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# Contemporary Aesthetics. A Topographic Attempt

Lisa Giombini; lisa.giombini@uniroma3.it, Adrián Kvokačka; adrian.kvokacka@unipo.sk https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3632430

# Introduction. Echoes from the Present

The primary goal of the ESPES Journal is to promote dissemination of contemporary approaches in the field of Aesthetics and the Philosophy of art. One way to do this is by publishing general, non thematic issues that can provide the readers with a realistic snapshot of the discipline in its current state, outside and beyond the constraints of its academic capacity.

Among the things that can be argued about aesthetics today, one is especially true: heterogeneity. As never before, the field is characterized nowadays by a great variety of styles, attitudes, and methodologies that make it look like a jagged land - a discontinuous and irregular ensemble of diverse interests and concerns. Presumably, this plurality is the result of internal developments happened in the artistic discourse of the twentieth century, which lead to an increasing complexity in artistic practice in the first place, and in art theory in the second.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever its exact causes, though, this situation can create a sense of dizziness in those approaching the field for the first time. Finding a clear path in the *mare magnum* of theories, schools, attitudes that emerge from current aesthetic theorizing may seem like trying to find one's bearings without a compass. And yet, for the professional aesthetician, this vertiginous plurality is but a striking sign of the vitality of the discipline itself. In the absence of a single direction, of stable and well-rooted philosophical traditions, scholars are today free to choose, to invent, to make their own independent discoveries outside the cage of ready-made ideologies. Interestingly, this freedom also gives one the chance to engage in a more creative relationship with the past. Retracing the past, indeed, goes along with exploring new territories towards yet unforeseen areas of interest.

Without any attempt to reduce this complexity, our goal in the present issue of ESPES is to provide a temptative 'topography' of the diversified theoretical experiences that compose the scope of contemporary aesthetics. The aim is not to present a comprehensive anthology of the discipline and its sub-branches, one able to cover all issues that are discussed today in aesthetic fori. Such a venture would be a priori doomed to failure, nor is a perfect representation of reality on a one-by-one scale what a topography is primarily meant to do. Rather, our attempt is to shed light on some significant patterns of current aesthetic discourse that can serve as landmarks facilitating the exploration of the field.

As the reader will observe, all the eight essays that comprise this collection focus on issues that are, albeit different from one another, emblematic of a number of debates in contemporary aesthetics. Most of these papers provide a re-interpretation of a variety of old problems - the status of kitsch, the complex subject of art reception and interpretation, the ontology of art, the notion of post-historical art - that represent *tòpoi* in the history of aesthetics. Others seek to inaugurate a contemporary and unprecedented perspective - the notion of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Welsch, 1992, p. 387

projective aesthetics, a different idea of aesthetic education. In any case, whether they commit in dialogue with tradition or attempt to uncover new theoretical avenues, all the texts presented here bring an original contribution to the clarification of the various problems they address. In the remainder of this *Introduction*, we will briefly address these papers individually so as to highlight how each of them may serve as a useful benchmark that can help us draw the map of today's aesthetics.

# **Old Problems, New Solutions**

Max Ryynänen's insightful article *Kitsch Happens* provides a re-evaluation of the negative characterisation of kitsch as pseudo or bad art that has been raging in much aesthetic investigation of the 20th century. Questioning the assumption that kitsch is not possible in nature but only in *representations* of nature (Kulka, 1994), Ryynänen analyses the case of landscapes to ask whether natural phenomena can be a possible source for experiences of kitsch. This leads him to reconsider the history of the concept, from its first theorization in the work of Clement Greenberg to the latest tendencies of so-called "pro kitsch art community" (Nerdrum et al., 2001). While, according to Ryynänen, in earliest years kitsch was mainly examined "from the outside" just to be condemned as fiercely contrasting with true Art (i.e., modernism, in Greenberg's terms) and authenticity, a "second wave" of research on kitsch was initiated by Umberto Eco's (1997), and Tomáš Kulka (1994). In this period, kitsch started attracting the curiosity of scholars as a phenomenon of interest in itself, worthy of serious examination and scientific analysis. Finally, in the last few years, "a third wave" of studies on kitsch has emerged, which emphasizes the positive aspects of kitsch and examines how kitsch as a concept and as a form of sensitivity can vary according to the different countries and cultures. "Authors on this side of the millennium" Ryynänen writes "are no longer much interested in good/ bad art (which for them is just good/ bad art) or the non-legitimization of certain forms of e.g. (lowbrow) painting, when they discuss kitsch."

Interestingly, it is in the light of this more recent evolution of the notion that the question of nature as a source of kitsch becomes possible. Indeed, according to Ryynänen, once we stop looking at kitsch as a despicable phenomenon and begin considering it as a shared cultural 'heritage' – a part of "our cultural *a priort*", in his words – we can come to recognize kitsch as something that simply happens, and that we can therefore recognize also in nature – in a sunset for instance – as a trace of the images or pictures we have learned to see and identify. This consideration brings Ryynänen to a redefinition of the notion of the *Kitschmensch*, as someone who, rather than simply lacking so-called 'good taste', is instead visually "programmed" to appreciate kitsch, to the point of being led to make choices, even perhaps moral choices, on the basis of her implicit identification of kitsch (consider the use of sentimental and kitschy images to drive people to charity).

A more critical consideration of kitsch characterizes Doron Avital's and Karolina Dolanská's dense contribution, *From Tomas Kulka on Kitsch and Art to Art as a Singular Rule*. Drawing on Kulka's concept of a Popper-inspired aesthetics, the authors contend that kitsch works can be defined as alteration-resistant: they cannot allow for any change in their form – whether better or worse – because each possible variation is in principle able to replace the original item without loss of aesthetic value. Since it cannot be falsified, kitsch is only pseudo-art. What indeed defines true Art (like true science in Popper's account) is, according to Avital and Dolanská, the possibility of its being improved upon, thus 'falsified'; in other words, its capacity to survive, as it were, the 'falsifiability test'. But what are these variations about? And how do they relate to the specific "perceptual Gestalt" that, in Kulka's terms, that makes each single work what it is? According to the authors, a distinction that helps clarify the matter is that between the 'what' and the 'how' of the work of art. Variations affect the way (i.e. *how*) a work's perceptual Gestalt (i.e. *what*) is presented.

This distinction provides the basis for Avital's and Dolanská's criticism of Kulka (1994). Thinking, with Kulka, that there exists a single, constant, unchangeable 'what' for every work of art is for the two authors misleading, since the different manners and conditions according to which a work can be presented and experienced (its *how*) necessarily intrude upon what we consider its Gestalt (i.e., its *what*) to be. To explain this, the authors



refers to the famous example of the duck-rabbit: when we switch the figure and the background in the picture (either the duck or that of the rabbit), we also switch the 'what' and the 'how'. In this sense, the distinction between the 'what' and 'how', between figure and background, is far less clear-cut than it may appear, and should be conceived of as open to our "free play" among competing visual readings. This is also compatible, according to the authors, with the notion of a work of art being a 'singular rule' in itself. This notion is important for aesthetic appreciation, because it determines the extent to which a given work succeeds or fails in complying with the standard it itself has posited and thus provides us with a parameter to assess how valuable the work is. It is only to the extent that a work is a singular rule that it can qualify as a proper 'Work of Art' as well as, in Kantian terms, as "the mark of genius"; this, Avital and Dolanská conclude, is just another way of claiming that kitsch does not count as art.

Expanding on the relation between an artwork's possible 'variations' and aesthetic appreciation is also Vlastimil Zuska's paper *Non-structural version of the variational method - the explanatory weakness of Gestalt, the limits of imagination and rejection of the Other*. Commenting on Kulka's (2019) notion of 'variational method', Zuska claims that what we regard as 'altered versions' of a work of art are in fact just imaginary constructs, characterized by a different ontological status with respect to the object of our actual perception (the work before our eyes). In this sense, they cannot receive the same kind of consideration we accord to the real artwork when it comes to aesthetic appreciation.

Just like Avital, Zuska criticizes Kulka's use of the concept of a *unique* non-aesthetic perceptual Gestalt determining the identity of an artwork. Using the 'figure-background' scheme as an example, he points out how certain pictures, like for instance the duck-rabbit, are bistable and do not allow for any singular reading, and concludes therefore that the assumption of the uniqueness of the perceptive Gestalt is misplaced. In fact, according to Zuska, the main flaw of Kulka's account lies in its recourse to the notion of Gestalt. Quoting Jan Mukařovský, Zuska argues that the structure of a work of art, meant as a whole, is hierarchical, i.e. it contains subordinate and superior components, so its totality cannot simply be reduced to a "Gestaltquatität". In this sense, the concept of structure seems to him more productive when it comes to explaining artworks' intrinsic ambiguity, because – unlike the rigidness of the notion of Gestalt – it involves the idea of a vital interaction among the work's components and the context. Able as it is to account for the interactions taking place among the work's parts as well as between the work and the living artistic tradition that comprises it, structuralism offers us a method that outreaches the limits of Gestalt as such.

A further concern, according to Zuska, is represented by the fact that Kulka is not clear about the reasons why the method of 'alterations' should constitute the best way of addressing aesthetic problems. Even the introduction of the three core notions of unity, complexity and intensity, according to Zuska, does not help him avoid some form of skepticism, mainly because at least two of these notions, unity and intensity, rely on the viewer's ability to correctly interpreting the work. When evaluating a work of art, viewers are indeed prone to overemphasize unity among the work's parts, while disregarding all the elements that may disturb the whole. This suggests that the method of alteration is unable to exempt us from misunderstandings and errors of assessment.

The modalities through which works of art are usually perceived and evaluated lie at the core of Ondřej Krátký's paper *Perception, Length Of Its Duration, Evaluation: Various Authors, Related Observations.* Focusing on the case of artistic 'texts' (a term which is taken by Krátký to refer to all genres of artistic production - from literature and painting to music, movies, sculpture) the author examines what he refers to as the 'linear' facet that characterises the spectator's perception. According to Krátký, the standard way recipients have to approach a text is by gradually gaining a sequence of perceptions of it, until the moment the text is somehow "replete" in their eyes. In this sense, Krátký claims, the more 'static' an artistic text is (like a painting for instance) the greater will be the activity required on the part of the recipient to appreciate it.

Referring to Paul Grice's conversational theory (1975), Krátký argues that the main goal underlying all forms of artistic creation is an effort, on the part of an artist, to communicate a certain message to an audience. In

this sense, art appreciation can be seen as implying an "exchange" between the artists' communicative intent and the recipients' perception of such intent. According to Grice, ideal communication in conversations occurs when all so-called *maxims of conversation* (cooperation, quantity, quality, relation) are respected by the speakers. Nevertheless, according to Krátký, in the case of artistic texts, effective communication can be obtained also by intentional violations of the norms that ground the expectations of the recipient.

Violation of the recipients' expectations is indeed a tool often used by artists to produce a certain communicative effect on the part of the spectator, which Krátký identifies in a phenomenon of 'arousal'. Arousals are not necessarily negative, but may in fact have a positive effect on the recipient. In this sense, according to Krátký, artistic communication succeeds both when the spectator's expectations are fulfilled and when the spectator is brought, by experiencing a state of 'arousal', to "jump" to a different reading or perception of the work itself. Our evaluation of an artistic text, thus, does not strictly depend on how much a text meets our expectations. Predictability and unpredictability - i.e., the qualities of an object to either meet or fail our expectations - are in themselves neutral features that can be perceived as good or bad ("welcomed" or "unwelcomed" in Krátký's terms) by different people in different situations. Accordingly, one recipient may interpret an artistic text negatively because of its unpredictability, while the other can appreciate it exactly for the same reason. This, however, leads Krátký to raise the following question: when it comes to appreciating an artistic product, are we expecting the unexpected or are we rather expecting the expected?

In his captivating contribution, Projective Aesthetics as a Possible World, Boris Orlov explains the nature, origins and purposes of the approach he calls "projective aesthetics" (Orlov, 2015, p. 43) as well as its possible role in the development of future discourses in aesthetics. Projective aesthetics, Orlov claims, prospects a new way of understanding aesthetic practices, one resting essentially on three main pillars: Deleuze and Guattari's idea of 'schizoanalysis' (2010) as stemming from the important concept of rhizome; a so-called 'conceptivistic methodology', where conceptivism stands for an interpretation of philosophy as concept-production; and, third, the notion of projectivity, meant as a practical way of engaging with the dimension of aesthetics. This practical engagement, that Orlov ascribes to Dewey's pragmatism and Berleant's aesthetic thinking, turns projective aesthetics into a non purely theoretical discipline, aiming to account for all the aesthetic experiences potentially happening at any time and any place of human everyday life. Because of its shift from theory to praxis, the object of projective aesthetics must be re-configured in terms of the two related phenomena that, Orlov contends, contribute in equal way to making our experience of the world meaningful, what he calls aestheticization and artification of reality. It is the goal of projective aesthetics to potentiate our aesthetic taste so as to enable us to "saturate our life" by way of aestheticizing or artificizing it to its maximum. In this sense, projective aestheticians do not simply investigate what is beauty or what is art, but explore "how to bring [...] beauty or artistry in their own life".

Relevantly, it is mainly in virtue of its practical connotation that projective aesthetic can enter into dialogue with some of the most innovative approaches characterizing contemporary aesthetic field, from everyday aesthetics to environmental aesthetics, contemporary art practices and media aesthetics. A common feature of all these approaches - however different they may be from one another in content and concern - is indeed that they all interpret aesthetics as a dimension that is able to provide us with something existentially significant, potentially capable of transforming our whole being. The transformative power of aesthetic experience also represents an important element in Orlov's educational practice as an aesthetic teacher. Beyond the constraints of traditional ex cathedra academic communication, embracing projective aesthetics can lead to the implementation of educational projects in which students are allowed to engage personally and practically with the aesthetic dimension, for example by relying on their own experience of beauty or with their own sensitive body.

An interest in education also features in Jana Migašová's paper Black Mountain College Case: Transformation Trends in Art Education in the First Half of the 20th century. Migašová analyzes the case of the Black Mountain College, a college operating in Black Mountains (North Carolina, United States) from 1933 to 1957, alma mater to many



famous artists such as Josef Albers, John Cage, Walter Gropius, Willem de Kooning, and Robert Rauschenberg, among the others. Focusing on the role played by John Dewey's pragmatism and progressivism on the educational approach implemented in the college, Migašová investigates the relationship that tied the American school to another important institution of that time - also groundbreaking in concept and vocation - namely, the German Bauhaus. Like Walter Gropius' school in Weimar, the Black Mountain College was clearly devoted to both practical and formal instruction in the field of liberal arts, including subjects as mathematics, psychology, economy, etc. Placed at the core of the education delivered by the academy, art was seen as providing a synthesis between the humanities and the natural sciences, a dimension capable of bringing together all the multiple facets that comprise culture.

This was in fact the idea of one of the school's leading figures, the German painter and teacher Josef Albers, to whom Migašová devotes a large part of her contribution. A former member of the Bauhaus who emigrated to the United States in the Nazi period, Josef Albers had distinctive opinions concerning the role of education in society and politics, which he derived, according to Migašová, from his own practice as an artist. In his educational 'manifesto', Concerning Art Instruction, Albers conceived art as both the "experimental arm of culture" as well as a way to create meaningful forms, what he saw as the prerequisite of cultural production and progress. In his courses at the College, Migašová tells us, Albers followed Dewey's conception of the learning by doing, beginning each lesson with exercises of a practical nature (like measuring, dividing, estimating etc.) that, to his mind, could strengthen students' handicraft capability and, subsequently, their freedom to engage in more personal kind of work. One important part of Albers' educational methods, according to Migašová, was indeed attributed to training the learners' discipline - where discipline was, however, meant in a strictly "anti-academic" way. The role Albers granted to freedom for exploration and experimentation in his teaching activity at Black Mountains College, his understanding of art as necessarily related to ethics and politics, and, more generally, his progressive ideas concerning education may, according to Migašová, represent an interesting model for re-conceiving our higher education, especially in the field of arts, in a more progressive and democratic sense.

Lisa Giombini's paper *Descriptivism in Meta-Ontology of Music. A plea for Reflective Equilibrium*, inaugurates a shift toward the realm of ontological and meta-ontological investigations about the arts. Drawing on current discussions in analytic aesthetics concerning the methodology underlying musical ontology, Giombini examines one of the most popular positions in the debate, namely, descriptivism. As a general meta-ontological approach, descriptivism can be traced back to a tradition coming prominently from Peter Strawson's (1959), who introduces it to discuss the broader issue of determining the task of general metaphysics. According to Strawson, metaphysics should be aimed at describing "the actual structure of our thought about the world" (Strawson, 1959, p. 9) as reflected in ordinary language. Applied to the case of music, this implies that our best ontological theories of musical works are those which prove consistent with our intuitive thought and discourse about actual practice, more than with the abstract claims of metaphysics.

Despite its current success among scholars, descriptivism raises in fact, in Giombini's perspective, a whole number of issues, the first being the role it assigns to our pre-theoretical intuitions about music as the main sources for ontological theorizing. This, according to Giombini, is especially problematic because of the contradictory nature of intuitions themselves. For example, there seems to be a broad variety of intuitions underlying what we believe an authentic performance of a musical work is, all in conflict with each other. It is therefore unclear how we should choose between them and which of them we must elect as the foundation for our ontology. Moreover, Giombini contends, it seems also disputable whether descriptivism is really able to offer us any form of non-trivial knowledge, given that its deliberate task is to codify the regularities found in our intuitive discourses about musical practice.

A possible way to redeem descriptivism against these lines of criticism, according to Giombini, might be through reference to the so-called method of *reflective equilibrium*, as famously envisaged in the field of ethics by John Rawls (1971). As a philosophical method, reflective equilibrium refers to a procedure aimed at revising,

adjusting or filtering our pre-theoretical intuitions, so as to achieve the higher possible level of consistency among the judgments that have stood up under rational examination. Importing this method in the framework of ontological inquiries about music, Giombini argues, might help descriptivism overcome some of the difficulties entailed in recourse to intuitions, thus making it more resistant to objections. What is more, reflective equilibrium could also have an impact on the type of knowledge achievable by means of a descriptivist ontological theorizing. Indeed, according to Giombini, by acknowledging some degree of revision in our intuitive conception of musical practice, we end up with a knowledge that is not just trifle codification of the already-known.

In her inspiring contribution, Daniela Blahutková presents a different perspective on a subject that has attracted the attention of theoreticians for decades if not for centuries, namely, that of the end of art and of the fate of art in the post-historical period. This topic, commonly referred to the thought of Hans Belting and Arthur Danto, is complemented in Blahutková's paper with the work of the relatively less known philosopher and sociologist Arnold Gehlen. Post-history, in Gehlen's perspective, corresponded to the crystallization of a culture which was modern, technical and shaped by the avant-garde - a culture, however, in which syncretism of styles and creative production survived. As Blahutková highlights, to explain the notion of post-history Gehlen resorted to the idea that both the present and the future state of society were the result of an internal development of humankind according to three different stages, prehistory, history and posthistory, each identified by a different character. Gehlen's conception of art and of the logic behind the historical progress of pictorial rationality were based, according to Blahutková, on his view of the relationship insisting between art and social institutions, natural sciences, the bourgeoisie, and the industrial society of the 20th century.

Writing in the 1950s, Gehlen contended - somewhat pessimistically - that society was static and that no stimulus for a change could be expected - no "new horizons, breathtaking utopias". At the same time, however, he maintained that posthistory did not represent the finale stage of human existence. Since posthistory was, to his mind, the product of cultural crystallization, he emphasized the value of experimentation (both as an artistic process and as a symptom of the spiritual atmosphere of the industrial era), transformation and multiplication spreading both in post-historical culture and in art. As Blahutková underlines, this aspect explains why the avant-garde signified, for Gehlen, a new hope against the process of social crystallization. The emergence of the avant-garde had to be understood as the onset of subjectivity in the arts, associated in turn with the crisis of institutions such as state or religion. However, experimentation in the avant-garde art did not represent, he contended, a real form of artistic progress, mainly because of avant-garde persisting commitment with such institutions.

Relevantly, knowing that our post-historical society no longer requires art to fulfill its needs could give us, according to Gehlen, further opportunities to socialize, integrate, and coordinate our actions. Gehlen's attempt to devise an art theory despite his post-histoire diagnosis emerged from a need to investigate the boundaries of art and his concept of art as a vehicle of reflection. This is why, Blahutková concludes, Gehlen's example may still be relevant for our culture today.

# Conclusions

What lesson could we learn from this tour into the jagged topography of contemporary aesthetics? From a purely academic viewpoint, the most relevant idea is probably the multifaceted nature of aesthetics as a field, intertwining philosophy, the theory of perception, sociology, art history and art criticism and addressing issues that go far beyond the realm of art and art theory.

Although the papers presented here do not answer to all the problems they raise – perhaps because there simply are no straightforward, easy answers – they all show originality and insightfulness in the particular way in which they put the relevant questions. To our mind, this is in fact one of the key aspects of any valuable theoretical investigation (in all fields): rather than finding solutions, raising the issue in a novel and interesting



way. This might also represent a way for aesthetics to cross the boundaries of the academic world and reach the interest of the general public, thus resisting to the increasing marginalization and excessive specialization to which all scientific disciplines are subject nowadays. We hope this issue will make a little contribution to this process too.

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Dr. Lisa Giombini Roma Tre University Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performance Rome / Italy lisa.giombini@uniroma3.it

Mgr. Adrián Kvokačka, PhD. University of Presov in Presov Faculty of Arts Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture Presov / Slovak republic adrian.kvokacka@unipo.sk

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/

# Kitsch Happens. On the Kitsch Experience of Nature (Hommage à Tomáš Kulka)

Max Ryynänen; max.ryynanen@aalto.fi, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3595474

**Abstract:** In Kitsch and Art Tomáš Kulka notes that natural landscapes cannot be called kitsch. Kitsch needs to be produced by a human being, he says. I agree with that. Experience-wise it is more complicated, though. Sometimes kitsch affects our experience of landscapes. It is not just that our overwhelming culture of images affects how we see nature, but that also sugared, sentimental and stereotypical kitsch images of nature, that we see in postcards and social media, affect our experience of e.g. sunsets and picturesque landscapes. We might desire to fight back, but at least we need to understand and to some extent accept our situation. Kitsch is in our experience even when there is no kitsch around, and our experiences of nature prove that.

Keywords: Kitch, Tomas Kulka, kitschification, culture

Early 2000s, I spent a long weekend in the Norwegian mountains, where I participated in a Nordic postgraduate conference on aesthetics. After a day crowned by a keynote delivered by Martin Jay on the dangers of separating aesthetic experience from art, I walked out during the final dinner with my colleagues – just in time to see the sunset. The red sun coloured the mountains in pink and gold. It was beautiful. But I felt uneasy, aesthetically speaking.

For Kant colours are secondary (qualities) to (primary ones like) motion/rest, solidness, texture and spatial position/constellation. Secondary qualities are less formal than primary ones; less communicable. Kant thinks that they are less relevant for judgements of taste (Wentzel, 2005, p. 63). In a fictional passage in *Estetiikka* [Aesthetics], Aarne Kinnunen takes Kant to his hometown in Savonia (Central Eastern Finland), and they fly over the lakes, hills and forests. Kant is impressed. When they fly back, snow has covered the landscape. It is now completely white. Kant is shocked by the beauty. He sheds a tear (Kinnunen, 2000, p. 63). Kinnunen aims to accentuate how much landscapes change with colour.

Kant, had he been able to join us in Norway, would probably have thought of the sublime while looking at the mountains. The sublime was not what came to my mind, though. The 'original' landscape was already a bit 'too much'; as one participant of the conference said, 'too beautiful'. I am not convinced about the notion of 'too beautiful'. Dewey uses this concept about kitsch in *Art as Experience* (see Dewey, 1980, p. 78) – but I have always assumed that he refers to clumsy pretentiousness, not that something really would be too beautiful. I also assume that as people use the expression while they point to a person or a landscape, it usually means that there is something which disturbs beauty. Skiing in mid-February in my hometown Helsinki, when the sun suddenly returns and is too bright (mirrored by all the ice and snow), it is one of those moments when visual hysteria makes the appreciation of landscapes impossible. When people, on the other hand, are seen to be 'too beautiful', I have noticed that they meet the standards of a 'beautiful man/woman', but somehow lack warmth or charm. Sometimes they give the impression of being beautiful in a stiff way (a way that is not dynamic). The colouring of the landscape we were looking at during the conference, on the other hand, felt unreal in a plastic way, like something just on the surface.

The Norwegian landscape in itself did not lack anything. During the conference breaks, except for the one recalled in the beginning of my article, it was beautiful (also sublime if one desired to accentuate that). It was just that it echoed the stereotypical travel agency advertisements and postcard aesthetics slightly too much to really 'breathe'.

Umberto Eco writes in his 1964 essay *La struttura del cattivo gusto* (Eco, 1997; [The Structure of Bad Taste]), that when someone talks about kitsch in literature, s/he often refers to dead metaphors or overtly consumed expressions (take for example 'kisses that taste like eternity' or a description of a beautiful woman riding a white horse on a beach), and still today, at least when we talk about *romantic* cultural products, I think this holds. If a murder is stereotypical in a detective story, we would not usually call it kitsch, as it would just be bad entertainment, popular culture or mass culture. Stereotypical expression is of course one thing that a critical person can take up and call kitschy, but the concept is mostly attached to sentimentality, attributes seen to be typical for feminine consumer culture (prettiness, cuteness, pink colour) and sensibilities like cheesiness or 'sugared' (see e.g. Emmer, 1998; Solomon, 2004; and Ryynänen, 2018 for an overview). Coming back to the mountains, the scenery was generic, and one could say that it felt like something overtly consumed, or a dead symbol, a pathetic trace of German idealism, travel agency visuals, or urban bourgeois visions of romantic nature.

Anyway, 'Kitsch happens,' I said. My peers were not convinced. One of them said nature cannot be kitsch. I think he was right, but I think that his stance was about another issue, i.e. the fact that to be experienced as kitsch, an *object* needs to be manmade. It is just that drifting into a kitsch reaction/experience does not entail engagement with a kitsch object. As art in the 18<sup>th</sup> century once became a way of framing nature (the picturesque), to some extent this has started to happen quite naturally in our age with kitsch. "This landscape is like a painting" is somewhat analogous to "this landscape is like kitsch", although the kitsch experience might, at least for most, be more negative.<sup>1</sup>

The view of my peer is presented and is also theoretically backed-up in Tomáš Kulka's book on kitsch, *Kitsch and Art* (Kulka, 2010), where Kulka writes that "(n)*ature itself cannot be kitsch, only its representations can*" (Kulka, 2010, p. 90). He does not claim that we couldn't experience nature as something kitschy, as he does not really focus on experience, but he talks about landscapes (among other themes) that are suitable for kitsch portrayal, e.g. ones that include full moon, beaches with palms or a deer in a forest clearing. I am quite convinced that he would have thought that my view in Norway would have been suitable for kitsch portrayal (Kulka, 2010, p. 26).

Kulka's work is a constitutive classic for our scholarly discourse on kitsch, but while most texts on kitsch today mention it, it is sometimes hard to build on it anymore, as it belongs to a historical period where kitsch used to be considered as something negative, pointing to bad quality<sup>2</sup>. Kitsch often just meant pretentious pseudo art, at the same time as scholars classified all consumer culture as kitsch. Lately 'kitsch' has increasingly referred to knick-knacks. (see e.g. Olalquiaga, 2003; for an overview see Ryynänen, 2008, 2018). Today it would also be hard to react to *Dallas* and *Dynasty* (Kulka, 2010, p. 16), or nearly any TV series as kitsch, as the concept has narrowed down and embodied itself into a spectrum of features like pink/gold, certain materials (porcelain), femininity-driven mass culture (Hello Kitty) and reactions towards fake elevation (for example 'luxury'). (We are lacking a taxonomy of kitsch.) Sometimes, today too, of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>I am thankful to Lisa Giombini for this witty comment on my paper.

