiarity" in his everyday aesthetics. He contrasts it with "strangeness," which he sees traditional aesthetic theories as being into (through an interest in art).[12] Haapala thinks that "[t]he aesthetics of everydayness is exactly in the 'hiding' of the extraordinary and disturbing, and feeling homey and in control."[13] Having control of one's life is, however, something, again, that mostly only privileged people can enjoy. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) is far from controlled by the protagonist (and definitely not 'homey').[14] As we thought in our special issue with Di Stefano and Friberg, it would be great (I am here paraphrasing our thoughts a little) if there were sometimes sentences like "every morning when people go out collecting trash" or "flying in private jets," but of course, like the self-critical aestheticians have said (I note this above), this would be something that would be hard to do, as the people writing about everyday aesthetics do not in this sense have experience of these lifestyles.

At the same time, I think there is always some way and route to make richer and wider objectscapes for texts about aesthetics, and one reason for me believing in this is the work of Arnold Berleant.

Berleant has in his *The Aesthetics of Environment* (1992) posed a challenge for aestheticians. In the chapter "Descriptive Aesthetics," he shows how important it is to write rich descriptions of phenomena we want to understand.[15] These include kayaking, sailing and circus performances. Not many of us have, however, been living very different everydays, and even if I, for example, could engage with writing about the multi-ethnic suburban lower-class everyday of immigrants in Sweden, living in the countryside as much as in the cities, growing up in the working class and later adopting a middle-class lifestyle, the leaps made are not remarkable, thinking about the broader picture that I have sketched out here. Not many of us could describe the life of a Mexican nurse, a Nigerian drug dealer or a cook from Bhutan (Ossi Naukkarinen's examples of lives he does not know, see footnote 5), and I do not think we have to be able to do this to understand what everyday aesthetics is and what it can give to us, but if we want to make the discussion low-threshold for everyone and not create structures that pose unnecessary metaphysics in discussions, this is an important task. And, of course, I would easily feel uncomfortable reading descriptions of the everyday lives of the poor and the less-privileged written by privileged middle-class scholars who had no first-hand experience of them.

Still, I would like to pose the question: do the examples used in the discussion also steer it theoretically? If an article used the example of bad sleep just before a major drug trafficking deal with Russian Mafia or the way it gets heavier late in the winter when one needs to walk an extra mile if one wants to find wood for the fire (in Norther Africa), it is hard to imagine that one could then follow up with theoretical claims that this type of life is somehow 'homey' or that we are in our everyday when we are in control of it. For sure, examples steer not just readings (and the way some

people don't feel welcomed to certain discussions as they have the wrong experiences and backgrounds), but also writings, the way people build argumentation. A rich variety of examples does not as easily allow for narrow thinking.

Socially engaged literature, although often written by people who view other people's lives from the outside (some writers are good in this), could of course give us a helping hand, and, of course, sometimes theorists have made remarkable work in their aspiration to describe through their own lives the problems of class, ethnicity and gender. For example, bell hooks's *Outlaw Culture* (1994) begins with an incredibly illuminative description of what it meant in hooks's youth to enter liberal arts education when one did not share 'Caucasian' cultural roots.[16]

The work of qualitative social scientists offer texts where 'experience experts,' i.e. people who are, for example, addicts, poor or abused, explain their lives. The texts can shed light on lives that most scholars have no idea about.[17] Still, the problem for aestheticians is that these materials virtually never contain ideas of the everyday or aesthetics, and thinking about the problems of people that social scientists study, it would feel rather awkward to crave funding to get this type of information about them.

To anyway get back to Berleant's writing, he has not simply just been portraying one set of environments, but, besides being the uttermost philosopher spectator that Rorty writes about, he has worked hard to create a broad number of environments, permanent, short-term and sometimes imagined, and futuristic, for his discourse. Space stations, rivers, Renaissance city centers (Venice), Japanese gardens and urban wilderness have always made me feel that this scholar is not just of the utmost excellence as a philosopher and cultural theorist. He is also into the whole world, through all kinds of human habitats, from the East to the West, from the South to the North, and through this act he also welcomes everyone to take part in his philosophical journey. I used to easily get the feeling that everyday aesthetics was not for me, but following Berleant's work, which was my central reading for my PhD in environmental aesthetics (on Venice), environmental aesthetics always felt like a discussion to which I could belong as much as anyone else.

I also had the privilege of having Arnold – besides his visiting Finland actively in the early 2000s – as my opponent when I defended my doctoral dissertation. I will never forget the wisdom and kind attitude of this intellectual giant, who has since mentored me as we have met in Helsinki, at conferences, and lately once on Zoom – who also had a sense of humor. Just before my defense, in October 2009, we sat down, me in a suit, and Arnold with a cloak borrowed from the University of Helsinki. Although I was nervous, he looked both stylish (in a Gandalf fashion) and a bit funny, because the cloak was really extraordinary, and I laughed a bit, and said, "You look medieval." Arnold answered immediately, "We are medieval." Thinking about the medieval ritual we were just entering; he was truly right. Just before we went into the classroom, Arnold asked Arto Haapala (my main teacher throughout my studies, and my Kustos in the ritual, who I have to thank for all the great visitors we had in aesthetics at the time), if he had to be a 'bad cop' during the process. Arto assured

Arnold of his freedom to chat the way he wanted. And Arnold was happy with that. We had a pleasant chat for a little over an hour, and all in all, Arnold left a big trace on my career, giving me much valuable advice then and even later on. Happy 90th birthday, Arnold Berleant!

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[1] Richard Rorty, *On Philosophy and Philosophers: Unpublished Papers 1960-2000*, edited by W. P. Malecki and Chris Vorapil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[2] I am thankful to Wojchech Malecki for our short dialogue on the topic, which helped me to see Rorty's philosophy in the right context.
[3] Ben Highmore, "Introduction: Questioning Everyday Life," in *The Everyday Life Reader*, edited by Ben Highmore (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.
[4] Elisabetta Di Stefano, Carsten Friberg and Max Ryynänen, "Editorial: Forgotten Everydays," *Popular Inquiry* 2021, Vol 2, Iss. 9, 1-4.
[5] Ossi Naukkarinen writes that his "everyday life is probably rather different from that of a Mexican nurse, a Nigerian drug dealer, or a cook from Bhutan," but also reminds the reader about the fact that philosophically it is more important to think of the attitudes people have toward their everyday. Ossi Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. 11, Article 14: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol11/iss1/14 (section 2).
[6] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[7] See e.g. Shilpa Padke, Shilpa Ranade and Sameera Khan, *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011).
[8] Kevin Melchionne, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 2013, Vol 11: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1290&context=liberalarts_contempaesthetics.
[9] Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012), 8-9.
[10] Tom Leddy, "The Aesthetics of Junkyards and Roadside Clutter," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 2008, Vol 6: ttps://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/journal.php.
[11] Kevin Melchionne, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 2013, Vol 11: https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1290&context=liberalarts_contempaesthetics.
[12] Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, edited by Andrew Light and J. M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 40.
[13] Ibid. 52.
[14] The reference is fictional, but based on true life events.
[15] Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), chapter 3.
[16] bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).
[17] See e.g. Riikka Perälä, "Civil Society Organizations and Care of the Self: An Ethnographic Case Study on Emancipation and Participation in Drug Treatment," *Foucault Studies*, 2015, Vol 20, 96-115.

ARNOLD BERLEANT MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY MIKEL DUFRENNE

Maryvonne Saison

Abstract
Berleant and Dufrenne were both simultaneously benchmarks in the IAA for many years. They knew each other and Berleant refered to Dufrenne occasionally. Starting from some quotations of Dufrenne by Berleant, I propose to show how both of them differ from Merleau-Ponty when thinking that perception is not only an act of vision but a somatic process. The originality of Berleant associating phenomenology and Anglo-Saxon way of thinking could lead to suggest that Environmental Aesthetics has a feedback effect opening a new reading of Dufrenne.

Keywords
Sensuous, Eye, Vision, Ear, Synesthesias, Somatic Engagement, Natural Environments.

Among all my encounters related to the IAA, Arnold's was one of the most important and recurrent. I was moved and intrigued, during a friendly dinner in Paris with Arnold and his wife, when he confessed that he had taken up French again to revive his knowledge of a language he particularly liked.

It is this link with France and French philosophers that I wish to reactivate by evoking several points of convergence between Arnold Berleant and Mikel Dufrenne. As much as Berleant's[1] readers have noted the reference to Merleau-Ponty, in whom he found a philosophy of perception essential to his work, the reference to Dufrenne has hardly been pointed out. It deserves however to be taken into consideration.

It is not surprising that Berleant sometimes quoted Dufrenne, for the two had frequented each other: they were both very present for many years within the IAA. Dufrenne was considered a phenomenologist in the same way as Merleau-Ponty and the aesthetic orientation that he gave to his research justified Berleant's invoking him when phenomenology renewed aesthetic reflection. It was in particular the case when he undertook to give an account of the musical performance and followed the example of Dufrenne: "in recognizing the wide range of sensuous perception and at the same time the originary capacity of aesthetic experience, Mikel Dufrenne has shown us the rich capabilities of phenomenology. It is in that spirit that this essay explores musical performance."[2] To admit as obvious a form of division between referring to Merleau-Ponty for the philosophy of the perception and referring to Dufrenne only regarding aesthetic questions would be nevertheless imprudent insofar as, for these two French philosophers, the aesthetic questions are inscribed within the framework of a global philosophical reflection: Merleau-Ponty produced numerous texts on the art and Dufrenne carried out a philosophical work within which the aesthetics constitutes only one aspect.[3]

Without trying to be exhaustive or to overestimate the proximity with French philosophy, even if it would give credence to the statement that Berleant is one of the few American aestheticians to have established a bridge between the Anglo-Saxon analytical and pragmatist tradition and phenomenology, I will first look at the way Berleant referred to Dufrenne and find the corresponding analyses in the texts of the French philosopher. We will see that, in spite of a global reference to Merleau-Ponty, both of them share some reservations against him concerning the senses and the sensuous, and the pre-eminent place given to the eye and the vision. This observation will lead me to suggest, despite certain philosophical incompatibilities, other possible convergences between Dufrenne and Berleant.

A shared criticism of the prevalence of vision

Let us start from Berleant's remark "'vision is born from what is happening in the body' Dufrenne once remarked ". A note specifies that it was "in a lecture on Merleau-Ponty's *Eye and Mind* at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, 13 October, 1979".[4] I do not have Dufrenne's 1979 lecture, but a speech given at a Merleau-Ponty colloquium held at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1977, entitled "*L'œil et l'esprit*" (“*Eye and Mind”*) and published in volume III of the collection *Esthétique et philosophie*[5], at least allows us to find the spirit of his lecture. He centers his analysis on the title given by Merleau-Ponty to his essay by insisting on the fact that the thought "is always sustained by the perceptual faith that anchors us in the truth of the sensuous" and he notices that the philosopher “thinks of the savage in vision according to the Husserlian model of passive synthesis”: the visible is given "and this act of giving is an event in the visual field". That leads him to raise the main themes of the Merleau-Pontian ontology that he goes through until the unfinished work, *The visible and the invisible,* published *post mortem* in 1964: “this originary being that the philosopher calls flesh (…) the bursting forth of originary being”, “the upheaval of appearing, for this bursting forth produces a chiasm” and "the reversibility of the visible and the seer”. The enigma of the vision explains the eye, and in order to think this unthinkable that is the bursting forth of originary, writes Dufrenne, Merleau-Ponty examines painting. If the eye, far from “designating a determine organ assigned to a precise function” designates “this strange power of opening of the flesh, (…) The eye, putting us into the world by opening a world to us, precedes the mind.” At the end of his presentation, Dufrenne leaves room for a reservation through a question concerning the title: “eye, of course, but why not ear or hand, for that matter? (…) The flesh is polymorphous and polyvalent. The sensuous must also allow itself pluralization, for no matter how subtle the discourse of hyperreflection may be, it can only divulge originary being as having already burst forth.” Should Merleau-Ponty have written: “the sensuous and mind?" he wonders, before ending with the regret that the philosopher privileges the eye, neglecting the sound and the tactile and "the synesthesias which are the lot of all perception". The disagreement relates to the radical privilege that Merleau-

Ponty wanted to confer to the visible, which leads him not to recognize that "the whole body is invoked" because there are equivalences which associate tactile values to the painting.

If, precisely, Berleant had retained in Dufrenne's talk his remark that it is the whole body that is involved in perception, he can only agree with the way the French philosopher develops this position in his last book published in Montreal in 1987: *L'œil et l'oreille*[6] ("Eye and ear"). The ultimate essay, by its title, echoes Merleau-Ponty's *L'œil et l'esprit* ("Eye and Mind"), and expresses the same revolt against the pre-eminence of the eye in Western culture. With the ear, the music is also saved, "to which the reflection on the art does not always take account of, being inspired by the imperialism of the eye, obsessed by the fine arts."[7] It is therefore first of all a question "of doing justice to the ear" as announced from the outset in the introduction: the ear alone "founds the relation to oneself which constitutes the subject", it is by it that the living individual feels alive, and it is undoubtedly also "that by which he feels himself thinking, creating between the body and the mind, between feeling and thinking, a continuity which makes place for thinking to emerge."[8] The senses, claims Dufrenne, are interdependent and exchanges take place between them: "our purpose, he continues, is thus not only to rehabilitate the ear but also to reflect on the plurality of the senses, or more exactly of what is ordered to the senses."[9] Dufrenne wonders at length about the synesthesias whose experience allows to feel the unity of the sensible, and which are ways of making, aimed or reached by the practice of arts.[10] Passing from the association of the senses in the synesthesias to the association of the artistic practices, he concludes by these words: "Hence the destiny of arts: For lack of producing and giving to feel the transsensible, they play happily to associate ". Whereas Merleau-Ponty gives an account of synesthesias by a "seeing extended to non-visual qualities", Dufrenne imputes synesthesias to the imagination, defining the imaginary by the virtual: "we think we see them, we say we see them, but it is not so: the tactile or the audible were not converted into visible, they only passed to the state of virtualities.[11]

Berleant, in a 1993 text, shares with Dufrenne the criticism of the fact that the theory of art "[...] has mostly been elaborated in reference to a single art form – the visual arts of painting and sculpture [...]"[12]. It is no coincidence that he had been struck by Dufrenne's remark at Stony Brook: it is in the same spirit that he writes again, in this 1993 article, "perception [...] is not only a visual act but a somatic engagement with the realm of the aesthetic."[13] What is formulated here in the criticism of the traditional theory of art implies a new conception of the aesthetic and more generally of the perceptive experience: the 1991 text commented the reference to Dufrenne by drawing the consequences of the idea that the perception is somatic before being visual: " the eye is but one factor in our perception of space, an awareness that we grasp through multiple sensory channels."[14] The preface to the 2005 collection of articles *Re-thinking Aesthetics* points out again that these essays "insist on including the body and all its senses within the domain of aesthetic experience,"[15] and the topics of engagement and environment at the heart of Berleant's thinking are linked to the critique of the

place given to vision. The reference to Dufrenne is therefore important in that it allows to complement the reference to Merleau-Ponty, and this dual reference leads to corroboration of the claim that Berleant bridges generally opposing traditions.

"Extending the range of aesthetic experience"[16]

To extend these reflections I will add some unexpected convergences between some other writings by Dufrenne and positions defended by Berleant, starting from a broader scope of aesthetics proposed by the two philosophers in their national contexts. As far as Dufrenne is concerned, I will refer less to *La phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, which takes as a model of aesthetic experience the reception of works of art and remains faithful to the Kantian heritage for which disinterestedness is essential to contemplation, than to texts that are not considered to be directly related to aesthetics in the traditional sense of the term, and I will give preference to his last publications. I do not believe that Berleant himself noted the echoes that he could find there and I was surprised by the silence relative to the French phenomenology in his article "esthétique de l'art et de la nature"[17], whereas Merleau-Ponty's courses at Collège de France from 1956 to 1958 dealt with the concept of Nature[18] and Dufrenne did not stop promoting a philosophy of Nature[19]. Despite notable differences related to the fact that the concept of Nature finds its roots in the ontology and metaphysics of the two French philosophers, some reasons for rapprochement are notable: let us open some windows.

The originality of environmental aesthetics, we read in the preface of the collection *Esthétique de l'environnement*, which presents Carlson and Berleant as "major authors of the current", "consisted first of all in putting natural environments at the center of attention [...]". While twentieth-century aesthetics, regardless of its origin, generally focused on art, environmental aesthetics recaptures the spirit of Ronald Hepburn's advocacy of an aesthetics of nature[20] that shows to which extent the viewer can be involved in what he or she is experiencing, and the feedback effect this has on them. Environmental aesthetics gradually broadened its scope to include anthropogenic environments, and then proposed an "aesthetics of ordinary life" by aesthetically evaluating common objects and environments, as well as a wide range of ordinary activities, opening the field to the study of "aesthetic appreciation of the world at large" that even includes works of art.[21] In the first chapter of the collection of essays from 2005, which takes up the opening speech at the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics in 1998, to account for the transformations of aesthetics, Berleant took the example of the renewal proposed by Wolfgang Welsch in three directions: "expanding aesthetic perception to the full range of *aisthesis*, enlarging the range of art to include both the multiplicity of its inner aspects and the many ways in which art prevails the whole of culture, and finally, extending aesthetics beyond art to society and the life-world."[22] Aesthetic experience within the framework of environmental aesthetics is a sensitive experience that is performed in different domains but whose

characteristics remain the same, whether it is nature or art. Our first relationship to the world is somatic and a continuity between nature and culture is re-established.

Dufrenne's philosophical path when he makes the hypothesis of Nature as a pre-human and pre-real originary, as the ground that gives birth, that we cannot think but that we can feel in aesthetic experiences which mobilize the sensitivity, is situated in the prolongation of a philosophical work whose extent exceeds a reflection on the nature of aesthetics as discipline. He remains nevertheless close to the concerns of the supporters of the environmental aesthetics when he discusses "The aesthetic experience of Nature"[23]. In this text of 1955 Dufrenne reconciles the aesthetic preoccupations of the time and the personal philosophical path already made. Starting from the observation that the privileged aesthetic object is always the art, which gives place to the phenomenologically most enlightening experience, he shows what one can expect from a reflection on a natural aesthetic object: "the natural object exalts the sensuous in the world" and "in front of the natural spectacle, we'll get into it, integrated in the natural becoming of the world"[24]. He uses the aesthetic categories discussed in the Anglo-Saxon or Western aesthetics, the sublime in the first place, but drifts towards a philosophical reflection which is proper to him, centered on the issues of the aestheticizable and expressiveness. He abandons the purity of the experience provoked by the work of art, yet phenomenologically more interesting, in favor of the one carried out in contact with the natural object, which comes closer to the ordinary perception "in that it mixes us more with the things and does not authorize a complete reduction. " The gain is consequent: the article concludes on the scope of an experience that brings "the assurance of a connaturality of man with nature", that makes feel the consubstantiality of man with nature, "effect of a pre-established harmony that does not need a God to pre-establish it because it is God: *Deus, sive Natura*." Environmental aesthetics is developed by philosophers closer to American pragmatism than to phenomenology, but it is interesting to note that Berleant is attracted by monism and himself refers to Spinoza[25]. A parallel reading of the two authors shows, despite their fundamental differences, the proximity of certain analyses and descriptions. This is the case of a text by Dufrenne published in 1989.

It is an article in which Dufrenne answers the injunction of the number 16 of *La revue d'esthétique*[26], "speak about a beloved work", with a text entitled "Le Cap Ferrat": the philosopher defends the idea that the experience of Cap Ferrat is an aesthetic experience and that a cape, which is a natural object, can be considered as a work of art. It is less a question of defending an aesthetics of natural objects than of showing that a landscape questions the division nature–culture: "the Cape is a work. Of nature first of all [...] but the Cape is also the work of men, of all those who built the port, constructed the houses, planted the gardens, who build today the most sumptuous residences so it is called the paradise of millionaires. [...] Thus the Cape is a cultural object, as are most urban or rural landscapes today, at least in the West."[27] The Cape, a work of natural forces, is not the work of an artist but is its own work "as a cultural object, cultivated, shaped, managed by the people who

inhabit it": "Those who live the Cape, he specifies, [...] let themselves be guided by it [...]. They are the actors who play the Cape [...]. [...] The Cape is therefore naturating (*naturant*); and by naturating the people who are linked to it, it is naturing itself. Together with those who keep it, it is by right a work of art."[28] When man appreciates a natural object and transforms it, he responds to the solicitation of a naturating object with a naturating engagement, forever blurring what is natural and what is cultural, what is art and what is not.

As we see, this text describes a symbiotic and fusional experience of the Cape, the philosopher's immersion in the sensuous: "it is not its portrait that I like", he writes. "I can enjoy its presence, be his; abolish this distance that the gaze digs, feel it instead of seeing it." Nature gives rise to an aesthetic experience that "gives us a lesson in being in the world," wrote Dufrenne in 1955, an experience in which "man exists *with* things."[29] Berleant can be in harmony with Dufrenne on the level of an aesthetic experience expanded to include nature, when, as the latter concluded in 1955, "All that reduction can do here is to proclaim its own impossibility, to make belief in the world appear, not to suppress it."

Dufrenne's originality compared to the phenomenological aesthetics is to cease to limit the aesthetics to the art and to certain works of art, to cease to confine himself to a sectorial analysis, so he founds the aesthetic reflection on a philosophy of Nature whose developments are multiple. As he is elaborating a philosophy of the Nature, Dufrenne describes a type of lived experience which allows indisputably to operate certain connections, limited undoubtedly but notable, with the environmental aesthetics such as it developed across the Atlantic and notably in Berleant's work. One could go so far as to suggest that Berleant's writings have an effect on Dufrenne's reading and make one attentive to his last works.

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[1] From now on, in order to treat Arnold and Dufrenne equally, I will use their last names. Berleant's critical confrontation with Merleau-Ponty is particularly interesting: *cf* « Environment and the body » in *Place and Embodiment,* proceedings of XIII[th] International Congress of Aesthetics, Lahti, Finland, August 1-5, 1995 and *Living in the landscape: toward an Aesthetics of Environment,* University Press of Kansas, 1997.
[2] Arnold Berleant, "A Phenomenology of Musical Performance", *in Re-thinking Aesthetics. Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts*, Ashgate 2004, p. 176.
[3] *Cf.* Maryvonne Saison, *La nature artiste. Mikel Dufrenne de l'esthétique au politique*, Editions de la Sorbonne, 2018.
[4] Arnold Berleant, "Toward an Aesthetics of Environmental Design" in *Person-Environment Theory Series*, University of California, Berkeley, 1991.
[5] Mikel Dufrenne, « *L'œil et l'esprit* » in *Esthétique et philosophie*, tome 3, Paris, Klincksieck 1981, p. 97-102. "Eye and Mind" translated by Dennis Gallagher*: In the presence of the sensuous: Essays in Aesthetics,* Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher, 1987, reprinted in paperback 1990 by Humanities Press International, Inc. Atlantic Highlands, p.69-74.
[6] Mikel Dufrenne, *L'œil et l'oreille,* Montréal, L'Hexagone 1987. This essay was reprinted in France by Editions Jean-Michel Place in 1991 et has been reissued by Nouvelles éditions Place in 2020.
[7] *Ibid*. Nouvelles éditions Place, p. 9.
[8] *Ibid*. Nouvelles éditions Place, pp. 50-51 and 55-56.
[9] *Ibid*. Nouvelles éditions Place, p. 10.
[10] *Ibid*. Nouvelles éditions Place, p. 122.
[11] Mikel Dufrenne, *L'œil et l'oreille, op. cit.* p. 122.
[12] Arnold Berleant, « Esthétique de l'art et de la nature » *in Esthétique de l'environnement*, textes réunis et traduits par H.-S Afeissa et Y. Lafolie, Paris, Vrin, 2015.
[13] *Ibid*., p. 97.
[14] Arnold Berleant, "Toward an Aesthetics of Environmental Design" *in Person-Environment Theory Series*, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, p. 13.

[15] Arnold Berleant *Re-thinking Aesthetics,* Ashgate 2005, p. vii.
[16] Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense*, Imprint Academic 2010
[17] Arnold Berleant, "L'esthétique de l'art et de la nature", text published in 1993 under the title "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature" in S. Kemal, I. Gaskell (dir.) *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts,* Cambridge University Press and translated by Y. Lafolie in *Esthétique de l'environnement,* Vrin 2015, p. 85-113.
[18] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours, Collège de France 1952-1960*, Gallimard 1968 and *La Nature, Notes, cours du collège de France*, Seuil, book series "Traces écrites", 1995.
[19] A note in the last chapter of *La phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* commenting on the assertion that art is essential to nature already adds: "if art is thus a cosmological phenomenon, one may ask whether nature does not attempt to realize art even before the appearance of man. A reflection on the natural aesthetic object would have to approach this problem." (PUF, 1953, p. 671). All the later works of Dufrenne are confronted with the subject of nature, with the originary, notably *Le Poétique* (PUF, 1963) whose 3rd chapter discusses "The poetic in Nature" and the two works on the *a priori* (PUF 1959 and ed. C. Bourgois 1981). It is in the book of 1981 that the nature takes a capital letter, designating the unthinkable that the feeling ("sentiment") presages throughout the world (p. 312).
[20] *Esthétique de l'environnement*, *op.cit.* p. 17 and Ronald Hepburn "L'esthétique contemporaine et la négligence de la beauté naturelle", *ibid.,* p. 41-54.
[21] *The Aesthetics of Natural Environnements*, *op.cit.* p. 11, quoted in the preface to the *Esthétique de l'environnement, op.cit.* p. 9 and p. 18.
[22] Arnold Berleant, *Re-thinking Aesthetics*, *op.cit.* p. 14.
[23] Mikel Dufrenne, "L'expérience esthétique de la nature", *Esthétique et philosophie* éd. Klincksieck T.1, 1967, p. 38-52.
[24] Mikel Dufrenne, *ibid.* p. 38-40.
[25] In *Re-thinking Aesthetics*, *op. cit.* p. 17, Berleant expresses his hope that philosophy, abandoning the dualism based on systems of binary oppositions, will highlight the interpenetrations, continuities, and even fusions between ideas "perhaps with the hope of achieving a kind of Spinozistic unity that seems them as aspects of a common substance."
[26] *Revue d'esthétique*, *œuvres* n° 16, 1989, Paris, Editions Jean-Michel Place, nouvelle série.
[27] Mikel Dufrenne, *ibid.* p. 59.
[28]Mikel Dufrenne, "Le Cap Ferrat", in *Revue d'esthétique*, n° 16, *op. cit.* p. 59.
[29] Mikel Dufrenne, "L'expérience esthétique de la nature", in *Esthétique et philosophie,* Paris, Editions Klincksieck T.1, 1967, p. 51.

AESTHETICS AND ETHICS OF RELATIONALITY: PHILOSOPHIES OF ARNOLD BERLEANT AND WATSUJI TETSURŌ COMPARED

Yuriko Saito

Abstract
Arnold Berleant's oeuvre spanning half a century is remarkable in its prescience and global reach. One of the most important contributions he makes is to illuminate the relationality that characterizes our aesthetic experience. His notion of aesthetic engagement, extending also to define our mode of being in the world, overcomes the dichotomy between subject and object, a long-held and well-entrenched legacy of Western philosophy. This relational account of human existence is also developed by a twentieth century Japanese philosopher, Watsuji Tetsurō, in his ethics based upon the notion of inbetween-ness. Despite the shared concern to emphasize the interdependent and intertwined relationship with the world as the nature of human existence and aesthetic experience, Watsuji's interest focuses on self-cultivation, without sufficient attention paid to its social and political implications. Berleant, in comparison, develops the notion of negative aesthetics to highlight those aspects of our lives and environments in which our relational existence and aesthetics are damaged and advocates the importance of utilizing aesthetic sensibility as a critical instrument for social improvement.

Keywords
Berleant, Aesthetic Engagement, Relational Aesthetics, Watsuji Tetsurō, Inbetween-ness, Negative Aesthetics.

1. Aesthetic engagement as relational aesthetics

As I was rereading Arnold Berleant's voluminous work that spans over half a century to properly honor his contribution to the field of aesthetics, I was struck by how prescient his work has been. For one, although the discourse on everyday aesthetics is gaining increasing attention in recent years, Berleant was way ahead of those authors who are today associated with this sub-discipline of aesthetics, such as Katya Mandoki, Tom Leddy, Kevin Melchionne, Ossi Naukkarinen, and myself. Berleant's notions of aesthetic field and aesthetic engagement, first concerned with art but has continued to inform environmental aesthetics and social aesthetics, characterize *experience* and, as such, there is no aspect of our life that is excluded from the realm of aesthetics. Although I, along with Mandoki, may have made this ubiquity of aesthetics in our lives prominent with the title, *Everyday Aesthetics*,[1] I consider Berleant to be the true founding father, and John Dewey the founding grandfather, of this discourse. Without using the specific term, everyday aesthetics, their work initiated and established this field of aesthetic inquiry. As I reread his work, I continue to be humbled by the fact that whatever I thought about when developing my own view on everyday aesthetics had already been suggested by Berleant. On one hand, I feel reassured that I am on the right track, grateful for the trail he blazed for later

travellers like myself, but on the other hand I feel intimidated that there is nothing new I can offer! The only new thing I can add is some materials from Japanese philosophy, which I plan to do in this essay.

Another sign of prescience of Berleant's work is the notion of 'relationality,' which has recently been garnering attention in various fields. In ethics, for example, one of the earliest proponents of care ethics, Nel Noddings, changed the subtitle of her seminal work, *Caring*, from *Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) to *A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2013) for the second, updated edition, de-emphasizing gender specificity while emphasizing a general human condition.[2] Or, Anton Luis Sevilla invokes the notion of "relational ethics" in his comparative study of bel hooks' engaged pedagogy and the philosophy of Watsuji Tetsurō, one of the most influential twentieth century philosophers in Japan, the subject of my subsequent comparison with Berleant's work.[3] In design discourse, some prominent contemporary designers advocate conceiving design practice as "relational services" in which the designer and the client become participants in co-creating the desired outcome, as an alternative to the conventional model of a designer creating an object which a client receives.[4]

Most pertinent to my purpose here, relationality is also getting attention in aesthetics.[5] The notion of relationality was first made prominent by Nicolas Bourriaud. He coined the term, "relational aesthetics," to specifically account for the relatively new form of art that is comprised of people's everyday life and social interactions, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija's and Liam Gillick's social and participatory art. However, Bourriaud himself admits that art-making has always been relational, first between humans and deity, then humans and objects, and most recently between and among humans.[6] He characterizes this relationality as "transitivity," "encounter," and "dialogue" by pointing out that "at the outset of this, negotiations have to be undertaken, and the Other presupposed … Any artwork might thus be defined as a relational object."[7] In short, "each particular artwork is a proposal to live in a shared world." There is no finished product, and the so-called art is open-ended and improvisationary, consisting of the relationship that is spontaneously generated between the object of art and its appreciator or, in the case of participatory art, by participants' interactions with each other and their environment.

Berleant's work dating back to 1970 can be characterized as relational aesthetics, more than three decades before Bourriaud articulated this notion in 2002. Except for referring to those contemporary art projects that make this nature of art explicit, I find in his discussion nothing new that Berleant had not already developed. In fact, Berleant's work abound with terms like relationship, cooperation, reciprocity, dialogue, and collaboration, and aesthetic engagement is often presented as participatory aesthetics. Without specifically calling it such, I consider Berleant's aesthetic engagement to be a model of relational aesthetics.

Although Berleant is best known for establishing the subfields of aesthetics, namely environmental aesthetics and social aesthetics, the fundamental concept of aesthetic engagement underlying

them characterizes the human mode of being in the world. The conventional understanding of aesthetics as the philosophy of art and beauty thus does not capture the richness and wide-ranging concerns of aesthetic engagement, not only in terms of what sort of things should be included for aesthetic inquiry but, more importantly for the purpose of this paper, in terms of how its reach extends to the ethical, social, political, and existential arenas, all of which are integrated and entangled in our lived experience. It is no accident that terms like continuity, inseparability, connectedness, reciprocity, relatedness, and cooperation are the key words that appear frequently in his discussion. These terms describe not only the nature of aesthetic experience but also our living in this world together with others, whether people, nature, or artifacts. We manage our daily life *with* them, always interacting with them to accomplish tasks, develop relationships, dispense care acts, and co-create aesthetic experience. Our existence cannot be separated from the world which we inhabit, and, at the same time, "the world in which humans participate cannot be entirely separated from the human presence"; as such, "there is rather a *reciprocal* relation between people and the things and conditions with which we live."[8] In short, the world is not made up of discrete entities, such as humans, natural objects, and artifacts, each acting as an independent and separate building block. Instead, relationships, interactions, and entanglements between and among them constitute the world. Aesthetic engagement offers an occasion to make this *relational* account of the way in which we inhabit this world sensible and explicit: "humans' relation to things is not a relation between discrete and self-sufficient entities. On the contrary, just as people impose themselves on things, so, too, do things exercise an influence on people."[9]

This inseparability of us and the world characterizing the fundamental mode of human existence challenges the modern Western liberalist view of human beings as autonomous and independent, which still dominates today's neoliberalism. It promotes human exceptionalism by giving us privilege because of free will, which is thought to entitle us to wield power over others not bestowed with such privilege. The way in which we are affected by the world is minimized in favor of celebrating our capacity to rise above it, providing a recipe for hubris and anthropocentrism. Essentially, Berleant observes, "we constructed a world of discrete objects separated from one another, objects and events that, like Leibniz's monads, are related only externally."[10] The independent existence takes priority over relationality, and the key terms Berleant uses in characterizing this conventional worldview are separation, discreteness, division, and isolation.

Berleant's notion of aesthetic engagement is an attempt to overcome one of the pronounced expressions of this dominant Western philosophical tradition: the dichotomy and separation between a subject and an object. The reach of this dualistic framework, no doubt paralleling other dichotomies such as mind and body, humans and nature, and male and female, has been deep and extensive, including in aesthetics. The persistent paradigm of aesthetics is that there is an object distinguishable and separable from an experiencing agent and that the subject takes in whatever is

provided by the object. As a result, events, situations, atmospheres, and activities that one performs, that is, those aspects of our life experiences that are not directed toward a clearly defined or framed object, become a kind of 'inconvenient truth' and they are made to disappear from the aesthetic radar. Furthermore, this model of aesthetics based upon an independent object-hood tends to direct its inquiry toward making a judgment regarding beauty or artistic value. That is, "the underlying presumption is that an objective judgment of beauty must be both possible and desirable, since there is an independent object of appreciation."[11] Furthermore, the long-held notion of disinterestedness dictates that various life concerns, in particular practical and ethical, are to be suspended when experiencing an object aesthetically. Thus, the conventional model of aesthetic experience is characterized by a series of *disconnect* between the subject and the object, the content of the experience and the judgment, and the aesthetic and other concerns from our management of life. Berleant's aesthetic engagement proposes to reclaim these connections by characterizing aesthetic experience as being thoroughly integrated with our life. It puts together these parts of our lives, forcibly separated and made disparate for the sake of clarity and distinction, and restores a holistic account of human existence and lived experience.

Berleant characterizes aesthetic experience as a dynamic process that emerges from a collaboration between the object and the subject facilitated by reciprocal responsiveness. It is never a one-way street; that is, it is neither object- nor subject-driven. Instead, the process is like a dialogue between them. As an experiencing agent, I approach the object with an open mind and improvise the most appropriate and effective means of responding to what it offers me, sometimes scrutinizing details while other times taking a sweeping large view, or sometimes sitting back and letting the atmosphere engulf me while other times vigorously moving my body to contribute to an already jovial air. I let the other invite me into its world, speak to me, and work with it. At the same time, I also activate my imagination and fuse it with the sensory experience, thereby creating a rich layer of associations. Unlike what is expected by the disinterested attitude,

> every perceiver contributes to the situation, not only through perceptual activity, but with the invisible dimensions of past experience, memory, knowledge, and conditioning. A whole range of personal and cultural factors colors our active sensory experience, whether or not this is intentional or conscious. This structural order of the aesthetic field is colored by the character of particular occasions.[12]

In aesthetic engagement, "there is no separation between components but a continuous exchange in which they act on each other."[13] Aesthetic experience is an ongoing process of negotiation and collaboration with whatever I am experiencing by entering its world and engaging in a dialogue, with an ample reward for my willingness to dance together. I savor such a process. While making a judgment of the aesthetic value of an object is not anathema to aesthetic engagement, the emphasis is on

the experience which may or may not lead to a judgment. The experience is valued for itself, not as a means to making a judgment.