 $<sup>^2</sup>$  It is worth noting, though, that Kulka respects the work of some marketplace painters if they have skills and ambition. See Kulka 2010, 7–8, p. 39.

course, kitsch is mentioned when something sugared, sentimental or just otherwise hard to digest critically is too hastily or in a false manner claimed to be art, but this is no longer the main focus of the concept.

For years Kulka's (and my peer's) comment on nature haunted me. I still think it is the wrong question/perspective. This is of course easier to see from the point of view of today's art world and aesthetic research, where processes have increasingly become more important than objects.

The history of the concept has not been straightforward. As Kulka was the first to really nail the connection of kitsch and tourism, his work has also, with respect to knick-knacks (which are analysed quite extensively in his work), been progressive and important for later research. It does not just land in the 'canon' of kitsch, but opens, in the footsteps of Eco (1997), who wrote for example about bad taste in choosing a tie for a suit, the door to everyday objects and culture. We still lack the final step here. Clement Greenberg, in his 1939 *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1986) has already mentioned fake tourist knick-knacks, focusing on the way they were presented as 'authentic', but at least today, truly, for (most) tourists the knick-knacks they buy have nothing to do with authenticity, as they are just plain knick-knacks and the buyer understands this [Dorfles (1969) and Calinescu (1987) generally follow Greenberg's path].

If Greenberg's attitude in 1939 that 'everything that lands between high modernism and folk art is kitsch' was all-encompassing, looking at the second wave of kitsch research, which starts with Umberto Eco's 1964 *La struttura del cattivo gusto* (Eco, 1997), and which ends with Kulka's work (Kulka, 2010; see also Kulka, 1988), the idea historical work of Calinescu, 1987, and the historical overview of Ryynänen, 2018), kitsch is no longer under attack that much, but is just under curious analysis and scrutiny.

The third wave already shows how the appreciation of kitsch, the way the concept is growing into being increasingly positive, is visible in the works of Celeste Olalquiaga (2002) and Odd Nerdrum and his pro kitsch art (and art history) community (Nerdrum et al., 2001; see also Anderson (2010) who discusses cheesiness, particularly kitsch, in a happy manner). C. E. Emmer first analysed its accent on female culture in 1998 (Emmer, 1998), and Robert Solomon discussed the cynical attitude intellectuals show towards sentimentality in 2004 (Solomon, 2004). We have also grown to understand how kitsch is applied as a concept and sensitivity differently in different countries, and how materials (e.g. porcelain) and colour (pink, gold) create reactions where the concepts pops into the mind (Ryynänen, 2018; Ryynänen – Somhegyi, 2018).

The last wave, I think, makes the question of nature as a source of kitsch experiences possible. If the earlier waves of thinking were about condemning kitsch or looking at it from the outside, the new way of thinking and experiencing (my students say they love kitsch) is looking at it as a cultural tradition, which we all take part in, whether we want to or not, at least in some way. Authors on this side of the millennium are no longer much interested in good/bad art (which for them is just good/bad art) or the non-legitimization of certain forms of e.g. (lowbrow) painting, when they discuss kitsch.

In a letter to Kulka, Milan Kundera recalls that when there were not many cars about, they were sometimes experienced as horrible, but in later times, with too many cars, people have no longer reacted, as cars have become a norm in culture – and then suggests that this might have happened to our relationship to kitsch (foreword to the Finnish edition; Kulka, 1997, p. 3). In some sense this might be true, but one must also bear in mind that the hierarchical way of looking belittlingly at people who had not acquired a taste based on the central European system of art (Kristeller, 1951), has become problematic both politically and culturally, as we understand the complicated class-, gender- and ethnicity-driven nature of the old art system (ibid.; see also e.g. Bourdieu, 1986).

It is noteworthy how many kitsch images we see all the time, i.e. images we react to, or could react to, as kitsch. They might be simply a part of the media, popular and mass cultured flood of visual culture we live in, but they make an affective difference following their cheesy, overtly sugary and sentimental nature. Adorno claims in his 1944 *Culture Industry* that the all-encompassing capitalist machinery works through an endless cultural hammering (on the subject), a flood of aesthetically corrupted culture, which in the end, through repetition, becomes an *a priori* for how people view beauty and art (Adorno, 1969). Guy Debord follows Adorno in his 1957 *Society of the Spectacle* (2000), where he sees images as the only late modern glue of the society. And, when one looks at Baudrillard's claim that it has become virtually impossible to separate images from the 'real' (seen outside the world of representations, i.e.) (Baudrillard, 1994), one has theoretically arrived at understanding that the story of the Norwegian mountains (coloured by the sunset) could be read as just one new example of this thread of critical theory. The topic also comes close to Samuel Weber's reflections on 9/11, where he shows how people talked and viewed the catastrophe by relating to its visual resemblance to catastrophe movies (Weber, 2013).

The way kitsch has somehow become a part of our cultural *a priori* to the extent that we can react to a natural landscape as we would encounter kitsch, is amazing. Repetition makes certain patterns generic. I recall my own arrival in the US for a term at Temple University Philadelphia in 2002, when I felt that I was in a movie as I saw a police car driving by the first time I went to the grocery store.

In Norway, the red and golden sun made the landscape look like a postcard and a travel advertisement. It was not an intellectual interpretation/reflection which led to this, but an immediate reaction. The interesting thing is that following this reaction, I/we entered a dialectical interpretation/experience, where I/we had to remind myself about the fact that this was a real natural landscape, not kitsch. This did not, in the end, change much in the experience. The experience owed itself to the kitschification (visual appropriation) of landscapes. (One must remember that our way of focusing on landscapes is, by its very nature, an artificial modern cultural product: Is this why it easily opens the backdoor for the impact of kitsch?)

It is maybe the same process which raises anger in the 'fans' of classical music, who become irritated when a piece by W. A. Mozart is used in a car, chocolate or SPA advertisement. What at first glance looks like elitism is perhaps a reaction to the same kind of kitschification which we already noted had happened with generic landscapes. If repeated too many times in the 'wrong' context, the composition gains a kitschy trace which also pops up in the experience at stake in the concert hall. Kitsch takes over the original experientially, at least to some extent.

It applies to the urban environment too. When I walk in Venice, I know that it is original, and I respect the work of the (European/Arabic) architects who created the glorious maze, but still, maybe partly following the tourist atmosphere, and even more following the endless repetition of images where the city is used as a 'romantic' icon, a 'real moment' at San Marco feels just awkward, plastic, and sugared.

In nature I have experienced this in Finnish Lapland, the High Tatras and Switzerland (the Alps). Kitsch just happens, suddenly, without an invitation, and it is hard not to note the reaction to it. While Kulka concentrates only on the objects that someone has created according to his/her low taste (or lack of understanding of craft/colours), Jay was, in his Norwegian keynote (already published earlier, see Jay, 1999), in the footsteps of Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 2008), worried about the way the positive attention, and through that the support to aesthetic experience outside art, could result in dangerous side-effects (like accepting certain economic or political phenomena following their enchanting aesthetic nature).

It is just that the experience is still there, whether scholars desire/accept it or not, and I think Jay erroneously thought that scholars would not be critical when they turned to these issues of politico-aesthetical pleasure [they are, as one can see e.g. in the later work of Carsten Friberg (2018) and Crispin Sartwell (2010)].

The issue of kitsch is of course (I am sure Jay would agree with me) less a question of danger than the 'looks' of fascism. But how did kitsch become a part of us and what does that entail? The consumer society sits deep in our subjectivity and our way of perceiving the world. What remains, I think, is to take a Benjaminian stance, to try to experience and to write about this experience faithfully (Benjamin, 2006), whether we liked the experiences or not, and so to make the critical remarks and analyses needed for a better understanding of the world.

Kitsch is something which does not (mostly) support our understanding of the deepest issues of life (of course sometimes a cheesy yoga poster can help us to navigate in our meditation), nor does it pave the way for a more democratic or ethical society, at least not in any simple manner. The fact that one might not appreciate a landscape as much as would be possible, following the reaction and experience of kitsch, is something worthy of our attention – as much as the fact that kitsch might also increase some people's interest in taking care of some environments more than others. In the same fashion, the way some of us want to protect (cute) cats and (cute) dogs and give them more rights than animals that are not as cute (or to the same extent visually consumed), is an issue close to the one at stake here.

The fact kitschy landscapes raise in some us negative reactions, in some of us positive – 'Look, Jerry, this is just like a postcard!' – is something we need to understand too. (Liberal) arts education might not be the best one to have in a 'kitsch happens' situation in nature. Besides basic perception, it is hard to reduce our taste, our personal historical experience and the traces of the images we have seen or learned to recognize. To understand what we are, we might need to redefine the old concept of the *Kitschmensch*, which used to refer to someone who had bad taste, but which could now mean someone who cannot look at a cheesy sunset without a reaction. We are of course all 'programmed' visually, not just by art, documentary footage and basic mass and media culture, but also by kitsch. We even react more to sentimentally kitschy war images and it is only then social media *really* cries for peace (see Ryynänen, 2019 on the Syrian war and its painful key kitsch images). This makes the findings we have gone through here also potentially a new opening for future discussions about ethics and visual culture, as our ideas on landscapes have already shown on their behalf. All this is, of course, just one echo of a trace which Kulka has left us. We owe him a lot.

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Max Ryynänen, PhD. Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture Espoo/ Finland max.ryynanen@aalto.fi

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/



# From Tomas Kulka on Kitsch and Art to Art as a Singular Rule

Doron Avital; doronavital@yahoo.com, Karolina Dolanská; karolina.dolanska@aauni.edu https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3634912

**Abstract:** The article takes as its starting point the work of Tomas Kulka on Kitsch and Art to further a philosophical move aiming at the very logical core of the question of art. In conclusion, the idea of Singular Rule is offered as capturing the defining logic of art. In so doing, the logical structure of a singular rule is uncovered and in that also the sense in which the idea of singular rule both explains and justifies the role that art plays in our life.

In his Kitsch and Art Tomas Kulka extends Karl Popper's refutation principle in science to the arts. He asks of a true work of art to be open to "refutation" by way of evaluating it against its own admissible alterations or variations. An admissible alteration according to Kulka is a change or a modification of the work that does not "shatter its basic perceptual gestalt". In considering alterations that are aesthetically better, worse or neutral with respect to the original picture, Kulka offers us a rational reconstruction of key aesthetics concepts such as unity, complexity and intensity. His reconstruction will show that a work of kitsch does not qualify as art in direct analogy to a proposition that cannot qualify as scientific if it is not (potentially) refutable. Kitsch cannot be "refuted" by any of its possible alterations as they are all of equal aesthetic value. This explains the aura of empty perfectionism that accompanies the experience of kitsch since the work of kitsch does not carry any promise for improvement nor does it show itself superior to any of its possible alterations.

Notwithstanding Kulka's novel analysis, its premise we must note is grounded in the work of art impressing on us a single basic perceptual gestalt with respect to which an alteration can qualify as admissible. But in acknowledging the possibility of a gestalt-switch or the fact that the work of art can impress on us a variety of mutually-exclusive perceptual gestalts, Kulka's analysis loses the logical anchor necessary for it to work. However, in what might look at first sight as an unrecoverable logical deficiency, we find an anchor to a novel analysis to the question of art. This is our analysis to the idea of art as a singular rule. Indeed, the concept of a singular rule - a rule onto itself which has exclusively itself as its own argument - must strike us as paradoxical. But in offering to reconstruct the work of art through the complementary concepts of background and figure - to match respectively the how and the what of the work - we are able to provide a structural resolution to the idea of singular rule as what defines art. In this we believe we deliver a definitive answer to the question of art.

Keywords: Tomas Kulka, Representation, Nelson Goodman, Kitch, Art.

#### Tomas Kulka on Kitsch and Art

Tomas Kulka's celebrated body of work on aesthetics has its logical groundings among other influences in the works of Karl Popper in the philosophy of science and Nelson Goodman on art and symbolic systems. We will revisit these two anchors to draw the philosophical move Kulka takes in his *Kitsch and Art* and use it to further a philosophical move of our own aiming at the very logical core of the question of art.

#### Kulka, Popper and Refutation

In Karl Popper's philosophy of science, we find his known refutation principle as answering to the old Induction problem replacing inductive corroboration as the engine of progress in science with refutation. But in extending Popper's refutation principle to art and art appreciation we must immediately feel the necessary logical tension. For refutation has its anchor in a propositional claim that is meaningful - or in Popper's more limited version "Scientific" - in as much that it can be refuted; that there is or there could be a propositional evidence that contradicts it. But if the analog to the scientific propositional claim is the work of art then in what fashion could we argue that it can be refuted?! Refuted by what? For sure not by rigid artistic rules say of composition or perspective since the history of art is also the history of the breaking up with old rules and setting anew grounds for new epochs of art that are governed by new rules and considerations.

It is therefore on the face of it an ambitious task that Tomas Kulka took upon himself in introducing Popper and his refutation principle of philosophy of science to the discussion on the logical underpinning of art and aesthetics.

What we would to like suggest in this short essay is that not only did Tomas Kulka put into important use the refutation principle in the discussion in art but that in extending his daring philosophical move further we may get closer to a better understanding of the logic of art and Art's role as social and cultural power functioning as an opposing force to the Sciences. From here also to the intimate connection between aesthetics and ethics the way can be shown to be short.

But what then can refute the work of art? Kulka's answer is simple: it itself. The work of art is set against itself as a standard. It is therefore can be said in a sense to refute itself. But how could this be done?

For this Kulka offers us to envision "variations" or "alterations" of the work of art that can be compared against the original work of art. He defines more closely what would count as an alteration in arguing that "*a change in a work only counts as an alteration if it does not shatter its basic perceptual gestalt*". He then invites us to evaluate the alterations or the versions against the unaltered work of art and classify them as better or worse from the perspective of aesthetics. He follows this with an ingenious rational reconstruction of core aesthetics predicates such as "unity", "complexity" and "intensity" to come up with a calculative formula that can capture our aesthetics evaluation of the work as a byproduct of the interplay between these three basic aesthetics predicates.

"Unity" for one is correlated with the number of alterations that damage the work of art minus alterations that improve it. In the end of the spectrum we may consider a work whose manifold of possible alterations only damage the aesthetic value of the work and in this its unity therefore will score the highest. "Unity" Kulka is quick to observe can truly deserve praises only if it does this against the "Complexity" of the work which in his presentation will be correlated with the sum total of all possible alterations of the work: the sum of the better, the worse and the neutral alterations; last ones are those that do not improve nor damage the work or our appreciation of it. "Intensity" will have an inverse correlation to the number of neutral alterations (+1 for technical reason) divided by the sum of alterations that do make a change, either for better or worse. This works nicely as a measure of redundancy. When for example the number of neutral alterations overshadows the number of "meaningful" alterations, alterations that are either better or worse, intensity of the work must suffer.

In offering his "formula", multiplying his three measures for "unity", "complexity" and "intensity", Kulka is of course careful to sideline criticism accusing him of offering "calculative machinery" for computing aesthetic value of works of art. He will label his analysis in the terminology of a "rational reconstruction" of these key aesthetics standards, an inquiry into the epistemology of art criticism as one of his followers put it. Kulka is also careful to distinguish "aesthetic value" from "artistic value", e.g. as pertains to Les Demoiselles d'Avignon of Picasso some and perhaps Tomas Kulka himself may argue that it is a work of art that is revolutionary in magnitude and carries great and challenging "artistic value" and yet one that may score less on "aesthetic value".

Kulka rational reconstruction of aesthetics value is extremely helpful when we look at the question of Kitsch. Kitsch in this analysis is a work which provides for no "meaningful" alterations, neither better nor worse, all its alterations are neutral and therefore they can replace the original work to no effect. It is therefore categorically different from art, bad or good, since a work art must carry a promise. Its constitution, by way



of opening before us its possible alterations, introduces ways to improve on the original work. Good or bad it sincerely aims at being a good work of art and therefore must carry with it the very possibility of being "refuted" and consequently improved upon. Kitsch does not present itself to this possible test. It cannot be refuted. It is therefore no art in direct analogy to propositional claim rendered not scientific by Popper as it offers itself to no possible evidential refutation.

# Kulka, Wittgenstein, Goodman and Representation

As we follow the analogy of refutability from Science to Art it is inviting to further the analogy and equate the case of propositions of analytic or tautological nature with the case of Kitsch. The former cannot be rendered scientific according to Popper as they offer themselves to no possible evidential refutation. This for sure is a move with its own nest of difficulties, from how to address certain formulations of Evolution Theory to scientific counterfactuals where the antecedent is always false; consider according to Newton the fate of an object set in motion in the presence of no friction. But this is not in our main line of reasoning here. What could be interesting for us here is to move with Ludwig Wittgenstein from the question of propositions qualifying as scientific to propositions qualifying as having meaning or being meaningful to start with.

It accords well with Wittgenstein to consider only propositions capable of being negated as meaningful. As in refutability in Popper, here only that which can be negated can be meaningfully asserted. This the exact sense in which the Metre in Paris setting the standard for the length of one Metre can neither be said to be of one metre in length nor that it is not.<sup>1</sup> The proposition asserting nonetheless that the Metre in Paris is one metre in length is a "grammatical proposition" or "fact of meaning" as some would have it and therefore has only the facade of a meaningful proposition. Pseudo proposition that it is, it can neither be asserted nor negated. The Metre in Paris cannot be asserted as having satisfied its own standard (of length), since, as it were, the assertion to this effect cannot be negated.<sup>2</sup> In analogy, revisiting Kitsch as pseudo art, as having only the facade of a work of art works well with Kulka's philosophical move. Kitsch as it were cannot be negated, it is therefore not an artistic assertion; it is not art.

Before we continue we should touch briefly on the second major influence on the work of Tomas Kulka and this is the philosophy of Nelson Goodman. Nelson Goodman is known for his paradox of "Grue" which strengthens the futility of looking for corroborative or probabilistic mechanism answering to the problem of Induction - to which Popper offers his refutation principle. Goodman inquired equally well into questions of philosophy of science, such was his interest, for example, in counterfactuals, as well as into the question of art and aesthetics. The subject of symbolic systems and the relation of representation is key to his thought. Realism he considered is but the acceptance of what he labeled "entrenched conventions" of representation and in many respects though art according to him was strictly speaking not a language he did analyze the question of art from the perspective of language and symbolic systems as the title of his prominent book, *Languages of Art*, must indicate. The question that I think is relevant to our discussion here is whether art is representational or referential, a question to which Goodman answers in the affirmative. Our use here in "representation" or "representational" is looser in definition than that of Goodman's i.e. we use

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "There is one thing of which one can say neither that it is one metre long, nor that it is not one metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris.—But this is, of course, not to ascribe any extraordinary property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the language-game of measuring with a metre-rule" (Wittgenstein, 1953, § 50).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For an in-depth inquiry into the question of the Metre in Paris, see Avital (2008, pp. 318–339).

"representational" as simply: seeking to portray an object or aiming at a subject matter or an outer aim.<sup>3</sup> We will further suggest that it would be instructive to our case to model the use in the term "object" on the basic distinction of the "what" and the "how" and offer to approach the work of art through what is it about or is its message if we wish, and the way, the "how" through which the "what" is being delivered.

For Kulka's philosophical move to work he had to anchor the possibility of variations or alterations in what he labeled a "perceptual gestalt". This is the *constant* with respect to which we could render alterations as better, worse or neutral. In this respect, his move is modeled on the distinction between the "what" and the "how" of the work of art. Also, in admitting the distinction, it should be clear that we cite with Goodman that art is representational or referential. In Kulka's analysis the "what" *is the perceptual gestalt* of the work, each alteration is a possible "how" that in turn when coupled with the constant "what" creates a version than can be rendered better, worse or neutral with respect to the original picture.

It should be noted that there is something very tempting in the attempt to evaluate the work of art against as it were its possibilities. We may envision the artist herself grappling as she works through the creation process with competing venues of how to proceed. We could envision the preliminary sketches, the layers erased to pave way to new versions, and we could as experts sometimes do when they examine classical works of art, try to reverse engineer, as it were, the working of the artist, thereby gaining a deeper insight into the final outcome as it is presented against what was optional in the creative process. All these variations could support a better aesthetics evaluation. They can enable us to read or see the picture through new venues as if they were lenses allowing us to discover hidden potential. In fact, it is this intuition that Kulka utilizes in offering his rational reconstruction of key aesthetics standards. But what is important to the case we are going to make next is to understand that Kulka's move can only be evaluated against the fashion in which variations are deemed admissible and that in his analysis this is done by fixing a single "perceptual gestalt" as constant; in our terminology, as the "what" of the work of art.

But in insisting on a single, if you wish, "perceptual gestalt" as the "what" or technically as a constant with respect to which variations are defined and then evaluated we forget that the work of art may be approached through many different venues, ways of seeing or approaching the work, much as a poem can be decoded through different semantic trajectories. Even by way of presentation, with each time a poem is either read out loud, read softly or sang, we may anticipate that its poetic gestalt will impress us differently.

To make this point clear we may consider the fashion in which mutually exclusive "perceptual gestalts" can compete on our visual attention. This becomes evident when we observe the following famous duck-rabbit (fig. 1) that not accidentally figures center stage with the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. For what plays "what" here, what plays "how" is arbitrary or rests on what visually impresses us first and is completely open for visual rotation or exchange.



Fig. 1: duck-rabbit

What we have in this gestalt scheme are two pictures, two

"perceptual gestalts" that can now compete on being the (original) picture. This in turn may be shown to be at work at any traditional picture where the gestalt switch may be less evident. We could model pictures on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Nelson Goodman's terminology of representation, as Tomas Kulka once pointed out to me, is much more refined: for him, all art is referential, although it might be not representational. Such is the case regarding the functions of expression and exemplification which, according to Goodman, are species of non-denotational reference and not of representation.



the distinction between figure and background, the first plays "what", the second plays "how"; gestalt switch will be at work when they switch roles.

Consider for a moment a picture of a fully-fledged, eighteenth century aristocrat proudly standing before a landscape view featuring his estate. Here we could easily discern the two elements, background and figure, and consider a gestalt rotation: we could read the picture perhaps untraditionally as a landscape picture, to which a proud aristocrat serves as background. We can suggest the term "diagonalization" to this rotation of roles. While it rarely crosses our mind to "diagonalize" traditional pictures, we may find it hard to resist "diagonalization" in the case of the duck-rabbit. In both cases the two readings of the pictures are mutually exclusive, you can switch from one "diagonalized" reading to the other but cannot see them both all at the same time.

Back now to Kulka's analysis: point in question is the identity criterion for what would count as the "same" picture. For example, in our picture of the proud aristocrat, we may replace the landscape with some other background, for instance, some velvet curtains from the gentleman's estate. After this change, we may make the case that this is the "same" picture which had undergone an alteration; that the perceptual gestalt stayed intact. Had we kept the original landscape and replaced the aristocrat with his wife, standing proudly etc. we would feel unease in making the same claim. We would probably suggest that we are presented here with two different pictures that share the same landscape as background.

If you envision that whatever plays figure functions as constant, such that if it is modified the picture loses its identity, then the only possibly admissible alterations are these that modify the background. We could then ask what modifications of the background that do not alter the picture as a whole - since if figure is yellow circle, background modified to yellow will not work - are better or worse or neutral in the fashion that Kulka suggests.

It is important however to note that from the perspective of logic as it were, we are free to choose what plays figure and therefore is constant and what plays background and hence could be modified or altered. This free play to choose among competing perceptual gestalts might at first sight look damaging to the analysis that Kulka offers us. But next we will show that what might look as deficiency or weakness in Kulka's analysis can be transformed into a powerful model for what art is. This is our analysis to art as a singular rule.

# Art as a Singular Rule<sup>4</sup>

The very idea of a singular rule carries with it the flavor of a paradox. <sup>5</sup> It is a rule whose only instantiation is it itself. It can admit as an argument only itself and what it prescribes as a rule, the condition it asks itself to satisfy is not grounded in any prior condition. It is both the condition and the object that satisfies it as a condition. We can go back to Immanuel Kant and his *Critique of Judgment* where we can encounter his analysis of the predication of beauty. We learn that "\_\_is Beautiful" does not behave as general predicates do, say, predicates as "\_is Rolling" or "\_is the End". The latter can figure in propositions expressed by sentences such as: "The stone is rolling" or "This is the end". In these propositions the meaning of the predicate as a condition can be grasped prior or independently of the instantiation of the argument; for we can grasp what *is*-*Rolling* or *is-the-End* are prior to the encounter with the *Stone* or with whatever *This* refers to in the context in which it is being used. Not so with "\_is Beautiful". Here the predication is indexical or in Kantian fashion "*with no concept antecedent to the given intuition*" (Kant, 2007, s. 333). No concept here means no general concept

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The reader that would like to explore the subject in a better detailed fashion is invited to read my study (Avital, 2007).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For a more detailed inquiry into the logic of Singular Rule see, Avital (2007, pp. 20 – 37).

or rule that we could grasp its meaning independently or prior to encounter with the object playing argument to the rule.

But before getting entangled with singular rule we may ask first how can a work of art be a rule or prescribe a rule to which it itself can be subjected as an argument?

To this question, Kulka offers us a rather easy venue. In following his analysis, we can transform works of art into rules. By fixing the "perceptual gestalt" constant - in our terminology, that is the "what" of the work - we design a rule that takes as arguments all possible variations of the work and admit only variations that keep the gestalt intact. Surely the unaltered work itself is such a variation and can function therefore as an argument. Furthermore, it is easy to see that it must be admitted as falling under itself as a rule, since it clearly does not refute its own gestalt. Next we can compare the admissible versions with respect to the question of whether they improve, damage or stay neutral with respect to the original picture.



Fig. 2: Mosaic by M. C. Escher

But the difficulty arises as we pointed in previous section when the work of art is open to different or competing visual readings as is in the case of a gestalt switch. How can we then apply the idea of the work of art as a rule?

Let us then revisit the phenomenon of gestalt switch. This time with the following Mosaic by M. C. Escher (fig. 2).

The Mosaic here is composed of two types of "figures": white figures and black figures. The two types exclude each other; for you cannot see them both all at the same time.<sup>6</sup> They are both capable of playing either one of the two roles, that of figure or background. When combined, they complete each other and makeup for a picture. The point here is to consider the picture as one unity rather than a mere concatenation of components. We may ask then when do two things, an element for figure, an element for background, complete each other to form a single unified whole, in this case a picture? The answer carries a transcendental twist: for if it were not for the intrinsic tension - that each of the elements is capable of playing either figure or background, even though both cannot play the same role at the same time - that we would end up with two distinct entities rather than a single unified picture.

The Mosaic here as in duck-rabbit forces us to acknowledge the possibility of switch in roles. Since if whitefigures play "what" or "figure", black-figures are forced to the background, they become as it were transparent. This, however, is not to say that they vanish - for assume white-figures as background and blackfigures miraculously come back into the foreground; they now play "what" or "figure" while white-figures in background play now the "how"; the medium if we wish through which the presentation of the former figures is made possible.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The notion of modality that is introduced in the expression: "you cannot see them both all at the same time" is of a transcendental nature, i.e. if one insists that she does see "them" both, all at the same time, we will have to conclude that she does not master what are the "them" in question. Similarly, in the case of an agent who insists that she encountered an object that is both black and white all over, we will conclude that she does not master the terms black and white.



We are now set to introduce the structure of Singular Rule. To follow Kulka we could assume now a rule which takes as its arguments the possible variations of the picture. The rule is defined as with Kulka: admit a variation if it does not interfere with perceptual gestalt. We follow our analysis and equate here "perceptual gestalt" with what plays figure in the picture. Figure stays intact plays the criterion for the picture not losing its identity. Let us then in Mosaic of Escher fix white-figures as figure or constant. White-figures are constant, we hereby define a rule that admits variations of the original picture with different backgrounds than that of the black-figures, e.g. ones that figure monochromatic color as background as long perhaps the color is not white. We could then switch roles and fix black-figures as a constant defining now a rule that admits as its instantiations variations with different backgrounds than that of white-figures, e.g. from monochromatic colors perhaps with the exclusion of black to lovely blue skies or what have you.

Since there is no priority to either one of the elements, it would seem at first sight that we are unable to follow Kulka and apply his aesthetic evaluation analysis. The switch in roles would result in the two rules blocking admissible variations of each other. To conform with the picture or its perceptual gestalt staying intact possible variations offered by the two rules cancel each other out.

But a moment of reflection shows us a new prospect: for what we have encountered here is the schematic structure of a singular rule. The two possible rules, each fixing one of the elements as a constant, exhibit here the logical structure of a singular rule. Preserving the identity of the picture mandates both that the white-figures be constant, call it the white rule, and that the black-figures be constant, call it the black rule. It is only in the working in tandem of the two competing yet completing rules that the identity of the picture is secured.

In fact, when we, as observers, switch between the two possible, diagonal readings of Escher's Mosaic, we vacillate between seeing the picture as the manifestation of one or the other of the two corresponding rules. Seeing the picture as produced by one of the rules, the second rule unfolds as the former unique extension and vice versa. This is what we mean by a singular rule: that it is both the rule and its unique extension.

Escher's Mosaic is an impressive illustration for what it means for something to be a singular rule. This can be phrased in the terminology of the "what" and the "how". By keeping the "what" constant, we define a rule which takes as arguments the different ways by which the same "what" may be achieved. Assume that the work of art is a singular rule, then there is only one, unique way that satisfies this rule. This structure is completely symmetric, i.e. we can keep the "how" constant, define a rule, and take the "what" as its unique extension. But this, in final analysis, puts the "what" and "how" on an even plane. These are not different metaphysical categories. For whatever we consider constant comes over as the "what", thus we form a rule and present the "how" as the unique extension of this rule.

This is then what we mean by the work of art as a singular rule and it is something that also offers us a better understanding of the discussion we briefly mentioned in the context of Nelson Goodman that concerns the question of whether art is representational. Art is representational in the sense that it does relate to an "object", in the loose sense we offered in which its makeup must be that of the concatenation of "what" and "how" that are uniquely and interchangeable tailored to each other.

In what is said here about singular rule we must be echoing a basic intuition we all share. That art is about the unique tailoring of form and content, of the what and the how. For what is a great poem if not a message delivered in a fashion tailored to this exact effect, such that the message could not have been delivered in no other way and that this very vehicle of delivery is only suited to deliver this message and no other.

# **Art Appreciation**

Now that we outlined the logic of singular rule I would like to follow Tomas Kulka and suggest in the matter of art appreciation that the work of art must both set the standard for its evaluation and present itself as a candidate for the fulfillment of this standard. For this we should transform the idea of a singular rule into a normative demand. In other words, the work of art should set itself as a singular rule and the extent to which it succeeds in achieving this goal would determine whether and to what extent it is worthy of our appreciation.

In fact, what we ask ourselves as we examine the work is how well does the work withstand the challenge of being both its own rule and its unique extension?

In this we are back to Popper refutation principle as Kulka utilizes it in aesthetics. We look to refute the work by setting it as it were against itself. The vehicle here as it is with Kulka is in the attempts to find admissible variations to the work since if there is an adequate variation, we know that something else besides the work itself falls under the extension of the work as a rule, i.e. the work has failed the test of singular rule.

However, by using the general idea that Kulka suggests, we can think in terms of a measure that tells us how close the work is to its "ideal": to it being a singular rule. This can be done via attempts to alter the work: we fix a (non-trivial)<sup>7</sup> feature of the work as constant, thereby introducing a rule, and we can then examine the extent to which this rule may take as an instantiation something other than the work itself. The extent in which we will value the work will be determined by how limited we are in our attempts to locate such occurrences of the work's own rule.

In fact, the case of Kitsch may get similar treatment like in Kulka since Kitsch defies the very idea of the unique tailoring of what and how and in this does not show any sincere inclination to comply with singular rule. As such its verdict will be as in Kulka. In a similar fashion art that is merely imitative can also be said to refuse the duality of what and how which is constitutive to singular rule and therefore will earn similar condemnation akin to the notorious verdict Plato assigned to the Arts, as a useless third degree remote from the truth type of imitation.

We could further illustrate by comparing the work of art to a game. The variations of the work we try to introduce in our attempt as it were to refute the work are our moves in a game whose rules are constituted by the work itself. The mark of good art is that it is a good and stubborn opponent in the very game that it sets. This explains our sense of being mesmerized or captivated when we are confronted with great works of art. There, we are simply seduced into playing a game where we are sure to be defeated. A work of art then is an invitation to a game. The observer, who enters the game, obeys its rules, only to find himself acknowledging the work as the superior player. In refusing defeat, the observer might re-enter the game from another perspective, following a different set of rules, only, if this is indeed good art, to surrender once again.

This is the exact sense in which Escher's mosaic exemplifies our case so well. It displays exactly this kind of a gaming structure however in a simplified and schematic version. The observer enters the game through either of the figures, the whites or the blacks, only to affirm the move of introducing the opposed figures as a winning move in the game.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In Non-Trivial feature we mean a feature that impresses on us a gestalt-like view of the work, e.g. fixing the artist's signature as a constant will not do.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Escher's picture indeed displays this structure, but is it art? Formulating an answer to that, we might find ourselves caught between two conflicting intuitions. On the one hand, we can, as we do in this paper, put the picture into words, i.e. coming up with adequate linguistic variation of the picture. This perhaps hints that this is a case of Kitsch. On the



That the work of art be a singular rule - that it be its own rule and its own unique instantiation - is therefore our yardstick for determining what qualifies as art. To the extent that a work sincerely attempts to be a singular rule, it qualifies as a work of art, worthy of our respect. To the extent that a work either sets a problem which is not its own or recites an answer already given, it is not a singular rule nor a sincere attempt to be one, and, thus, is not a work of art. If it nevertheless assumes this status, it is worthy of condemnation. A work of art that is a singular rule, setting its unique problem and exclusively solving it, is the mark of genius.

# Art and Science, Aesthetics and Ethics

The work of art as a singular rule implies that the work of art is unique. It is important to note, however, the distinction between a thing being unique and a thing being a particular. A particular object in and of itself does not imply that the object is unique. We tend to think of particulars as if they were our prime examples for the application of the idea of uniqueness. But if we follow this line of reasoning, we expose our analysis to the objection that particulars qua being unique are exemplification of singular rules, and therefore qualify as works of art. The point of our analysis, however, is rather reversed: we need a grasp of the structure of singular rule in order to grasp the true meaning of uniqueness.

We might therefore say that it is Art, qua being a singular rule, which tells us what uniqueness is. And hence a particular, if it does not exhibit the structure of singular rule, is simply not (genuinely) unique. Consider a particular chair: this chair is not a singular rule, since many other objects (chairs) can achieve "what it does" i.e. all such objects achieve the same thing - they can all serve the purpose of sitting. The circumstance under which we nonetheless acknowledge "a chair" to be unique must therefore be only the circumstance when it exhibits singular rule. In this case, we may say that this object is genuinely unique, since under this condition, we note that the object escapes the general classification as a chair - or any other general concept we may offer as a heading under which this object may fall.

The point about singular rules is that their structure exhibits the duality of figure and background or that of the "what" and the "how". This structure, as we have shown, entails that the "how" and the "what" are interchangeable. And hence the "how", the way in which the genuinely unique chair-like object serves its purpose, would equally well function as the "what" i.e. what this object does or serves. In switching the roles of "what" and "how" for this object, we would see it no longer as a chair, but rather as something else, that is, something new would be brought up to the surface or to the foreground - by way, let us say, of utilizing the chair-like-qualities of this object. In such a case, the "chair" would rightfully make the case for its being unique and hence we would acknowledge it as a work of art.

I think it is only appropriate to introduce here two beautiful art works. Two chair-like singular rules: one is Duchamp's (fig. 3) on the left and the other is Mona Hatoum's on the right (fig. 4). The analysis we offered of singular rules - as well as the interplay of figure and background - is vividly present in both works. In Duchamp the chair competes-with and completes-the the bicycles' wheel and with Hatoum we have the wheelchair and the hospital-food-tray association communicate in a similar fashion.

other hand, we clearly feel that there is something unique and singular about this work. Thus, I think that Escher's picture is neither Kitsch nor a work of art (nor a work of science, as some would suggest). Without arguing any further, I would suggest it belongs to the domain of Philosophy.



Fig. 3: Marcel Duchamp



Fig. 4: Mona Hatoum

The point about particulars we should note is that they fall under general concepts whose extensions have as members potentially and as a matter of fact more than one particular. This says of a particular which is not singular rule that it does not present a real case of uniqueness. Science, for example, treats all particulars as falling under non-singular concepts and in this way it obliterates their claim for uniqueness. We could, for sure, resist this over sweeping tendency towards generalization, the subjecting as it were of nature and our immediate surroundings to our concepts and needs, e.g. we may consider an element of our surrounding or of nature unique, as something that does not fall under a concept. But in so doing, in considering for example the scenic view of a landscape unique and inimitable, we actually treat it as a singular rule, that is, we treat it as art. This is where nature presents itself as art, as an ideal or as a model for what art is or should be about. This introduces art's role in society as a constant reminder of nature's uniqueness and hence also as a reminder of the uniqueness of our lives. In that art presents itself as a counterforce against social institutions like the sciences, whose task can be viewed as that of the enslavement of nature to our concepts and pragmatic needs. This is the exact sense in which we could - without falling into a cliché - say that it is art that sets nature and therefore us free.

This also presents the real significance of art and art sensibility and education to our lives, since it may be viewed as the sensibility required for us to be able to observe uniqueness, against a background - science and the practicality of life - that seems to force on us a world view, within its frame genuine uniqueness has little role to play. Here also, we must note, lies the intimate bond between ethics and aesthetics, since the ethical dilemma must also be conceived as a singular scenario that escapes a labeling under general headings or concepts.

In conclusion, we may say that the idea of singular rule offers us also an insight into the ways in which diverse concepts and social forces are at work together, completing and making sense of each other. In center place, as was hinted in these concluding remarks, is the quintessential opposition between the sciences and the arts, as given in terms of the enslavement of nature versus the setting free of nature; as well as the interplay between the ideas of freedom, genuine uniqueness and the question of the meaning of art as well as of life.



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Dr. Doron Avital Tel Aviv University The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas Tel Aviv/Israel doronavital@yahoo.com

Mgr. Karolina Dolanská, Ph.D. Anglo – American University Visual Art Studies Prague/Czech Republic karolina.dolanska@aauni.edu

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# Nestrukturní verze variační metody – explanační slabost Gestaltu, meze imaginace a odmítnutí Jiného

Vlastimil Zuska; vlastimil.zuska@ff.cuni.cz, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3595484

**Abstract:** The article attempts to critically reconsider some of the central motives of Tomáš Kulka's aesthetics, especially his use of the term Gestalt and his concept of versions and alterations. In addition to his own objections, the author focuses on criticism of the above-mentioned parts of Kulka's theory from the perspective of Czech structuralism (Mukařovský) and phenomenology (Husserl).

Keywords: Tomáš Kulka, analytical aesthetics, aesthetic evaluation, artistic criticism, Gestalt.

Ve své poslední, sumarizující a syntetizující monografii nazvané Umění a jeho hodnoty. Logika umělecké kritiky nabízí Tomáš Kulka vybroušený přehled a domyšlený celek svých, někdy poněkud provokativních teorií, přesto ve většině případů "věrných" východiskům (a limitům) analytické filosofie a analytické estetiky (Kulka, 2019). Právě ona "nadstavba" nad běžnými kánony a opakujícími se prezentacemi analytických tezí skýtá pozornějšímu čtenáři škálu inspirací a provokuje domýšlení konsekvencí i puzení k "dekonstrukci" argumentační výstavby a zejména jejích východisek. Zvolím jako *pars pro toto* krátkou, třetí kapitolu druhé části knihy, která představuje jeden z pilířů Kulkovy komplexní teorie estetického soudu a soudu o uměleckých hodnotách: *Verze a alterace*.

Kulka zde jasně vymezuje dále používané pojmy: "verze" tedy není malířské či jiné dílo s obdobným či totožným námětem (jako jsou, příklad autora, dva obrazy Paula Cézanna *Hráči karel*), ale alternativa k témuž individuálnímu dílu ve smyslu "nerealizované možnosti". Nerealizovaná možnost neboli alternativa je pak výsledkem alterace neboli úpravy. Přeskočíme-li na chvíli do následující kapitoly, probíhá tato úprava pochopitelně v imaginaci hodnotícího diváka<sup>1</sup>, který pak ve svém estetickém soudu srovnává vizuálně prezentovanou malbu s alternativou, vytvořenou v jeho imaginaci. Zde narážíme na první, vnitřní rozpor celého, postupně odhalovaného procesu estetického soudu. Jeden člen komparace je tvořen vizuálně přítomnou malbou, tedy je fundován aktuální percepcí, druhý člen (verze) je imaginární, tedy mentální představa-konstrukt. Nesrovnávali bychom tedy na stejné úrovni mentálního zpracování a taková komparace by od počátku trpěla nerovnováhou a byla by vlastně "nespravedlivá" ve smyslu omezené produktivity. Tato nerovnováha je způsobena nepřipuštěním existence estetického objektu jako mentálního konstruktu v mysli diváka, což je jedno z dogmat (tedy ono nepřipuštění) první fáze analytické estetiky (v hrubém zjednodušení "dickieovské"). Ale, uznaným faktem jak psychology a filozofy percepce, včetně současné neurofilozofie a kognitivních neurověd, je selektivita percepce, tedy výběr pouze části ze stimulujících prvků percepčního pole a na tomto výběru založená, resp. jimi potvrzovaná percepční

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Hezký příklad románového ztvárnění reálné, tedy vizuálně vnímatelné alterace najdeme v dětské knize Eduarda Petišky *Birlibán*, kde hlavní hrdina usoudí, že ilustrace v jeho pohádkové knížce potřebuje "vylepšit" a skončí počáranou zničenou stránkou a obavou z trestu (Petiška, 1959). Podobný osud čeká i obraz v Balzacově *Neznámém arcidile*, ale najdeme i úspěšné reálné alterace klasických děl (ve formě reprodukcí) v pozdní tvorbě slovenského malíře Rudolfa Filly či Reného Magritta.



hypotéza vedoucí ke konstituci mentální reprezentace "vnějších" objektů. To, že mentální reprezentace se nebuduje z prvků směrem k celku, ale naopak od předchůdného celku, je zjištění jak Gestalt psychologie z 20. let minulého století, tak i současných výzkumů tzv. mikrogeneze vizuálního obrazu. K pojmu Gestalt – i v Kulkově užití – se ještě vrátíme, jak ostatně napovídá i název této studie.

V závislosti na zaměření diváka, přesněji jím zaujatém postoji<sup>2</sup>, pak probíhá tato selekce a konstituce. Srovnávání mentálních reprezentací pak je již principiálně možné a legitimní. Kulka ovšem postuluje, jako bázi alterací, "mimoestetický percepční Gestalt", tedy obraz "čistě jako zobrazení", tedy, dodejme, jako čistou, tj. transparentní reprezentaci, kde jde pouze o ono "co" (je zobrazeno) a ani v nejmenším o to "jak" (o což jde jinak v umění především). Pojem značně problematický, protože – pokud vůbec – tak pouze obrovským vzepětím vůle a velmi násilnou redukcí lze vytvořit percepční Gestalt, který nezahrnuje také estetické nebo potenciálně estetické vlastnosti, resp. vztahy typu barvených kontrastů či harmonií, právě tvarové kvality (srov. tzv. "dobrý tvar" gestaltpsychologů). Nelze tedy zobrazit "něco", aniž by toto zobrazení nezahrnovalo ono "jak". Přesuny, akcenty, fixace pozornosti, postojové změny atp. mohou jenom posunout váhu toho či onoho pólu celé situace, ale zrušit inherentní povahu percepčního objektu jako konkrétního zobrazení *určitým způsobem* nedokážou.

Další problematickou záležitostí, která vytrvává v dogmatičtěji pojaté analytické estetice je rozlišení na mimoestetické a estetické vlastnosti. Navíc je třeba vyjasnit, čeho vlastnosti to jsou: fyzického objektu, objektu percepce tedy vnímaného objektu, mentální reprezentace, a tedy estetického objektu ve smyslu fenomenologické, recepční či strukturalistické estetiky? Příklady non-estetických vlastností, které uvádí například Frank Sibley – velký, kulatý, zelený, pomalý atd. – (Sibley, 2006, s. 1) je obtížné vnímat v přirozeném, žitém světě (tzn. *Umweltu*, slovy jednoho ze zakladatelů gestaltpsychologie Kurta Koffky, kterého Kulka cituje ve sledované kapitole), aniž bychom současně nevnímali i vlastnosti jiné. Snadno si představíme estetický objekt, jehož relevantními vlastnostmi, tedy podílejícími se na objektovém pólu procesu estetického prožitku je právě kulatost, zelená, relativní velikost atp. Ale podívejme se krátce na sám pojem Gestalt, jeho genezi a pojetí u jeho tvůrců.

První rozpor s implikací Kulkovy teze, podle níž "základní percepční Gestalt určuje relativní identitu díla", která mimo jiné implikuje, že takový Gestalt je jediný, který vizuální pole či percepční perimetr, případně můžeme říci fyzický nosič/báze výtvarného uměleckého díla poskytuje, je *jeden*, nabízí bohatý materiál Gestalt psychologie. Očividný příklad tzv. reverzibilní figury. Neckarova krychle, Schroedrovo schodiště, Kachna-králík (kterou/kterého Ludwig Wittgenstein převzal od Josepha Jastrowa) a celá řada dalších, včetně vlastních uměleckých děl typu *Trhu na otroky se zjevením Voltairory busty* od Salvadora Dalího nebo prací Mauritse Cornelise Eschera, jehož díla jsou co do svého účinku a smyslu založená právě na oscilaci mezi Figurou a pozadím. Kde budeme hledat u těchto děl základní percepční gestalt? Wittgenstein v této souvislosti zavádí pojem *seeing-as (vidění-jako*, např. jako kachnu nebo jako králíka), přičemž jde o totožnou kresbu, – jedna báze, dva Gestalty (Wittgenstein, 1993, s. 246). Richard Wollheim dále upřesňuje zjemněním a zavádí pojem *seeing-in*, – vidět něco v něčem, přičemž toto "něco" nemusí tvořit figuru ve smyslu Gestaltpsychologie (Wollheim, 1980). Opět je zde přesah za "základní percepční gestalt", stejně jako právě zmíněná Figura, která je pro gestaltpsychology neodlučitelná od pozadí. Což je poněkud v rozporu s konceptem "základního percepčního Gestaltu", jednak pro zanedbání role pozadí v celkové

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Estetický postoj" je další konceptuální "červený hadr" pro býka rané analytické estetiky. Ale i takový skalní analytik jako Jerrold Levinson je nakonec nucen jeho existenci připustit: "[…] z mého pohledu není pojem estetického postoje ani zdaleka prázdný a může hrát roli při určení estetického prožitku jako druhu prožitku objektu, který minimálně typicky nastává při zaujetí takového postoje vůči objektu nebo vůči vlastní interakci s ním" (Levinson, 2016, s. 29).

struktuře obrazu (např. pozadí Mona Lisy je zásadní pro celkové vyznění/působení obrazu). Pojem "základního percepčního Gestaltu" by obstál nanejvýš například u policejního identikitu, ale u uměleckého díla sotva. V této souvislosti se snadno vynoří i diktum Paula Kleea, podle něhož "všechny části díla musí pracovat". Ale i kdybychom použití pojmu Gestalt modifikovali a prohloubili, pořád bude vykazovat zásadní deficit, na který, jak si ukážeme dále, upozornil Jan Mukařovský.

Gestalt je pro Mukařovského typ celku, uzavřeného celku, který "kromě vlastností, daných částmi, má ještě celkovou "vlastnost tvarovou" (Mukařovský, 1971, s. 90). Struktura, jako typ celku, pro umělecké dílo co do explanační síly jeho významu i ontologického statutu právě silnější nežli uzavřený celek Gestaltu, je hierarchická, tzn., obsahuje složky podřízené a nadřazené a její celkovost se neprojevuje jako Gestaltquatität, ale jako souvztažnost složek. Souvztažnost složek ovšem implikuje esenciální víceznačnost vnímaného celku, tedy rozhodně žádný "základní percepční gestalt", ale množinu "konkretizací" (R. Ingarden), "percepčních objektů" (S. C. Pepper) či adekvátních interpretací. Mukařovský dále dovozuje, že "vzájemné vztahy ve struktuře umělecké jsou do značné míry určovány tím, co předcházelo, živou uměleckou tradicí" (Mukařovský, 1971, s. 91). Opět jde o mohutný přesah "základního percepčního Gestaltu", který ovšem Kulka v nejlepší tradici britského formalismu počátku 20. století (C. Bell) neuvažuje. Ale Mukařovský dočasně abstrahuje od umělecké tradice a analyzuje "jediné umělecké dílo". Zaměřuje se při tom nikoliv na hierarchii, tedy na odstupňování jejich vztahů, ale na jejich kvalitu. "Strukturní vztahy pak mohou být dvojího druhu - kladné a záporné, mohou se tedy jevit jako soulady nebo jako rozpory." Rozpor je pak pociťován jako nesounáležitost, "doprovázená pocitem nezvyklosti, ba nelibosti" (Mukařovský, 1971, s. 91). "Také rozpory jsou činitelem v umělecké struktuře, činitelem diferencujícím a individualizujícím. Čím méně má umělecká struktura vnitřních rozporů, tím méně individuální bude, tím více se bude blížit obecné, neosobní konvenci" (s. 91). Přesně tento faktor se pak projevuje, resp. nereflektovaná tendence k jeho eliminaci, v Kulkově verzi variační metody, na kterou se následně zaměříme.

Kulkův model hodnocení uměleckých děl vychází z předpokladu, že "*při estetickém posuzování neporovnáváme dané dílo s jinými uměleckými díly, nýbrž s jeho verzemi, na něž můžeme pohlížet také jako na jeho vlastní nerealizované možnosti<sup>xe</sup> (Kulka, 2019, s. 88). Tyto verze pak pochopitelně nevytváří tvůrce sám, ale recipient/divák. Pomineme tedy koncepty intertextuality (J. Kristeva), artworldu (A. Danto), uměleckého pole (P. Bourdieu) i struktury v Mukařovského smyslu a pro účely argumentace přijmeme tuto premisu, třebaže, obávám se, množina všech aktuálních i potenciálních recipientů výtvarných uměleckých děl obsahuje minimální počet těchto modelových diváků, soukromý tip autora je, že maximálně jednoho. Nejde jen o dojem, ale například i o výstupy současné neuroestetiky. Ale dobře, není sice nikde vysvětleno, proč by se divák nesoustředil na dílo samo, na souvztažnost jeho částí, kompozici, barevné kontrasty a akordy, jeho význam a expresivní potenciál a škálu možných interpretací, místo toho se pustí do tvorby verzí díla jako imaginativních variací, které pak porovnává mezi sebou a se zdrojovým dílem. Což nás přivádí ke kořenům zde použité variační metody a jejímu tvůrci, Edmundu Husserlovi.* 

Husserl formuluje variační metodu jako cestu k nazření esence v několika svých dílech, pro stručnost zvolíme pozdní práci *Zkušenost a soud*. V paragrafu 88, "Metoda zření esence", v oddílu a) "Volná variace jako základ zření podstat", vymezuje tuto metodu jako založenou na:

"[…] modifikaci zakoušené nebo představované předmětnosti, přeměněné na arbitrární příklad, který současně přijímá charakter řídícího "modelu", východiska pro produkci neomezené mnohosti variant. Je tedy založena na variacích. Jinými slovy, pro její modifikaci v čisté imaginaci se necháváme vést faktem, vzatým jako model. Proto je nezbytné, aby všechny podobné představy byly dosaženy jako kopie, jako představy imaginace, které jsou všechny konkrétně podobné originální představě. Volním aktem tedy produkujeme volné variace. […] Ukazuje se jako evidentní, že jednota, procházející touto multiplicitou následných figur, invariant takových volných variací originální představy, třeba nějaké věci, je zachycena jako nutně obecná forma, bez níž by takový objekt nebyl vůbec myslitelný. Zatímco to, co odlišuje varianty, je pro nás nepodstatné, ta forma vystupující v praxi volných variací jako neproměnné co, s nímž všechny varianty koincidují – obecná esence" (Husserl, 1973, s. 340–341).

V uvedeném vymezení najdeme společné prvky s Kulkovou variační metodou, například pro všechny varianty/verze společné "co", což je u Kulky "základní percepční gestalt", u Husserla ovšem věc či představa v její plnosti. Nicméně, v Kulkově modelu to, co odlišuje varianty je důležité, i když, striktně vzato, to, co odlišuje jednotlivé verze, je jen součást celku jednotlivé verze, lišící se od ostatních. Kulkův modelový estetický hodnotitel tak nedospívá k obecné formě neboli obecné esenci (tou by, při dodržení fenomenologické variační metody byla estetická hodnota), ale k řadě verzí, které může porovnávat. Pomineme časové hledisko, krátkodobou vizuální paměť, pořadí a kontext takových představ, které by jistě finální hodnocení ovlivnily a podívejme se, co by takový hodnotitel nakonec dosáhl. Ještě předtím stojí za zmínku, že v uváděném postupu estetického posuzování by, při nutném požadavku udržet invariant, musel při tvorbě jednotlivých verzí oscilovat mezi non-estetickým "základním percepčním Gestaltem" a estetickým imaginativním (mentálním) objektem/konstruktem. (Pokud bychom připustili existenci "estetického postoje", potom mezi estetickým a praktickým či teoretickým postojem).

Kulka v rámci logické výstavby svého modelu pochopitelně uvádí a musí uvést kritéria, podle kterých recipient hodnotí/porovnává jednotlivé verze mezi sebou a mezi jimi a výchozím modelem, původním výtvarným dílem. Volí "beardsleyovskou" triádu *jednota, komplexnost, intenzita.*<sup>3</sup> Pojetí jednoty a intenzity je ovšem závislé na individualitě recipienta a zejména, na jeho imaginativní schopnosti, která bude v drtivé většině případů nižší nežli u tvůrce díla. Na námitku, že divák s průměrnou představivostí přece stojí "na ramenou obra" a tedy dosáhne výš nežli onen obr, lze namítnout, že pokud by pochopil velikost tvůrce, nebude se snažit dílo "vylepšit", ale vyjít mu vstříc a snažit se odnést si co nejvíce. A co je horší, snaží-li se divák zlepšit "jednotu", bude eliminovat rozpory, ty části, složky, faktory, které aktuálně prožívá jako nelibé, rušivé, ošklivé a výsledkem bude "učesaná" verze, která potlačí většinu inovativní, subversivní hodnoty díla, které by mohl rozšířit zkušenostní, kognitivní, emoční horizont recipienta, na místo toho mu poskytne chvilkovou libost, bez jakéhokoli hlubšího, mysl a personalitu restrukturujícího dopadu. Neboli, řečeno např. s Emmanuelem Lévinasem, převede *Jiné* na *Stejné* (tedy na to, co vyhovuje jeho zažitým, osvojeným preferencím, estetickým normám a konvencím).