The terms describing the aesthetic experience facilitated by engagement, namely collaboration, responsiveness, reciprocity, and open mindedness, are decidedly ethical virtues. These virtues are most prominent in social aesthetics, the arena of aesthetics that Berleant established as he continued to expand the aesthetic field, from art to environment. Commenting on this expansion, Berleant points out that it is "both needless and false to restrict environment to its physical aspects," but it includes "environments of all sorts, including human situations and social relationships."[14] This movement is characterized by him as "objects into persons: the way to social aesthetics."[15]

The desiderata of social aesthetics, or "getting along beautifully,"[16] consist of acceptance, respect for the unique singularity of the other party, perceptual acuity, open mindedness, and creative and imaginative engagement. A mechanical transaction that follows a prescribed script, each party doing its own thing without having any traction gained through interaction, is generally not aesthetically fulfilling. In contrast, an aesthetically successful situation is generated collaboratively, interactively, and improvisationally by each party with an open mind that invites and welcomes new discovery, unfamiliar territory, and fresh insight gained not only cognitively but through perceptually.[17] Here, it is difficult to separate the aesthetic from the ethical, "for these settings … fuse moral and social values with aesthetic ones."[18] A satisfying social situation and interaction are made possible by the participants' ethical grounding in virtues such as respect, thoughtfulness, care, responsiveness, and reciprocity, but these are further facilitated by aesthetic sensibility accompanied by perceptual acuity, activation of imagination, and tuning into and adjusting one's attitude and behavior according to the situation and atmosphere. At the same time, our ethical interactions with others require aesthetic manifestations through oral expressions such as the use of language and its delivery and bodily expressions such as facial expressions, postures, and gestures.

Although the conventional aesthetics' tendency to focus on art sets the direction from "objects into persons," it may be the case that the ethically-grounded and aesthetically-directed social interaction lays the ground for the aesthetics regarding objects. This possibility of bidirectional aesthetics, from persons to objects, in addition to from objects to persons, is suggested by Berleant in the following passage:

> Aesthetic engagement is an experience of aesthetic appreciation that transforms a physical juxtaposition into a social relationship in which a personal encounter takes place. It projects the aesthetic connection we can experience in the arts into our engagement with other people and with things, as well, turning our encounter with separate, impersonal objects into personal relationships.[19]

What is important is that aesthetic engagement, whether regarding objects, environments, or social interactions, is grounded in the ethical mode of being in, and relating to, the world. At the same time, our ethical relationship with the world can be fulfilling and successful only if it is informed and directed by aesthetic considerations. This inseparability or fusion of the aesthetic and the moral is a recurrent theme in Berleant's aesthetic engagement. In discussing the aesthetic dimension of social life, he claims that "the aesthetics has expanded to include what I call social aesthetics, social values manifested in the relations among people, individually and in groups, and in discussions that recognize *aesthetics and ethics are inextricably intertwined*."[20] Elsewhere, he states that "in the human environment, *the moral, the social and the political are thoroughly interwoven* [...] Our world is first *aesthetic but at the same time moral*."[21] Finally, in his discussion of negative aesthetics brought about by the commercial, political, and industrial co-optation of what he calls perceptual commons, environment that should be free for all, he states that "here the aesthetic and the moral *merge inseparably*."[22] Berleant's overall commitment to restore the *continuity* and *inseparability* of various life concerns and the aesthetic is summarized thus: "The moral and the aesthetic are often symbiotic and, in a world of continuities, nothing is entirely insulated from any part of the whole."[23]

2. Watsuji Tetsurō's notion of inbetween-ness

I have mentioned how prescient Berleant's work had been, anticipating more recent developments like everyday aesthetics and relational aesthetics. At the same time, his work is noteworthy for its global relevance, most prominently indicated by the enthusiastic reception by Chinese scholars with whom he has been enjoying a productive exchange.[24] No doubt Chinese scholars found resonance in Berleant's environmental aesthetics, which has a long legacy in the Chinese intellectual and cultural tradition. Here I want to call attention to a significant affinity between Berleant's view of relationality of human existence that underlies aesthetic engagement and the work of one of the most influential philosophers in the twentieth century Japan, Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960). The affinity between their views is important to me for two reasons. One is personal. I have always gravitated toward Berleant's work because I felt something awfully familiar to me without being able to put my fingers on exactly what, beyond agreement with his view. At the same time, he has always been open to and appreciative of different cultural traditions, in particular Chinese and Japanese, most clearly indicated in his discussion of gardens. In retrospect, I realize that his view on relationality of human existence shares some important insights with the Japanese cultural ethos that underlies Watsuji's philosophy.

The second reason for my interest in comparing Berleant's work and Watsuji's work is via Gernot Böhme's work on atmosphere. Like Berleant's aesthetic engagement, Böhme attempts to overcome the subject-object dichotomy and judgemental discourse that have dominated Western aesthetics discourse.[25] What is particularly noteworthy for my purpose is that Böhme compares atmosphere, "the prototypical 'between'- phenomenon," to the Japanese notion of "in-between"

(*aidagara* 間柄), the key concept in Watsuji's view of human existence.[26] Analyzing the term, human beings (*ningen* 人間), where the first character signifies "human" and the second "between," Watsuji argues against Western individualism that regards human beings as an independent and discrete entity. Taking various archetypes of humans in the Western tradition, whether *anthrōpos*, *homo sapiens*, or *homo faber*, he claims that they "abstract man from social groups and attempt to grasp man as something self-existing."[27] Variously characterizing as "abstraction," "isolated ego or self," or "isolated subjectivity," he claims that "for the problem of human existence, i.e. the problem of practical, behavioral relationships, the … isolated subjectivity is essentially irrelevant."[28] His particular concern is to account for the ethical dimension of human life. For him, it is not "merely questions of the individual consciousness" but "the place of ethical questions really lies in the *between-ness between men* (人と人との間柄)."[29] By emphasizing relationality, Watsuji is not denying that human beings are individuals, but rather he presents the double nature of human existence by highlighting relationality, or inbetween-ness, because it has been neglected in Western ethics, whether deontology or utilitarianism, which centers its focus on the acting subject as an abstract entity. We exist in a society, Watsuji continues, not as an independent being who happens to be located in its midst but rather we *are* also society; we define society and society defines us. There is interdependence in that neither precedes the other:

> [H]uman existence cannot be explained as a situation in which we first have individuals and then the establishment of relationships among them; nor can it be explained as first a society and then the emergence of individuals out of that society. In both of these explanations it is the 'priority' which is the impossibility.[30]
>
> If we try to grasp an individual in our ordinary life as truly individualistic, it comes to nought. As a result, even though our betweenness oriented being subsists between one individual and another, we cannot posit this individual as an individualistic being whose existence precedes the already existing betweenness.[31]

Humans are fundamentally social and communal, and ethics has to do with our relationships with others.

It should be noted that there is an affinity between Watsuji's relational account of human existence and the ethics of care. Although Watsuji's philosophy can hardly be called feminist and there is no direct connection between them, his critique of the ethical paradigm that is based upon an abstract, autonomous, independent subject in favor of the interdependent, relational mode of human existence that gives rise to the ethics of relationality, inbetween-ness, shares an important commitment with care ethics. Erin McCarthy summarizes this affinity thus:

> In both Japanese and feminist philosophies we find concepts of self that provide alternatives to the concept of self as the autonomous, isolated individual, and the ethics that results from such a conception of self. When the relational aspect of selfhood is foregrounded, when being

> in relation is recognized as an integral part of what it is to be a human being-in-the-world, … we are moving toward an ethics of care … one that … has relationality at its core.[32]
>
> For an ethics of care and Watsuji's philosophy, it is this relation, this basic fact of human being-in-the-world that obliges us to care for the other. Due to the interdependent nature of being human where the other is a part of the self, self-care becomes other care and other care becomes self-care. We can no longer look at the other as something entirely isolated from ourselves and thus, realizing our deep interconnectedness, we cannot ignore the other's pain or suffering as it is also our own.[33]

Relationality both in ethics of care and Watsuji's ethics is focused on the human interactions, but Watsuji is perhaps more vocal about the relationality between humans and environment with all its constituents, as he insists on the *concreteness* of human existence.[34] We exist in a specific environment and historical moment: "the Way of man is realized in various kinds of climatic and historical specific types."[35] This theme receives the most thoroughgoing treatment in his discussion of "climate," the term used to translate his *Fūdo* (風土) published in 1935. The first character indicating wind and the second soil, as well as the translated term, Climate, give the impression that it has to do with nature with a climatic condition, but some scholars believe that it is an unfortunate translation and instead offer an alternative term, such as "human milieu" to make clear that for Watsuji there is a total integration, not a dichotomy, between humans and environment.[36] Watsuji argues for their integration by taking coldness as an example:

> Is it that air of a certain temperature, cold, that is, as a physical object, stimulates the sensory organs in our body so that we as psychological subjects experience it as a certain set mental state? If so, it follows that the "cold" and "we" exist as separate and independent entities in such a manner that only when the cold presses upon us from outside is there created an "intentional" or directional relationship by which "we feel the cold"… The "feeling" of "feeling the cold" is not a "point" which establishes a relationship directed at the cold, but it is in itself a relationship in virtue of its "feeling" and it is in this relationship that we discover cold.[37]

But this is only the beginning of his view on how a simple experience of coldness is inseparably entangled with environment and society. He extends one's feeling of cold to sharing the experience with other people, such as when exchanging a greeting with remarks about the season. Furthermore, the character of the cold varies according to the context, such as when a cold, dry wind roaring in late winter or when it blows away cherry blossoms late spring, or when a sudden shower provides a respite from the summer heat. The cold also moves us to act, such by putting on heavier clothes or drawing near to the source of heat. Finally, it determines the kind of houses, clothes, and diets.[38] His point is that my so-called subjective experience of feeling cold does not occur in the abstract, nor does it remain a private, discrete occurrence, but rather happens in an intricate and inseparable

relationship with so many factors, in short, environment. The experience of cold is thus supported by and in turn supports a web of relationships.

Although Watsuji's concern is ethics while Berleant's aesthetics, there is a remarkable degree of shared concern for capturing the relational nature of human existence and experience, instead of abstracting individuals from others, whether people, society, or environment. Interdependence, instead of independence, defines human existence, and the failure to recognize it leads to a mischaracterization of one's ethical life as well as aesthetic experience. Though independent of each other, both Watsuji and Berleant are collectively challenging the view of human beings as autonomous, independent entity, a powerful legacy of Western modern philosophy that shaped the subsequent development of philosophy, including aesthetics, in the West, which was also embraced by the Japanese intellectuals after the rapid and sudden Westernization began in the late nineteenth century.

I have mentioned that Berleant's aesthetic engagement is ethically-grounded. At the same time, Watsuji's ethics based upon the notion of inbetween-ness is aesthetically-informed. Although Watsuji does not offer the following point as pertaining to aesthetic considerations, his discussion of the role of expression in ethics reads very much like Berleant's social aesthetics. He locates the understanding of human existence in "an *immediate* understanding of everyday gestures and dialogue," which constitutes "the practical interconnection of acts prior to their being expressions or an understanding of art, philosophy, and so forth."[39] I interpret "immediate understanding" to be the perceptual experience of the "ways of speaking" that are subtly adjusted to the other party and context, because "human relationships are subtle."[40] Thus, he continues: "a novelist who tries to describe the concrete features of a human life brings subtle human relationships into full relief by appealing to the ways of speaking of the characters in the novel. The way of speaking is more important than its content." He goes further by pointing out that the character of our interaction with the other through speaking is determined by not only the manner of expression (informal and friendly, or formal and polite) but the history of our relationship where we expect a certain manner of expression from this person. So, "If one were to use a polite expression in speaking to an intimate friend, instead of employing a more friendly way of speaking with which one is ordinarily accustomed, this would be a joke, or else we would suppose that something unusual has happened to the relation between the two."[41] Here, Watsuji integrates relationality not only in terms of what is transpiring between the two parties at the time but also the past relationality that gives a context to determining the nature of current expression. Although he is not making an aesthetic point, the manner of speaking with a specific tone, inflection, choice of words, and speed of speaking constitutes an aesthetic matter, and we can interpret that he is showing how relationality determines the nature of social aesthetics.

Watsuji's specifically aesthetic illustration of this relationality between and among human beings is the traditional art form of linked verse, widely practiced in Japan from fifteenth to seventeenth century. Linked verse is a form of parlor game in which a group of people of all social ranks

gather and co-create a series of poetic verses. One person starts with a few lines, followed by the next person who continues the theme or image while adding his own contribution, which is followed by the next person, and so forth. This communal activity goes on for many hours, sometimes all night resulting in as many as ten thousand links.[42] What is critical in the successful linked verse co-creation is to adjust one's contribution to the preceding lines composed by others without sacrificing one's own voice. It is a relational art or participatory art *par excellence*.

> Each verse in a linked poem has its own independent existence, yet there is a subtle link that unites these so that one existence evolves into another and there is an order that reaches through the whole. As these developmental links between verse and verse are usually forged by different poets, the coordination of the imaginative power of a single poet is deliberately cast aside and the direction of the development given over to chance.[43]

He calls the spontaneously and collaboratively generated overall harmony as "meeting of feeling" (気合い). The aesthetic experience for the participants is made possible by each participant building upon one another with creativity and imagination, all the while responding to the other participants' contribution. They practice aesthetic engagement as they interact with the other participants and their contributions.

The most eloquent expression of the relationality as an aesthetic organizational guide embodied in physical objects is Japanese garden, according to Watsuji. He contrasts them with European formal gardens organized according to a geometrical order. Japanese garden design without any discernible order is guided by the same "meeting of spirit" he attributes to the art of linked verse, here between rocks of different qualities, rocks and moss, and trees offering different appearances at different seasons.[44] They are arranged to respond to each other. Without any rules to follow, designers use their intuition in arranging these items, and the visitors appreciate the way in which the overall harmony is generated thereby, symbolically presenting how relationship, or inbetween-ness, supports the individual items/beings.

3. Berleant and Watsuji compared: political implications

Today there is a renewed interest and reassessment of Watsuji's philosophy, particularly by focusing on the notion of relationality, which resonates with ethics of care, as I have mentioned. However, this is in response to a series of criticisms lodged against various aspects of his philosophy. First, very few of us accept his rather tortured explanation of the environmental determinism that claims that three "types" of climates, monsoon, desert, and meadow shape the character of culture and arts. Similarly, his tendency toward Japanese exceptionalism, particularly with respect to arts, and a facile contrast between the East and the West is perhaps age-appropriate when it was written but certainly outdated now. Finally, a number of critics point out his philosophy contributed to the nationalistic sentiment in the pre-World War II era, however unintentional.[45]

What I want to develop as a comparison between Watsuji's inbetween-ness and Berleant's engagement is the political dimension of each. As it is often pointed out regarding care ethics, the emphasis on relationality tends to overlook the need for judging the worthiness of developing or maintaining relationship with the other party. For example, does the importance of cultivating care as a mode of relating to the other trump the moral character of the other party? Should I, or is it desirable to, develop a care relationship with a Nazi officer? A rapist? So, even those who are sympathetic to care ethics point out that we still need a justice-centric perspective to determine the worthiness of relationship.[46]

Similarly, Tetsuya Kōno points out a possible problem with Watsuji's notion of relationality, *aidagara*, as the defining mode of human ethical existence for being too optimistic and idealistic. He asks: "In cases where the other party is so far away that we cannot engage in any exchanges or somebody who is unwilling to communicate, developing a relationship, *aidagara*, becomes impossible."[47] Furthermore, sometimes the other party may make an unreasonable or unfair demand, creating a serious conflict regarding what one should do. Kōno points out that the ethics that relies solely on the notion of *aidagara* does not address these all-too-common problems in our lives.[48] Even more importantly, since for Watsuji *aidagara* operates between a human being and environment, including society, there is a danger of supporting an interdependent relationship with a society that may be problematic on the issues regarding justice and human rights. What happens when a society makes unreasonable or unjust demands on its citizens? Kōno observes that Watsuji failed to address such problems and ignored the way in which a society often supports "an unequal power relationship between those who have it and those who don't, creating a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, authority and obedience, centralization and marginalization, and inclusivity and exclusion."[49] For example, one of the social problems at the time was the commodification of bodies by prostitutes but, according to Kōno, it is dismissed by Watsuji by his focus on the relationality between the prostitute and the client.[50] Kōno criticizes Watsuji for turning a blind eye to social injustice perpetrated by the relationality between individuals and society, and remaining indifferent to oppression and exploitation. This is why Watsuji is criticized for contributing to the pre-World War II nationalism that was gaining momentum, no matter how unintentional it may have been on the part of Watsuji.

Let me now turn to Berleant's notion of aesthetic engagement. I have argued that it shares with Watsuji's inbetween-ness the importance of relationality as a fundamental mode of human existence. Where they differ, I believe, is that Berleant's 'negative aesthetics,' a subdiscipline of aesthetics that he has been increasingly concerned with, addresses the kind of problem for which Watsuji is criticized. Berleant shares with Katya Mandoki a critique of Western aesthetics which, according to her, has been suffering from what she calls "the Pangloss Syndrome" whereby negative aesthetic experiences are "either only mentioned superficially or swept under the rug." [51] Mandoki calls for aesthetics to pay equal attention to aesthetic poisoning. It includes "the disgusting, the

obscene, the coarse, the insignificant, the banal, the ugly, the sordid" that "our sensibility confronts … every day." Berleant, too, cites examples of negative aesthetics most notably experienced in urban life, such as "aesthetic intrusion" of omnipresent unwanted noise; "aesthetic pain" from air pollution; "aesthetic distortion" caused by strident colors of signage and billboards; "aesthetic deprivation" felt by dwellers of cramped urban housing with inadequate exposure to natural light, sun, and wind; and "aesthetic depravity" resulting from exposure to hard porn and vulgar amusement.[52]

These instances of negative aesthetics dull, impoverish, offend, harm, or assault our aesthetic sensibility, and they should be called out for the negative aesthetics that they are, instead of ignoring them in favor of the Pangloss Syndrome or marshalling the theory of disinterested attitude as a way of deriving positive aesthetic experience. I grant that developing a positive aesthetic experience of these objects and phenomena through adopting a disinterested or distanced attitude can sometimes serve as a heuristic strategy to diversify our aesthetic sensibility.[53] However, they are ultimately not a good candidate for aesthetic engagement because, in our lived experience, aesthetic concerns cannot, nor should it, be separated from other life concerns.

These instances of negative aesthetics are not merely aesthetic disamenities, as "we can … no longer look at any event as exclusively aesthetic, for this only contributes to its isolation."[54] They shake the foundation of a just, civil, humane, and inclusive society and a fulfilling, satisfying, and productive life. What Berleant calls "perceptual commons" should be accessible to all of us, just as air (and particularly today, with mounting urgency, clean drinking water, liveable environment, and peace and quiet at appropriate places and times) should not be a commodity or a privilege limited to the rich and powerful. As it is becoming increasingly apparent from research in environmental justice and environmental racism, the oppressed, marginalized, and disadvantaged segments of society are subjected to negative aesthetics, ranging from polluted water, mounting garbage, dilapidated and neglected urban areas, incessant noise from various modes of transportation and factory operations, and monotony of housing tracts. These are aesthetic matters insofar as senses are assaulted by eyesores, stenches, untoward noises, as well as dulled and enfeebled by the lack of stimulation.

It is true that such environments can offer opportunities for aesthetic intervention and artistic creativity, such as street art, murals, graffiti, and collaborative art projects with those marginalized populations, as seen in Vik Muniz's work with the garbage pickers at the largest garbage dump site outside of Rio de Janeiro documented in *Waste Land* (2010) and a French artist JR's work with various global sites including the people at the US-Mexico border and the California supermax prison populations recorded in *Paper and Glue* (2021). Despite such potentials to offer canvases and opportunities for creative works, however, the fact remains that the negative aesthetics the residents have to contend with is inseparable from the actual harm done to them, affecting their health and well-being. Hence, the problem of exposure to negative aesthetics is not that some dispensable amenities are missing. It reveals a social and political problem of the unjust distribution of the sensible, to borrow Jacques Rancière's notion.

Aesthetics for Berleant, therefore, is an indispensable instrument of gauging the ethical state of the society and this instrumentality must be embraced and used. He shares this instrumental value of aesthetics with John Dewey: "Contrary to traditional claims that aesthetic value is wholly intrinsic, Dewey insisted that it is also extrinsic."[55] He also advocates this social and political instrumentality of aesthetics as an argument against the traditional notion of aesthetics as disinterestedness. To dissociate aesthetics from the rest of the life concerns is both a dereliction of duty and a missed opportunity. It is a dereliction of duty because part of the responsibility of aesthetics is to use itself as "a powerful instrument for social criticism" and guard against "the brash and exploitative appropriations of this commons in the political, military, industrial, and commercial co-optations of the perceptual condition of human life."[56] Not using aesthetics this way is a missed opportunity because it has "still greater power to transform the human world by supplying its standard of fulfilment."[57] Specifically, "starting with the whole, the whole of natural resources, the whole of perceptual possibilities, we can generate an ethics of care, not conflict; of justice, not privilege. lt might be said that perceptual equality precedes and underwrites political equality."[58]

The comparison between Berleant's aesthetic relationality and Watsuji's existential relationality is now quite clear. Watsuji's primary concern with the existential mode of human beings tends to neglect the critical assessment of the social and political climate which humans inhabit and interact with, a characteristic he shares with noted twentieth century Japanese philosophers, Nishida Kitarō of the so-called Kyoto School being the best-known.[59] Even though they may not have specifically intended to support the then militaristic Japanese government's promotion of nationalistic unity to prepare citizens for the war effort, their theories left the political implications unaddressed, making them vulnerable to being interpreted and exploited as a possible endorsement for the war.

In comparison, Berleant's increasingly urgent discussion of negative aesthetics and social and political implications of aesthetics makes clear that the relationality that underlies aesthetic engagement itself deserves a critical assessment, as it is inseparable from its social and political context. Not everything makes an appropriate candidate for aesthetic engagement, and this judgment can only be made by reference to all the other concerns with which we operate for the management of life. He reminds us that aesthetic engagement is socially-situated with serious consequences.

In conclusion, I find it remarkable that seemingly disparate thinkers, Berleant, Watsuji, and care ethicists, share the same insight regarding the fundamentally relational mode of human existence. This, I believe, speaks volumes about the wide reach and relevance of Berleant's view.

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[1] Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[2] Nel Noddings, *Caring: Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
[3] Anton Luis Sevilla, "The Ethics of Engaged Pedagogy: A Comparative Study of Watsuji Tetsurō and bell hooks," *Kritike* 10, no. 1 (June 2016): 124-45. It seems common in the English language Watsuji scholarship, like this one, to keep the Japanese order of a person's name, which places the family name before the given name. Accordingly, I will keep this

practice throughout my discussion. I should also note that more recent publications reflect the faithful pronunciation of his given name with a diacritic, but older publications don't.
[4] Ezio Manzini and Carla Cipolla, "Relational Services," *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* 22 (2009): 45-50.
[5] For example, a forthcoming anthology edited by Gioia Iannilli is entitled *Co-operative Aesthetics: Models for a Relational Sensibility in the 21st Century*.
[6] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, tr. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: les presses du reel, 2002), 28.
[7] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 26 and the next passage 22.
[8] Arnold Berleant, "Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics," *Espes* 6, no. 2 (2017): 11, emphasis added.
[9] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 85.
[10] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 85.
[11] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 83.
[12] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 89.
[13] Berleant, "Objects into Persons," 10.
[14] Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 154; *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 39.
[15] This is the title of his article published in *Espes* (see note 8 above).
[16] "Getting Along Beautifully: Ideas for a Social Aesthetics" is the title of Chap. 14. of *Aesthetics and Environment*.
[17] It is important to note that the agreeable content does not guarantee an aesthetically satisfying experience. The aesthetics of social interactions has to do with the form rather than content. Hence, we can "get along beautifully" while agreeing to disagree on a certain issue.
[18] Berleant, *Aesthetics and Environment*, 155.
[19] Berleant, "Objects into Persons," 15.
[20] Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), 49, emphasis added.
[21] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 190, emphasis added.
[22] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 188, emphasis added.
[23] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 188.
[24] See Cheng Xiangzhau's "Arnold Berleant's Environmental Aesthetics and Chinese Ecological Aesthetics," Special Volume 9, *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2021), https://contempaesthetics.org/2021/01/05/arnold-berleants-environmental-aesthetics-and-chinese-ecological-aesthetics/ accessed December 20, 2021.
[25] Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics," tr. David Roberts, *Thesis Eleven*, 36 (1993): 113-126; "Atmosphere as an Aesthetic Concept," *Daidalos* 68 (1998): 112-15.
[26] Böhme, "Atmosphere as an Aesthetic Concept," 112.
[27] Watsuji Tetsurō, "The Significance of Ethics. As the Study of Man," tr. David A. Dilworth, *Monumenta Nipponica* 26, no. 3/4 (1971): 399.
[28] Watsuji, "The Significance of Ethics," 395.
[29] Watsuji, "The Significance of Ethics," 396.
[30] Cited by William R. Lafleur in "Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō," *Religious Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1978): 245. Lafleur sees the influence of the Buddhist notion of emptiness and dependent origination in Watsuji's view (244).
[31] Watsuji Tetsurō, *Watsuji Tetsuro's* Rinrigaku, tr. Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 83. Rinrigaku, the Japanese title, means Ethics and my subsequent reference will use this Japanese title.
[32] Erin McCarthy, *Ethics Embodied: Rethinking Selfhood through Continental, Japanese, and Feminist Philosophies* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 54. Robert Carter summarizes the Japanese worldview as a "declaration of interdependence," that is, "a recognition that we are not only inextricably intertwined with others but with the entire cosmos." *The Japanese Arts and Self-Discipline* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 5.
[33] McCarthy, *Ethics Embodied*, 58.
[34] Watsuji, "The Significance of Ethics," 405, 406.
[35] Watsuji, "The Significance of Ethics," 412. We should note his reference to "types" here because it contributes to what many critics call his environmental determinism, discussed below.
[36] Yū Inutsuka, "Sensation, Betweenness, Rhythms: Watsuji's Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Conversation with Heidegger," in *Japanese Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and John McRae (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 94.
[37] Watsuji Tetsuro, *A Climate: A Philosophical Study*, tr. Geoffrey Bownas (Tokyo: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government, 1961), 2.
[38] Watsuji, *A Climate*, 2-7.
[39] Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, 42-3, emphasis added.
[40] Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, 240. The next passage is also from 240.
[41] Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, 240. His point here is particularly pertinent in Japan, as the Japanese language has a clearly codified degree of formality and politeness that even determines verbs and the pronouns for "I" and "you."
[42] For specific examples, see Donald Keene's *Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers* (New York: Grove Press, 1955) and Eiko Ikegami's *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 84-93.
[43] Watsuji, *Rinrigaku*, 196.
[44] Watsuji, *A Climate*, 192.

[45] For today's assessment of his philosophy, see Robert Carter and Erin McCarthy's the entry on Watsuji Tetsurō in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (revised Nov. 27, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/watsuji-tetsuro/, accessed December 20, 2021.
[46] See Michele M. Moody-Adams, "Gender and the Complexity of Moral Voices," in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991) and Rosemarie Tong, *Feminine and Feminist Ethics* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993).
[47] Tetsuya Kōno, "Watsuji Tetsurō to Kea Rinrigaku: Ryōsha wa Kyōdō dekirudarōka" (Watsuji Tetsurō and Care Ethics: Can They Be Made Compatible?), *Journal: Essays in Japanese Philosophy* 8 (2016): 377, my translation.
[48] Kōno, "Watsuji Tetsurō to Kea Rinrigaku," 368.
[49] Kōno, "Watsuji Tetsurō to Kea Rinrigaku," 368.
[50] Kōno, "Watsuji Tetsurō to Kea Rinrigaku," 369.
[51] Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 38. The next passage is from the same page.
[52] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 198-99. Also see 110.
[53] Thomas Leddy is one of the vocal proponents of the value of this kind of experience. See his *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012) and "The Aesthetics of Junkyards and Roadside Clutter," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 6 (2008), https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol6/iss1/11/, accessed December 22, 2021.
[54] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 190.
[55] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 160.
[56] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 188, 190.
[57] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 190.
[58] Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, 187.
[59] For the criticism of the Kyoto School, see *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*, eds. James W. Heisig and John Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995); *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997); and my forthcoming "Ethically-Grounded Nature of Japanese Aesthetic Sensibility," in *Oxford Handbook of Ethics and Art*, ed. James Harold.

LANDSCAPE, PHENOMENOLOGY, AND AESTHETICS

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Abstract
This paper presents the contemporary phenomenological intepretations of the concept of landscape. It confronts phenomenology of landscape as an example of non-representational theories of landscape developed in anthropology, archaeology and culture studies with approaches that are focused on landscape as a phenomenon. Furthermore, it is claimed that phenomenological approach to landscape may be applied to aesthetics and Arnold Berleant's theories of aesthetics of engagement as well as of descriptive aesthetics are presented. The final conclusion is that conceiving of landscape as of an aesthetic phenomenon is fruitful since it better explains the relationships between people and the environment.

Keywords
Aesthetics, Landscape, Phenomenology.

The ubiquity of landscape

It will not be a gross exaggeration to say that we have witnessed not long ago the birth of what Michael Jakob termed 'omnilandscape' (*omnipaysage*).[1] In fact, one is tempted to claim that landscapes are everywhere these days: every area, site or territory may fall under this category either in everyday speech, legal documents, or in academic discourse. These circumstances may easily be seen as a proof of nothing more than a recent popularity of the concept, thanks to, among other things, the growing interest in landscape on behalf of the representatives of social sciences and humanities as well as to the recognition of landscapes as particular goods that should be protected legally. More importantly, however, it may be treated as a contemporary expression of an aesthetic revolution described by Jacques Rancière who discusses the 18th-century garden aesthetics as a symptom of a new manner of thinking about nature and art, one that can be compressed in one word: landscape.[2] One could quarrel whether this aesthetic revolution took place during the Enlightement or it rather dates back to the beginning of the early modern era, or is medieval in origin[3]. It can even be argued that such a revolution never took place, since in one way or another people have always experienced their surroundings as a landscape.

Yet, no matter what stance one opts for, it cannot be denied that never before the advent of the 21st century was the concept of landscape as important as an ubiquitous means of 'distribution of the sensitive' (to borrow Rancière's term) as it is now. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to pinpoint the moment when landscape turned into omnilandscape, yet a symbolic date may be suggested (at least in the European context): the year 2000 when the European Landscape Convention was ratified by the Council of Europe[4]. On the one hand, the document, signed today by 40 countries is the first international

treaty fully devoted to the issues of management, planning and protection of European landscapes and as such is a seminal step in recognizing that landscapes – natural, rural, ruban, peri-urban, of great value as well as common or even degraded – are of primary importance to all the people today and in the future. On the other hand, the significance of the Convention is recognized and debated on purely theoretical grounds, since it offers and in fact promotes a rather novel definition of landscape implying a particular understanding of the relationship between people and landscapes.[5] What is more, the Convention may be interpreted as a fruit of a long process driven by the rapid development of landscape studies and subsequent changes in perspectives assumed by landscape scholars.

The ground for the overall idea behind the Convention is expressed in the definition of landscape: "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". One of the recent documents on the implementation of the ELC is illustrated by a useful graph explaining its theoretical assumptions. The concept of landscape is presented as a circular scheme whereby 'physical characteristics of the landscape', when experienced, turn into 'perceived landscape' which becomes 'interpreted landscape' thanks to intepretation, and 'interpreted landscape' through actions turns into 'used landscape', which shapes the physical landscape.[6] What is crucial in this approach is that objective side of the landscape, namely its material side (termed 'space' by the authors of the document) is indissolubly associated with its subjective or inter-subjective aspect (called 'place' in the text), namely – to put it broadly – people's experiences. It is precisely this twofoldness that marks a break from a purely geographical understanding of landscape and an exclusively symbolic approach, the two perspectives that defined the spectrum of landscape thinking for a long time. As such it may be associated with various theories that in one way or another draw on post-phenomenology.

The definition may be accused of being generic and too broad – in fact it implies that landscapes are, or at least may be, everywhere – yet its open character may also be seen as its strength. It is comprehensive in the sense that it may cover different approaches and hence offer a common ground to them, while privileging none: it well accomodates representational theories as well as non-representational ones. As a result, it may be used as a promising starting point for landscape research, or a 'landscape «metascience»' embracing natural sciences, social sciences and humanities[7]. It may also be seen as a ground for 'philosophy of landscape' understood as a reflection on a "specific modality of the experience of reality" that has "both a horizontal and vertical dimension", a reflection that shall offer „a conciliation of distinct and disaggregated knowledge [...] a heuristic thought that precedes interdisciplinary crossovers".[8]

At the heart of contemporary landscape theories lie different metaphors. Landscape is said to be, among other things, an image, noun, text or verb, that is concepts suggesting that landscape is an 'object' in front of a subject. The ELC definition may instead be taken to show, albeit implicitly, that landscape may also be conceived of as an 'object' that exists only insofar as it is experienced by a subject even if it cannot be reduced to his or her experience.

Such an approach has several advantages that may be added to the ones mentioned above. It may be used in defense of the concept of landscape against criticisms stemming from, for example, the belief that it is overused (or, to put it differently: ubiquitous) and hence meaningless.[9] It may explain the fact that the concept of landscape links "approaches that pretend to be «objective» and appreciations that inevitably imply «subjectivity»".[10] Finally, it may also justify the need to use the concept of landscape which – as the authors of the graphic illustration of the ELC definition state – may be associated or even replaced by such concepts as space or place. Landscape 'as perceived by people' is – as Arnold Berleant convincingly shows – inherently aesthetic, which means that it has an aspect that place or space do not necessarily possess.

One of the most important changes in the understanding of landscape consists in departing from the tradition that identified it with an image (a landscape picture) or a 'way of seeing', which implied a particular approach to aesthetic values of landscape and aesthetic appreciation, one that Allen Carlson called the 'landscape model'.[11] However, one of the consequences of this move was divorcing the idea of landscape from the aesthetic or reducing the latter to research on human aesthetic preferences. The phenomenological approach seems to offer a possibility to reconsider the aesthetic and to show why it should be reintroduced to landscape debates. In what follows I shall briefly sketch what it means to conceive of landscape in a phenomenological vein and how it translates to aesthetics.

The phenomenology of Landscape

„Phenomenology of landscape" is an ambigous expression. It may denote *en bloc* various contemporary approaches to landscapes focusing on human practices taking place in various environments and hence treating landscapes as "more-than-visual and more-than-symbolic".[12] It may also refer to the perspectives, including the abovementioned ones, which are explicitely based on post-phenomenology. In such a case "phenomenology [...] shapes both *what* is studied under the heading of «landscape», and *how* it is studied".[13] What is more, in both cases, the approaches at stake are underpinned by the belief that they are able to clarify the phenomenon of landscape. No matter, however, to what extent and how directly these theoretical perspectives are inspired by Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the two pillars of phenomenology of landscape, they recognize in one way or another the fact that humans cannot be conceived of as beings detached from the world around them, that their existence may be best described as dwelling in an environment or landscape, and that inhabiting it involves not only interpreting it but also and above all experiencing it through the senses.