Závěrem, Kulkova logická konstrukce estetického soudu a tedy procesu a vyústění recepce výtvarného uměleckého díla tak připomíná létající ostrov Laputa z Gulliverových cest – vznáší se zářivě vysoko v oblacích (reduktivní abstrakce), ale nesmí se dotknout země (reálné recepce výtvarného díla), protože by se roztříštila.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Připomeňme Mukařovského roli rozporu v konkrétním uměleckém díle a směřování k "obecné, neosobní konvenci" při jeho redukci.

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Prof. PhDr. Vlastimil Zuska, CSc. Univerzita Karlova Filozofická fakulta Katedra estetiky Praha/Česká republika vlastimil.zuska@ff.cuni.cz

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# Vnímání textu, délka jeho trvání, evaluace: Různí autoři, související pozorování

Ondřej Krátký; zakarija@seznam.cz, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3633804

Abstract: Recipients always perceive texts in a successive and linear way. Often, the recipient's perception of the text only lasts until the text has fulfilled the expectations the recipient has of it. Being well aware of this, authors build texts based on their goals, aims, or preferences that either meaningfully fulfill the expectations of the recipient according to the authors' own knowledge, estimation, or presumptions - or, on the contrary, more or less intentionally violate these expectations. While the fulfillment of expectations results in a certain "comforting" impression on recipients, its violation causes an arousal in them. In this sense, violation of expectations does not only have a negative effect, but it can also have a communicative value. It can be argued that a) the author incorporates stimuli into the text that lead to the violation of the recipient's expectations and does so with a communicatively functional - also artistic and aesthetic - kind of intent and b) an arousal is a consequence of violating the recipient's expectations; then if an author's artistic or aesthetic intention lies in a (multilayered, sequential, compositional) series of violations of the recipient's expectations, this can provoke an aesthetic experience which will be caused - among other things - by the arousals themselves induced by the relevant violations.

Keywords: Perception, expectancy violation, arousal, evaluation, text

#### Linearita vnímání textu

Vnímání textu probíhá ze strany recipienta (časově) lineárně, a to přechodem z jednoho vjemu na další. V některých případech "vstřebávání" textu začíná vnímáním celku a od něj přechází k vnímání jeho jednotlivých částí (např. u obrazů či soch), jindy naopak recipient postupuje od částí k celku či text absorbuje v jinak postupné sekvenci dílčích vjemů (kniha, film), případně je text "volnější", a je tak vstřebáván sérií různých vjemů z různých perspektiv (výstava) či při různých "příležitostech" nebo "událostech" (poznávání něčí osobnosti apod.).

Fakt lineární povahy vnímání textu (tj. od počátku textu až k jeho "pochopení" či dosažení jiné saturace daným textem) je jevem, který recipient textu v rámci příslušného textového paradigmatu přirozeným způsobem naplňuje. Takto ("lineárně") se recipientovi postupně dostává sekvence vjemů, a to až do chvíle, kdy je textem nějakým způsobem "naplněn" (včetně toho cítí-li potřebu jeho vnímání přerušit nebo ukončit).

Pro vnímání je přitom podstatné recipientovo "vystavení se" sledu vjemů, resp. jeho "konfrontace" s nimi: recipient textu se do ní (v určitém paradigmatu) nejen přirozeně "dostane", ale i si (v jiných případech) takové "exponování se vjemům" sám "vynutí", resp. vytvoří. Příkladem budiž to, že a) je-li "konfrontován" s knihou, čte – tj. pohybem očí přechází z jednoho grafického zpodobnění zvuku, který odkazuje k významu (= hlásky, resp. písmena, slova atp.) na další; b) je-li konfrontován s obrazem, prohlíží si jej – tj. zaujímáním různých úhlů náhledu přechází očima z celku na jednotliviny, z nich případně zpět na celek atp.; c) je-li konfrontován s hudbou či filmem, ("pouze") poslouchá či se ("jen") dívá – vjemy se totiž hýbou, střídají a postupují "samy", tj. změnu sledů jednotlivých vjemových

"momentů" (či "událostí") mu "samy" obstarají; d) je-li konfrontován s osobou, výstavou či jiným "volnějším" textem, využívá různé způsoby náhledů, kterým sám aktivně napomáhá a spoluvytváří je ve snaze pochopit – obchází, nahlíží, testuje reakce na podněty; zkrátka vyhledává (případně sám vytváří, a to i podvědomě) různé příležitosti a způsoby "pohledů".

V zásadě tak lze říci, že čím je text a) "statičtější" (obraz, socha, zčásti i kniha), tím vyšší je "fyzická" aktivita recipienta vyvinutá pro jeho zkoumání; je-li text naopak b) "dynamický" (film, hudba, show atp.), je "aktivita" recipienta nižší – a to proto, že střídání vjemů zajišťuje samo paradigma textu (resp. z takového paradigmatu vychází). Jde-li o text, který lze z hlediska povahy střídání vjemů označit za určitým způsobem c) "smíšený" či "volněji definovaný" (resp. s "volnějším paradigmatem" či méně zřejmým nebo až "nulovým" autorským záměrem atp. – například již uvedená "osobnost"; veletrh umístěný v různých pavilonech; přírodní scenérie apod.), dochází na straně recipienta k vytváření tolika různorodých "aktivit" či úhlů pohledu, kolik usoudí, že je jich k pochopení textu (či vůbec vyhodnocením toho, zda stojí za to se jím zainteresovat) třeba.

#### Poměr a vyváženost elementů textu

Minimálně u tvůrčích (resp. "uměleckých") textů je legitimní se domnívat, že je autor komponuje s nějakým cílem. Tím je nejčastěji snaha či potřeba (umělecky, případně esteticky apod.) předat nějaké sdělení. I proto mohou umělecké texty zpětně dobře sloužit pro posouzení toho, jak zdařile se předání takového sdělení podařilo. Obzvlášť vhodné jsou obrazy, neboť ty jsou schopny akomodovat velké (případně "vícevrstevně" nakomponované) množství "snadno" stravitelných textových forem, u nichž lze zpětně "hodnotit" míru zdařilosti jejich "prezentace" (barvy, tvary, kompozice, kontrast, zvýraznění, abstrakce, karikatura, hlubší poselství či naopak řemeslná dokonalost atp.). Možná i proto jsou určitým synonymem umění jako takového.

Právě na příkladu obrazů identifikoval teoretik umění Ernst Gombrich jeden ze základních předpokladů pro to, aby textová informace měla vůbec šanci se k recipientovi v žádané podobě dostat. Daný poznatek shrnul konstatováním, že "*veškerá pozornost se musí 'dít' na pozadí nepozornosti*<sup>\*\*1</sup> (Gombrich, 1982, s. 15). Smysl sdělení lze přitom chápat i takto: Aby ten text, o nějž jde, vůbec obhájil, že právě on je (v celkové autorské kompozici) tím hlavním, musí jeho "zdůrazněnost" jasně kontrastovat s (nějakým způsobem rozostřeným, a tedy pozornost nepřitahujícím) kontextem.

Aplikujeme-li danou "poučku" šířeji (a vztáhneme-li ji i na příklady z každodenního života), zjistíme, že jde o konstatování s obecnější platností – jde-li o vnímání, je totiž daný "duální" (či "binární") kontrast "pozornosti" vs. "nepozornosti" prakticky "všudypřítomný". Příkladem může být nejen vnímání obrazů (= pozadí vs. "hlavní" námět; rozostřené kontury vs. jasný smysl apod.), ale i poměrně ilustrativní kontrast typu a) "nepopsaný papír na stole v místnosti" (= v podstatě vše vnímáme jako jeden celek, papír nepřitahuje naši pozornost, vše je tedy svým způsobem jen "pozadím", nic nepřitahuje větší či menší pozornost) vs. b) "papír se vzkazem ležící na stole v téže místnosti" (= z "nějakého důvodu" máme sklon vnímat zprávu na papíru víc, než cokoli jiného; resp.: cokoli dalšího nevnímáme téměř vůbec).

Podobně kontrastivní jsou i dennodenní "banality", jež velmi pravděpodobně stály u zrodu určitých "samozřejmých" označení (viz např. jasně ohraničené "Slunce" či "Měsíc" na pozadí relativně proměnné a neuchopitelné oblohy apod.) či dokonce pozdější vnitrojazykové taxonomie (pohyb či změna na pozadí

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Citát v původním znění: "all attention must take place against a background of inattention"

statiky či stability jako základ pro "kontrast" sloves vs. jmen apod.). Na stejném principu vystupuje (na pozadí "periferního" kontextu) do popředí (pozornosti) v zásadě jakýkoli jiný text, který je v dané konfiguraci považovaný recipientem za hlavní.

Připustíme-li, že komunikace je určitou "výměnou" a) autorského záměru a b) recipientského vnímání takového záměru, lze za určitou obdobu poznatku, k němuž Gombrich (1982) došel na poli teorie umění, spatřovat v rámci teorie komunikační jeden z konceptů amerického lingvisty Paula Grice (1975, 1981, 1989). Pro Grice, podobně jako pro Gombricha, byly přes rozdílnost obou jejich disciplín důležitým kritériem smysluplnost a efektivita komunikace. Grice ve svém pojetí ovšem vycházel z teoretického (oproti zdánlivě nesjednotitelným "hodnotícím kritériím" umění zároveň obecnějšího, jako výchozí bod ale logicky zvoleného) předpokladu "komunikační kooperativnosti". Ta představuje určitý ideální stav, kdy oba účastnící komunikace do komunikačního aktu vstupují vybaveni jak ideálním objemem informací, tak ideální vůlí je komunikovat, tj. jak sdělovat, tak vnímat, a to v takové formě, aby bylo co nejefektivněji dosaženo komunikačního cíle, tj. předání informace v takové podobě, aby došlo k jejímu co nejlepšímu pochopení.

Na tomto základu definuje Grice jednak vyplývající a) "ideál" maximálně efektivní komunikace, k níž dojde při aplikaci tzv. "komunikačních zásad" (jimiž jsou: stručnost, jasnost, relevance a pravdivost), jakož i b) eventuality, k nimž dochází při porušení daných zásad. Ty nazývá implikatury (viz. Grice, 1975, s. 41–58). K daným odchylkám od "ideálního" stavu (tj. od zásad kooperativní komunikace) dochází jednak a) v podobě "běžných", drobných odchylek od "ideálu" v rámci běžné, tj. reálné (tedy jakékoli jiné než fakticky v podstatě neexistující ideální) komunikace, jednak b) ve formě silnějších, nicméně (většinou) vědomých, řízených či jinak "sofistikovaných" odchylek, které jsou (při správném kontextuálním využití) vysoce funkční pro specifické komunikační cíle (lhaní, sarkasmus, ironii, parodii, další).

Kde je ale avizovaná paralela s Gombrichovými závěry a pozorováními? Nabídne se, zobecníme-li myšlenku "distorze" normy, jíž se zaobírají právě griceovské implikatury: zatímco komunikační kooperativnost je variantou, kdy se do popředí dostává ideální text a vše nepotřebné zůstává kontextem, jsou implikatury eventualitou, kdy se do popředí z nějakého důvodu dostalo (= tj. kdy se textem stalo) to, co by v "normálním" případě (tedy při zachování normy) bylo kontextem, resp. jen pouhou (v textu nepřítomnou a tedy pozornost nepoutající, protože autorem nevyužitou, neaktivizovanou, "nezjevenou") teoretickou možností. Zatímco první eventualita je příkladem zachování jakési "obecné" (ovšem teoretické) normy, představuje druhý případ nějakou formu jejího porušení (variaci na ni, vzdálení se jí, vymezení se vůči ní, její alternativu apod).

Je zde ale i jiná paralela: uskutečnil-li Gombrich (1982) své pozorování na umění, není od věci konstatovat, že právě umění spočívá na podobném druhu distorze, resp., řečeno jinak: Ř*ízená oscilace mezi tím, nakolik na jedné straně zachovat, a naproti tomu na straně druhé více či méně porušit normu/y všeho typu je přítomna u většiny uměleckých záměrů.* Lze se ale ptát i dál: Je takový záměr vlastní jen umění, anebo k jednání v jeho duchu dochází při jakékoli více či méně vědomé manipulaci s recipientem, pro niž je médiem text? Tím spíš plní-li tato "manipulativní" distorze svůj komunikační účel (resp. autorův komunikační záměr) přinejmenším zcela rovnocenně jako (případně ještě efektivněji než) by jej (v jiných případech) plnil text "griceovské" zásady plně respektující (či se jejich dodržování blížící).

Reinterpretujeme-li Griceovy (1989) principy (při jejichž teoretické či ideální aplikaci je potenciál komunikační kooperativnosti naplňován na maximum) pomocí Gombrichova pozorování, lze říci, že a) právě dostatečně velký objem (stručnost) b) zřetelných kontur (jasnost), který c) dává smysl, odkazuje k něčemu známému či jinak informačně obohacuje (relevance), je vyveden d) v nedeformované podobě a
obsahu (pravdivost) na e) "pozadí", které recipientovu pozornost nepřitahuje víc, než je třeba. Poslední bod je přitom ryze gombrichovský jen zdánlivě – (autorské) pozadí, tj. (recipientské) rozostření pozornosti je jen jinou formou autorské adherence k zásadám stručnosti, relevance, jasnosti i pravdivosti: právě proto, že autor je komunikačně kooperativní, volí v jednotlivých částech jím tvořené kompozice buď větší (centrum pozornosti), či naopak menší (rozostření, zmenšená pozornost – pozadí) "dávkování". Duch komunikačních zásad ovšem zůstává stále stejný – jen se realizuje na "gombrichovské" ose tvořené hlavními body autorské úvahy vztahující se právě k recipientově pozornosti, tj. a) zdůraznit podstatné a b) upozadit nepodstatné, či dokonce c) vynechat domyslitelné (zřejmé, známé, jasné, z kontextu vyplývající apod.).

Je nasnadě, že mechanickým vyjádřením griceovsky "ideálně" komunikačně kooperativního přístupu na poli interpretačního zobrazení by byla např. zcela dokonalá fotografie či (hyper)realistická malba. Právě snaha (vůle / touha / záměr / cíl apod.) vyhnout se "otrockým" imitacím reality je momentem (či impulzem), kdy (či s nímž) přichází "umělecký" vstup. Neznamená to však, že by s ním Grice (1989) ztrácel na platnosti, či Gombrich (1982) začínal převažovat, naopak: umění je "jen" řízenou sérií odchylek od normy – a jako takové s normou vždy počítá jako s něčím, proti čemuž se sice vymezuje, ale na čemž spočívá; což možná relativizuje, ale k čemuž zároveň ze své podstaty alespoň některým elementem odkazuje. V podobném smyslu: je-li umění (větší či menší) sérií odchylek od normy, není ničím jiným, než – v griceovském slova smyslu – "jen" (větší či menší) sérií implikatur; (stejně jako je jí jakýkoli jiný text, který bude v jakémkoli jiném smyslu griceovské zásady porušovat). Pokud takový text obsahuje čehokoli "víc", cokoli v něm bude (ne)zvýrazněné jinak, než "by mělo" atp., může být na vině buď a) prostá chyba (porušení komunikačních zásad neúmyslné či jiné), případně b) jiný komunikační účel (distorze tvaru či obsahu – karikatura či jiná parodie; změna sekvence, četnosti, barvy atp. – umění; upozaděné či chybějící – hádanka či doplňovačka; atp.); i v takových případech tedy text plní svůj komunikační smysl tak, jak má.

Gombrich i Grice se shodují v určitém obecnějším přístupu, s jakým text, autorský záměr, resp. komunikaci nahlížejí – konkrétně v určitém "podvědomém přesvědčení", že lze či je nutné nebo záhodné dosáhnout určité vyrovnanosti mezi a) hlavním (výrazným) sdělením ("textem") a b) podpůrným (nerušivým) doplňkem ("kontextem"). Nemusí samozřejmě jít o "pouhý" kontrast obsah vs. forma: pokud je cílem demonstrace řemeslného umu, pak je většinou upozaděn obsah, resp. tvůrčí osobnost autora "ustupuje do pozadí"; pokud je naopak cílem silné sdělení, forma může být zdánlivě velmi "všední"; to ovšem o to víc (právě díky její "nerušivosti", "samozřejmosti") umožní obsahu vyniknout (např. obrazy René Magritte). Na podobné bázi fungují ale i určité "smíšené" disciplíny, kdy je například "tolerována" (resp.: vyžadována) velmi jednoduchá či zdánlivě "řemeslně nedokonalá" forma, pokud je ovšem obsah velmi silný (karikatury či kreslené vtipy), případně užité umění. Naopak "griceovská" maxima mají své místo tam, kde je klíčová snaha držet se normy a být tak "textuálně" navýsost efektivní. Jako takové mají svůj hlavní význam především jako určitý teoretický "ideál", jemuž se praktické textové realizace jen více či méně přibližují.

### Délka vnímání textu

Gombrich i Grice při svých úvahách o textu do značné míry vycházejí z předpokladu, že jej recipient bude vždy vnímat v jeho celkovém rozsahu (tj. od začátku do konce, resp. jako soubor všech jednotlivých vjemů). Pro to, aby byl text ale skutečně "vnímán až do konce", je nutná recipientova vůle k plynulému, nerušenému přecházení z jednoho vjemu na další. Pro to, aby si recipient uvědomil, nakolik se mu jí v průběhu vnímání každého příslušného textu dostává, je klíčové průběžné vyhodnocování, které

recipient nějakým způsobem a v určité intenzitě během textu neustále provádí. Důsledkem takového vyhodnocování je pak buď jeho vůle přejít na další vjem, nebo naopak jeho snaha vnímání příslušného textu přerušit či předčasně ukončit.

Máme-li cokoli označit za "přerušení" či (předčasné) "ukončení" textu, bude právě předčasnost hlavním definujícím rysem takového případu. Ze svého titulu se bude realizovat a) před bodem, který je objektivně předpokládatelný, chápaný či interpretovatelný jako konec textu, b) poté, co recipient absorbuje určitý objem vjemů, jakož i c) namísto recipientova přechodu na vjem další.

Tématu se jak Gombrich, tak Grice sice dotýkají, ovšem jen částečně, případně tím, co z jejich konstatování vyplývá implicitně. Gombrich tak činí na příkladu plátna, kde je v těsné blízkosti mondrianovského vzoru vyveden stylově nekorespondující ("barokní") (viz. Gombrich, 1998, s. 237). Na základě toho Gombrich shledává, že přechod ze střídmého, "geometrického" stylu à la Mondrian k honosně pojatému podpisu není "oku" příjemný, a proto je celková kompozice vnímána jako nesouladná, rušivá. Na zdánlivě malém příkladu se tak opět vyslovuje k širšímu principu předurčujícímu mnohé: od pořádku na pracovním stole i módy přes umění, architekturu až po jakoukoli jinou aktivitu, jejíž podstatou je a) autorský plán, který více či méně zohledňuje b) recipientské vnímání – tj. princip toho, že dojem ladu je v zásadě výsledkem série libých (a na sebe libě navazujících) vjemových dojmů.

Grice (1989) se k tématu (konečnosti, resp. dis/kontinuity textu) částečně vyjádřil tím, že nadefinoval a) hlavní konverzační zásady v rámci kooperativního komunikačního přístupu, jakož i b) varianty, které mohou motivovat k jejich porušení, a to zejména funkčnímu – a jako takovému vlastně stále komunikačně kooperativnímu. Dál už ovšem nijak nerozvinul variantu, k níž dochází při takovém porušení komunikačních zásad, které se ukáže jako nějakým způsobem dysfunkční – což je jednoduše každé, při kterém dochází k úpadku či ztrátě recipientovy pozornosti, resp. účasti v komunikaci jako takové.

## Teorie porušení očekávání

K pochopení toho, jak dané recipientské vyhodnocování probíhá, k čemu v něm dochází a co podmiňuje jeho výstupy, může napomoci, zakomponujeme-li do úvahy hledisko (ne)očekávatelnosti (expectancy), případně s její rolí v komunikaci související teorii porušení očekávání (expectancy violation theory). Ta byla formulována zejména Judee Burgoonová v letech 1976–1978 v rámci experimentu zkoumajícího různé reakce recipientů na různé způsoby (ne)naplnění očekávání, jež měli ohledně respektování jejich osobního prostoru ze strany druhé osoby (resp. dalšího účastníka experimentu).

Zatímco Grice (1975, 1981, 1989) vnímá normu (od níž následně odvíjí "své" implikatury představující určitou "typologizaci" jednotlivých způsobů porušení principů kooperativnosti) jako cosi "objektivního" (byť teoretického, ideálního či abstraktního), zabývá se Burgoonová (1976) (společně s Jonesem [1978]) ve svém zkoumání o poznání víc úrovní subjektivní. Je to samozřejmě dáno i tím, že ve svých pokusech sleduje konkrétní reakce na každý jednotlivý případ porušení recipientových očekávání, kontext takových porušení atp.

Za důležité závěry z pera Burgoonové lze ve vztahu k této úvaze považovat jednak a) připomenutí, že "očekávání (toho, jaký prostorový vztah bude s příslušnými osobami za jakýchkoli daných podmínek nastaven) rozvíjíme jak díky zkušenosti s normativními typy chování ve společnosti, tak na znalosti jedinečných proxemických vzorců těch, s nimiž vstupujeme v interakci<sup>\*\*</sup> (Burgoon, 1976, s. 135). Toto lze myslím obhájitelně interpretovat i tak, že výstupy z dosavadních vnímaných textů (resp. vjemů) vytvářejí očekávání od textů (vjemů), které budou následovat po nich. Dále je důležité b) její konstatování, že jsou-li očekávání porušena, způsobuje každé

takové porušení očekávání – resp. odchylka (deviation) od určité osobní, popř. subjektivně předpokládané či tušené atp. normy – u recipienta vzruch (arousal); jakož i určité c) "uvedení na pravou míru" toho, že dané vzruchy (resp. je stimulující porušení očekávání vyvolané autorovým odchýlením se od očekávatelné normy) nemusejí být nutně negativní (jak by pojmy "expectancy violation" či "deviation" mohly sugerovat), a mohou tedy mít na recipienta pozitivní (komunikační) efekt. Tímto Burgoonová (1976) nepřímo koresponduje jak s Gricem (jehož implikatury popisují stav, kdy právě porušení očekávání má za důsledek efektivitu sdělení), tak s Gombrichem (1979). Spočívá-li totiž alespoň některé – plně funkční, prověřené a efektivní – "umění" na vědomé autorské distorzi toho, co by jinak bylo "jen" prázdnou reprodukcí či nápodobou, rodí se jeho funkčnost pravděpodobně právě díky autorovu vědomí si toho, že na straně recipientů je po každém daném typu, sérii, konfiguraci či sekvenci neočekávatelností, kterou ten či onen jeho umělecký kus ve výsledné podobě nabídne, z nějakého důvodu ne-li přímo poptávka, tak pro něj alespoň "připravený terén". Takový druh autorské anticipace běžně funguje v karikatuře či reklamě (tj. jakýchsi instantních, smluvních, spotřebních a zábavných distorzích, které jsou na nečekanostech postavené /a kde jsou tedy nečekanosti vlastně očekávané/). Těsně a s trochou štěstí se "poptávka" po vítané neočekávatelnosti (v daném případě "krychlovité" stylizaci reality) protnula s příchodem kubistů; naproti tomu opožděně svého recipienta našly – či v zásadě si jej díky intervencím kritiků "vychovaly" – Van Goghovy obrazy atp.

Burgoonová (1978) svůj výzkum nicméně neuskutečnila na poli estetiky či umění, nýbrž vycházejíc z experimentu sledujícího reakce v návaznosti na (ne)narušení osobního prostoru. Proměnná v rámci experimentu spočívala v obměně (na základě co nejobjektivněji nadefinovaných obecných kritérií cíleně různě atraktivních) "autorů" vstupního "textu", a to s tím, že autor (Burgoonovou označovaný jako "initiator", "iniciátor") se podle zadání autorky experimentu k "recipientovi" (Burgoonovou označovaný jako "reactant", "reagující") přiblížil vždy buď na větší, nebo menší (než, dle kritérií experimentu určitým způsobem nadefinovaných kritérií, očekávatelnou) vzdálenost. Reakce recipienta na (ne)porušení osobního prostoru (ne)atraktivním "iniciátorem" (tj. autorem) tak vyjevily jednotlivé eventuality recipientova vnímání (ne)obliby (ne)očekávaného porušení osobního prostoru, a to právě v závislosti na vstupních proměnných.

Tím, jak Burgoonová pro potřeby svého výzkumu rozdělila "realitu" daného experimentu na jednotlivé hlavní elementy, v podstatě velmi zdařile nadefinovala několik základních (vzájemně "komplementárních", resp. skladebných atp.) entit, které jsou pro zkoumání komunikace z hlediska porušení očekávání klíčové. Toto rozdělení (kromě několika příkladů zejména v předchozím a následujícím odstavci viz zejm. Burgoon, 1976, s. 132–136 a Burgoon, 1978, s. 130–131) je podle mě velmi reprezentativní, výstižné a disponující obecnější platností, tudíž je pro další práci s tématem cenné.

Autora textu (např. v rámci uměleckého paradigmatu) je tak v zásadě možné ztotožnit s tím, co Burgoonová nazývá iniciátor (initiator), recipienta pak s jejím termínem reaktant (reactant). Normu chápe (či popisuje) jako sociální normu (social norm), subjektivní odchylku, která nicméně stále nepřekračuje její rámec pak jako idiosynkracii (idiosyncracy). Jako odchylku (deviation) pak označuje jakoukoli odchylku od očekávání, resp. "jiné než očekávané" – porušení očekávání pak jako jakoukoli rozpoznatelnou odchylku (any recognizable deviation).

Cenný je dále element, který v rámci této její "disekce" reality (pro účely daného experimentu) označuje jako vyhodnocení (či vyhodnocování; evaluation), resp. komunikační výstup (communication outcome). Komunikační výstupem jsou podle Burgoonové "typy chování reagujícího a jeho vyhodnocování na to, jak iniciátor zvolí vzdálenost. Typickými výstupy, které sem lze zahrnout, by byly porozumění, změna postoje, důvěra, otevření se,



přitažlivost a různá vyhodnocování iniciátorovy důvěryhodnosti. Za výstup lze považovat jak reakci na jeden podnět ze strany iniciátora, tak souhrnnou odpověď reagujícího na vzdálenostní vzorce iniciátora v průběhu konverzace" (Burgoon, 1978, s. 130–131).

## Přechod z jednoho vjemu na další

Ve výzkumu uskutečněném Burgoonovou slouží poslední dva uvedené pojmy k terminologickému "uchopení" či "operacionalizaci" závěrečného momentu každého z pokusů. Co takto označují v daném pokusu, je v realitě nicméně vždy "jen" jedním z "dalších" z momentů interakce, a to tím, kdy (resp. "než") se recipient ("reactant") rozhodne, zda bude dál vnímat text, či jeho vnímání přeruší, nebo zcela ukončí. U Burgoonové experiment touto fází nicméně – samozřejmě plánovaně – končí, je však nepochybné, že v reálné komunikaci (vnímání, interakci atp.) jsou podobné "hodnotící" (a tedy i "rozhodovací") momenty přítomny průběžně, a to jako jakási "spojnice" mezi "ukončením" jednoho vjemu a "počátkem" dalšího. Lze předpokládat, že právě jejich překonání je jedním z klíčových kritérií, která na jedné straně umožní autorovi úspěšně "předložit" svůj text v jeho celistvé podobě, na straně druhé pak recipientovi se tím samým textem v (přibližně takovém, jak) autorem zamýšleném rozsahu saturovat.