These general assumptions are grounds for a vast range of studies that have been recently conducted in different fields and focused on innumerable instances and facets of the existential intertwinning of human beings and landscapes.[14] These studies aim to analyze 'acts of landscaping'[15] and approach landscapes through various individual or social practices taking place in them and conceive of these practices as factors that in fact co-create landscapes. In other words, landscapes are

interpreted in a performative key – they are not scenographies for human performances but they exist insofar as they may be said to be performed by humans as well as other-than-human beings. Such a view goes counter to the representational theories that interpret landscapes in terms of cultural representations defining the way people relate to their environments.[16] Reducing in one way or another the landscape to a 'way of seeing' have been accused of overlooking a number of crucial aspects of human-landscape relationships, mainly the fact that people are always *in* a landscape, and not *in front* of it as it is implied by thinking of landscape as of a mental or visual image. Being-in-a-landscape, in turn, is said to amount to a constant engagement and interaction with landscape. This means that people shape their landscapes and at the same time are shaped by them. Another way of putting it is to state that people inevitably live in what may be called a 'phenomenological landscape'.[17]

In order to come to terms with these circumstances one has to recognize and acknowledge several things. Tim Ingold and Christopher Tilley, two major exponents of the approach hereby discussed, underline that we should think of landscape as perceptual, material, and spatio-temporal and we should never abstract from the fact that humans are always bodily immersed in landscapes, and that – contrary to the traditional view – landscapes are not only visual, but also auditory, olfactory and tactile. In fact, the word 'landscape' denotes "the mutual embeddedness and interconnectivity of self, body, knowledge and land".[18] This means that it is impossible to understand people without considering their locale, just as it is not thinkable to interpret landscapes without taking into account who dwells in them. As Ingold puts it "[the landscape] is *with* us, not *against* us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscapes becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it"[19]. A similar position is offered by Tilley who claims that "we have an environment and we are part of it and it is part of us" or that "we enter into them [landscapes], they in turn enter into us; we form them, they form us".[20] In that matter phenomenology of landscape remains faithful to Jose Ortega y Gasset's famous statement: "Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are".[21] Seen in this way, landscape is an existential or ontological ground for humans since it defines their daily lifes: "it is lived in and through, mediated, worked on and altered, replete with cultural meaning and symbolism".[22] Hence, landscape is also experiential in the sense that living in a landscape implies experiencing it in various ways and it is through an experience involving not only the body and the senses, but also memory, emotions and thoughts, that people become aware of the environment they inhabit it. As Ingold claims that "the world of [our] being-in presents itself in the form of the landscape".[23]

When put to practice, phenomenology of landscape may consist in analyzing what various 'phenomenological landscapes' are like and what sorts of entanglements, relations, tensions define them– in fact this is what is done in the abovementioned studies of 'landscaping'. It may also result in a 'thick description' which is an attempt at translating an *in situ* landscape experience into a more or less academic discourse or – one may venture – into a sort of phenomenological description aimed at grasping the essence of that particular landscape, that is of the landscape that existed insofar as it

became a part of the subject who was becoming its part, too.[24] It is thanks to such descriptions that one may become aware that, as Barbara Bender writes:

> 'landscape' is therefore, 'the world out there' as understood, experienced, and engaged with through human consciousness and active involvement. [...] The same place at the same moment will be experienced differently by different people; the same place, at different moments, will be experienced differently by the same person; the same person may even, at a given moment, hold on conflicting feelings about a place.[25]

In other words, one may realize that landscape is not only objective, but also subjective, i.e. it exists in an individual's experience. This does not mean, however, that conceived of in this manner landscape turns out to be free from cultural, historical or ideological aspects.[26] Quite the contrary, an individual's landscape experience is per force shaped by cultural, social and other factors, which makes landscapes highly contested.

The landscape as a phenomenon

Even if rooted in phenomenology, the approach discussed above does not really touch upon the phenomenological status of landscape. On the one hand it is quite understandable: despite its denomination phenomenology of landscape is a theory invented in order to offer new insights useful to anthropologists, archaeologists and other cultural studies scholars who are more interested in analyzing cultural performances. On the other hand, however, reflecting on landscape as a phenomenon *tout court* allows to focus „on more abstract and first-order questions regarding the nature of subjectivity, and human relationships with the world"[27] and hence to approach the idea that landscapes are performed from a different angle, one that allows to come to terms with the major issue inherent to landscape. A good account of it is given by Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> Suppose that my friend Paul and I are looking at a landscape. What precisely happens? Must it be said that we have both private sensations, that we know things but cannot communicate them to each other—that, as far as pure, lived-through experience goes, we are each incarcerated in our separate perspectives—that the landscape is not numerically the same for both of us and that it is a question only of a specific identity? [...] When I think of Paul, I do not think of a flow of private sensations indirectly related to mine through the medium of interposed signs, but of someone who has a living experience of the same world as mine, as well as the same history, and with whom I am in communication through that world and that history. Are we to say, then, that what we are concerned with is an ideal unity, that my world is the same as Paul's [...]. But ideal unity is not satisfactory either, for it exists no less between Mount Hymettus seen by the ancient Greeks and the same mountain seen by me. Now it is no use my telling myself, as I contemplate those russet mountain sides, that the Greeks saw them

> too, for I cannot convince myself that they are the same ones. On the other hand, Paul and I 'together' see this landscape, we are jointly present in it, it is the same for both of us, not only as an intelligible significance, but as a certain accent of the world's style, down to its very thisness. The unity of the world crumbles and falls asunder under the influence of that temporal and spatial distance which the ideal unity traverses while remaining (in theory) unimpaired. It is precisely because the landscape makes its impact upon me and produces feelings in me, because it reaches me in my uniquely individual being, because it is my own view of the landscape, that I enjoy possession of the landscape itself, and the landscape for Paul as well as for me.[28]

When someone inspired by non-representational theories of landscape tries to define what landscape is, the main difficulty he or she has to overcome lies precisely in accounting for what Merleau-Ponty notices, that is for the fact that landscape is my experience and at the same time a stretch of the world independent from me and my experience and hence accessible to others, too. In fact, I can look at or enage in the same landscape as other people do and that at the same time what I experience is perforce different from what other people experience. It is precisely this twofold character of landscape that makes it not only analyzable in terms of an object independent from the subject, but also indissolubly associated with the subject to whom it belongs as a phenomenon.

This boils down to the fact that, according to Jean-Pierre Le Dantec, landscape should be understood as an 'invention of the land' on behalf of the subject, yet an invention that is not altogether arbitrary since determined by the outer world.[29] To put it in a different way, landscape is 'something' given to people in and through their experiences and hence depends on how it is experienced, but at the same it has its own truth (essence) that can be experienced. A landscape exists, then, only insofar as it is experienced, which means that: without someone's experience – it may be strictly individual, but it may also be shared with others – landscape cannot exists and it exists in the 'form' determined by the experience; furthermore, landscape trascends every experience in the sense that it can always be experienced in some other way. As Le Dantec underlines, the same land may carry different landscapes. This characteristic is crucial since it is responsable for the fact that landscapes are so contested: what people experience as their landscape is not only their own invention, but also a reality inhabited and shared by others who experience it differently and hence live in a different landscape. Following Le Dantec's hermeneutical inspiration it may be said that experiencing a landscapes amounts to experiencing the world as meaningful. The source of the meanings is the experiencing subject, but they are not arbitrarily created. In other words, landscape is not a „pure representation, or pure presence, but a creation resulting from the encounter of the world with a certain point of view".[30]

A similar position is offered by Augustin Berque who suggests the following formula to describe the relationship between people and their milieux: $r = S/P$ ('r' stands for human's reality; 'S' denotes

Subject meaning Earth conceived of as 'ground or substance' to which predicates are added according to one's experiences, thought and actions; 'P' – denotes the predicate, that is the World ('totality of predicates'). The formula is supposed to show that human's reality is in fact the Earth (independent reality) experienced as the World.[31] A similar approach is offered also by Michael Jakob who proposes the following equation instead: L = S + N ('L' – landscape; 'S' – subject; 'N' – nature).[32] These formulae are supposed to render the fact that - as Eugenio Turri writes – „[...] the man discovers the world through landscape, which, grossly speaking, means that „the world is what we experience". [...] It is through landscape that an exchange between the man and the enviroment takes place".[33]

Accordingly, thinking of landscape as of a 'phenomenon' (Le Dantec) or 'middle term' (Collot) allows one to approach it in a way that does not reduce it either to human experience that would not be determined by what is experienced, or to the object that would determine the experience. Such understanding of landscape makes it possible to analyze objective aspects of landscapes while recognizing the fact that their objective character is a manner of experiencing them. At the same time it allows one to treat their subjective traits as real as their nonsubjective qualities. What is more, such an approach opens a path to interpreting various ways of experiencing environments, that is various landscapes, as alternatives, such that none of them is privileged more than others as corresponding to objective reality.

Treating landscape as a phenomenon that is as a way in which people experience their surroundigs or – to express it in a phenomenological parlance – a way in which the surroundings appear to them as lanscapes, seems to grasp the birth of landscape in the most fundamental or existential dimension, a birth that accompanies both looking at ones surroundings from a distance or engaging bodily in it through some sort of practice, e.g. working the land or walking.

Landscape aesthetics

The hitherto discussed phenomenological approaches to landscape have one particular trait that may be considered a weakness, namely the way they cope with the aesthetic dimension of landscapes. On the one hand, it is either ignored or conceived of as the issue of aesthetic preferences accompanying, influencing, or resulting from people's 'acts of landscaping' or – on the other – it is associated with art since having a landscape experience is thought of in terms of 'artification'.[34] It is, however, possible to offer an alternative to these perspectives and show that landscape as a phenomenon is inherently aesthetic. A good way to do it is to follow Arnold Berleant's 'phenomenological aesthetics of environment'.[35]

The point of departure for his analyses is painting, which is not surprising given the history of the concept of landscape. He famously distinguishes two sorts of landscapes. The observational or panoramic corresponds to the Newtonian concept of space and implies that one views the world from a standpoint of a detached observer („such a viewer is totally disengaged, gazing contemplatively upon a landscape from which he or she is utterly removed"[36]). The participatory or engaged landscape,

corresponds to a phenomenological view of the world and implies one's immersion in the environment („the participatory landscapes requires that we look into the space, that we enter it [...] and become a part of it"[37]). According to Berleant, these two sorts of lanscapes may be found in paintings, but more importantly they are expressions of two different manners in which people may experience the world around them. Western culture predominantly identified the concept of landscape with panoramic landscape and so did aesthetics. Berleant opts, instead, for thinking of landscape mainly in participatory terms and claims a necessity to develop 'aesthetics of engagement' that „fuses partipicant and environment".[38] Such a perspective, he believes, grasps more adequately not only the relationships between humans and their environments but also the way they experience it: „in such a phenomenological field the environment cannot be objectified; it is rather a totality continous with the participant"[39]. In other words, all the experiences are determined by the environment and take place in the environment, but at the same time the environment exists for people as something experienced by them. Environment then is a „field of forces that engage both perceiver and perceived in a unity of experience, turnig the world we inhabit into a truly human habitation"[40]. Or, as Berleant also puts it: „we can say [...], not that I live in my environment, but that I am my environment".[41]

It is noteworthy that he repeatedly underlines the fact that these experiences are not only bodily and hence sensorily, but also imbued with emotions and beliefs and determined by various cultural contexts. Thus, landcape aesthetics aimed at studying how people engage in their landscapes requires taking into account all these factors. It may be practiced in various manners but there is one which Berleant underlines: descriptive aesthetics. It is supposed to offer accounts of aesthetic experiences, descriptions that „may be partly narrative, partly phenomenological, partly evocative, and sometimes even revelatory".[42] What is more, such attempts are also normative in character, since they are supposed to focus their recipient's attention to the aesthetic experience involved in being engaged in a landscape. Descriptive aesthetics, then, is „not the critical appraisal of [...] buildings, cities, and scenes but a detailed exposure of their conditions, their qualities [...] together with the penumbra of meanings that are the rich product of human association".[43] In other words, it offers an account of the way one aesthetically experiences the landscape in which he or she actually is in. Descriptive aesthetics brings, then, to the foreground what lies at the core of aesthetic experience, that is awareness of aesthetic qualities of landscape. Or to put it differently: it helps one realize that landscape is a phenomenon, which means that it exists only insofar as it is experienced and the way it is experienced. Consequently, another aspect of 'phenomenological landscape' is revealed.

No matter whether panoramic or participatory landscape is always experienced as material. If it is experienced as meaningful it is so because it is also experienced as sensory and in this sense is inherently aesthetic. When we focus on how we experience it, we become aware of this fact in the first place: landscape is always physical surroundings. Descriptive aesthetics, as postulated by Berleant, is supposed to give an account of this. However, noticing that landscape is inherently aesthetic in the

above sense involves not only becoming aware of the fact that it is experienced through the senses and that its sensory qualities are, so to say, vehicles of the meanings it is experienced as having, but also realizing how we experience it as sensory and meaningful. To put it differently, thanks to an aesthetic experience of landscape we become aware of the landscape that appears to us and of the way it appears.[44] Thus, we may grasp its appearing or its 'phenomenological' birth.[45] This is what, according to Merleau-Ponty, Paul Cézanne managed to show in his Mount Victoire landscapes.

One remark may be added, here. In light of what has just been said, every landscape turns out to be aesthetic, even if more often than not we do not notice it, since we do not focus on its aesthetic qualities as we usually experience it as, for example, an area where we have to act in a particular way or do certain things. It is possible, though, to point out a landscape in which its aesthetic aspects come to the foreground. This would be aesthetic landscape, that is landscape whose aesthetic features are experienced as more important than others. This is what descriptive aesthetics is about and what is shown in paintings or described in poems, but also this is what appears to all of us, whenever we aesthetically appreciate landscapes.

Conclusions

As mentioned at the outset, an important step in the history of landscape theory was made when the European Landscape Convention was enacted. The significance of the ELC lies in the definition of landscape („an area, as perceived by people […]") which, in light of what has been said above, appears to present landscape as an aesthetic phenomenon. It is noteworthy that this definition is centered on the fact that landscape is both subjective (or intersubjective) and objective. In a concise manner it gives an account of what Donald Meinig described as follows:

> Take a small but varied company to any convenient viewing place overlooking some portion of city and countryside and have each, in turn, describe the 'landscape' […], to detail what it is composed of and say something about the 'meaning' of what can be seen. It will soon be apparent that even though we gather together and look in the same direction at the same instant, we will not – we cannot – see the same landscape. We may certainly agree that we will see many of the same elements – houses, roads, trees, hills - in terms of such denotations as number, form, dimension, and color, but such facts take on meaning only through association; they must be fitted together according to some coherent body of ideas. Thus, we confront the central problem: any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads.[46]

Even if Meinig identifies landscape with a view, assuming a perspective opposed by phenomenological approaches, later on in his text he enumerates possible manners in which a landscape may be experienced not only visually: as nature, habitat, artifact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, place, aeshetic. This view is shared by, among others, Yi-Fu Tuan who defines landscape as "an ordering of

reality from different angles".[47] According to Tuan landscape may be seen from a 'vertical view' and a 'side view'. The former, 'objective and calculating' presents landscape as an environment indispensable for human life, while the latter, 'personal, moral, and aesthetic' shows landscape as surroundings in which people live or – to say it a la Berleant – participate. The point is that "if the essential character of landscape is that it combines these two views (objective and subjective), it is clear that the combination can take place only in the mind's eye".[48] Not only in the mind, but also in the senses, one could add, which would give Meinig's and Tuan's claims a truly phenomenological tune.

Summing up, approaching landscape in a phenomenological vein seems useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it links the concept of landscape with human experience by showing that landscape is in fact the objective world as experienced by people and that there is no other way for them to be aware of their world than by experiencing in one way or another. Secondly, it makes it possible to understand that the world in which people live is a world of their experiences, some of which are individual and some collective. In other words, thinking of landscape as a phenomenon allows one to take into account different ways in which people experience the world around them. As an aside, it may be said that it is equally possible to claim that this is the reason why landscapes are studied from different perspectives. The ambiguity or vagueness of the concept of landscape, deplored by some scholars, may be interpreted as a sign of the fact that various academic disciplines and approaches are rooted in different experiences. Thirdly, it shows that every landscape is aesthetic even if only sometimes do we notice it by focusing on how it appears to us and that its aesthetic aspect involves sensory qualities as well as meanings and values. Finally, all the approaches presented here under the heading of 'landscape phenomenology' support the belief that landscapes are ubiquitous and justify their omnipresence – landscapes are everywhere because people always and everywhere experience in one way or another the world around them. It is an existential truth, since human existence is after being-in-a-landscape. No other approach shows it better then phenomenology combined with aesthetics.

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[13] Ibidem, 127.
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[17] Bender, "Place and Landscape," 305.
[18] Wylie, *Landscape*, 1.
[19] Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," in Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 191.
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[22] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 25.
[23] Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," 193.
[24] Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, 28.
[25] Bender, "Place and Landscape," 303.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Wylie, "Landscape and phenomenology," 132.
[28] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 472.
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[30] Michel Collot, *La pensée-paysage* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2011), 18.
[31] Augustin Berque, "Déploiement écouménal," in *Mouvance II. Du jardin au territoire. Soixante-dix mots pour le paysage*, sous la direction de A. Berque (Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2006), 40–41; see also Augustin Berque, *Thinking through Landscape*, trans. by Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon (lLondon: Routledge, 2008); Berque claims that peirceving the World as landscape is not universal since several cultural conditions have to be met.
[32] Jakob, *Il paesaggio*, 30–31.
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[37] Ibidem, 69
[38] Ibidem, 73.
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PEACE WITH NATURE, PEACE IN THE CREATION! AN ETHICALLY AND AESTHETICALLY DURABLE NATURE RELATIONSHIP

Yrjö Sepänmaa

Abstract
I will examine two concepts, *the Creation* and *Peace with Nature*. What is the *Creation* like and what does it mean to conclude a peace treaty, *Peace with Nature,* with it? These questions have become timely in Finland in two projects. The first was a camp-based environmental education project "*The Creation – Joy from Nature and Animals: Environmental Education for Children and Young People*" (2018–2020), aimed at 8–12 year-old girls. The second is the ceremonial Midsummer event *"PAX NATURA – a Proclamation of Peace with Nature"* (2017–).[1]

Keywords
Bildung, Ecosystem Services, Environmental Wisdom, Pax Natura, Total Work of Art, Well-being.

The Creation Project

The Creation Project is of the type *philosophy for children,* leading to thinking about ways of life and taking responsibility for the environment and providing conceptual means for this. It rests particularly on humanistic environmental research. It combines experiential and intellectual environmental observation. It then proceeds to practicing environmental skills. The Creation is personified as a partner, with whom we act in mutual understanding and respect, in a civilized manner, and with good behaviour.

The Project produces material for the development of value consciousness and attitude education. Difficult questions are not avoided. The approach is positive, believing in life, eagerly searching for solutions. The animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms – like our own group, humanity and its members – are seen in close-up, in nature camping and hiking, experientially, while developing emotional links. The philosophical questions are formed suitably for the age group. The results support children's and young peoples' mental growth and initiative, without distinction.

Creation in a state of nature

Creation gives rise to creations, i. e. that which is created, and systems of them, the Creation. *Luomus (Creation, or Creature)* is the new name of the Finnish *Central Museum of Natural History* in Helsinki. "*Luomus on luonnon muisti" (Creation is nature's memory)*, says the museum's motto; the English equivalent being "*Library of life*".

The Creation is the same as the World, the Universe. Do we think of the Creation as being purposefully created by someone or something, or as having developed spontaneously and as still developing? We are faced by an interpretation and choice based on our view of the world and of life. The initiator and controller is seen either as a personal author, the Creator, or then as self-controlling nature, according to evolution theory.

A personal Creator or self-sufficient Nature? The need to choose is elegantly avoided by the American pioneer of environmental journalism Philip Shabecoff (1934–), who states to his interviewer:

> I am profoundly humbled by the beauty and wonder of the natural world. Whoever or whatever created it, nature is an aesthetic masterpiece of endless variety.
>
> He ends:
>
> To me, a life without nature's beauty is unthinkable.

To me, too, I should add.

The Creation is perceived as a total work or a total work of art comprising pieces of nature. Its beauty too is in layers: from its parts to their combinations, up to the Universe. The state of equilibrium is dynamic, and movements from one state to another take place through instability, disturbances, ruptures, and catastrophes.

Discretely avoiding the original dispute permits a more essential activity aimed at the same goal by those who think differently. It is good to see the big picture, the forest and not the trees. "Feel and see from on high", is how someone arriving at my summer holiday municipality is guided by a roadside billboard. "—nature is beautiful seen from above --", writes the Dane Martin Glaz Serup in his prose poem The Field (2010). Withdrawal from San Marco's in Venice to the sky and space – a literal final ascent – ends Paolo Sorrentino's television series The Young Pope (2016), the final picture showing the entire Earth from space.

Humanity and human creation: culture

Alongside or instead of Nature's creation is human creation: culture. It has a different time scale compared to geological nature. The results of human work are temporary, ephemeral and momentary compared to the geological and cosmic dimension, but of vital importance to a person and humanity despite their absolute modesty or nullity.

Culture is a system that has arisen under our control and is built on our actions. The author has care and responsibility for choices and results. The preservation of natural values and cultural heritage and caring for them is a duty written into the Finnish constitution:

> Responsibility for nature and its diversity, for the environment and cultural heritage belongs to everyone. Government must strive to ensure that everyone has the right to a healthy environment and the possibility to influence decision-making relating to their living environment.

The position of humanity, at least in the Christian creation, is to be the latest and greatest, but at the same time to be set as a trusted servant, farmer, and guardian of all. In that they are a creator, a continuer and developer of the work. Nature in a state of nature and human creation interlock, mix, and form layers. The mental, immaterial world with its principles and ideas, sciences and arts is also involved.

The positive side of human work is enrichment of the environment, the negative is intentional or unintentional destruction and overlaying. Construction means unavoidably the destruction of the previous, be it valuable or not. It must be calculated whether change is worthwhile; positive and negative environmental effects must be weighed up. The technology philosopher Frederick Ferré stated the tragedy of this building-by-destroying as follows:

> The meaning of life is to be both a maker of beauty and a destroyer of beauty in order to make more beauty. That really is the rhythm of the universe.

Natural and human nature meet. Culture is humanity's hand-, foot- and fingerprint, the result of creative force and frenzy. The environment is our self-portrait, exactly like the painting that changes according to its model's actions in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The German equivalent, *Bildung,* to the term *Civilization (Civility),* refers to both a picture and to building.

Recent discussions have been largely a projection of threats and images of destruction and influencing through fear. Human work, however, has an important positive, constructive role. It produces that which nature alone cannot and thus increases the diversity of the environment, even if on the other hand it reduces it.

"Technology is our next nature", proclaims the Dutch *Next Nature Network*. "*Forward, not back to nature",* the group demands in its published manifesto *Next Nature Book: Nature Changes along with Us* (2012, 2015). Those with a longer vision have already seen farther than human nature, to a state of post-humanism and the post-Anthropocene. A second or next nature – varied or made by humanity – is not one, but a series, a continuum.

Human actions undoubtedly produce tension and contradictions between different types of value. Rural and urban landscapes – around which are industrial areas and traffic arteries – are those environments the preservation and continuation of which demand people, for good or evil. Wind turbines are an obvious visual detriment, however at the same time promising an ecological and economical way to produce energy. Noise walls and berms hide the view from the road while protecting roadside residents from traffic noise. Compacting the urban structure reduces the need to move but closes long views and eats green areas.

Detriment and offence are lesser evils than spoliation and pollution – the difference being only one of degree. Irritated nature's reactions are unpredictable – climate change being one of them. Nature is our *Dobbelgänger*: humanity encounters Nature eye-to-eye, face-to-face, and finds themselves in it. Cultural nature is an extension to Nature's creative work, humanity's self-portrait. Here is a task for an active, future-facing aesthetic: not only to predict what is coming, but to take a stand and influence trends.

Encounter

We, the humanity, are part of our environment, internal. At the same time, however, as observers we keep our distance and measure our relations to other species, landscapes, the Earth, and Space. We try to create a set of ethical norms for common life. I refer to three kinds of encounter: species, landscape, and the world.

Foreign species: The problem with inter-species encountering is how to discuss, when nature speaks with many voices and languages. An interpreter and a translation are needed. The difficulty of making contact is illustrated in the science-fiction film *Arrival* (2016), in which enormous egg-shaped spacecrafts land on Earth. No-one knows with what purpose the strangers have come, and whether they are friendly or hostile. The beings send ink-jet clouds of different shapes and colours. The first idea of a linguist who is called to help is to see a language in the spraying; then an attempt can be made to decide its grammar and vocabulary. The researcher succeeds, contact is made, the threat ends.

Landscape: The landscape is encountered eye-to-eye: we see the landscape – the landscape sees us. Interaction arises between us. We observe the landscape's expressions and gestures, we interpret them. The landscape speaks to us; it addresses us. The landscape touches us; it can be touched. It affects our feelings. The landscape becomes a person; it becomes a partner, a friend.

The Earth: Seen from Space, the Earth is a blue-green ball, a total work, a kind of total work of art. Its beauty is admired by astronauts. Shakespeare's Hamlet holds a skull in his hand, speaks to it and dwells on the nature of human life. I pick up a same-sized globe, and my thoughts go to it and the situation of the creatures living on it. It has been said that seeing the Earth from space illustrated our mutual dependence and created a great feeling of togetherness. This became a concrete duty of care. The globe's message is that of photographs of Earth taken from Space: look after me!

Peace with Nature

Peace with nature is an expression of our will, a treaty guiding our acts and actions. It was made official and ceremonial in a proclamation of peace with nature, *"PAX NATURA",* given on top of Koli Mountain in Finland since 2017 on Midsummer Day (near the Summer solstice, 21st June). The idea was developed, backed and implemented by two small associations, *Ukko-Kolin Ystävät (Friends of Ukko-Koli)* and *Kalevalaisen Kulttuurin Liitto (Kalevala Cultural Association)*. The model for the proclamation text and its manner of presentation was taken from the traditional *Joulurauhan julistus (Christmas Peace Declaration)* in the City of Turku, Finland.

Thus, on Koli, referring to the Finnish national epic, *The Kalevala*:

> In the light of the Midnight Sun of Midsummer, all those living and moving in Nature are urged to treat the Earth's nature as well as human nature with respect and sympathy according to a Kalevala-like nature relationship.

And thus for 700 years in Turku on Christmas Eve (24th December), based on the *Bible*:

> a general Christmas Peace is hereby proclaimed urging all to celebrate this festival with appropriate devoutness and otherwise to behave quietly and peacefully.

In the old days, breach of the Christmas Peace was followed by more severe punishment than usual. The proclamation quickly moves to remind those in breach of the peace of the punishments awaiting them. The text of the proclamation of Peace with Nature is a more succinct appeal, without reference to sanctions.

Peace with nature means a balanced, conciliatory relationship between people and all kinds of nature. Whether its roots are in the *Kalevala* or in something else is then secondary. The question is of a lifestyle and attitude, which can be seen as ethical-aesthetic. This proclamation, like the Christmas Peace, is a common statement of will. It commits to a respectful environmental relationship and good behaviour. It is more than following conventional manners. It is a question of environment-friendly ways of life, of a respectful attitude to Creation – of environmental civilization or civility. It is matter of following an etiquette of good manners, of encountering the other in a spirit of friendship.

The mythical ideal state is a paradise of eternal peace, Eden, lost for breaking a prohibition. Green peace is a peace movement, which seeks a solution to the conflicts of humanity and nature in reconciliation. The general name has become the name of a central nature protection movement: *Greenpeace*.

A peace proclamation obliges, no matter whether the question is of nature peace or the similar Christmas peace – or of school, home, or social peace. Life together is based on interaction, for which there are rules of the game and sanctions for not following them. For example, a law on environmental crime is undoubtedly needed, but before resorting to laws and sentencing it is sensible to use softer means, such as education and enlightenment.

Personification means thinking of nature and its parts as being like a person. As such nature is seen as a negotiating partner. If Creation is seen as a legal person, it becomes a contracting party, which needs a voice. The voice is given by a guardian and defence counsel, a spokesman. Humanity must take a place and role as a nature ombudsman. In promoting nature's interests, humanity promotes its own interests, even when it seems to act against them.

A demand for activities to be ecological has become apparent in recent years. This is a question of the structure appearing in ecosystems and ecosystem services, i.e. the resources nature offers us. Nature serves people, people serve nature. The environment is seen as our understanding partner, someone we can talk to, to whom we are united by feelings and a physical dependency. Arnold Berleant depicts such a participation and solidarity, stating (2013):

> Humans and environment need to be understood as interdependent constituents of a complex whole that has identifiable contributing factors but not separate parts.
>
> […]

> As experienced, environment does not stand apart but is always related to humans, to the human world of interest, activity, and use. This is the human meaning of ecology.

In Finland, it has been wished to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between people and their environment by naming a special *Finnish Nature Day,* which is celebrated at the end of August. When the project was initiated in 2013 it was stated that:

> An attempt will be made to wake people up to the importance of services produced by our nature, as we cannot live without clean water, food, and air.

War and conflict situations between states are sought to be resolved by peace negotiations. If they succeed, they end in a ceasefire and then a peace treaty. The war against nature is an unproclaimed war. Battle is an image used in nature literature too. Land is conquered for agriculture, heroic fights are waged against predators and natural forces, even if no longer with the former feelings of the joy of victory.

The paradox of peace with the Creation and Nature is that nature too is sometimes aggressive and destructive. Not only are there animals hunting each other for food and plants fighting for space to grow, but also there are meteorites striking the Earth, volcanic eruptions, mud slides, and floods – to say nothing of the massive environmental destruction caused by humanity.

Threats create environmental anxiety and paralysis. Fears are real, but they should not become dominant. Positivity is a resource. It is wise to wish the best for nature. The *Creation Project* too arranged information and experiences for children and young people with the motto *"Joy from nature and animals"* – joy above all, even though…

Life is a work that changes and conforms, renews, withers, and dies. Ecosystems are characterized by the mutual dependence of their members. Human life built, designed, and created as a totality is like a natural system. Both have surface and deep levels. The beauty of the surface is wide and horizontal, that of the deep level is narrow, concentrated, and vertical.

Environmental civilization (civility) and wisdom

Civilization (civility) refers to the level of development of the individual and society. It is not a state of being but an aspiration, which is based on a belief in people's abilities. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes form a totality. The task of research is to determine the association between these three and the means by which civilization (civility) can be supported.

Environmental civilization is a question of taking care of the relationship between humanity and the environment. Civilization obliges people to develop knowledge and skills, but also to examine attitudes, in a wide sense morality and manners.

Good manners mean understanding others, taking account and respecting them. Here beauty has an ethical-aesthetic character. Such environmental civility is more than knowledge – it is also civilization of the heart. It includes tact. It is walking alongside. Tact means discretion, empathy.

Etiquette is understood as regulating our mutual interaction, but it can – and should – be extended to be a guideline of good behaviour between humanity and the rest of creation.

Peace with nature means adapting one's lifestyle to nature; peace with nature is also peace with ourselves. Peace with nature is a means and goal for achieving a balanced relationship. This is sought by the moderation movement, which promotes a responsible, ecologically durable lifestyle. An equal relationship requires familiarity with and listening to each other. A basis for this is created by an interest in nature and nature research. Knowledge applies equally to the culture environment and to virtual worlds.

Familiarity leads to esteem. It is wished to protect one held in esteem, in loyalty to one's friend. Finland's first nature protection supervisor Reino Kalliola (1909–1982) said that as a schoolboy his aim was to become a friend of nature. A love of nature, an attachment to nature, and a feeling for nature characterized his whole career and life.

The external observer grows into an active internal participant. Observation becomes doing and doing also includes aesthetic pleasure and a feeling of well-being. The scale of doing extends from the everyday living environment to manifestos and visions outlining major goals and environmental programmes in the manner of art programmes.

Literature and the other arts provide models for the observation of, and pleasure in the environment, but they also inspire actions. The well-known American nature writer Aldo Leopold saw unity, complexity, and intensity in nature. The exact same properties were crystallized fifteen years later in the characteristics of a good work of art by Monroe C. Beardsley in his philosophy of criticism. Environmental utopias present desirable states, dystopias threat images. The point of departure is equally optimism and anxiety. Fritz Lang's classic film *Metropolis* (1927) ends with a lesson on the emotional delicacy and empathy needed between thought and action. Head, heart, and hands – i.e. intelligence, empathy, and acts – form a trinity.

Environmental wisdom is a synthesis of 7 e-values: aesthetic, ethical, emotional, ecological, epistemic, economic and emphatic. This is the highest level of aesthetic environmental civility and civilization. The Earth sets the limits to our activities, but also the preconditions and possibilities. Humility and daring are needed simultaneously.

The starry sky is on the one hand a mythological firmament of named constellations, on the other scientifically an enormous depth, in which one can see the light of the cosmic past of different times. The heavens of imagination and science fit in the same sight.

A mystical, deep lack of knowing – perplexity and a sublime feeling of the distances of space, in front of light years – can also be aesthetically captivating. In his Christmas essays for radio, the Finnish Nobel-prize winning writer F.E. Sillanpää built a link and emotional relationship with nature. "*A Dream of Christmas"* (1928) ends with imagining a wistfully peaceful death: "*An infinitely small warm spot is only extinguished in the middle of an infinitely large and cold space."*

Finally

Between the Creation and Peace with Nature there is a bond, the binder is humanity – absent from the original Creation, then barely a survivor, now ever stronger and more dominant. At some stage once again in the future, humanity is absent and the world in a state of new creation, *The New Wild* (a phrase used as the title of his exhibition by the Finnish landscape painter Petri Ala-Maunus). The world after us and our traces – *hours, years, aeons* – was envisioned by a pair of Finnish artists *IC-98* (Patrik Söderlund and Visa Suonpää) in an installation and exhibition *Omnia mutantur,* i. e. everything changes (2015).

Humanity, and only humanity, sees and considers its place and relation to its life surroundings; it does not just live high life. According to Socratic wisdom the good life is a considered life, responsible, conscious, and serious. We are part of the Creation's system and also the creators of the cultural levels in it – an observer, experiencer, and seer relating critically to our plans and acts. Humanism emphasizes optimistically humanity's abilities and responsibility. Ideological humanism and the humanities meet.

The *Creation Project* and *Peace with Nature Declaration* may be understood as seeds and shoots, as premonitions in the language of folk belief, or as weak signals in modern terms. They give a name and a face to actions and movements that have a possibility to grow enormously.

Perhaps in coming years, Peace with Nature, P*AX NATURA Declaration,* will be proclaimed as visibly as the traditional Christmas Peace. The *Creation* will expand from its religious colouring to become a neutral term for our world of mutual dependence. The word has a solemn, but at the same time a soft fairy-tale like tone.

A synthesis? A suitable emblem for Peace with Nature and Peace in the Creation would be the artist Anna Estarriola's multimedia installation, a spatial work *The System* (2017), in which people, animals, objects, and unidentifiable lumps sit harmoniously in a common future panel, attempting to understand each other. The question is: "*What's next?"*

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[1] Luomakunta-hanke – Iloa luonnosta ja eläimistä. Ympäristösivistystä lapsille ja nuorille. 2018–2020. Helsingin NNKY. Projektin johtaja: ympäristöfilosofian dosentti Leena Vilkka. (Creation Project: Joy from Nature and Animals. Environmental Education for Children and Young People. Organized by the Young Women's Christian Association in Helsinki. The leader of the project Docent (title of) in environmental philosophy Leena Vilkka.)
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NATURE VERSUS CULTURE?

Wolfgang Welsch

Abstract
Arnold Berleant has claimed that we get rid of the dualisms which haunted Western thinking for millennia. This paper tries to confirm his thesis by examining one of the most prominent dualisms: that of nature and culture. In antiquity, the opposition between nature and culture was not yet total, but limited and moderated. In modernity, however, nature and culture were believed to represent completely different spheres, corresponding to the Cartesian dualism of res extensa and res cogitans. Contemporarily, however, undeniable entanglements between nature and culture are being put on the agenda. The future is likely to be marked by the interweaving of nature and culture.

Keywords
Berleant, Nature, Culture, Environmental Aesthetics.

In his 2011 essay "Evolutionary Naturalism and the End of Dualism," Arnold Berleant convincingly argued that nowadays a philosophical standpoint is warranted according to which "human beings are fully integrated biological organisms that share a common history with every other form of life."[1] Practically, it follows from this a "modern analogue of the Stoic's injunction to live in accordance with nature."[2] Theoretically, this results in the call to leave behind the whole bunch of time-honored dualisms: "It is clear that a holistic, integrative understanding of the natural world that embraces the human presence is not compatible with the dualistic understanding that has dominated Western thinking since its origins two millennia ago."[3] We have to question and to dissolve the whole body of dualistic thought patterns, which was based on the no longer tenable thesis of a constitutive unnaturalness of man.

In the following I want to contribute to this endeavor by addressing one of the most fundamental dualisms of Western thinking: that of nature and culture. First, I will present the main stages of dualistic thinking with regard to nature and culture in antiquity and modern times, and then turn to aesthetic revisions and to current transformations.

1. The Duality of Nature and Culture in Antiquity

In antiquity, the duality of nature and culture was nowhere total, but always limited and moderated.

The Sophists brought up the opposition between nature and culture by pointing out that the cultural world is, at least in some respects, self-legislated and cannot be measured throughout by nature (physis). What is considered just or how a crime is to be punished is not regulated by nature, but results from social positing (nomos) and can therefore vary from one society to another. Nature has certainly determined many things (that we grow from children to adults, that we feed ourselves, that we are in need of protection, etc.), but how this happens in detail is in the hands of humans. One

may still point to guidelines of nature (one should not hinder the natural growth, should not over-indulge and should not let the protection degenerate into pampering, etc.), but even then, there is still a lot of room for social convention in detail. Nomos and physis do not stand in bare opposition, rather nomos has a legitimate place within the framework of physis.