Řečeno jinak: výzkumný experiment uskutečněný Burgoonovou končil ve stejném momentě, kdy došlo k určitému "hlavnímu" komunikačnímu výstupu, tj. tomu, který byl (pro účel daného pokusu) "hlavním cílem"; dělo se tak nicméně z plně logického důvodu, neboť právě na základě daného momentu byl vyhodnocován i celý experiment. I v rámci experimentu ale permanentně docházelo k "dílčím" komunikačním výstupům tak, jak se to děje v průběhu vnímání všech textů v rámci jakékoli komunikační interakce – jen nebyly dané komunikační výstupy experimentem reflektovány (protože to u nich ani nebylo cílem). Ovšem už jen prostá skutečnost, že jimi recipienti prošli, svědčí o tom, že nikde v průběhu (až do "kulminace" v podobě závěrečného, "oficiálního" komunikačního výstupu) nedosáhli vyhodnocení ("evaluation") takové povahy, že by je to od dalšího pokračování odradilo či je v něm znejistělo natolik, že by vnímání textu (alespoň dočasně) přerušili.

Komunikační výstup tak chápu jako moment, který a) je na jednu stranu výstupem všeho dosavadního vnímání textu v určitém paradigmatu (možná jen s tím, že určitý důraz je tu na vjemy poslední či obzvlášť silné, přičemž ty jsou pro další recipientovo rozhodování se zásadnější atp.). Zároveň ovšem (každý dílčí) komunikační výstup (tj.: každý recipientův dojem "na konci" každé vjemové události) vnímám jako b) recipientův indikátor toho, zda bude dále v textu pokračovat, nebo se rozhodne jinak. Komunikační výstup tak je vlastně jak c) aktuálním stavem vůči všem dosavadním očekáváním, tak d) odrazovým můstkem (resp. referenčním bodem) pro "skok" na další vjem (resp. porovnávání daného nového vjemu se souborem vjemů z dosavadního textu).

Znázorníme-li průběh komunikace s ohledem na předmět zájmu této úvahy zhruba takto (přičemž: A – autor textu, R – recipient textu):

	Počátek	Střed	Konec
Α	úvod, nastolení paradigmatu, normy (běžné či "vlastní")	snaha k adherenci k tomu, co bylo "avizováno" pomocí úvodu	na základě antecendentů postupně narůstající "závazek" text dokončit
		TEXT	
R	seznámení se, možnost rozhodnout se, zda nabízené paradigma a norma jsou přijatelné	kontrola autorovy adherence k normě, tj. míře naplnění recipientových očekávání získaných díky antecedentům, popř. vyrovnanosti jeho textu atp.	nechá autora tvořit text do té doby, dokud plní jeho (vícerá) očekávání; jinak jeho vnímání přeruší či ukončí

pak se každý "dílčí" komunikační výstup (resp. "kritický bod", milník, předěl apod.) "mezi" dvěma vjemy může (ve "zmenšené", resp. "kondenzované" podobě) v podstatě rovnat stavu na konci daného schématu – přičemž se návazně vše (jako určitá nová "základní" pozice každého dalšího textového elementu) opakuje v rámci celého textu na stejném obecném principu (tj. ve stejném schématu) dál. V rámci konkrétní realizace je samozřejmě jedno, mluvíme-li o notě, která v posluchačově sluchu následuje notu předchozí (přičemž samozřejmě obě navazují na sérii předchozích a jsou součástí celkového zápisu, resp. interpretace), o slovu v textu následujícím předchozí slovo, barevné ploše, tvaru či vzoru, na něž se sveze oko poté, co opustí plochu, tvar či vzor předchozí apod.<sup>2</sup>

Pozn.: Tím, jak text ubíhá, se za normálních okolností průběžně zmenšuje spektrum variant pro výběr každého dalšího elementu daného textu – samozřejmě za předpokladu, že má být (v rámci "komunikační kooperativnosti") dodrženo, že text bude až do momentu svého konce naplňovat očekávání v takové podobě, aby stále probouzel (resp. udržoval) chuť a vůli recipienta jej do takového příslušného konce sledovat. Jinými slovy: neustálé zmenšování "rezervoáru" pro výběr každého dalšího použitelného (a autorem nakonec zvoleného) elementu je i určitým indikátorem (symptomem apod.) toho, že se text blíží svému konci; zároveň s takovým zmenšováním příslušného spektra (a jde-li vše "dobře" a podle "autorského záměru") se recipient takového textu blíží své saturaci, začíná sám tušit blížící se konec textu, resp. dané tušení integruje do souboru očekávání, která od textu / autora má či která průběžně vznikají.

## Vyhodnocování: "jen" ohled do minulosti, nebo základ postoje vůči budoucnosti?

U (resp. pro účely) experimentu Burgoonové slouží komunikační výstup především pro zpětný ohled na již proběhlý text (či případně recipientův "dojem" z něj). Jeho plný smysl v rámci běžné komunikace však počítá hlavně s výhledem do budoucnosti. Kam jinam by ostatně klíčový, tj. "praktický" význam jakýchkoli vyhodnocování ("evaluací") měl být namířen? Respektive: k čemu jinému, než k přípravě určitého postoje vůči něčemu, co přijde (a nikoli hodnocení minulosti samoúčelně, jen tak apod.) by (jakékoli) sondy do minulosti měly být činěny? V takovém světle tak jakákoli fáze interakce, kterou lze označit jako "komunikační výstup", realizuje svůj smysl až v momentě vytváření nových očekávání – a to právě na základě toho, do jaké míry byla očekávání dosavadní (ne)naplněna v "konfrontaci" se standardy ("normou") paradigmatu, v němž se pro hodnocení v rámci každého příslušného komunikačního výstupu

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Pro ukázku konkrétního vědeckého výzkumu uskutečněného na související téma viz např. Loui – Wessel (2007, s. 1084–1092).



text pohyboval (přičemž taková očekávání jsou přitom samozřejmě vždy směsí standardů recipientovi "vlastních", tak "daných" určitou "obecnou" normou i mírou obeznámenosti s autorem /resp. jeho "idiosynkracií"/, stejně jako "navozených" aktuálně absorbovaným textem apod.).

Z tohoto důvodu se domnívám, že není až tak důležité hodnocení v "ohlédnutí se" zpět, jako spíš "pozice", "stanovisko", "úsudek", "vyhodnocení", "dojem" či "pocit", které takové hodnocení zakládá; hodnocení zpět by totiž bylo skutečně "jen" ohlédnutím a rekapitulací bez pragmatického efektu. My se ale během vnímání textu především průběžně rozhodujeme, jaký bude náš každý další krok, tj. zda budeme naslouchat (tj. necháme text plynou a autora "konat"), přerušíme otázkou či jinak motivovaným vlastím vstupem (kdy nahradíme autorovu tvorbu textu textem vlastním), nebo si vymůžeme ukončení textu (tj. odejdeme či autorovi jinak "zamezíme" v další tvorbě textu apod.). Víc než pouhé "ohlédnutí" je tak daleko důležitější právě každý aktuální dojem navozený vždy objemem textu "navnímaného" do každé dané chvíle a daným ohlédnutím také zprostředkovaný, resp. právě takový dojem je tím hlavním smyslem takového ohlédnutí. Daný "dojem" (jenž je tedy zpětným pohledem jen formálně) je tu tak především pro to, aby nám umožnil zaujímat pragmatické postoje vzhledem ke a) každému dalšímu elementu textu, b) každému dalšímu textu, případně k c) autorovi textu (resp. jeho osobnosti – se vším, co od ní lze očekávat).

Jako argumentační opora tomuto tvrzení může sloužit pozorování související s natolik elementární potřebou, jakou je pocit bezpečí. Dané pozorování se přitom týká nejen vyhodnocování a/či eliminace nebezpečí, ale i čehokoli, co je nevítané, potenciálně škodlivé či zkrátka jen jakkoli jinak zneklidňujícím způsobem nepředvídatelné atp. Polský antropolog Bronislaw Malinowski (1932) pozoroval, že pro minimalizaci či odstranění zneklidňujícího efektu neznámých, nepředvídatelných situací hraje u jím zkoumaných domorodých civilizací klíčovou roli (magický) rituál. Lévi-Strauss (1963, s. 14) Malinowského ilustrativně cituje pasáží, v níž polský antropolog konstatuje, že (magický) rituál je vyhrazen pro "*všechny důležité činnosti a projekty, jejichž průběh nemá člověk plně pod kontrolou*" (Malinowski, 1929).<sup>3</sup>

Není vyloučeno, že jednou z příčin účinnosti rituálu je to, že jeho pevně daný průběh nabízí nejen atmosféru výjimečnosti či posvátnosti, ale disponuje i zklidňujícím efektem předvídatelnosti, dojem z níž přetrvává ještě dlouho po jeho skončení. Smyslem magického rituálu tedy mohlo být i zahalení nepředvídatelného do komplexu jemu předcházejících dějů, a tedy i kvantitativní minimalizaci "nepředvídatelné" části vůči takto vzniklému (většímu) celku.

Pevné mantinely rituálu (a obecně jakákoli "dobře zaběhaná" pravidla) konvenují se širším konceptem sociálních institucí, jejichž společenský význam Malinowski (1932) spatřoval právě v předvídatelnosti jimi garantovaných či nabízených paradigmat umožňujících funkčnost systému, důvěru v něj, z ní pramenící jistotu, možnost smysluplného plánování atp. Důvěra v řád a z něj pramenící jistoty do značné míry závisí mimo jiné právě na "dojmu" předvídatelnosti, který ta která instituce dokáže vzbudit. I z těchto důvodů stála "poptávka" po minimalizaci nevítaných nepředvídatelností u vzniku společenských institucí, resp. právě ona se stala jedním z prvořadých cílů, který takové instituce plní.

## Řízená porušení očekávání jako kreativní autorský proces

Shrneme-li toto v duchu a kontextu dříve řečeného, lze konstatovat, že a) evaluace má svůj hlavní smysl především vůči dalšímu, nikoli uplynulému textu. Pocit navozený dosavadním textem slouží pro

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Dál k tématu viz zejména Malinowského (1925) *Magic, Science and Religion* popř. Malinovský (1944) *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays.* 

identifikaci subjektivních budoucích očekávání, v dlouhodobém horizontu pak snad i pro konstrukci určitých objektivních norem. Tomu, nakolik je určitý výsledný "dojem" z dosavadního textu (tj. jeho "evaluace") pozitivní, anebo naopak negativní, do značné míry odpovídá i následný výhled do budoucnosti (tj. "očekávání" od dalšího textu / resp. jeho autora).

Budoucí text je zároveň vždy více či méně (ne)předvídatelný. Očekávání od něj, vyplývající z evaluace jeho (vícerých) dosavadních antecedentů, tak může oscilovat někde mezi (4) hlavními alternativami; ty lze – bereme-li v potaz (ne/porušení) očekávání jako jedno z hlavních kritérií pohledu na věc – "vymezit" přibližně v rámci variant sousloví (ne)vítaná (ne)předvídatelnost.

Pokud takto (z recipientovy perspektivy) nahlédneme text, u nějž má recipient na základě dosavadních "percepčních vstupů" možnost odhadnout jeho povahu či jiný stimul nutící jej se tak domnívat, vidíme, že do dané "sousloví" pokryje v zásadě celé spektrum variant:

Vítanou předvídatelností" je jakýkoli druh "rituálu" – od používání ("smluvního") přirozeného jazyka a nedělních návštěv cukrárny přes koncert vážné hudby od "prověřeného" umělce až po garanci školní výchovy pro děti či systém důchodového pojištění; nevítanou předvídatelností pak cokoli od vize nudného pobytu u líných, prudérních či přehnaně starostlivých prarodičů až po výhled několikaletého pobytu v izolaci zpřísněné vazby. Nevítaná nepředvídatelnost může nabírat podoby ranního dopravního chaosu, kakofonické kompozice, společenských změn či války. Naopak "vítanou nepředvídatelností" mohou být jak nuance, tak i větší sekvence jazzového koncertu (nejnázorněji jeho improvizační party), drobné "zábavné", "osvěžující" či jinak "uměřené" odchylky v divadelní, recitační ale třeba i řemeslné (užité umění) nebo kulinářské tvorbě (různé způsoby přípravy pokrmu na základě jinak stejného receptu atp.), případně celá díla dávající na základě proporčně "vyvážené", resp. ucelené série odchylek ("deviací, které dýchají smysluplností, resp. mají vnitřní řád") většinou vznik celému novému uměleckému směru (fauvismus, kubismus, dada apod.).

Samozřejmě ne vždy se musí s autorským zájmem protnout to, jak text vnímá recipient: co na jednoho může působit jako nepředvídatelnost nevítaná (nejistota, hazard, riziko, nebezpečí apod.) může jiný vnímat právě pro svou nepředvídatelnost jako vítané (chaos skýtající příležitost, dobrodružství atp.). V této úvaze nicméně většinově vycházím z určitých zažitých "norem", kolektivních preferencí a dlouhodobé zkušenosti (zejména západního kulturního okruhu).

Možné typy reakcí recipientů na nenaplnění jejich očekávání s sebou nesou i další, obecnější otázky po povaze textů: Je přerušení autorova textu otázkou zcela novým autorským textem, nebo integrální součástí ("doplňkem") promluvy původního autora? Je ukončení komunikace či fyzické odejití z ní důsledkem dosavadního textu, anebo snahou zamezit tomu, co recipient vyhodnotil jako velkou pravděpodobnost série nevítaných sledů dalších textových elementů, tj. takových, kterým by velmi pravděpodobně byl vystaven, pokud by v komunikaci zůstal? Je "trest" (míněno v zásadě jakýkoli – tj. včetně fyzického trestu či věznění) spíš pomstou za spáchané doposud, anebo hlavně prevencí do budoucna – tj. snahou jakýmkoli způsobem zamezit v tom, aby autor toho či onoho "činění" ve svém dalším textu nepokračoval apod.?

Podobně je zde paradox určitého "ultimativního" pohledu. Ten je do značné míry také závislý na míře a povaze subjektivních nuancí. V závislosti na nich se pak u každého jednoho recipienta můžeme ptát např.: Jdeme-li na výstavu postmodernistů, čekáme nečekané (tj. postmodernisty do detailu neznáme, ale tušíme, že budou s porušením toho, co bychom "od obrazů" normálně očekávali, pracovat), anebo čekáme očekávatelné (tj. jdeme tam právě proto, že od dané tvorby očekáváme určitý typ distorzí, protože práci postmodernistů známe) atp.?



Jinými slovy: pokud umělec, o němž se ví, že jeho stylem je porušovat očekávání (například karikaturista či experimentální zpěvák) zničehonic předvede "normální" výkon (tedy bude sice v "normě", nicméně tím poruší očekávání, která dlouhodobě navozoval), přesune diskusi zhruba do úrovně výše uvedeného "paradoxu". Paradox je samozřejmě jen zdánlivý, a to především proto, že umění je v zásadě permanentní (více či méně vědomě experimentální) "programovou" oscilací mezi subjektivním a objektivním přístupem k (objektivní i subjektivní) normě ve smyslu jejího dodržení či porušení – mající za cíl právě vyvolání určité esteticky agitované "mobilizace" či "dynamizace", kulminující leckdy kdesi mezi odmítnutím a přijetím, rozechvěním a uspokojením, a ústícího do dlouhodobějšího pocitu ohledně toho, co přijde dál, a to (v ideálním případě) kdesi mezi vítanou předvídatelností a vítanou nepředvídatelností.

Abychom toto "estetické rozechvění" pochopili blíž, je možná na místě vrátit se zpět k jednomu z dílčích závěrů, které učinila Burgoonová, když konstatovala, že porušení očekávání (tj. taková "epizoda" vnímání, která je v rozporu s očekáváními navozenými dosavadními vstupy – tj. zejména přímo relevantním konkrétním textem a dosavadní obecnou zkušeností) způsobuje vzruch. Odsouhlasíme-li toto, můžeme dál předpokládat, že dojde-li v rámci jednoho textu k vícero takovým porušením, budou mít nutně za důsledek sérii vzruchů.

Je-li tato "zákonitost" (resp. fakt, že porušení očekávání je provázeno vzruchem) obecnější povahy, pak platí, že jejímu "efektu" je recipient vystaven nejen v případě "nevítaně nepředvídatelných" textů (kdy by výsledný "pocit" či "dojem" byl negativní), ale i textů nepředvídatelných "vítaněji" (tj. například uměleckých, případně nějakým jiným způsobem "řízeně manipulativních" – reklamy, propagandy, poezie atp.), tedy takových, kde "dojem", "pocit" či "prožitek" je (většinou, spíš) pozitivní, nezřídka označovaný dokonce jako "estetický".

V takovém případě dále platí, že příslušný (umělecký) text lze vnímat jako určitou "strukturu" či "platformu" nesoucí podněty (či jimi "disponující"), které sledem toho, jak jsou vnímány, působí sérii vzruchů složenou z jednotlivých "epizod" porušení recipientových očekávání. Připustíme-li, že taková porušení nemusí působit jen negativně, jakož i to, že autor (umělec) ve svém textu taková porušení vybudoval s cílem působit na recipienta esteticky, konstatujeme, že estetika je (minimálně do určité míry) založená na řízeném vršení takových porušení očekávání, jejichž kombinace, sled či konfigurace vyvolá požadovaný (estetický) prožitek. Jinými slovy – estetický prožitek je (do určité míry) důsledkem recipientovy percepce vjemů nakonfigurovaných autorem tak, aby (žádoucím způsobem) působily sérii (řízených) porušení recipientových očekávání.

Recipient je tak vystaven sérii zcela specifických "skluzů", odboček a "výletů" z předvídatelného do neočekávatelného, vyvolávajících podněty (vzruchy) nejrůznějšího druhu, sekvencí i intenzity. Ty jsou nicméně generovány v takové kvalitě a kvantitě, že jejich "celková kombinace" (tj. konečný "komunikační výsledek") má sílu zapůsobit tak, že nejenže recipient u vnímání textu zůstává, ale je jím naopak "pohlcován" a jeho prožitek se ještě posiluje – což je svým způsobem i dalším z rozměrů, jímž se vůči očekávatelnému realizuje cosi (překvapivě, ale vítaně) neočekávatelné.

Právě (autorova) vůle k racionální hře s (recipientovými) iracionálními dispozicemi, aktivující v recipientovi všemožné dimenze (nejen) "múzického" euforického vytržení, představuje jeden z hlavních stimulů autorova tvůrčího záměru; ta samá vůle je i autorovou hlavní "strategickou doktrínou", již má na paměti po celou dobu tvorby svého textu. Dost možná právě tímto způsobem se rodí (či je do textu "zakódovávána") nezanedbatelná část podstaty, působivosti i podmanivé magie estetického prožitku, jež se s větší či menší intenzitou, naléhavostí či působivostí zhmotňuje pokaždé, když je text "dovnímán" – a tedy i pochopen, "vychutnán" či jakkoli jinak naplno "prožit".

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Mgr. Ondřej Krátký, Ph.D. Katedra antropologických a historických věd Filozofická fakulta ZČU Plzeň/Česká republika



# Projective Aesthetics as a Possible World\*

Boris Orlov; bvo51@rambler.ru, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3632459

Abstract: The notion of "projective aesthetics" is considered in this paper for the first time as a variant of the recourse to praxis that characterizes contemporary aesthetics and its "aesthetic involvement" (A. Berleant). Projective aesthetics involves the use of methodologies of a new type: "schizoanalysis" (in Deleuze's and Guattari's terms), "conceptivism" (as devised by M. Epstein) and "projectivism". The emphasis is put on the principle of "rhizome" and on the features of so-called "culturonics", a way of thinking "through projects" in the cultural sphere. Projective aesthetics implies a way of philosophizing about art and aesthetics which is defined by a functional orientation in terms of a process of aestheticization and artification, and, accordingly, of projectivity. The connection between projective aesthetics and the peculiarities of modern communicative aesthetics is also examined, together with the need for creating a philosophical glossary of artistry and modern art, meant as a relevant project for aesthetics, as related to beauty as well as with the direct participation of students in filling out the contents of the above-mentioned glossary.

Keywords: projective aesthetics, aesthetic engagement, rhysome, culturonics, conceptivism, discourse of lecturing in aesthetics, glossary of projective artistic.

In contemporary aesthetics, there is a situation when the former methodologies such as analytics, systematics, hermeneutics, and deconstruction, though they still exist, fail to grasp the situation of temporality of culture and art. These challenges of our time need not only an assessment but rather a new, practically oriented, theoretical vision.

In this regard, we introduce the concept of "*projective aesthetics*" (Orlov, 2015, p. 43), and its conceptual marking is not so much important as its trend towards grasping the peculiarities of a *new discourse*.

The *discourse*, in this case, is understood as the whole sum of "talkings" on philosophical and aesthetic themes in the aspect of "aesthetic involvement" in the praxis of everyday life.

Let us clarify what a new theoretical and methodological context, which underlies the discourse, represents here.

First, what Deleuze and Guattari (2010) have done can be named "schizoanalysis" in their own terminology. Without getting into all the details of their "schizoaesthetics", let us examine, perhaps, the most important notion – "the principle of the rhizome". We are talking about the "rootstock", from which everything grows, and not from the root of power structures. "Don't bring out the General in you!" – this slogan from the famous aesthetic manifesto of the brilliant French opposes the creativity of the rhizomatic connection of "wasp - and – orchid", when a new quality appears. It is thanks to the rhizome – through the intertwinement with the world in its rootstock – the structure becomes flexible, reaching the level of post – and, more important, trans – structure. An authoritative rigidity deadens, escape from the

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hard structure ("the line of escape", according to Delueze and Guattari) gives it life. The rhizome is rhizomatic in its essence generating a new entity that has not existed before.

Second, the significance of conceptivistic methodology should be taken into account. "CONCEPTIVISM – the philosophy of 'conceiving concepts', a constructive activity of thinking in the sphere of notions and universals. Like constructionism [...], conceptivism acknowledges the 'constructiveness', the conceptual purpose of 'reality'. However, its task is not to criticize or demystify these constructs, but to generate them creatively, to create multiple models of possible worlds, cognitive and social practices [...] Conceptivism opens a new era of thinking that inherits the Kantian criticism and, at the same time, goes beyond those 'critical' functions with which post-Kantian philosophy has limited itself to a large extent. If criticism restricts the limits of theoretical mind, then conceptivism comes from within these limits, and crosses them over and over [...]" (Epstein, 2013). Thus, the concepts of, for example, the "open-type" system and the "digital online" system become crucial for projective aesthetics. We will dwell on this topic further.

Third, and most important, it is essential to think projectively.

Considering that contemporary culture has drastically changed its vector in the direction opposite to Post - Post - Post..., in other words, in the direction of *proteism* (Epstein, 2013), the importance of *projectivism* for contemporary discourse in the humanities can be indicated. In his *Projective Philosophical Dictionary* Epstein distinguishes contemporary "cultural studies from culturonics".

Culturonics is "[...] the construction of new activity forms in culture, new techniques of communication and learning, new models of perception and creativity. If cultural studies thinks in **projections**, or interpretations of objects in symbolic systems of different cultures, then culturonics thinks in **projects**, in other words, in symbolic systems that have not yet become practices and institutions of any culture and form a plan for possible transformations of the whole cultural field" (Epstein, 2013).

The problem of praxis can be solved through "intelligent design" if we call it in the spirit of conceptivism. We are talking about projection and its corresponding methodologeme when thinking in projects and constructing reality on this basis become dominant. However, design here is not a technique (though it is important). More significant are existential projects of being that can arise on a technical basis. It is clear that, for example, the Internet, in this case, is not creative in itself, as we have repeatedly seen, doing there mostly communication par excellence.

So, there are *rhizome, concepts and projects,* among which it is *projectivity* that, especially concerning aesthetics, allows us to understand it *practically*, that is, in the aspect of *"aesthetic engagement"* (Berleant, 2013, p.10). Unlike classical *aesthetic disinterestedness and analytics* in this regard (Kant, 1966), Arnold Berleant, basing mainly on John Dewey's *pragmatism* (Dewey, 1980), drew attention to the inclusion of aesthetic experience in human everyday life and its potential in this connection.

The idea that the interest in praxis is now particularly important for our aesthetics, has revealed itself through thoughtful analysis not only of what is now highly topical in the methodological field but also of the very object of aesthetics, the interpretation of which directly depends on its functionality.

If we turn to the history of aesthetics, the main question here is not one of its object or even methodology, but the question of why do we need aesthetics? Without getting into details of this complicated story, let us put forward a hypothesis that states as follows: if the object of aesthetics in some advanced version should coincide with its transition to the variant of praxis, it turns out that its focus on the *aesthetic and artistic* sets its main trend of functionality. In this regard, the main thing from the perspective of its purpose is the *aestheticization and artification of being* at some other level but in the direct connection with the aesthetic and artistic. If by the aesthetic and artistic one understands the whole



experience of this type, then the *aestheticization and artification* can be understood as something that at least contributes to making this experience meaningful and vital, and in a unique, individual, free, genuine way, that is, in the strategeme of existential modus of being. The problem of projectivity of our being can be solved only by ourselves when we try not only to find the meaning of our life but to suggest a solution that has aesthetic and artistic projectivity of being.

Anyone who philosophizes on aesthetic themes is already, willingly or unwillingly, in this *discourse*. So the main thing for them is not only a question of what is beauty or what is art, and they do not "exist" (if not taking into account the archaic theoretical disputes about the plurality of their practices) but how to bring, for example, beauty or artistry in their own life, and, therefore, in life itself, how to connect what is given to you and only to you because of your own uniqueness with the Formation of Being (according to Heidegger) or with the Flow of Creation of Being (according to "I Ching").

For us, the most important question is about the criteria of what is *aestheticization and artification* as the limit of meaning, which is associated with philosophizing on the "aesthetic interpretation" of our being. Put simply, we are talking about for what – in the limit – they are needed in praxis and what should be done with them so that they would allow implementing the practical transition from the rank of theory to the rank of praxis, that is, to the "*engaged aesthetics*".

Apparently, the ultimate aesthetic meaning of our being is in the *pleasure (taste)*, and the artistic meaning is in the *otherbeingness (potentiation)*. Their absence means the absence of meaning – meaninglessness, which has no prospects for further development of being and, therefore, its alienation. And so, the meaning of *aestheticization and artification* is to saturate our life to the maximum (or, at least, to the minimum) in this practical connection, and by means of peculiarities of its activity. An ability to aesthetic taste and potentiate being is peculiar to projective aesthetics.

*The aesthetics of projectivism* involves a number of projects, relating to the sphere of theory and to the actual projects. The aesthetics of the environment<sup>1</sup>, everyday aesthetics (Saito, 2010), somaesthetics (Shusterman, 2013), the art of life (Dziemidok, 2017), contemporary art practices (Lisovetc, 2015; Milani, 2017), media aesthetics<sup>2</sup> and so on suggest projects that would evidently provoke the creation of *aestheticization and artification* in the real life, and it should be, of course, synchronous to what is happening now in the cultural world. According to Moisey Kagan's (2001, p. 4) accurate observation, here we can speak about the "*aesthetic sphere*" of culture.

Aestheticization and artification (or, more euphonically, aesthesis and arthesis in their interconnection and, first of all, not just in the functionality, but also in their ontologic entity) assume an existential projection. So to say, this is an "aesthetic design", which will be the "final project" in the situation of here-and-now philosophizing "on aesthetic themes" for someone who is immersed in this experience right now. The theme of the "final project" is very important and directs the theme of Sartre's "initial project" towards the future. The "final" here is what you can do now, self-performing transformations of your being on the basis of your existence, your "initial project". This is not only a verbal discourse but also an attempt to make a real statement in terms of going beyond the marginal limits (transgression) towards creating a symbolic reality. And it is not just a culture that is treated like an aesthetic sphere, it is rather a transculture and the unconscious, not only personal or collective, but "transpersonal" (Grof, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> e.g. Ekologicheskaya estetika: problemy i granicy, 2014; Estetika chelovecheskoj sredy, 2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> e.g. Media: mezhdu magiej i tekhnologiej, 2014.