Aristotle coined a famous and powerful reconciliation formula: "Art (techne) imitates nature (physis)."[4] By this he means that human art proceeds in the production of things in exactly the same way as nature does, insofar as the same four kinds of causes that prevail in nature (the causes of matter, form, effect, and purpose) also govern human production. The structure of causes is homologous: "If, for example, a house were something that comes into being by nature, it would originate in exactly the same way as it does now through the activity of craftsmanship. Conversely, if natural entities came into being not only by natural means but also by human craftsmanship, they would originate in exactly the same way as they do now by nature."[5]

In addition to this homology of causes, there is a complementary relationship between nature and art: human skills support nature where nature is unable to complete its work by itself; for example, crop plants require human care, just think of the basic paradigm of culture, agriculture: wheat grains depend on the activity of farmers – nature alone does not produce wheat fields. Furthermore, human art complements nature where nature only settles the first steps of development, while subsequent development requires specific human measures; thus, humans need a midwife for birth, and afterwards, as children, the assistance of parents.[6] In such cases the human art takes up the precepts of nature and resumes the naturally laid out ways. It completes what is initiated – but only initiated – by nature. Similarly, in the moral sphere, it is decisive that a good natural disposition is present, but it has to bfind its adequate development into a "second nature" through education and habituation.[7]

In short: Aristotle reduces the contrast between nature and culture. According to him, culture is a continuation of nature, which proceeds analogously to nature and completes the work of nature wherever nature itself is unable to reach its completion. Culture acts in the manner and the sense of nature.

Finally, the Stoics generally propagated conformity with nature as the measure of moral life (homologoumenos zen). Human nature is itself a part of cosmic nature, therefore there can be no real opposition between nature and culture. Nature is and remains – from the behavior of animals to the cosmic order – the shining example of human orientation.

In antiquity, therefore, the distinction between nature and culture has no real explosive power. Even where nature is not considered to rule everything, but where culture is adjudicated some independence, the measure of nature is not suspended. Culture fills a free space that nature has left open, and it does so not against nature, but in its sense.

2. The Modern Opposition of Nature and Culture

Only in modern times nature and culture decisively separate. This is apparent, for example, in Nicholas of Cusa, who, against Aristotle's attempt to see human productivity as an "imitation of nature"

and thus to bring it under the thumb of nature, points to the otherness of genuine human creations, which cannot be understood as imitation. Paradigmatically, Nicholas of Cusa uses the example of the spoon carver who rightly declares: "I do not imitate the shape of any natural thing. The forms of spoons, bowls and pots come into being only through human art. Therefore, my art consists more in achieving than in imitating creaturely forms, and in this it is more similar to the infinite [which means: the divine] art."[8] Human culture and its production of artifacts go beyond the presets of nature. They constitute a creation sui generis.

Another document for the detachment of the human world from the context of nature is Pico della Mirandola's speech De hominis dignitate (Oration on the Dignity of Man) from 1486, where Pico explains that humans, unlike all other beings, are not determined by creation, but confront it freely and unattachedly. Humans have to define their position in the world themselves.

Finally, Descartes proclaimed a strict dualism of res extensa and res cogitans, which became decisive for the future radical opposition of nature and culture. Nature, on the one hand, should be characterized by extension alone and be a purely material entity – res extensa. On the other hand, man and the culture he produces were to be characterized by a completely different way of being: by rationality, thinking, spirit – res cogitans. The difference to older views could hardly be greater. In antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages, the world was understood as determined by spirit. Descartes, however, saw it as mere matter following purely mechanical principles. Nature thus became completely spiritless. The spirit, on the other hand (once the regent of the world and the innermost principle of nature) became a principle external to nature, and man thus, precisely as a spiritual being, became an alien to the natural world. While the human being is catapulted into the pure world of spirit, the animals, on the other hand, are even deprived of liveliness and are declared to be mere automata – a downright scandalous consequence of the Cartesian dichotomization.[9]

This also caused the view that nature is simply to be subjugated to culture, that it just represents a reservoir of raw materials and energy to be exploited. In this sense, Francis Bacon declared in 1620 that humans should "conquer nature,"[10] and Descartes, in 1637, wanted to make us "masters and owners of nature."[11] At that time the primarily technological and commanding relation to nature was founded which reaches up to our days.

The ontological dichotomization of nature (matter) and culture (spirit) not only had practical consequences, but also led to an epistemic dichotomization. Nature became, strictly speaking, unknowable. For if our means of cognition qua res cogitans belong to an order which has not the least in common with nature qua res extensa, then these means of cognition are not capable of any correspondence with nature; we are instead left only to construct nature and to fabricate the world according to our own imagination. Spirit and nature no longer go together. The Kantian unknowability of the thing-in-itself will be a consequence of the Cartesian dualism.

Later, the opposition of nature and culture became virulent anew even within the sphere of culture, when Rousseau fundamentally criticized culture as an aberration and asserted nature as an ideal opposing this decay. Rousseau saw the culture of "arts and sciences" which determines modernity as disastrous: full of ostentatious splendor, it ruins people. It has only dubious measures: the Olympian measure of citius-altius-fortius or the decadent measure of refinement. Certainly, the arts and sciences flourish more and more. People make more and more inventions, acquire more and more knowledge, meanwhile already 35 bulky volumes are needed to represent the knowledge accumulated (the Encyclopedia of 1751–1780). But this progress makes people neither happier nor better. On the contrary, it leads to the decline of human existence, to the decay of morals, to the flourishing of vices. The progress of arts and sciences is a generator of decline. It leads people further and further away from happiness. It destroys them.

In contrast, recourse to a measure not taken from culture is necessary. For Rousseau, nature provides this measure. He knows, of course, that it is eminently difficult to reconstruct the original natural state, because in consequence of numerous cultural transformations we are probably no longer able to bring this state before our eyes undistorted.[12] Moreover, it may even be questionable whether a genuine state of nature has de facto ever existed. But the attempt to reconstruct this state – even fictitiously – is indispensable. We need it as a model.[13]

The situation is tricky. Nature is supposed to serve as a corrective to the luxuriant culture. But it cannot simply be detected; it can only be designed from within the horizon of culture. Therefore, this ‘nature’ is not pure nature, but a pole of longing of culture, it is – as a fictitious corrective of culture – widely culturally infected. The opposition of nature and culture, which ontologically should be a total one and which epistemically led to the disappearance of nature as such in favor of its man-made conception, produces culturally a game of hypothetical projections.

3. Attempts to Overcome Dualism

But with this the opposition of nature and culture is still far from being overcome. On the contrary: In the years to follow, one tried again and again to close or at least to bridge the gap between the material and the spiritual world, which had been torn open by Descartes. The overcoming of modern dualism is the permanent task of the time to come.[14]

Diderot has put the concept of a sensualistic monism on the scale. Everything in nature is connected by sentience: "From the flea to the sentient living molecule, the origin of everything, there is no point in nature that does not suffer and enjoy";[15] sentience is "a general and essential property of matter."[16] Thus, matter already possesses something that clearly distinguishes it from Descartes' purely dead matter and brings it closer to the sphere of the spirit. Demarcations are merely superficial. Man, too, is included in the great commonality, is not opposed to nature as a special being: "Every animal is more or less man, every mineral is more or less plant, every plant more or less animal. There is no sharp demarcation in nature."17 Diderot dismisses the modern thinking of separation.

In the late 18th century, attempts to move beyond dualism become more and more numerous. In 1790, in his Critique of Judgment, Kant argues against the mechanistic conception of nature for an organic understanding of nature, according to which purposes are not first found in the human world, but already in nature, thus bringing the two spheres closer to each other. Schelling propagates an original unity of nature and spirit.18 Schiller explains, in his Kallias-Letters, that freedom (supposedly a proprium of human culture) is already to be found in nature, that the beauty of nature is basically an appear ance of freedom, and that nature, through its beautiful creations, virtually makes an appeal to us humans to finally become free as well.[19] Goethe can only shake his head about a supposedly hard opposition of nature and spirit and shows how precise experience of nature can lead to the vision of ideas, which proves that the two sides are in continuity, not in opposition.[20] And Novalis makes the naturalness of man, already emphasized by Diderot, clear once again: "Do not animals, plants and stones, stars and skies also belong to mankind, and is mankind not a mere nerve node in which infinitely diverse threads intertwine? Can it be comprehended without nature –?"[21] – These are attempts to overcome the modern dualism and to understand the human finally no longer as a special being alienated from the world, but as a natural being in the midst of other natural beings.

Yet these efforts were ultimately not successful. The natural sciences of the 19th century stood in the way. They pursued a rigidly mechanistic view of nature, which still moved in the wake of the Cartesian approach. A prime example was Emil du Bois-Reymond, the influential physiologist and several times rector of the Humboldt University in Berlin. While the idealist and romantic options urged seeing nature as alive and affine to spirit, du Bois-Reymond insisted on a strictly materialistic-mechanistic view of nature and rejected any tendency to attribute other (for instance vitalistic) forces to nature. Indicative of his opposition to the options of the Goethe period was his polemic in Goethe and No End of 1882.

The physics of the 20th century, on the other hand, brought before our eyes exactly what the Enlightenment thinkers, idealists and romantics had been looking for. It led the old mechanistic decrees ad absurdum. Microstates, as quantum physics showed, are not eo ipso determined (as mechanism had assumed), but only take on this or that value under the influence of measurement, and this is due to the fact that these states cannot be observed neutrally, but can only be determined by measurement, whereby every measurement inevitably represents an intervention, a physical exertion of influence. Thus, the experimenter is not neutral to the physical event, but is intertwined with it. Nature and culture are not separate, but interconnected. Moreover, the theories of self-organization and emergence explain how reflexivity emerged in a long process from initial phenomena of self-reference (as existed already in the formation of galaxies and atoms).[22] – Culture and nature, so one could summarize the teaching of these newer theories of natural science, form a unity, and man, too, is integrated into the processes of nature.

4. Complexions of Nature and Culture

a. Aesthetics being a Prominent Precursors

While during the history of thought in general it has long been difficult to think nature and culture together, this was not the case in aesthetics. Aesthetics has long been a sphere that uncovered connections between nature and culture.

In ancient times, not only with respect to production (as with Aristotle), but especially aesthetically, the view was held that art is to imitate nature as perfectly as possible. The anecdotes about the painters Zeuxis and Parrhasios are eloquent testimonies to this. The representations of art should be as faithful as possible to the model of nature – so much so that, for example, if it is a matter of grapes, sparrows fly over and peck at them, or if it is an artifact like a painted curtain, even an art expert like Zeuxis thinks it is real and tries to push it aside.[23]

While here nature and art were still considered different spheres, with art taking nature as its measure, the Renaissance asserted an original connection between nature and art. Leone Battista Alberti believed that nature had produced the very first representations – that art was originally a product of nature. Nature, Alberti claimed, occasionally creates pictorial representations (it paints, for example, "centaurs and bearded faces of kings on the fractures of pieces of marble"[24]), and painting and sculpture then emerged from the observation of such natural phenomena.[25]

If this is so, then there is of course from the ground up no opposition, but a continuity between nature and art. Art is originally a product of nature and thus does not stand in opposition to it, but is rooted in nature.[26]

Alberti's assumption that art and aesthetics are emergent products of nature received a surprising confirmation in the 19th century by the evolutionary aesthetics founded by Darwin and continued by Haeckel.

According to Darwin, nature not only produces beautiful shapes, but also brings forth the aesthetic attitude, the aesthetic sense. The fact that aesthetics has already arisen in the animal kingdom and does not appear only in man is the capital topic of the second part of Darwin's Descent of Man published in 1871. There he develops the theory of sexual selection. Sexual selection goes beyond natural selection. Aesthetically attractive features of one sex evoke arousal in the other sex, which leads to an aesthetically determined choice of partner and mating.[27]

Thus, according to Darwin, aesthetics is not first a cultural achievement (which as such could confront or oppose the natural), but is fundamentally a product of nature. And it does not only belong to nature, but is a way in which nature reproduces itself, shapes itself further and advances itself. The process of species propels itself forward by means of aesthetic refinements and choices. Aesthetics is an active and productive factor of reality, is an agent of further development of biological evolution. It was a great mistake to assume that the aesthetic sphere is opposed to reality. It is, on the contrary, from the very beginning a dimension of reality itself.

Haeckel, Darwin's propagator in the German-speaking world, was fascinated by the richness of natural beauty. Nature produces forms that qualify for models for art. Haeckel demonstrates this in his work Art Forms of Nature (1899–1904). The volume gained great influence on the arts of his time – for example, on Art Nouveau artists such as Obrist, Olbrich, Endell, Tiffany, and architect René Binet was inspired by Haeckel's pictorial panels for his famous entrance gate for the Paris World's Fair of 1900.[28] Art, Haeckel makes us understand, is already a strategy of nature itself; hu- man art does not stand in opposition to nature, but originates from it and carries on the art forms of nature.

Alberti had spoken only of the appearance of representations in nature. Darwin and Haeckel, however, recognize beauty production and beauty appreciation (art and aesthetics) as significant strategies already of nature and not only of the human-cultural world. The gap between nature and culture is bridged.

In the ductus of this rapprochement there occur also reversals: Not only does art derive from nature, but nature can also be modeled after art. The classic example of this is the English Garden. Its artificial design aims to make the garden arrangement appear as if it were nature. The garden artists, however, did not take the model of their 'nature' from nature, but from art. Landscape depictions of the 17th century, especially by Claude Lorrain, were the inspiration for the English gardens of the 18th century.[29] The culmination of this method was achieved when inside a temple situated in a garden hangs a painting showing precisely this garden – which was laid out according to the model of this painting. There the complexion of nature and culture is completed.

With amusing exaggeration, Oscar Wilde explained in the late 19th century the influence of contemporary painting on the perception of nature: "Nature [...] is an imitation of art. [...] Nature follows the landscape painter [...] Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas lamps and changing the homes into monstrous shadows? [...] The extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to a particular school of Art."[30] Art shapes our perception, and subsequently the aesthetically sensitized eye discovers a wholly new nature.

This is true not only for the London fog, but also for the Central European mountains. Previously considered terrible and inaccessible, these mountains were nobilitated in the late 18th century by aesthetics (Kant) and shortly thereafter by art (C.D. Friedrich). Mountains became paradigmatic objects of the sublime. This brought the mountain world closer to the people, so that soon (in the 19th century) mountains were no longer depicted and regarded as sublime, but as beautiful and pleasing. In the 20th century this was followed by widespread mountain tourism, and today the once so noble and sublime mountain world is being fully trampled on by mass tourism. – Art can not only change the image of nature, but also have very real and sometimes unpleasant consequences for it.[31] Let's look back now at some of the stages that, on the contrary, argued for a nature-art-connection starting from nature, not from art.

Romanticism understood the work of art as a product of the originally creative nature (of natura naturans), mediated through the artist as medium. Just as natura naturans produces all phenomena of visible nature (of natura naturata), it also produces all true works of art via artistic activity. In the works of art, the natura naturans expresses itself. If one looks at the works the proper way, one recognizes in them the productivity of natura naturans. This romantic conception was influential for a long time. It was still in use, for example, in Gustav Mahler: "But now think of such a great work, in which, in fact, the whole world is reflected – one is, so to speak, oneself only an instrument on which the universe plays."[32] "I see more and more: one does not compose, one is composed."[33]

Somewhat less pathetically, the kinship between art and nature could also be conceived in terms of parallelism. Here, one no longer speculated on a direct perpetration of nature, but rather acknowledged the cultural status of one's own activity and its distance from nature; yet nature, if no longer the subcutaneous perpetrator, was still supposed to be the guiding model for one's own artistic activity. In this sense, Paul Cézanne defined painting as "a harmony parallel to nature."[34] And Emil Nolde wished that his manner of painting should be exactly "as nature herself creates her forms."[35]

In the 20th century it could even occur that one was not content with a parallelism, but renewed the old romantic hope that reality itself produces the work or at least collaborates in it. Max Ernst's frottages (Histoire Naturelle, 1925) are an example of this. The frottage process causes the surface structure of objects to manifest itself in the representation. So, the objects themselves are involved in their visualization. What is portrayed, as it were, portrays itself – with the help of an artistic process which allows the real to write itself down.[36] – The relationship between nature and art is here completely integrative, nature and art are inseparably interwoven.[37]

b. Present

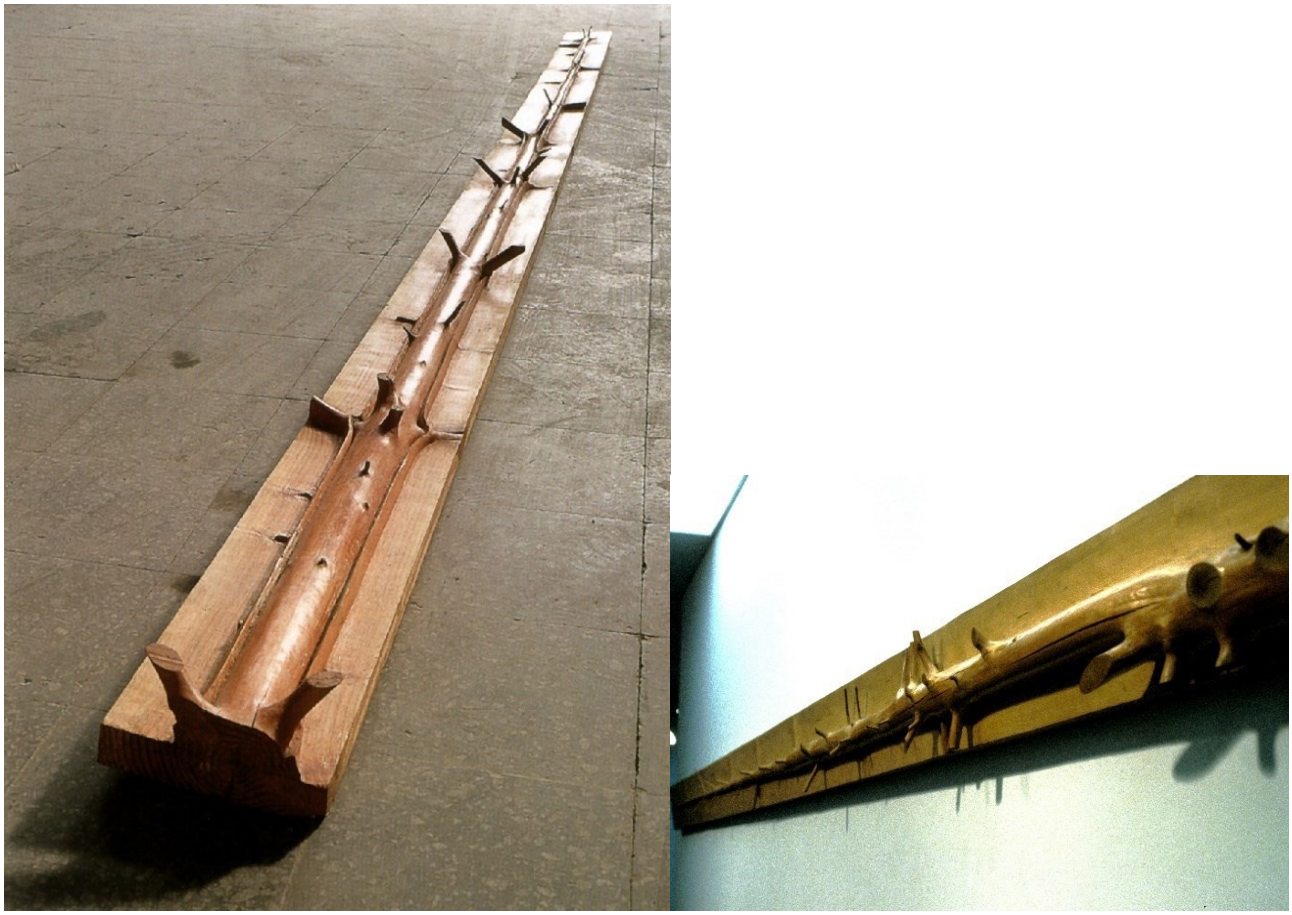
Finally, let us turn to the present. Contemporarily, the various complexities of nature and culture have become a major issue.