If we come closer to praxis, then we will be talking about attempts to transform a sensational reality by means of our own possibilities into something that is close to us as *aesthetic and artistic senses* of our being (*aesthesis-and-arthesis*), thus, into something existentially significant to us, into something that will let us experience the *taste and opportunities* of life in the *most appealing way* while aesthetically transforming our being.

Further I will not dwell on every implemented project, instead I will focus on what is connected with the topic of teaching aesthetics – with its praxis in educational projects. By this I mean the transition of intention into a project, notably, its aesthetic transformation.

A creative task that I gave to my philosophy students was based not only on their philosophically supported ideas about beauty but also, at least, on their stories of how they met the beautiful, how they interpreted it by means of available theoretical versions, and, at most, on a presentation of their own, implemented or intended, *project of beauty* where they could rely on their aesthetic experience. I was mainly interested in projects of beauty from the point of their aesthesis (or aestheticization). If we do not take into account projects that are heavily inclined towards arthesis (artification), it was, for example, projects connected with the musical impact: someone opened their own musical studio, where they teach vocal and piano lessons to children and adults, or started to learn music, or began to acquaint others how to learn jazz by means of their own skills and achievements. Thus, these projects were mainly connected with the body, gender, home, food, fashion, package, photography (not as art), tourism, website development, urban environment, landscape design, environment.

One of "bodily" aestheticization projects was as follows: its author, a slender girl, told that she lost 28 kg without any additional or medical means only thanks to her desire and will to be a woman. Unfortunately, her method remained a secret, but, what is important, the aesthetic intention under the influence of this project has transformed into another reality, from ugliness into beauty.

Now I will dwell on *artification*. It was related to another educational project – a project of using the potential of the electronic glossary on the philosophy of artistry. The glossary is located on the specially created website, *glossarya.com*. On the website, students and masters of philosophical faculty were offered a creative task. They should write their own articles for the glossary on the basis of their ideas of artistry and in the form of those concepts that were the closest to them in their understanding of artistry. Students who attend a special course on *Philosophical Problems of Contemporary Artistry*, which familiarizes them with the experience of contemporary art and its philosophical interpretations, were put in the situation of real intellectual entry into philosophical praxis. They have an opportunity to publish articles online, taking into account the concept of the dictionary and corresponding instructions. It can even be asserted that it is they who are creating their own vision of artistry as the "first being", principally for themselves, because they still form the backbone of the glossary project.

There are projects already published on the website, other projects – more than 50 projects and about 150 concepts – are in the editorial version. The presented articles are not only oriented towards new concepts of artistry but also pursue a more general goal – an attempt to create a new thesaurus, at least the minimum minimorum, of the language version of contemporary artistry. And I would link it with the "final project" theme, which has been previously mentioned. This is an attempt to declare myself in the situation of uncertainty in terms of today's artistry, an attempt to realize what – in general (verbally, conceptually, thesaurusly) – is understood now by artistry in terms of the "final project" – as it is.

As for me, there is no doubt here – the projective escape from everyday life (transgression) is indicated by my existential conception, justified by it, and, of course, I can explain what is happening in our being and



why we need projects, I can work with them myself. The students' case is more complicated. However, it is understood within the terms of a particular *discourse*. The students were able not only to voice their projects, and the verbalization here is important, but also to find a philosophical connection between the aesthetic intention, pleasure (or taste), potentiation (or otherbeingness) and praxis: in the context of projective aesthetics, this philosophical and theoretical *beginning of Aesthesis (aestheticization) and Arthesis (artification)* can be found in all of their works.

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Boris Orlov, PhD., Associate prof. Ural Federal University Department of Philosophy Yekaterinburg, Russia bvo51@rambler.ru

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/



# Black Mountain College Case: Transformation Trends in Art Education in the First Half of the 20th Century\*

Jana Migašová; jana.migasova@unipo.sk, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3631764

Abstract: In the 19th century, a gradual reform of art education began, which achieved its peak in the 1930s. This process manifested itself in the form of schools with an explicit anti-academic spirit – the Bauhaus in Europe and Black Mountain College in the United States. In this paper, I contend that such attempt at reform has never repeated again after the Black Mountain College case, where the combination of John Dewey's educational principles, Josef Albers' peculiar conception of art instruction, and the college founders' ideas concerning the essentiality of art for contemporary democratic societies created a unique environment for the development of an experimental form of art education. Examining this innovation with regard to the current situation of teaching art and the humanities, I argue that - despite a process of reform lasted more than a hundred years - art education still manifests residues of the old, conservative academic spirit, while art schools show features of exclusivity or even elitism. The pursuit for a wholesome social position of art, on the other hand, was the most striking endeavour of many brilliant thinkers in 19th and 20th century (e.g. Semper, Morris, Lichtwark, Dewey, Albers), something that art educators and art theoreticians of the 21st century must take this into a serious consideration.

Keywords: Black Mountain College, Josef Albers, art education, learning by doing, perception, ethics.

### Introduction

Black Mountain College, a school founded in 1933 in Black Mountain, North Carolina was a a new kind of college in the United States in which the study of art was seen to be central to liberal arts education, and in which John Dewey's principles of education played a major role. Many of its students and faculty were influential in the arts or other fields, or went on to become influential, such as Josef Albers, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Buckminster Fuller, Walter Gropius, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Robert Rauschenberg, Kenneth Snelson. Although notable even during its short life, the school closed in 1957 after only 24 years of operation (Anonymous [online], 2017).

In spite of the fact, that Black Mountain College became mainly famous for its graduates, e.g. John Cage or Robert Rauschenberg, who made a huge impact on the art field, I am rather focusing on the path which led to the establishment of the college as a specific and progressive type of art educational institution that was centred around anti-academic and anti-traditional concept influenced by the most fundamental school of this type – the Bauhaus (see Wick, 2000; Bergdoll – Dieckerman, 2009).

I aspire to trace this path from the reforming movements of art education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (represented by ideas of French Leon de Laborde, German Gottfried Semper or English Owen Jones and William Morris), when the problem of applied arts education or design school became more prominent and

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traditional academies were enforced to change their conservative and (at the same time) conserving curriculum (Pevsner, 2018, p. 250). Nonetheless, the main goal of my paper is to present and endorse theoretical background of the progressive educational methods and ideas of the leading figure of Black Mountain College – Josef Albers.

### Historical survey: the cracks in the shield of the "traditional" academy

As Nicolas Pevsner (in his famous book *Academies of Art: Past and Present*, originally published in 1940) pointed out, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prevailing trend of the time was to deprive the craftsman of all creative work. But this started to change in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when different scholars published their ideas about need for a returned unity of art and craft. Architect Gottfried Semper (1851)<sup>1</sup> critically declared that academic instruction lead to "an over-production of artists not justified by demand" (Semper in Pevsner, 2018, p. 252). He added: "Tuition in Fine Arts and Decorative Art should not be separated at all. All training should take place in workshops conducted in a spirit of community and with a 'brotherly relationship between master and apprentice"" (Ibidem, p. 252). Another milestone appeared to be the William Morris's theory (see Clamp, 1987, pp. 40–53; Morris, 2008). He learned tapestry-weaving to acquire an insight into the process which must govern design.<sup>2</sup> In contrast with concepts of designers as mere decorators, Morris' educational methods emphasised organic inter-relation between material, working process, purpose and aesthetic form. In the fashion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism, he yearned for the Middle Ages. Morris preferred a "wholesome social position of art, and consequently, beauty"; as well as (similarly the Nazarens) idea, that artists together with craftsmen should be educated in workshops<sup>3</sup> (Pevsner, 2018, pp. 259–260).<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, Pevsner asserts, that the most important steps in the reformation of art education was not taken in Britain, but in Germany. It was Alfred Lichtwark (and his Kunsterziehungs<sup>5</sup>), who came with the cardinal opinion: "Art, because it is the expression of the creative powers in man, must be made the centre-piece of all education. The school of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, too exclusively intellectual, has completely neglected the artistic faculties which exist in every child. Thus life became drab and mechanized" (Lichtwark in Pevsner, 2018, p. 266). The second key moment occured, when Kunstgewerbeschulen<sup>6</sup> adopted a method of teaching in workshops (1902).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The quotations are taken from H. Semper: G. Semper, ein Bild seines Lebens und Wirkens, Berlin, (1880, p. 21) in Pevsner, 2018.

 $<sup>^{2}</sup>$  The importance of weaving in an educational or scientific processes was also proven by Ada K. Dietz, who used the artistic craft for an algebra, to visualise multivariate polynomials. As an outcome, she published her famous work Algebraic *Expressions in Handworen Textiles* (1949).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The importance of the workshop as an educational method for the art education – not just in fine arts, but also in the theatrical field is stressed in the text of Eva Kušnírová (2019, s. 164): "The aesthetic interaction, that is a condition of aesthetic experience, thus establishes an aesthetic relationship between the viewer or recipient and the actor or object, while the possibility of experiencing the aesthetic situation is not unilateral. To the same extent, where a recipient is invited to experience that aesthetic condition, the actors may also benefit from such aesthetic condition, especially when it comes to a creative workshop where do students (and thus, inexperienced artists) participate [...]".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In his famous work Useful Work v. Useless Toil, originally published in 1888 (especially praised and quoted by Marxists), William Morris (2008, p. 100) wrote a critical remark on an account of the academic art schooling and revealed it as principally elitist: "At present, all education is directed towards the end of fitting people to take their places in the hierarchy of commerce - these as masters, those as workmen. The education of the masters is more ornamental than that of the workmen, but it is commercial still; and even at the ancient universities learning is but little regarded, unless it can in the long run be made to pay".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The key publication on Lichtwark's art education concept is *Alfred Lichtwark: Kunsterziehung als Kulturpolitik* by Nobumasa Kiyonaga (2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Schools of arts and crafts or schools of applied arts were a kind of vocational arts schools established in Germanspeaking countries since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them existed until the 1920s, afterwards they were merged with academies of art or universities. The good example of such a combined institution is the Slovak Academy of



Unlike Morris' Britain art schooling, Werkbund-movement did not decline machine industry, oppositely, they understood, that besides handwork, new art education must concern machinery.

Germany's aspirations were directed by men who knew that architecture and design would be more essential to an authentic style of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than painting and sculpture, and who acted accordingly. In two centres above all the re-birth of the academy of art was achieved; at Weimar, where Gropius founded and developed the Bauhaus, and at Berlin, where under Bruno Paul, the famous academy was completely amalgamated with the Kunstgewerbeschule. The curriculum of the Walter Gropius' school was clearly conceived to serve this programme. It consisted of practical instruction in the use of stone, wood, metal, glass, clay, textiles, pigments; and of formal instruction, which was divided as follows: study of nature of materials, study of geometry, construction and model-making; and study of design according to volume, colour and composition (Pevsner, 2018, p. 276).

Nonetheless, in the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's (1994) sociologic thinking, academy, above of all of art schools still has the most intensive *consecrating power* and academy also disposes of the variety of mechanisms of consecration and preservation of the game; it provides belief in the game, or – in Bourdieu's terminology – *libido artistica*. From all of mechanisms, I would like to highlight two: the "apparatus of the competition and prize giving"<sup>7</sup>; and the second one: so called *chef d'oeuvre*, masterpiece or magnum opus. In the candidate's fledgling career, this is no longer perceived as a training work, it is the best artwork of one's studies and the first "mature work", the product of an artist. It represents a "portal", a ritual artefact or, rather to say a "ticket" for entering the art field as an artist. We might admit that these two old academic mechanisms are still functioning. To suggest, in spite of many revolutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century art education development, art college was the apparent heir of the Bauhaus legacy and of the aforementioned reformation processes.

### Community as a heart of Black Mountain College

Black Mountain College was founded in order to provide a place where tested and proved methods of education were used freely and new methods were tried out in a purely experimental spirit. Initially, it was not established as an art school. The curriculum embraced mathematics (prof. Drier), psychology (prof. Hickley), English (prof. Martin), classics (prof. Rice), economy (prof. Boyden), weaving (Anni Albers, formerly Bauhaus) and art (Josef Albers, formerly Bauhaus). At the same time, the college was a social

Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, which has been from the beginning of its existence (1949) an amalgamation of the fine arts and crafts education institution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In case of the "art competition" and prize-giving Lukáš Makky (2019) has pointed out, that the institutional apparatus confuses aesthetic value with a potential economic value. Let us add, the prize can be perceived as a form of financial evaluation, which determines the position of an artwork on the art market. We can admit, that art market can "sell" also works of frauds, without high quality aesthetic value, but, at the same time, art market is a useful tool for a spreading artistic artifacts to the people's lives. Of course, there is no doubt, that art market has still bourgeois roots and it has elitist character.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Above all academic institutional appliances, I would like to emphasise the entrance exam, which is in our cultural milieu called "talent exam". For example, official requirements for applicants at Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (Czech Republic) are based on a drawing according to a live model, or, in the case of sculpture, on a "realistic portrait", bust. For more information, see official web pages of the academy. Available at: <htps://www.avu.cz/sites/default/files/document/5958/2020\_2021\_prijimaci\_rizeni\_mgr\_a\_navazujici\_mgr\_stu dium.pdf >.

unit. I quote the bulletin foreword by college founders, where the art as a focus of the curriculum is articulated (Bulletin 3, originally published in 1933-1934):

"Dramatics, Music, and the Fine Arts, which often exist precariously on the fringes of the curriculum, are regarded as an integral part of the life of the College and of importance equal to that of subjects that usually occupy the centre of the curriculum. In fact, in the early part of the student's career, they are considered of greater importance; [...] because of the conviction that, through some kind of art-experience, which is not necessarily the same as self-expression, the student can come to the realization of order in the world; and by being sensitized to movement, form, sound, and other media of the arts, gets a firmer control of himself and his environment than is not possible through purely intellectual effort?" (Anonymous, 2017).

The curriculum, organisational structure, and the core social justice values of its central faculty were all based in the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey's magnum opus on the topic of education, *Democracy and education*, perhaps the central philosophical text of progressivism in education, was published in 1916; nevertheless, John Andrew Rice and Theodore Drier, two of the founders of the Black Mountain College continued to use *Democracy and Education* as a guidebook for the foundation of the college two decades later (Fischer, 2010).

Besides the college founders John Rice and Theodore Drier, probably the most influential personality at the college was Josef Albers. Entering the Bauhaus in 1920 in his early thirties, he had previously taught at primary school and later art, coming into contact with the flourishing reform education movement in Germany. Albers followed John Dewey (whose Democracy and Education appeared in Germany in 1916): its *learning by doing* rallied progressive educators throughout Europe (Díaz, 2008, p. 280). To paint a picture of his educational methods, let me quote a journalist, who was observing the college atmosphere for several months in 1935: "*The courses in art which Professor Josef Albers teaches at Black Mountain College are, surprisingly, not for artists but for people.* [...] It is a standing joke, that the only course that was originally intended to be exclusively for students majoring in fine arts, is attended by nearly anyone in the college, students and faculty. It is painting seminar, which Professor Albers conducts informally, talking about any phase of painting he may choose" (Young, 2017). For the purpose of this paper, I would like to highlight the principles of Josef Alber's art theory which is organically linked with his educational methods and opinions on education and society as such.

## Josef Albers's art education

To select and differentiate core problems of Albers's theory of art education, I suggest tracing these 3 topics: form, experience and perception (better to say – vision) which is in Albers's thoughts linked with ethics and politics. To Josef Albers, art itself was the experimental arm of culture; as well as an investigation into better forms that were the prerequisite of cultural production and progress. As we can see, for him art, experiment and education were an organic complex situated in a social and philosophical framework. To Albers, every perceivable thing had a form and every form had a meaning. But through routine, the richness of the visual and material world was frequently overlooked. Therefore, he started his courses for example with mirror writing or rendering the script in the non-dominant hand and other simple exercises aiming for de-familiarization for challenging sterile habits of observation (Díaz, 2008, pp. 260–265). As he wrote in his "educational manifesto" *Concerning Art Instruction* (originally published in Bulletin 2, 1934): "Our first concern is not to turn out artists. We regard our elementary art work primarily as a means of general training for all students" (Albers, 2017).



Albers believed that understanding the meaning of a form is the indispensable preliminary condition for culture. Culture is the ability to determine the more meaningful form, the better appearance, the better behaviour. Culture is concerned with quality and art is a part of culture, and, therefore – it is its proof and measurement (Díaz, 2008, p. 265).

His course Art Instruction was divided into three disciplines: Drawing, Werkhlere (work with materials and forms) and Colour.<sup>9</sup> As he declared, drawing - we regard as a graphic language. We cannot communicate graphically what we do not see. Drawing consists of a visual and of a manual act. For the visual act one must learn to see the form as a three dimensional phenomenon. For the manual act the hand must be sensitized to the direction of will. With this in mind we begin each drawing lesson with general technical exercises: measuring, dividing, estimating; rhythms of measure and form, disposing, modifications of form (Albers, 2017). It is clear, that he excluded the so called expressive drawing (which was typical for abstract expressionists and led to release of subjective, individual emotional forms). Albers (2017) argues, that this type of exercise hardly results in a solid capability which alone can give the foundation and freedom for a more personal work. For this reason, the elementary drawing instruction is a handicraft instruction, strictly objective, unadorned through style and mannerism.

Albers explains: "In Werklehre we cultivate particularly feeling for material and space. We want reach a general constructive thinking, especially a building thinking, which must be the basis of every work with every material" (Albers, 2017). In short, Werklehre is training in adaptability in the whole field of construction and in constructive thinking in general. Finally, the Colour discipline was designed to prepare for a disciplined use of colour. Colour was always relational for Albers, as he argued: "[...] we consider colour first as working material and study its qualities; we study systematically the tonal possibilities of colours, their relativity, their interaction and influence on each other" (Albers, 2017). These fundamental studies occupied half a year. The striking aspect of the aforementioned postulates is slowness and discipline, but not discipline as a mere drill (in academic terms); it is a new concept of discipline in art education which is, paradoxically anti-academic and invented on the grounds where traditional academic preparation failed.

Albers advocated experiment without aiming to make a product. The goals of courses were not necessarily to produce anything useful but rather to train observation. He saw experimentation as the pre-eminent method by which the new and changing experiences of modernity could be expressed, and its modern problems addressed and he envisioned its practice as a disciplined testing process encouraging innovative visual articulations. Albers saw freedom for exploration and experimentation as antithetical to the negative freedom of someone who is a passive recipient of specific rights (freedom from something not freedom for something) (Díaz, 2008, p. 281).

The problem of perception has for Albers deep social, or rather ethical roots (see Díaz, 2008, p. 260; Barry, 2015). In his notes on design written in 1958 (*Dimensions of Design*) Albers (2014, p. 280) stresses the moral issue: "*With this I point at design as an outspoken human affair and its concern with quality and selection and consequently at its ethical implications*". He praises design as an exclusively human acting, planning, producing, creating, making order. It is necessary to learn design, but really from the beginning, from so called elementary studies. He believes in a systematic step-by-step training of observation and articulation, that is, of clear seeing first, and of precise formulating the second. Albers (2014, p. 281) concludes: "*Basic design as a grammar of visual language cultivates 'thinking in situations'*."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> These are supplemented by exhibitions and discussions of old and modern art, of handicraft and industrial products, of typographic and photographic work.

Through thinking about design, observing and perception Albers advocates art education as a core of democratic schooling, and training in art as a necessary social "equipment" not just for minority of intellectuals, but also for manually working people. "As he stressed, empowering individuals with attentive perception laid the foundation for an educated citizenry challenging regressive, outdated customs and sowing greater freedom in the world. [...] Indeed, Albers's audience is invited to extend this concern with destabilizing vision to other aspects of how the world is perceived, represented, and understood" (Díaz, 2008, pp. 275–281).

One might be misleading that Albers's mode of Geometric Abstraction is also a manifestation of avantgarde elitist position, but in fact it is far from the detachment of art from social conditions advocated by "formalist" critics such as Clement Greenberg at the time. In the Art Instruction, the painter offers: "We recognize that although our optical vision is correct, our overemphasis on the psychic vision often makes us see incorrectly [...] For this reason, we learn to test our seeing, and systematically study foreshortening, overlapping, the continuity of tectonic and of movement, distinction between nearness and distance." As Eva Díaz (2008, p. 273) pointed out, this can be illustrated by his work, oil painting Variant: Southern Climate (1948) [Figure 1]: "The oscillation between foreground and background emphasizes the inherent temporality of the process of perception and brings home the fundamental ambiguity of seeking any final, stable resolution to the pictorial problems." Constant comparing and correcting, abandoning pursuit for a final and perfect solution plays also a role in a social life, forasmuch as all evaluation stems from the comparison. Let me quote from Albers' (2014, p. 282) thoughts on design maintaining his formatting:

"So I am looking forward to a new philosophy addressed to all designers -in industry – in craft – in art – and showing anew that aesthetics are ethics, that ethics are source and measure of aesthetics."

Albers would add that he saw art also as an epistemological project, as a form of knowledge. Let us enclose this chapter by Albers' (2017) words from the Art Instruction: "For me studying art is to be on an ethical basis. Better design alters habits of perception and can improve society - a nervy claim, perhaps, and yet a thoughtful



argument for artistic responsibility."

Figure 1: (c) Josef Albers: *Variant/Adobe: Southern Climate*; oil, masonite, 31 x 57 cm.



### Conclusion

To conclude, students of Black Mountain College recognized that as pedagogue Josef Albers trained them not to produce work that looked like his own but, with the help of his methodology of experiment, to represent the world liberated of sterile habit.

Robert Rauschenberg (in Díaz, 2008, p. 281) praised Albers' method:

"I'm still learning what he taught me, because what he taught had to do with the entire visual world. He didn't teach you how to 'do' the art. The focus was always on your personal sense of looking. When he taught water color, for example, he taught specific properties of water color - not how to make a good water-color picture. When he taught drawing, the taught the efficient functioning of line. Color was about flexibilities and the complex relationships that colors have with one another. I consider Albers the most important teacher I've ever had, and I'm sure he considered me one of his poorest students."

What is the general legacy of Black Mountain College? The cooperation of different faculties and disciplines with an art as a core of education, as a synthesis of solving problems in humanities as well as in natural sciences – this should be concerned for the sake of contemporary education, especially art education at so-called academies or art colleges. Albers' educational practice at Black Mountain College was a solution for this "missing link". He explained how form, seeing, design and art are related to culture as a continuous selection of more meaningful forms, as concerning quality. We have to admit, that in spite of the endeavours at the Black Mountain College and absolutely striking necessity of the "wholesome social position of art", the period of 1930s still represents the peak in thinking about the position of art education in the educational system as well as about the position of art in a social life.

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Mgr. Jana Migašová, PhD. University of Presov in Presov Faculty of Arts Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture Presov/Slovakia jana.migasova@unipo.sk

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/



# Descriptivism in Meta-Ontology of Music: A Plea for Reflective Equilibrium

Lisa Giombini; lisa.giombini@libero.it, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3631769

**Abstract:** In this paper, I investigate one popular view in current methodological debate about musical ontology, namely, descriptivism. According to descriptivism, the task of musical ontology is to offer a description of the 'structure of our thought' (Kania, 2008, p. 437) about musical works, as it manifests itself in actual musical practices. In this regard, descriptivists often appeal to our pre-theoretical intuitions to ground ontological theories of musical works.

This method, however, is worrisome, as such intuitions are unstable and contradictory. For example, there is a broad variety of intuitions in our musical practice concerning what counts as an authentic performance of a musical work. All such intuitions reflect at least a part of actual practice; however, they are in conflict with each other. This raises a problem, for how can they thus represent a reliable basis for our ontology? A further worry for descriptivism concerns the triviality of the knowledge it gives us access to. If, according to descriptivism, the task of musical ontologists is simply to codify the regularities found in our intuitive thought or discourse about practice, then how can the resulting theories be informative at all with regard to the object of their concern?

Keywords: Meta-Ontology of Music; Descriptivism; Reflective Equilibrium

In this paper, I investigate one popular view in current methodological debate about musical ontology<sup>1</sup>, namely, descriptivism. A few famous exceptions aside<sup>2</sup>, the majority of scholars in the debate lean today towards what has been called a 'descriptive' metaphysical approach (Strawson, 1959, p. 9) one concerned with providing an ontological theory of musical works that proves consistent with our intuitive thought and discourses about actual musical practice<sup>3</sup>, rather than with the demands of abstract metaphysics.

One main worry for descriptivism concerns the reliability of what it takes as the main sources for ontological theorizing, i.e., the pre-theoretic intuitions that are implicit in, or govern our artistic practices. Sometimes these intuitions are contradictory, and support opposing ontological theories on the same subject. Sometimes they are just vague or confused, and do not offer us much guidance to decide on puzzle cases. For example, there is a broad variety of intuitions in our musical practice concerning what counts as an authentic performance of a musical work. All such intuitions reflect at least a part of actual practice; however, they are in conflict with each other. This raises a problem, for how can they thus represent a trustworthy basis for our ontology? A further worry for descriptivism concerns the triviality of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Though musical ontology represents my main focus here, all the considerations made in this paper can be extended to the ontology of art broadly construed. This is because the ontology of music is generally developed within, and in relation to, the more comprehensive framework of the ontology of art.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> One notable example is Dodd (2012, 2017), who can be considered, a committed assertor of revisionism in musical meta-ontology.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 'Actual musical practice', here and in the rest of the paper, stands for the different activities of composers, performers, critics and educated audiences.

the knowledge it gives us access to. If, according to descriptivism, the task of musical ontologists is simply to codify the regularities found in our intuitive thought or discourse about practice (Kania, 2008), then how can the resulting theories be informative at all with regard to the object of their concern?

Despite the extent of these worries, I argue that a possible strategy to rescue descriptivism against criticism is the so-called method of *reflective equilibrium*, as originally envisaged by John Rawls (1971) in the field of philosophical ethics. Adopting reflective equilibrium may provide descriptivism with a procedure to filter or systematize pre-theoretical intuitions, thus making it more resistant to the problems generated by the instability and inconsistency of intuitions. Recourse to reflective equilibrium, on the other hand, may give descriptivists a tool to revise some aspects of their data in light of reflections that lead to the most coherent ontological theory of musical works. In this way, ontology retains its *explanatory validity* (see: Kraut, 2014; Davies, 2017).

In what follows, I begin by offering a brief overview of current debate in musical ontology. A great part of the discussion seems driven today by a meta-ontological concern, aimed to establish how musical ontology needs to be done, i.e., its proper methods and purposes. I then present *descriptivism* for how it has been construed by some of its proponents (Kania, 2008; Thomasson, 2004; 2005; 2006). After considering the main worries faced by descriptivist-oriented theories, I discuss the possible benefits of applying reflective equilibrium to a descriptivist ontology of art.

## 1. Introduction

Throughout the past decades, the ontology of music has attracted an ever-increasing deal of attention on the part of analytic philosophers. The causes are a matter for speculation, but two are at least likely. First, the contemporary renaissance in fundamental metaphysics, which has had such major impact on analytic philosophy in general and on analytic aesthetics in particular (Thomasson, 2004, p. 92).<sup>4</sup> Second, the growing recognition that musical works present their own independently interesting dilemmas for anyone concerned with the discipline of ontology. Out of the astounding number of issues that have been brought to discussion, the following debates can be isolated.

The first is what Julian Dodd (2008, p. 1113) calls 'the categorial debate': What kind of ontological category do musical works belong to? Some classical positions contend that works of music are sets or classes of performances (Goodman, 1968), abstract entities (Wollheim, 1968) eternal sound-types (Dodd, 2007), initiated types (Levinson, 1980; 1990), etc.

A second debate revolves around what Dodd (2008, p. 1113) calls the 'individuation question': What conditions must a performance satisfy to be an *authentic* performance of a musical work? Answer to this question implies determining what kinds of properties are essential to a work's identity (Davies, 2001). Whether an authentic performance of a work has to comply with the script (Goodman, 1968) or with composer's instrumentation, tempo and dynamics (Levinson, 1979) depends indeed on which of these features are considered essential.

Finally, there is the issue raised by non-standard musical genres: How to think of those musical forms that do not belong to the classical tradition? Philosophers committed to the 'comparatist' debate (Kania, 2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In fact, one may wonder how ontology could flourish precisely within analytic philosophy, i.e., within a kind of philosophy that, for many years, was hostile to the very idea of metaphysics. Arguably, ontology became respectable again in 1948, when Quine published his famous paper titled On What There Is. It was Quine – against the Carnapian tradition – who made ontology a serious subject.



maintain that many arguments in the ontology of classical music are simply not applicable to music such as jazz, rock and pop (Kania, 2006; Young – Matheson 2000; Gracyk 1996; Pouivet 2010) and that these genres deserve independent investigation.

## 1.2 Deflationist Trends and the Methodological Turn in Musical Ontology

In recent years, perhaps as a side-effect of this newly matured interest, deflationism<sup>5</sup> about the whole enterprise of musical ontology has spread in the literature. Many have replied negatively to the question of whether ontology can tell us anything but trivial about music, and critics have probed the value of each debate in the field.

Some have doubted that *categorial* discussions are *genuine* in the first place. James Young (2014) has argued, for instance, that the issue of finding out the fundamental ontological category to which musical works belong should be dismissed as a "pseudo-problem". Suppose all musical works were eternal sound-types that are discovered and not created. How could this have any impact on our aesthetic appreciation of them? (Young, 2011, p. 297; 2014, p. 15).

Alternatively, criticisms against the *identification* debate have been raised by Aaron Ridley (2004), who denies that the ontology of music will ever provide us with any relevant aesthetic payoff. A sensible philosophical relationship to music should consist, according to Ridley, in figuring out how to *evaluate* musical performances, but the self-representing value-neutral ontological debate over musical works is irrelevant in this regard (Ridley, 2004, pp. 113–114).

More recently, there have also been arguments against the allegedly overly-complicated *comparatist* approaches to musical ontology. The problem here is that identifying a different ontological category for each musical genre or tradition seems to multiply entities beyond necessity (Kania, 2017). We may want to distinguish works in rock music from works in folk, indie, progressive rock and so on, but this looks like a slippery slope: how far can we go (Dodd, 2014)?

As a way out of the deflationist trend, an increasing number of scholars have recently started to shift the focus of attention from first-order debates<sup>6</sup> to issues concerning *methodology*, i.e., the procedurals, methods and criteria that lie at the basis of ontology. One shared feeling in this regard is that in the absence of "agreed-upon methodological standards", controversies in the field of musical ontology will show little hope of being resolved (Thomasson, 2006). In this vein, something as a 'methodological turn' has started to make its way in the philosophical community. In a nutshell, participants in the methodological debate search for adequate answers to three fundamental questions:

1. *What* are the suitable objects or data for musical ontology? Which sources should we consider while formulating an ontological theory? Which may be relevant and which may not? 2. *How* ought ontological theorizing to be accomplished? What norms or criteria should guide us in formulating an ontological theory? 3. *Why* shall one engage in the ontology of music? What is (or should be) the *purpose* of ontological investigations about music? What kind of knowledge do we hope to obtain?

These three questions are obviously interconnected. Different data seem to require different methodological treatments, and one's understanding of the purpose of ontology impinge on the method

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I take 'deflationism' here as the view according to which answers to ontological questions are just trivial or verbal ones, and that ontological disputes are therefore non-substantial.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> It is common to distinguish 'first-order' debates made within ontological discourse, from 'higher-order' debates made about ontological discourse.

one chooses to adopt. Ultimately, it seems that one cannot separate the question of how we should do musical ontology from the question of what we can expect musical ontology to do for us. For instance, if one takes musical ontology as an enterprise able to *add* to the sum of our knowledge by discovering new and potentially debunking facts about musical phenomena, along the line of the empirical sciences, certain conclusions on its proper procedures would follow. Alternatively, if one thinks that the task of musical ontology is to enable us to attain a clearer understanding of what is implicit in our musical practice, opposite conclusions would obtain with respect to methodology.

In the literature, these two approaches are respectively defined *revisionism* – the idea that our best ontological theories can debunk our folk-intuitions about musical phenomena –, and *descriptivism* – the idea that the task of ontology is to describe and/or codify the folk-intuitions shared by participants in the musical practice. As renown, the distinction between revisionism and descriptivism can be traced back to a tradition coming prominently from Peter Strawson (1959), who introduces it to discuss the broader issue of determining the task of general metaphysics.

In the following section, I will present and discuss descriptivism for how it has been construed by some of its major proponents in the literature about musical ontology. I will then consider some of the major problems in which this methodology seems to incur.

## 2. Descriptivism

In Strawson's view, a descriptive metaphysics is one that "describes the actual structure of our thought about the world" (Strawson, 1959, p. 9) – our perception of the world for how it is reflected in ordinary thought and language.<sup>7</sup> According to this general characterization, descriptive metaphysics' main aim is the finding of reasons for what we believe "on instinct". Instinctive beliefs form what Strawson calls "our conceptual scheme", a repertoire of pre-theoretical intuitions, thoughts and insights that shape our common-sensical image of the world and remain somehow stable beyond and before the philosophical revolutions caused by the changing of metaphysical paradigms<sup>8</sup>. Making this core of shared concepts explicit and contributing to their clarification is precisely what Strawson thinks the business of the descriptivist metaphysician should be. In this scenario, metaphysics is not committed toward discovering new truths about a particular issue, for "there are no new truths to be discovered" (Strawson, 1959, p. 10), but relies upon the method of conceptual analysis; indeed: "a close examination of the actual use of words is the best, and indeed the only sure, way in philosophy" (Strawson, 1959, p. 9).

Significantly, one first attempt to import methodological descriptivism in the art-ontological debate was made by Jerrold Levinson.<sup>9</sup> If there is anything like a 'conceptual scheme' in the field of music<sup>10</sup>, Levinson

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Revisionary metaphysics, on the contrary, is one that "is concerned to produce a better structure" (Strawson, 1959, p. 9), presumably one that pictures the world as it is, independently of our thought about it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> "There are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all [...] It is with these, their interconnections, and the structure that they form, that a descriptive metaphysics will be primarily concerned" (Strawson, 1959, pp. 11– 12).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> At least according to the reconstruction provided by Kania (2008). Kania claims that Levinson's paper has produced a sort of methodological 'turnaround' in the debate about musical ontology, by setting out a whole new set of priorities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> This is, however, controversial. To adapt Strawson's notion of 'conceptual scheme' to the musical domain, one should assume that there exists something as a perennial and a-historical 'musical common sense'. This assumption, however, can be criticized both diachronically, by saying that theories on music has evolved throughout history, and synchronically, by considering that different cultural and social traditions have their own different pre-theoretical conception of music (see: Ruta, 2013).



contends in a famous paper (1980), it must be the task of ontology to unearth it. This point is made clear in his defense of the commonly-held intuition that musical works are created rather than discovered. We should hold onto 'creationism', Levinson argues, because this "*is one of the most firmly entrenched of our beliefs about art*", and what's more, one which is really ubiquitous (Levinson, 1990, p. 216). More generally, Levinson's concern in the paper is with demonstrating that *priority* must be given to the demands of the actual musical *practice* rather than to the demands of *abstract metaphysics*. An ontology which favors abstract theoretical virtues such as parsimony and consistency to adherence to musical practice is doomed to lose its grip. This is why, according to Levinson, only a descriptivist methodology can obtain for musical ontology.

In recent decades, many philosophers have complied with Levinson's call for a descriptivist musical ontology. A nice example is Amie Thomasson (2004; 2005; 2006). In her writings about art ontology, Thomasson argues that investigating artworks' ontological status means analyzing the assumptions that are embodied in the discourses of those "competent speakers who ground and reground reference of our art terms" such as 'work of music' (Thomasson, 2005, p. 226). In Thomasson's view, these assumptions are conceived as forming something analogous to Strawson's conceptual scheme, a rather general background conception that supports structure for all related artistic practices such as performing, analysing, criticizing etc. The proper way to approach art ontology is therefore, according to Thomasson, by paying attention to how this background conception grounds the reference of art-kind terms as used in the ordinary discourses of art-connoisseurs (Thomasson, 2004; 2005). To investigate the ontological status of a sonata, for example, we need to analyze the rules that determine the conditions of application of the term in the context of the relevant practices. Ontological inquiries should thus consist, according to Thomasson, in a 'conceptual analysis' of the way in which musical and art concepts are used by competent speakers; the appropriate methodology being to codify "the assumptions about ontological status built into the relevant practices and beliefs of those dealing with works of art, to systematize these, and put them into philosophical terms" (Thomasson, 2004, pp 87-88).

Another version of descriptivism is defended by Andrew Kania (2008; 2012). Kania takes as his starting point the fact that we have certain ontological intuitions about musical and artistic works that are "rooted in our practice" – that we believe that musical works come to existence via an act of composition, that they are repeatable etc. (Kania, 2008, p. 431). These intuitions, he argues, should constitute the basis of ontological investigations. Indeed, according to Kania, musical and art works, *qua* cultural artefacts, are *determined* in their nature and properties on the system of beliefs that governs complex socio-artistic practices (Kania, 2008, p. 438). This means, according to Kania, that musical works do not possess a nature which is *independent* of the way we conceive them in the context of actual practice: "*how musical works are depends upon how people think about them*" (Kania, 2008, p. 438). As a consequence, what ontological inquiries must do is to try to describe and make explicit our pre-theoretic thought about antworks" (Kania, 2008, p. 437), is thus the only suitable methodology for musical ontology. But if "*in proposing a theory of the ontology of art we are really offering a description of the 'structure of our thought' about artworks, then the existence and nature of such philosophical arcana as types, properties, and so on, look like they might be beside the point" (Kania, 2008, p. 437)*.

## 2.1 Descriptivism's Conceptual Structure

While the list of contemporary philosophers embracing one or another type of descriptivism could go on<sup>11</sup>, we have now sufficient ground to enucleate what seems to be the basic conceptual structure underlying descriptivism, as a methodology for musical ontology. For this purpose, we may refer to the three central questions mentioned above.

1. *What*-question (what are the suitable objects or data for musical ontology?): According to descriptivism, our *pre-theoretical intuitions*, as implicit in wide-spread social practices regarding the arts and music, provide us with the central data to be explained by ontological means. Basic facts about the ontological status of artworks – their existence, identity and persistence conditions – can be 'extracted' from such intuitive data found in the actual practices.

2. *Hom*-question (how ought aesthetic theorizing to be accomplished?): in the descriptivist picture, the criteria to be used in construing and evaluating different ontological proposals rely fundamentally in the *coherence* with practice. This means that no correct ontological theory of musical works can substantially overthrow our pre-theoretical ways of thinking of the various artworks.

3. *Why*-question (what is the purpose of doing musical ontology?): according to descriptivism, the main aim of art ontology is to capture and describe the way in which people think and talk about artworks in the context of the actual social practices related to the different arts.

This has a bearing on the *limits* of the possible knowledge acquirable through ontological investigations. In cases where our practices are unclear about certain aspects – say, how many mistakes can be made in if a performance is to count as an instance of a certain work, etc. – our ontological picture itself shall be vague. As a consequence, there may simply be no *ultimate answer* to these questions. Indeed, according to descriptivism, either ontological disputes are answerable through analysis of our practices and examination of our folk intuitions, or they must be considered as *unanswerable*. Since our ontological knowledge is gleaned through human conception, it may turn out to be just 'ontologically shallow', in the sense that "*there is nothing more to discover about them than what our practices themselves determine*" (Thomasson, 2005, p. 228).

## 3. Some Worries for Descriptivism

If my reconstruction is correct, and despite the contemporary success of descriptivist approaches in art ontology<sup>12</sup>, we have *prima facie* a number of reasons to worry about descriptivism's main assumptions. In particular, what strikes one as particularly troublesome is the role attributed in this view to our pre-theoretical intuitions. One can notice, in the first place, a confusion in terminology. How are we to figure out what descriptivism means by the term 'intuitions'? Throughout the history of philosophy, the notion of 'intuition' has taken on an enormous number of connotations. Descriptivists do not seem to be concerned with the nuance the notion acquires in Kantian philosophy, nor do they seem to refer to something as an inner sense or a special faculty of any kind. But then, do they consider the intuitions

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> A further form of descriptivism is endorsed by Guy Rohrbaugh (2003; 2013) Whatever artworks are metaphysically, Rohrbaugh claims, first and foremost they are the objects of our thought, discourse, appreciation and evaluation (Rohrbaugh, 2013, p. 29). Therefore, according to Rohrbaugh, ontology should be consistent with and responsive to artistic practice, if it wants to understand the objects of its concern. However, Rohrbaugh resist the idea that the task of ontology is limited to capture the way we intuitively think of artworks in our artistic practices. <sup>12</sup> Julian Dodd calls it "*the begemonic thesis in the metaontology of art*" (Dodd, 2012, p. 1050).



philosophers of music are supposed to work with innate *beliefs*? Or are they rather taken as spontaneous unreflective *judgments*? Should they be considered as 'self-evidently true' or merely 'appealing'?

Secondly, and whatever definition one may choose to adopt, a stronger set of concerns addresses the idea that intuitions may *warrant* our knowledge about the relevant things. This line of reasoning seems based on a simple analogy. Just as perception, in empirical science, provides us with evidence of how things stand in the extra-mental world, intuitions provide us with the relevant evidence about the *ontological status* of the things we are concerned with. But is this analogy tenable? Do intuitions really constitute a reliable basis on which to ground our ontology?

## 3.1 Instability of Intuitions

The first standard problem for musical descriptivist concerns the *unstable* nature of intuitions. Indeed, we all know that more often than not our intuitions are variable and mutable. Our practices and beliefs regarding music and the arts are not constant in time but change according to period, culture, social contingencies, and the intrinsic development of art itself. Throughout history, different groups of people have constructed different vocabularies for speaking about music according to their personal interests and practices; that is, they have referred to musical works as entities with varying identity and persistence conditions, even if they have apparently been using the very same words to describe them. For example, at Bach's time what people meant when talking about 'music' was obviously different from what Beethoven's contemporaries indicated with the same word. Accordingly, Lydia Goehr (2007) has contended that the modern 'work-concept' – the concept of the multiply instanceable musical work – didn't have any 'regulative force' in the musical practice before the nineteenth-century, in the sense that it did not shape how music was viewed at that time. In the same way, one can argue that the use of the term 'musical work' has changed after Cage's 4'33''.<sup>13</sup>

More generally, the issue is that if our beliefs, intentions and practices regarding the arts vary across time and space, then the insights they give us about ontological issues will vary accordingly; and this ultimately implies that our ontological description of the (art) world will change along with how we think and act. This variation, however, not only undermines the claim that our ways of talking and thinking may provide us with stable knowledge of ontological facts, but also exposes descriptivism to the risk of cultural relativism. The point is tricky, since evidence of cultural and historical variation cannot be denied. Thus, either one simply foregoes descriptivism or one has to assume that the ontological truth about the thing referred to by our musical discourse changes when the use of language changes. But then one has also to face the following: that people in different epochs or cultures are really speaking about 'different things' when they refer to works of music, so the very possibility of a mutual understanding needs to be explained.

## 3.2 Inconsistency of Intuitions

If the argument for variation were the only challenge to descriptivism, however, one would not need to be too concerned. Differences in intuitions may indeed be cause for some concern, but they do not strike descriptivism at its heart.<sup>14</sup> A much more problematic issue for descriptivism tackles the intrinsic conflict

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Though whether Cage's piece can properly count as a musical work is debatable (see: Davies, 1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Indeed, our ontological categories themselves may be thought as dynamic, arbitrary, unsystematic and so on, in ways that reflect these features of the intuitions. This consideration may eventually lead philosophers to embrace an

between our intuitions in a certain domain. People normally have conflicting intuitions, intuitions that are mutually inconsistent and contradictory; just think of intuitions about, say, which party is going to win an election, or what the chances are that next winter will be warmer than the past one, and the like.

In the artistic domain as well, our intuitions are often chaotic and inconsistent. Musical practice looks realistically more like a jungle of muddled actions and opinions than a well-ordered landscape of shared judgments and attitudes from which to draw any consistent evidence. Expert people, i.e. professional musicians, practitioners and critics, are far from possessing a common set of ideas when it comes to the use of the relevant concepts. No easy consensus is to be found in their 'ordinary discourses'; at least none that supplies us with clear and consistent answers to our philosophical problem. Therefore, when one tries to answer ontological questions by examining musical practices, what one gets are a number of different and mutually contradictory intuitive answers.

The case of musical ontologists is paradigmatic here. Different philosophers, mostly based on their individual intuitions, have varying ideas about what the ontological category of musical works is, ideas that are incompatible and sometimes irreconcilable. As we have seen, some claim that musical works are abstract types that exist for all time, unchanging in their constitutive properties, and therefore are merely discovered by their composers (Wolterstorff, 1980; Kivy, 1983; Dodd, 2000; 2007). Others find this position unsustainable, and in particular see the 'eternalist' consequence to be deeply unintuitive (Levinson, 1980; 1990). Significantly, both claims have been argued for on the grounds that they satisfy our intuitions about the distinction between work and performance (Bartel, 2017, p. 349). But if even the philosophers' intuitions provide different answers at different times, then how can we trust the reliability of intuitions? The contradictory nature of intuitions, in other words, puts into question the very idea that they may represent something comparable to perception for guiding us to what is real, outside of our mental and linguistic structures. Indeed, if intuitions were a kind of 'perception' of ontological facts, or if they were *bona fide* reflections, objective mental representations of ontological data – judgments governed by norms of truth and validity – we probably won't disagree so often about which ones are true.

### 3.3 Triviality of Intuitions

A third, broader, concern for descriptivism addresses the way in which it *uses* musical intuitions to build up an ontological theory. Even granted that intuitions represent a reliable source from which to draw our data, if, according to descriptivism, ontological investigations must confine themselves to *mirror* these data, then it is difficult to understand what kind of knowledge about musical phenomena they are to attain. In other words, in the descriptivist practice, we cannot obtain by means of an ontological inquiry any knowledge about the nature of musical works which is *additional to*, or simply *different from*, the knowledge already contained in our intuitions concerning musical practice. An ontology driven by a descriptive commandment – one aimed to describe, in Kania's terms, the 'structure of our thought', looks ultimately unable to account for any of the things it is meant to account for, namely the nature and role of artworks in artistic practices. Since descriptivist theories are not pretending to reflect reality in any objective way, but only to ratify how we conceive it, all of what they left us with is a report of what we say, our *façon de parler* of the artistic world.

For example, one might think that one contribution ontology could make to our musical knowledge is to help us clarify puzzle cases, i.e. cases in which our intuitions about one aspect of the practice are vague or

ontological historicism, in the sense of Ian Hacking (2004), that testifies to the complexity of the phenomena under examination (see: Giombini, 2017, pp. 255–260).



ambiguous – alleged instances of copyright infringement, for instance, where there is disagreement about how much one can copy a musical work without committing plagiarism. Admittedly, however, descriptivism cannot bring us any closer to whatever ontological 'truth' there is to know in these cases, since it can only ratify the ambiguity of our intuitions, as reflected in the practice. But if descriptivism only tells us what we already know, its intellectual contribution to the study of musical phenomena is trifle, at best – then why should one engage in ontological investigations altogether? Descriptivist methodology, thus, leaves the door open to deflationism, defined, as mentioned before, as the view that ontology is in the end a 'worthless' enterprise: "An incredible amount of effort and ingenuity has been invested in trying to find the one true ontology of musical works. It has been wasted" (Young, 2011, p. 297).

## 4. Reflective Equilibrium: a Possible Strategy?

Scepticism about intuition as a reliable source of ontology, together with concerns about the trifle results obtained by descriptivist approaches to musical ontology, may lead one to give up on such methodology altogether. This conclusion, however, might be hasty. It can indeed be argued that the last section presents a too rough interpretation of descriptivism, and that a more refined version of it might in fact be able to mitigate, if not resolve, the problems highlighted.

So what would this version be like? Ideally, this should be an account that enables one to revise the contradictory consequences of 'simple' descriptivism, while holding fast to its main premise, i.e., the primacy given to actual musical practice. In other words, since there are many mutually incompatible claims about the nature of art and musical works, and no less disagreement about pre-theoretical intuitions, what one needs is a procedure for determining *which* intuitions to give up and *which* to hold on to. To put it simply, what is required is a strategy for selecting which intuitions and claims to treat as central and which to consider marginal, and to justify those choices.

A possible solution in this sense is a method originally developed in the context of philosophical ethics by John Rawls (1971), who also coined the term, namely, *reflective equilibrium*. Rawls identifies the method in the work of Nelson Goodman and notes that it is not limited to social and political philosophy: Goodman for instance uses it to evaluate competing theories of deductive and inductive logic (Goodman, 1955, pp. 65–68). What's more, according to Rawls, we can retrospectively find usage of the method throughout the history of philosophy: he suggests that it goes as far back as Aristotle.

## 4.1 The Method

As a procedure, reflective equilibrium can be considered in analogy with the scientific method: we aim at building a theory that is able to fit with the relevant data together. But while for the scientific method the data are empirical observations, perceptions, and the like, for reflective equilibrium the data are our pre-theoretic intuitions, what are called, in Rawls' terms, "considered judgments". Considered judgments can be conceived of as judgments that, according to Rawls, we make "intuitively", yet "with the greatest confidence" (Rawls, 1971, p. 42). An example in aesthetics could be Levinson's 'most entrenched belief' that musical works are created.

Roughly, the method dictates that one should work back-and-forth between one's considered judgments on the one hand and plausible general principles on the other hand. 'Working back and forth' entails taking into examination various intuitions to revise, adjust or filter out those of them which turn out to be based on prejudice and inferential error. The process succeeds when we arrive at an acceptable level of coherence among the judgments that have stood up under rational examination, or that have been: "duly pruned and adjusted" (Rawls, 1971, p. 20) on the basis of theoretical principles such as coherence, simplicity, plausibility and the like. Reflective equilibrium represents thus both the *final goal* and the *process* by which we reflect on and revise our beliefs concerning an area of inquiry. One central point is that only after having been carefully selected, adjusted and mutually calibrated can our pre-theoretical intuitions assume theoretical relevance. Relevantly, indeed, no claim within the procedure is immune from revision. This does not imply, however, that any belief is equally susceptible to the same amount of revision. Intuitions that, for instance, enjoy a great many connections to many of our other intuitions are revisable, but demand parallel revision of a vast number of inferentially related beliefs. On the other hand, intuitions that have few connections to other intuitions are especially vulnerable (Daniels, 2013). Moreover, intuitions need not only be consistent with each other, but also provide support or justification for other intuitions. Eventually, the judgments obtained from this process can form the backbone of a theory, but the method can also be used to select between competing theories that exhibit greater or lesser degrees of coherence with our considered judgments.

Though the breadth of application of this method is observable in many different domains of contemporary philosophy, only recently has it started to attract critical attention on the part of philosophers of art.<sup>15</sup> One interesting example of how the method of reflective equilibrium can be fruitfully adopted in ontology of art comes from D. Davies (2004; 2009; 2017). Davies famously articulates this methodology in what he calls 'pragmatic constraint': "*Artworks must be entities that can bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to what are termed 'works' in our reflective critical and appreciative practice; that are individuated in the way such 'works' are or would be individuated, and that have the modal properties that are reasonably ascribed to 'works,' in that practice*" (Davies, 2004, p. 18).

In accordance with a descriptivist perspective, Davies maintains that the main concern of art ontology should be to account for our art-related practices. Theoretical claims about the ontology of art and music must be *constrained* by features of our creative and appreciate practices: "*It is our practice that has primacy and that must be foundational for our ontological endeavors, because it is our practice that determines what kinds of properties, in general, artworks must have*" (Davies, 2009, p. 162). *However*, according to Davies, it is not the whole bunch of our existing intuitions about artistic practice that is supposed to play such a determining role in ontology, but only those intuitions that "turn out to be acceptable *upon reflection*" (Davies, 2017, p. 120). We should only look at those intuitions governing the practice "that would *survive 'rational reflection*" (Davies, 2004, p. 20 *my emph.*). Before they can be used as constrain to ontological theorizing, intuitions must thus be duly pruned and adjusted. This process of steady calibration and adjustment, according to Davies, is a priority for any ontological investigation: reflection has indeed to precede, warrant and establish the inquiry. Only after rational reflection has confirmed that certain properties are rightly ascribed to what are called 'works' in a certain artistic practice, can we derive a conclusion about the ontological nature of artworks (Davies, 2004, p. 23).

## 4.2. Application to Descriptivism

Relevantly, thus, Davies' approach conjoins the descriptivist's plea for the primacy of practice with a method akin to Rawls' reflective equilibrium. Accepting his methodological proposal, on the other hand, might help descriptivists overcome some of the difficulties implicit in their view. Here are some of the reasons why I think this might be the case.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Among these, see: Gracyk (2008), and Cooke (2012).



In the first place, embracing reflective equilibrium implies that one acknowledges the possibility that aspects of our intuitions about artistic and musical practices can be at least partially revised. This means that the descriptivists get rid with the idea that *all* our intuitions regarding musical practice are to be taken as indispensable or sacrosanct or unrevisable, and that they *all* deserve to find a place in our ontology. By contrast, while recourse to intuition is maintained, one should learn to use it cautiously, and subject it to rational scrutiny and examination. To this extent, when conflicting intuitions can be justified only through extremely difficult theorizing, it might be best to sacrifice a few of them for the sake of the consistency of the whole theory. In these cases, non-ontological intuitions can also be used to adjudicate between rival ontologies of musical works.

Consider for example the 'identification debate' over what kinds of aesthetic or artistic properties are essential for a musical work's identity. The sonicists' intuition is that only notational aspects are essential, so changes in instrumentation do not affect the work's identity (Kivy, 1988). Instrumentalists, on the other hand, assume that since musical works are largely determined by their context of creation, they have to be performed using the original instruments indicated by the composer (Levinson, 1990). The former argue that individuating musical works must only take into account what is prescribed for correct performances by the score, since all the relevant properties to be grasped in aesthetic appreciation depend upon the manifest properties of the artistic product, say, the perceptible properties of the sound-sequence that complies with the composer's specification. The latter, on the other hand, reply that any proper assessment of the work depends on these properties being accurately complemented by consideration of the medium employed in their production, i.e., the kind of instrument used to produce the sound-sequence, the concert hall etc.

Both accounts, as it happens, rely on consistent assumptions and have sound arguments to support their intuitions. If musical ontology were to salvage *all* these opposing intuitions as indispensable, each with its own specific demands, this would generate a very awkward account of the identity of musical works. In this case, reflective equilibrium may lead one to adopt a theory that might conflict with some of the assumptions we started with, regarding our underlying understanding of musical practice. Alternatively, it may lead one to resolve the conflict by giving up on the search for a single unified theory to account for all our intuitions. Conflicting intuitions can indeed be the result of different generative contexts and traditions. For example, as noted by S. Davies (2001), while the sonicist assumption works well for baroque oeuvres, whose instrumentation is flexible *by definition*, the instrumentalist idea is best exemplified by Romantic symphonies where instrumentation is explicitly specified by the composer. Sometimes, thus, reflective equilibrium may suggest that we see what is distinctive about particular cases and revise or refine our intuitions and principles before we arrive at a consistent understanding. Other times it may indicate that we cannot resolve disputes unless we bring more theoretical considerations to bear. In all situations however, a thoughtful process of reflection is needed before any intuition can be considered in our ontology.