For example, it has become increasingly clear that the landscapes we love and enjoy are by no means simply natural landscapes, but culturally impregnated landscapes. When we walk along a country lane or a forest path, we pass through culture at least to the same extent as we pass through nature. Our ancestors have cleared these areas and have created fields and paths through them; and they have cultivated the primeval woods – the woodlands we encounter today are forests. Country lanes and forest paths are paths through cultivated land. But this is not how they are generally understood; they are taken as paths through nature. One ignores the de facto cultural imprint of nature and mistakenly regards it as pure nature. And it is precisely this domesticated, cultivated nature that appears to us as 'pleasant', 'lovely' or 'beautiful', while 'raw' nature is often perceived rather as repulsive. The landscapes we cherish are lands that have long been worked and altered by humans. When we enjoy the 'soft image' of a landscape, we relish the harmonious relationship between forestation and cultivated land, the pleasing proportions of agricultural land that 'hugs' the hills, we

savor the seemingly natural, but in reality, long since regulated course of a river that pro- duces a harmony of landscape and settlement. When the health- and tourism-industries rave about the healing power and the high experiential value of nature, they are referring to a nature that is tamed, pleasant and cultivated – which is by no means pure nature, but to a large extent the work of man. The mistake, of course, is not to praise this kind of nature, but to pass it off as pure nature, that is, to fade out and deny the cultural factors inscribed in it.

The mistake is old. Karl Marx already pointed it out against Ludwig Feuerbach. He criticized Feuerbach's naive belief to live in a "nature preceding human history." Such a nature, Marx stated already 175 years ago (!), exists "nowhere."[38] The talk of a history- and culture-free nature is a piece of ideology. In truth, ʿnatureʾ is an amalgam of nature and culture. This should be clear to everyone today at the latest, in the age of the Anthropocene – where man has become the determin ing factor of the planet. It is necessary everywhere to recognize behind the appearance of romantic- idyllic nature the cultural-technical imprint of man.

For this kind of enlightenment, an example from the fine arts may be mentioned. In his younger years, the Italian artist Giuseppe Penone (born 1947) took a comparatively romantic position.



Giuseppe Penone, Albero di 5 metri (1969–1970), fir wood, 494 x 19.5 x 10 cm, Fondazione CRT Progetto Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, on permanent loan at Castello di Rivoli – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea.

It is exemplified by this work, where Penone has devotedly uncovered the inner life of a tree trunk. What we see here, is not a trunk with branches mounted on a wooden board, but what may appear to be a wooden board is a cut through the trunk; Penone has peeled out its inner structure, a previous state of the trunk. This is certainly a piece of fine-nerved nature worship.

Giuseppe Penone, Idee di pietra, 2012

Quite differently, almost the other way around, nature is thematized by Penone a good forty years later. At documenta 13 (2012), Penone erected a nine-meter-high tree (Idee di pietra). Strangely enough, this tree had only trunk and limbs, but no boughs and leaves. However, it carried – next oddity – a large stone in its crown.

Giuseppe Penone, Idee di pietra, 2012 (detail)

But the real surprise came when one got closer: one realized that this tree did not consist of wood at all, but was cast in bronze. What appears to us to be nature is in fact a technical product. Penone makes evident the artificiality of putative nature.

The understanding of nature as the other to culture has become obsolete. At best, it might have been appropriate at the beginning of civilization after the last ice age and during the transition to agriculture and livestock farming (i.e., more than 10,000 years ago). In the meantime, however, nature has been shaped by culture to a large extent, and we are confronted with nature-culture interdependencies everywhere. We have long needed a different concept of nature – one for which nature is not an antipole but an accomplice of culture.

In the future, the cultural determination of nature will become even stronger. For by means of genetic engineering we are able to penetrate even into the core of nature, into the genetic program of living beings. Culture and technology begin to nest in the software of nature. This affects not only plants and animals, but also ourselves. Culture has always worked (through education) to shape human beings. But what is new today, is that for this purpose cultural programs no longer have to be set up, but that we are able to technically intervene in our elementary biological program.

One might object that such interventions by genetic engineering and human technology do not represent a fusion with nature, but are a threat to and a destruction of nature. Nothing seems more unnatural than such a destruction. But stop! Caution! Far from it! Destruction of nature is not unnatural at all. Just think of the fact that in the course of evolution more than 99% of the species that ever existed have become extinct again – and their destruction was not caused from outside (there is no outside of nature), but was caused by nature itself. The destruction of species belongs to the progress mode of nature.

Nature is just different than the idyllic understanding of nature believes. Nature is not simply nice, harmonious, romantic. It is infinitely diverse, and at the same time both wasteful and cruel. On the one hand, it produces the immense energy flows of black holes, or each flower produces incomparably more seeds than would be needed for the preservation of the species, and myriads of insects fly through the night. On the other hand, nature turns against itself: Stars are self-destruction machines in the long run (they mutate into red giants and white dwarfs before finally ending up as black dwarfs); or animals, in order to keep themselves alive, have to destroy other living beings; and volcanic eruptions and avalanches are as merciless as tsunamis are. Nature is eminently productive and highly destructive as well. Only in the short term does it operate in a way that preserves the system; in the long term, however, it is in the process of change, reshaping, destroying old formations and creating new ones.

Nature is so diverse and contradictory that it should be forbidden to use the singular "nature." Nature includes the gigantic energy flows of black holes, the fine-tuning of quadrillions of solar systems, the oxygen production of plants, the magnetic field orientation of migratory birds and and and – and also the development of human culture. Nature has allowed itself the luxury or the caprice to bring forth the human being and with it a being which takes a cultural path and finally pursues technological goals. Just as nature has brought forth a praying mantis with postcoital desires for consumption, so also the human changing the earth not just in the Anthropocene.

If one tentatively adopts this larger perspective of evolution, then an unusual thought arises: Perhaps what appears in the narrow human view as destruction of nature is, from the perspective of nature, one of its many ways to reshape itself. By means of technology-driving man, who emerged from nature and is still a part of nature, nature undertakes a daring experiment. The outcome is open. But it can, whatever it may be like, certainly not be called "unnatural."

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I have pointed out – against the old dualistic thinking – some forms of interpenetration of nature and culture. They all support Arnold Berleant's thesis that we ought to get beyond the old dualisms. Increasingly are we grasping both the naturalness of man and the symbiotic character of nature and culture.

I conclude with a final note. In the face of the climate crisis and other disastrous effects of the Anthropocene, many call today for reconnection, for reconciliation, for a new communion with nature. That's a bit skewed. For who speaks in this way still relies on the old dualism and does not get rid of its burden, but perpetuates it. Because to say that our tasks are about connection, reconciliation and the

like, rests on the view that an opposition exists and must be overcome. In this respect, the old dualism between nature and culture continues to underlie the pleas for unification. It can be argued that we have distanced ourselves mentally and in our behavior from nature at least since modern times, although we are ontologically fundamentally natural beings. We have regarded nature only as a raw material resource to be exploited, have been ruthless towards it, have thought only of ourselves. Certainly, against this technological attitude a mindset of respect and solidarity is required. But this will not be achieved by propagating unification and fusion in a quasi new-romantic way, as it is widespread in the eco-alternative milieus. This is all very well meant, but little well thought out. It only envisages the contrary alternative to dualism, but does not think what is important today: a complexion of nature and culture. That such complexion instead of dualism is appropriate, is also evidenced by the fact that our future relationship with nature will have to be in league with new technologies. The time when mere complaining and wishing seemed to help is long gone. What we need instead are smart technologies that continue to enable us to live a life that does not simply consist of renunciation, but combines prosperity with carbon neutrality. – As Wagner said. "The wound is only closed by the spear that struck it."[39] Accordingly, we will only be able to treat our destruction of nature by means of a different, smart, intelligent technology. This can be seen as a final example of the fact that the future will be marked by the interweaving of nature and culture.

[1] Arnold Berleant, "Evolutionärer Naturalismus und das Ende des Dualismus," in: Natur und Geist. Über ihre evolutionäre Verhältnisbestimmung, eds. Christian Tewes and Klaus Vieweg (Berlin: Akademie, 2011), 21–30, page 23.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid, 26.
[4] Aristotle, Physics, II 8, 199 a 15–17; similarly, Aristotle, Fragments, B 14.
[5] Aristotle, Physics, 199 a 12–15.
[6] Aristotle, Fragments, B 13.
[7] Cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, II 1, 1103 a 17–19. On the concept of "second nature" see also John McDowell: Mind and World [1994] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 31996), 84–86.
[8] Nicholas of Cusa, Idiota de mente – The Layman on the Mind [written in 1450, published in 1488], in: id., Philosophisch-theologische Werke, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002), page 15 [II, 62].
[9] Descartes saw an advantage of his view in that it would relieve people of the suspicion of "committing a crime by eating or killing animals" (René Descartes, Letter to Henry More, February 5, 1649, in: id., Œuvres, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Cerf, 1897–1913; new edition Paris: Vrin, 1964–1967, vol. 5, 267–279, here pages 278 f.).
[10] Francis Bacon, Neues Organ der Wissenschaften [1620] (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974), page 25.
[11] Descartes, Discours de la Méthode – Von der Methode des richtigen Vernunftgebrauchs und der wissenschaftlichen Forschung [1637] (Hamburg: Meiner, 1960), page 101.
[12] "And how does man come to see himself as nature has made him, through all the changes that the course of time and of things had to bring about concerning his original constitution? And how is he able to separate what he possesses from his own origin and what circumstances and his progresses have added or altered to his first condition?" (Jean-Jacques Rous- seau, Über den Ursprung und die Grundlagen der Ungleichheit unter den Menschen [On the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men] [1755], in: id., Schriften zur Kulturkritik, Hamburg: Meiner, 1971, 61–269, page 63).
[13] [...] it is no easy undertaking to disentangle what is original and what is artificial in the present nature of man, as well as to recognize correctly a condition that no longer exists, perhaps never has existed, and probably never will exist, but about which one nevertheless needs right concepts in order to judge the present condition correctly" (ibid., 67).
[14] An important early figure was Spinoza, who declared the two substances of Descartes to be modes of the one and only substance.
[15] Denis Diderot, "D'Alembert's Traum" ["D'Alembert's Dream"] [written in 1769, first printing 1830], in: id., Erzählungen und Gespräche (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1953), 436–501, page 455.
[16] Id., "Gespräch zwischen d'Alembert und Diderot" ["Conversation between d'Alembert and Diderot"] [written in 1769, first printing 1830], in: Erzählungen und Gespräche, op.cit., 417–435, page 417.
[17] Diderot, "D'Alembert's Dream," op. cit., page 454.
[18] According to Schelling, natural philosophy has to demonstrate that nature is spirit in unconscious form (cf. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre, Tübingen: Cotta, 1806).

[19] "Every beautiful being of nature" is "a happy citizen who calls out to me: Be free as I am" (Friedrich Schiller, "Kallias oder Über die Schönheit. Briefe an Gottfried Körner" [written in 1793, first printing 1847], in: id., Sämtliche Werke, vol. 5, eds. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert, Munich: Hanser, 61980, 394–433, page 425). Cf. for more details: Wolfgang Welsch, "'Schönheit ist Freiheit in der Erscheinung' – Schillers Ästhetik als Herausforderung der modernen Denkweise" ["'Beauty is Freedom in Appearance' – Schiller's Aesthetics as a Challenge to Modern Thought"], in: id., Ästhetische Welterfahrung – Zeitgenössische Kunst zwischen Natur und Kultur (Munich: Fink, 2016), 49–62.
[20] Cf. Goethe's remark to Schiller (Jena 1794): "that can be very dear to me, that I have ideas without knowing it, while I even see them with my eyes" (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Glückliches Ereignis" [1817], in: id., Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden, vol. 10, Munich: Beck, 1976, 538–542, page 541).
21 Novalis, "Randbemerkungen zu Friedrich Schlegels 'Ideen'" [1799], in: id., Schriften, eds. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, vol. 3: Das philosophische Werk II (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 31983), 488–493, page 490. Similarly, already Herder noted in an early draft from his Königsberg-Riga period: "In which world was I before I came here / What will I be / Connection of creatures; great spirits / Perhaps the plants feel as we do / I have been an animal" (Herder's Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Bernhard Suphan, vol. 14 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913), page 665 [editor's afterword]).
[22] Cf. in more detail: Wolfgang Welsch, Homo mundanus – Jenseits der anthropischen Denkform der Moderne (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2012, 2nd edition 2015), 876–886.
[23] "Zeuxis is painting grapes, sparrows fly over and peck at the grapes. Parrhasios asks Zeuxis to accompany him to his studio, where it will be shown that he, too, is capable of such things. In Parrhasios' workshop, Zeuxis asks him to move the curtain that covers the painting. But the curtain is painted. Zeuxis acknowledges the superiority of Parrhasios: 'I have deceived the sparrows, but you have deceived me'" (Kris and Kurz, Die Legende vom Künstler: Ein geschichtlicher Versuch [1934] (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 90 [source: Pliny, Natural History [written about 77 AD], XXXV, 65]).
[24] Leone Battista Alberti, Della Pictura libri tre, in: Leone Battista Alberti's Kleinere Kunsttheoretische Schriften (Vienna: Braumüller, 1877), 45–163, page 96. King Pyrrhus had even possessed a gemstone "on which, painted by nature, one could see all nine Muses, distinguished according to their attributes" (ibid.).
[25] "The arts of those who aim at artificially reproducing and imitating the bodies created by nature have, in my opinion, had their origin in the following. One saw on a tree stump, a clod of earth or another lifeless body of this kind some linea- ments which, after a slight change, represented something that very much resembled the outer form of a real natural thing.
– By noticing such things and considering them with great care, one began to try whether one could not add or take away here and there and thus obtain what still seemed to be missing in order to have a complete likeness before one. So then, improving and perfecting lines and surfaces, as far as the object itself demanded it, one achieved what was desired; and this truly not without pleasure" (Leone Battista Alberti, De Statua [written around 1435 or after 1450], in: Leone Battista Alberti's Kleinere Kunsttheoretische Schriften, op.cit., 165–205, page 168).
[26] Cf. on this view also Dürer's famous saying "For truly art is in nature, whoever can tear it out has it" (Albrecht Dürer, Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion, 1528). Michelangelo's dictum that the figures are already present in the stone and that the sculptor only has to remove the shell mass to free the figures slumbering in the stone points in a similar direction (cf. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Rime, Milan: Rizzoli, 1954), page 77 [LXXXIII]).
[27] Cf. in more detail: Wolfgang Welsch, "Perspektiven einer evolutionären Ästhetik," in: id., Ästhetische Welterfahrung – Zeitgenössische Kunst zwischen Natur und Kultur, loc. cit., 63–84.
[28] Haeckel himself had predicted such an influence: "The modern fine arts and the modern, powerfully flourishing arts and crafts will find in these true 'art forms' of nature a rich abundance of new and beautiful motifs" (Haeckel, Kunstformen der Natur, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut. 1904, preface).
[29] These gardens are "the classic example of the power pictures have had, not only as sources of landscape design but also as a force that shaped our conception of a composed and ideal nature" (Gina Crandell, Nature Pictorialized: 'The View' in Landscape History (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), page 9.
[30] Oscar Wilde, The Decay of Lying. An Observation [1891] (Richmond: Alma Books 2016), pages 74 f.
[31] Cf. in general on the relationship between art and reality: Wolfgang Welsch, "Kunst und Wirklichkeit: Opposition oder Konfusion?", in: id., Ästhetische Welterfahrung – Zeitgenössische Kunst zwischen Natur und Kultur, loc. cit., 85–103.
[32] Letter from Gustav Mahler to Anna von Mildenburg, June or July 1896, in: Gustav Mahler – Briefe (Vienna: Zsolnay, 1982), pages 164 f.
[33] Gustav Mahler in the memoirs of Natalie Bauer-Lechner, ed. Gustav Killian (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, 1984), page 161.
[34] "Art is a harmony parallel to nature. The whole endeavor of the painter must be silence. He must silence in himself all voices of prejudice, must forget, forget, let silence enter, be a perfect echo. Then on his sensitive panel the whole landscape will inscribe itself" (Conversations avec Cézanne, ed. P. M. Doran, Paris: Macula, 1978, page 109).
[35] "I always wanted in painting that the colors, through me as a painter, on the canvas worked out so consequentially, as nature itself creates its formations, as ore and crystallizations form, as moss and algae grow, as under the rays of the sun the flower must unfold and bloom" (Emil Nolde, Jahre der Kämpfe, Berlin, 1934; quoted after: Walter Hess, Dokumente zum Verständnis der modernen Malerei, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956, page 45).
[36] Cf. Wolfgang Welsch, "Frottage" – Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Geschichte, phänomenaler Verfassung und Sinn eines anschaulichen Typus (Bamberg, 1974).
[37] In other cultural spheres the dualism of nature and culture is anyway far less distinct than in Europe. An opposition of this kind is alien to Asian cultures; and in indigenous cultures of Africa, Amazonia, New Guinea, or Siberia, a cosmology of commonality prevails (cf. Philippe Descola, Jenseits von Natur und Kultur [2005] (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2011).
[38] Karl Marx, "Die Deutsche Ideologie" ["The German Ideology"] [1845/46], in: id., Die Frühschriften, ed. Siegfried Landshut (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1964), 339–485, page 353.
[39] Richard Wagner, Parsifal [1882], 3rd act.

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