Secondly, and relatedly, adopting reflective equilibrium also has an impact on the type of knowledge that is achievable by means of descriptivist ontological theorizing. This is because the method carries along an intrinsically normative constrain. As a *rationalizing procedure* for our intuitions, reflective equilibrium entails, as Davies puts it, "an essentially normative, and not merely descriptive, relationship to the norms that operate in actual critical practice and the judgments in accordance with those norms that we actually make" (Davies, 2004, p. 20). The normative character of reflective equilibrium, in turn, provides descriptivism with some tools to escape the 'deflationist flattery'. Indeed, by acknowledging some degree of revision, adjustment and calibration in our

nascent conception of artistic practice, we end up with a knowledge that is not just trifle codification of the already-known. This also has implications for the assessment criteria of ontological theories, for it suggests that the best proposals on the table are not necessarily those that most comply with our intuitive conception of musical and artistic practices *simpliciter*, but those which give us the most rationally consistent justification of why and how people think about art phenomena the way they do.

More generally, once revised through the lenses of reflective equilibrium, descriptivism guarantees that the ontological accounts it validates are substantive, that is, that they achieve what some authors consider the major goal of art and musical ontology: to provide us with an adequate reflective explanation (Davies, 2017, p. 126) of the practices - production, reception, interpretation, evaluation, commodification - to which our intuitive conception refers. Reflective explanation means, in this context, "an accurate systematic picture of the artworld, making explicit the norms sustained therein: norms that govern recognition, evaluation, and interpretation of artistic objects and events" (Kraut, 2014, p. 3). Relevantly, we explain "by adverting to the sorts of things artworks are" for "their ontological status explains why they are, or ought to be treated, in one way rather than another" (Kraut, 2014, p. 5). It is vital to see that such explanations are not merely in the business of 'conceptual analysis' - ratifying or codifying our 'conceptual scheme' - but in the business of accounting for the artistic phenomena of our interest; there is more to a rational reconstruction of this sort than merely attesting to what 'real' people do or think. In this picture, ontology is in the business of shaping "a theoretical background against which properly aesthetic questions can be addressed, one permitting the formulation of a wide variety of views and arguments, precisely that dizzy variety of claims that constitute our artistic practices" (Rohrbaugh, 2013, p. 239). And this implies in the first place attempting to find rational grounds for our judgments by means of that continual process of examination of concepts and intuitions that goes by the name of reflective equilibrium.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have made a case for reflective equilibrium as a methodology able to overcome some of the problems faced by standard descriptivism in art and musical ontology. On the one hand, involving a process of adjustment and revision of intuitions, reflective equilibrium may help descriptivists address the instability of intuitions as ontological evidence. On the other hand, by introducing a normative dimension into ontological theorizing, it may grant that the resulting theories achieve explanatory power with regard to our art and musical practices.

One could argue, however, that it remains unclear in what sense the intuitions retained by the descriptivist are 'intuitive' at all (Bartel, 2017, p. 351). In other words, to *whom* are these claims intuitive? Rather than reflecting actual musical practice, the intuitions used by ontologists might in fact turn out to be the product of their philosophical commitments (Bartel, 2017, p. 364).

This may be indicative of a more general problem for descriptivism (see: Williamson, 2007, pp. 244–246). Even if reflective equilibrium were ultimately proven to be a suitable methodology for musical and art ontology (which would clearly require more study than can be carried out in the extent of a single paper), this in no way would contribute to justifying the epistemic reliability of intuitions, whose philosophical reputation remain questionable. In other words, what guarantees that the outcome of such a process of steady calibration and adjustment would be nothing other than an internally consistent set of false prejudices?

I reply by agreeing with the premise that clarifying the function of intuitions in the ontology of art and music – and philosophy in general – is crucial. Until light is shed on the epistemic status of the class of



judgments that are part of the method of reflective equilibrium – that is, until one has specified what kind of evidence intuitions provide – there could be no definitive basis for assessing the reliability of the method in question.

*Nevertheless*, even in the absence of such a theory, reflective equilibrium should not be discarded as arbitrary. Precisely because only some of our intuitions can be trusted, while other cannot, so that we can easily mistake a biased intuition for a trustworthy one, we *need* a method that help us rationally reconstruct our beliefs and intuitive judgments and their logical interconnections. Reflective equilibrium might thus be the philosophical equivalent of finding a smooth curve through the disparate and disordered data points that constitute our artistic practices. I trust everyone understands the difference between merely joining the dots and trying to figure out a pattern behind them.

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Dr. Lisa Giombini Roma Tre University Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performance Rome / Italy lisa.giombini@uniroma3.it

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/

## Arnold Gehlen o umění, společnosti a posthistoire

Daniela Blahutková; dblah@kfi.zcu.cz, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3666046

**Abstract:** Arnold Gehlen's use of the term posthistory can be traced back to his writings from the 50s. It occurs also in Zeit-Bilder. Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei (1960/1986), where his theory of pictorial racionality in art history is formulated and "peinture conceptuelle" as the key tendency of modern painting is appointed. Focusing on both, Gehlen's aesthetics of modern art and his theorem of posthistory (or crystallization of socio-cultural structures), we try to remind of the conservative thinker's contribution to today's debates of art and art history.

Keywords: Arnold Gehlen, posthistory, sociological theory of art, aesthetics of modern painting.

### Úvodem

V textech z posledních desetiletí se již běžně setkáváme s termínem posthistorické umění či tezemi o posthistoričnosti umění. Vyjadřují ve zkratce vědomí nepoužitelnosti koncepcí, problémů, pojmového aparátu a hodnot tradice a odkaz k svobodě dnešního umění vůči jhu dějin. Nesou v sobě perspektivy, které pro naši dobu formulovali Arthur Danto, Hans Belting a jiní v diskurzu o konci (dějin) umění. Za ním se ovšem schovává i téma obecnějšího vývoje či stavu civilizace, ve které žijeme – jak zmiňuje v reflexi Dantova myšlení Adrian Kvokačka (2018, s. 32), "*otázkou je ale charakter posthistorickej spoločnosti, ktorá 'plodí' posthistorické umenie*". V následujícím se chceme ohlédnout za dílem jednoho z klasiků myšlení posthistoričnosti, německého filozofa a sociologa Arnolda Gehlena (1904–1976), který se zabýval logikou civilizačního vývoje a ve vztahu k tomu také otázkami vývoje umění, zejména moderního malířství (podal inspirativní interpretaci avantgard, koncem života intenzivně reflektoval situaci jejich vyčerpání). V jeho myšlení 60. a 70. letech 20. století se obecnější téma posthistoričnosti prolínalo i s úvahami o konci či nekonci umění.

Gehlenovo jméno evokuje obvykle především filozofickou antropologii – tezi o zvláštním postavení člověka v přírodě, o člověku jako bytosti nedostatků, oproti jiným živočišným druhům slabě vybavené, ale v kompenzaci tohoto vynalézavé, jednající, obklopující se svým vyráběním a vytvářející mezi sebou a přírodou jakýsi meziprostor: "nepřirozená přirozenost", jednání a "odlehčování" života technikou a vytvářením kultury jsou tomto pojetí charakteristiky, které s člověkem putují jeho dějinami. Po II. světové válce se v Gehlenově myšlení projevuje obrat k sociologii, téma člověk a technika je dále rozvíjeno v analýzách vysoce industriální civilizace. Zejména v 60. a 70. letech jsou tyto úvahy mezi sociologií a filozofií v některých ohledech blízké kritické teorii Theodora Adorna; v dnešní literatuře německé provenience jsou připomínány například v sousedství s koncepcemi Pierra Bourdieua či Niklase Luhmanna (Magerski, 2011). Jde však celkově o zdrženlivou reflexi, na Gehlenovi leží stín kariéry za nacismu.<sup>1</sup> V češtině mohlo v poválečném období vyjít jeho dílo *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter* (orig. 1957,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Gehlenovo nejslavnější dílo *Der Mensch* vyšlo r. 1940. V této době rozvíjel Gehlen akademickou kariéru, byl i členem NSDAP. Po II. světové válce se mu uzavřel přístup na významné německé univerzity, působil na Vysoké škole správní ve Speyeru a později na technické vysoké škole v Cáchách. Po vydání *Zeit-Bilder* (1960) se k dílu



česky *Duch ve světě techniky* 1972), víceméně stranou pozornosti zůstalo jeho myšlení estetické.<sup>2</sup> V následujícím připomeneme teorém posthistoire, jak byl Gehlenem prezentován ve studiích a přednáškách z 50.–70. let (*Post-histoire, Ende der Geschichte?* aj.) a paralelně vypracovávaný pohled na situaci umění a jeho (ne)končení. V této souvislosti představíme také širší kontext jeho úvah o moderním umění, zejména spis *Zeit-Bilder. Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei* (1960/1986).

#### Konec dějin?

Ve vlivné knize 90. let Naše postmoderní moderna uvádí Wolfgang Welsch (1993, s. 27): "Posthistoire', teorém 'doby podějinné', znamená, že nadále nelze očekávat žádné inovace. Dějinné možnosti jsou vyčerpány a průmyslové společnosti přijaly formu reprodukce, která nové koncepty, nové hodnoty a nové impulzy ani nepotřebuje, ani je nemůže brát v úvahu, pokud by se objevily. Co běží jako na drátkách, je socioekonomický aparát zásobování neustále narůstajících mas lidí. Všechno ostatní – od velkého zásadního postoje až k místnímu protestu – je iluze… Hybné síly jsou pouze institucionálně- technického druhu, síly kulturně duchovní jsou jen divadlem."Welschova pasáž končí ujištěním, že "s teorémem 'posthistoire', jak ho v padesátých letech rozvíjel především sociolog Arnold Gehlen, nemá postmoderna nic společného."

Welschův takříkajíc slovníkový odkaz stačí, aby ilustroval nevalnou pověst úvah o posthistoričnosti, které ovšem mají kořeny ve filozofickém a sociologickém myšlení 19. a 20. století a mohly by nás vést k myšlení Hegela, Nietzscheho, M. Webera, Kojèva a dalších, na které bychom naráželi i v ohlížení za zdroji postmoderního filozofování. Gehlenův pohled na fúzi průmyslu, ekonomiky a administrativního aparátu ve vyspělém světě a předjímání atmosféry globalizace ostatně dnešního čtenáře patrně neurazí, byť dění neprožíváme s pesimismem Gehlenova střihu. Pohleď me blíže, jak vypadá "post-histoire" v jeho podání, s jakými kulturně-filozofickými akcenty a s jakými přesahy k otázkám umění se pojí.

V textech z 50. a 60. let 20. století se Arnold Gehlen zpravidla opírá o myšlení inspirátorů a předchůdců sociálněvědné orientace. V přednášce z r. 1962, publikované posmrtně pod názvem "Post-histoire", zaznívají jména jako Hendrik de Man, Roderick Seidenberg a Jacques Ellul: jejich tématem je proměna a určitý druh stabilizace civilizace v éře techniky, jejíž pojem je však třeba rozšířit tak, aby zahrnovala i techniku ekonomickou a organizační ("*strojní technika kráčí víc a víc ruku v ruce se sociálně organizační technikou, která nás nakonec překryje jako souvislost průmyslové produkce, do níž se narodíme a z níž se vymaníme až úmrtím"* [Gehlen, 2004, s. 352]). Za společného předchůdce a klasika takového myšlení Gehlen označuje francouzského matematika a ekonoma Antoina A. Cournota (1801–1877), který předjímal "sílící racionalizaci lidstva" a zestejňování životních podmínek. Mimo jiné předpokládal i jakýsi konečný stav, kdy dějiny "*ustanou tváří v tvář pravidelnému chodu stroje výroby a správy, budou zbytečné*". A tento stav "*by podle Cournota mobl být v podstatě nekonečný, nemusel by znamenat odumírání, jak v četných případech říší a královských korun, jež se považovaly za věčné*" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 355).

Cournot používal údajně k vyjádření vztahu mezi dějinami a konečným stavem příměr k řece využité zavlažovacím systémem (místo původního toku je voda rozváděna do ramen, kanálů, sítí – proud řeky se

vstřícně vyjádřili mj. Theodor Adorno a Helmuth Plessner, Adorno také r. 1966 vystoupil s Gehlenem v rozhlasové debatě "Soziologische Erfahrungen an der modernen Kunst". Posmrtná recepce Gehlenovy osobnosti a díla se pohybuje v širokém spektru od diagnózy "postfašistického intelektuála" (Niethammer 1989), přes "konzervativního myslitele" (např. Belting 2000) až po uznání Gehlena za významného představitele filozofické antropologie či jednoho z klasiků sociologizující teorie umění. (Na podnětnost jeho málo známých analýz moderního umění upozorňuje např. Rehberg 2016, doslov).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Česky dnes lze číst studii O některých kategoriích od potřeb oproštěného chování, zvláště estetického z r. 1950 (vyšla v r. 2003).

ztrácí, ale zavlažuje se široký region). Lutz Niethammer v kritické reflexi Gehlenova zacházení s cournotovskými inspiracemi v této souvislosti podtrhuje, že v případě post-histoire šlo o původně optimistickou vizi, vyjadřující naději na překonání dějinného nepokoje a zmatku; má pozitivistické a raně socialistické zázemí a vlastně i vazbu na program osvícenství (Niethammaer, 1989, s. 27–28). Gehlen toto pozadí nezmiňuje a ve výkladu teorému dává přednost méně optimistické metaforice – krystalizace, eroze... Cournotovské inspirace a úvahy Ellula a Seidenberga vedou Gehlena začátkem 60. let k přesvědčení, že vynalézání a pokrok míří všemi směry, ale techniky výroby, provozu, sociální organizace jsou v určitém smyslu na konci – "obecná linie procesu je daná, smysl spočívá v účinku: že se víc a víc lidí udrží při životě za lepších podmínek. Přitom nebude možné existovat vně technické souvislosti, v dobledné době člověk vůbec nebude moci změnit prostředí, [...] základní struktury budou přístřeškem pro lidstvo a budou víc a víc tuhnout, jako si už dnes v německém systému sociálního zabezpečení dovedeme představit jen reformy, ale ne změnu základních plánů [...] A snad má Seidenberg právo říkat, že pak ustane historické vědomí – to by bylo pouze vnitřní zrcadlení procesu – a ovšemže bude dále možno pěstovat historickou vědu" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 353).

V článku *Ende der Geschichte?*, který vyšel roku 1975, tj. rok před Gehlenovou smrtí, je téma shrnuto do několika tezí. Naše civilizace je přibývající měrou stacionární v tom smyslu, že: budoucí makropolitický vývoj připouští už jen přehledné alternativy (už nejsou barbaři, kteří by nás mohli přepadnout z vnějšku); je dána báze industriální společnosti na celosvětové úrovni; budeme už marně čekat na nějaký velký apel, který by vyvolal nadšení a bojovnost na poli ducha, hlavními tématy budou do budoucna výživa a bydlení nekonečně rostoucí masy lidí (a související sociální úkoly oblastí jako pojišť ovnictví, doprava, zajišť ování práce, zdravotnictví...); zelenou má nadále pokrok přírodních věd, techniky a medicíny – jejich výsledku budou včleněny do velkého systému industriální kultury a budou zhodnotitelné pro sociálně-správní oblast. – V mnoha ohledech realistická prognóza. Pesimistický akcent není její jedinou složkou, ovšem na pojmu post-histoire ulpěl nejzapamatovatelněji: "*žádná bláznivá, skvělá víra, žádné otevřené horizonty, žádná fata morgana, žádné dechberoucí utopie – nýbrž odvíjení se, penzum*". Tak je očekavatelný stav, "*který už několik let označuji výrazem post-histoire*" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 345–347).

Ve studiích z poválečného období se objevuje celá řada výrazů, specifikujících kvalitu ohlašujícího se stavu, který se Gehlen také snažil uchopit i jako součást procesu vývoje lidstva vůbec. Mezi nimi lze na prvním místě uvést výše zmíněný pojem kulturní "krystalizace" (používaný již italským sociologem V. Paretem), který pomáhá vyjádřit představu ustálení a zpevnění nosných struktur industriální kultury (srv. Gehlen, 2004, s. 346, 304).<sup>3</sup> Související popis tohoto prostředí jako "superstruktury" – propojení techniky, vědy a ekonomiky v systém průmyslu a správy, pokrývajícího stále větší část světa a zajišť ujícího potřeby rostoucího počtu obyvatel planety, je rozvinut také v již zmíněném díle z r. 1957 *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter.* Kontrast k evokované komplexitě a stacionárnosti pak Gehlen, který registroval nepřehlédnutelnou pestrost a pohyb společenského a kulturního dění včetně umění poválečné éry, zohledňuje a interpretuje pod heslem "Unaufhörlichkeit" (neustálost, nepřestávání, nekončení). Pojem převzatý od spisovatele Gottfrieda Benna<sup>4</sup> zaznívá v širokém okruhu úvah, v nichž Gehlen za dominantní způsob našeho zacházení s realitou označuje experimenty, transformace, multiplikace a související rozšíření těchto postupů z vědy do různých oblastí kultury, která se demokratizuje, zpřístupňuje a umožňuje hravý rozběh ve všech představitelných směrech. Téma je v řadě textů rozváděno zejména

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Tento pojem zní v titulech dvou Gehlenových článků z 60. let: *Űber kulturelle Kristallisation a Die gesellschaftliche Kristallisation und die Möglichkeiten des Fortschritts.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> K původu pojmu u Benna srv. Gehlen, 2004, s. 345.



s ohledem na umělecké projekty, nová média, zmnožující se informační podněty a zároveň konformismus mas, sdílejících rámec existence v industriální superstruktuře.

V několika textech Gehlen upozorňuje, že post-histoire nemíní jako finále existence lidstva, spíše jako součást představy dějin, v nichž se střídají dlouhá údobí, z pohledu vývoje lidstva spíše stacionární, s prudkým vývojem v "historické" etapě, kterou umožnil rozvoj agrárních společností a která ve 20. století končí zásadní proměnou charakteru západní civilizace, nyní průmyslové a globalizující se. V tomto smyslu explicitně rozlišuje předhistorickou, historickou a posthistorickou epochu (Gehlen, 2004, s. 356–357).

Obecné teze o kulturní krystalizaci a posthistoričnosti jsou v textech, za kterými se zde ohlížíme, podkládány příklady a reflexí "kultury v užším slova smyslu", tj. úvahami o situaci filozofie, náboženství a také umění. Právě do problematiky umění se Arnold Gehlen v posledních desetiletích života ponořil nejhlouběji. Dříve než se v této souvislosti obrátíme k rozsáhlému spisu Zeit-Bilder. Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei, zůstaňme ještě chvíli u (hegelovské) trojice filozofie, náboženství, umění. V mnoha drobných zamyšleních a prognózách vyvozovaných ve vztahu k ní působí Gehlen trefně a právě dnes srozumitelně. Při výkladu fenoménu kulturní krystalizace se například ohlíží za nesmírnou politickou a společenskou silou filozofie ještě začátkem 19. století ("jak obtížný byl vztah Sókrata, Descarta, Kanta, Fichteho k náboženství své doby či jak kriticky se Platón, Hobbes nebo Hegel stavěli k politickým silám své doby, o Marxovi ani nemluve"), zatímco dnes jsme zvyklí na "snadnost, stravitelnost filozofie", jejíž část ostatně již vplynula do "krajiny techniky a přírodních věd" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 357-358). V náboženství se přizpůsobení době projevuje přesuny akcentů: problémy jako predestinace, vykoupení, askeze "už současníky v zásadě nezneklidňují", nenastolují se v plné vážnosti a uvolňují místo zejména sociální etice, učíme se svobodě "či jsme zváni k jakési všeobecné lásce k člověku, takže nikdo nedokáže říci, co je ne-morálka" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 359). V umění a literatuře se jako ústřední moment ukazuje svobodné experimentování; aniž by docházelo k objevování nových stylových kategorií, vzniká dojem nesmírné pohyblivosti a "v modu proměn je umění, literatura a hudba stále k dispozici nesmírnému aparátu, který denně hovoří, muzicíruje a promítá na všech vlnových délkách. [...] malba, lyrika nemohou přestat, ačkoli by je dnes nikdo nevynalezl, kdyby zde již nebyly; umění nalezlo životní formu zastavení v modu pohyblivosti, jímž vchází do post-histoire a může být provozováno nedohledně dlouho" (Gehlen, 2004, s. 359-360).

Gehlen zemřel r. 1976, v posledních desetiletích života mapoval ve svých analýzách i oblasti jako volný čas, sport, mobilita, luxus, soukromí, estetizace všedního života. I zde se vztahoval k post-histoire, například když dovozoval, že kultura a její tradiční oblasti fungují přibývající měrou jako kulturní dědictví a předmět správy, že škála kulturních prvků, s nimiž žijeme, se rozšiřuje, ale za cenu pouze relativní důležitosti ("*bezpočet prvků japonského či arabského životního stylu se teď i v budoucnu prosadí nebo přímo rozšíří, byť už nebudou samurajové nebo harém* [...]; *to platí o náboženství, o vědě, všudypřítomné v témže smyslu, stejně jako o vzorech abstraktního malířství, jež se objevují na tapetách a na kravatách*" [Gehlen, 2004, s. 360]). Nejvíce se obracel k situaci umění, zejména malířství – při jeho studiu projevil rozhled a intenzivní snahu pochopit estetické, sociologické a kulturně-historické aspekty toho, čím prochází ve 20. století, ve vzájemných vztazích. Voláli Hans Belting v Konci dějin umění po někom, kdo by si kladl otázku kulturního významu umění v dějinách a otázku úlohy obrazů, jsou-li používány v rámci své kultury, kdo by nám dokázal říci, "co znamená umění v technickém světa a jak se v této éře měnť" (Belting, 2000, s. 182), nebyl by Gehlen sice oním vítězem, "postmoderním Benjaminem" s vizí pro budoucí generace, ale nepochybně právě zde byla půda jeho zkoumání a mnohé nahlédl, vymezil, nabídl k diskusi.

#### Zeit-Bilder: umění a obrazová racionalita

K problematice výtvarných umění publikoval Arnold Gehlen soustavněji od r. 1956, většina jeho příspěvku vzniká v 60. a na začátku 70. let. V díle Zeit-Bilder. Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei, poprvé vydaném r. 1960 (a dnes čteném ve verzi aktualizované r. 1972), ústí široce pojatý pohled na umění a logiku vývoje tzv. obrazové racionality v dějinách opět v rozsáhlou úvahu o vztahu mezi moderním malířstvím a "mentalitou průmyslové společnosti"; vztah mezi nimi ukazuje Gehlen jako nepřímý – ovšem studium moderního malířství "může snad být k užitku, chceme-li rozumět dalekosáhlým transformacím kultury vůbeť. Gehlen hned úvodem avizuje perspektivu přesahující oborové hranice a zdůrazňuje "použitelnost sociologických představ". Převést téma v sociologii umění mu pomáhá "vůdčí idea obrazové racionality", na základě které je v Zeit-Bilder historický vývoj umění západní tradice představen jako proces redukce obsahu, redukce jeho vrstev (ideje, předměty, forma). Sled způsobů či paradigmat zobrazování v západní tradici je představen ve spletitých vztazích ke kulturně-historickému vývoji, kdy 1. věčné pravdy filosofie a náboženství dovolovaly pochopit umění klasické doby (umění zpřítomňující ideje), 2. příroda, její důstojnost a autorita podněcovala moderní realismus a naturalismus (umění zobrazující vezdejší, opakovatelné, zkušenostní) a 3. reflektovaná subjektivita vytvořila vztažný bod modernistických experimentů, v nichž odpadá rozpoznávání a dominuje forma v užším slova smyslu (umění objevující "v podstatě stále jen sebe, své možnosti, metody, procedury"). Gehlen, jak bylo řečeno, tento vývoj nepodkládá logikou imanentní umění samému, ale spojuje jmenované etapy se společenským prostředím dominujících institucí církve a aristokracie, s novověkým rozvojem přírodověd a vzestupem měšť anstva a konečně s prostředím industriální společnosti ve 20. století (srv. Gehlen, 1986, s. 15-17).

Právě poslední fázi a související interpretaci avantgardismu, zejména abstrakce, je věnována významná část Zeit-Bilder, ve vazbě k éře techniky, době sílící matematičnosti a modelování ve vědách, moderního života v rytmu velkoměst, odpoutání od "dané skutečnosti". Plocha, linie, barva – nové cesty experimentování, nekompromisní změny, jichž se odvážily avantgardy, toto Gehlen v 60. a 70. letech interpretuje jako výsledek proměny vztažného systému umění, proměny dosud poslední. Téma dominance subjektivity spojuje s myšlenkou krize institucí typu stát, morálka, náboženství. Slovy Jana Patočky, jednoho z mála českých interpretů Gehlenova myšlení, je také moderní výtvarné umění "v podstatě velká racionalizace tohoto revolučního subjektivního živlu, racionalizace, která je tím důležitější, čím jsou prvky uměleckého projery samy méně smysluplné a racionální. Dát subjektivitě pole tvůrčího uplatnění znamená zároveň umožnit racionalizaci iracionálního, dát funkci nefunkčnímu, cíl bezcílnému" (Gehlen in Patočka – Vojtěch – Chvatík, 2004, s. 211).

Gehlen v Zeit-Bilder analyzuje avantgardu a její cesty pod hesly "reflektovaná subjektivita" a "peinture conceptuelle". Připomíná, že umělcova subjektivita se v obsahu obrazu projevovala vzrůstající měrou zhruba od klasického impresionisme, byť ideové zázemí této tendence vidíme již v romantismu. Obrat k subjektivnu se přitom ukázal "zpočátku jen v tom, že vnímatel byl otřesen ve svých zrakových návycích a přiveden k reflexi své vlastní schopnosti viděť" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 57). Zájem nalomit a reflektovat vědomí Gehlen připomíná také vedle rozvoje psychologie jako vědy. Rozvíjející se proces, kdy "začíná končit panství předmětu a vzrůstá působnost obrazové plochy" a zároveň "nastupuje velké téma konceptuální malby", je v Zeit-Bilder podrobněji komentován přibližně od Seuratova pointilismu, s důrazem na průlomy období cca 1905–1925. Interpretace avantgardních směrů a umělců, kteří skoncovali s tradicemi realistické malby (expresionismus, Kandinského abstrakce, dada a surrealismus, Klee, Mondrian) a kteří jsou bez ohledu na Gehlenova různá zhodnocení uznány za mody nového a podoby "peinture conceptuelle", je "nesena vůlí k důkazu, že v nich je všude subjektivita různě pojímaná výkladovým principem, klíčem k porozumění. Kubismus je optická parabola k novokantovsko-busserlovské konstrukci předmětu v našich subjektivních názorových syntézách. Klee



objevil svým výtvarným dílem všechny podstatné zákonitosti tvarové psychologie. Kandinsky tvoří ve vizuálních šifrách fonémy pro jazyk, v němž vede své optické monology. Mondrian zjišťuje, že jediná abstrakce je s to vyjádřit subjektivitu, jejímž je výtvorem, na rozdíl od daných přírodních forem [...]" (Patočka, 2004, s. 212).

V Gehlenově teorii je ústředním, protože krajním, extrémním vyjádřením této paradigmatické změny obrazové racionality abstrakce – přinesla, obecně řečeno, ochuzení rozsahu malovatelného, významových obsahů, ale zvýšenou suverenitu estetična, samostatnost nových cest, sebezdůraznění. S tím, jak se umění odvrací od předmětu a mizí moment rozpoznávání, však obraz takříkajíc umlká. U moderního umění "*roste míra mlčenlivosti, tato zvláštní zdrženlivost a klid, všude, u Seurata, Cézanna, u Juana Grise, u Matisse. Dřívější umění dokázalo nevyslovitelné přeskočit pomocí slov; dnes se toho paradoxně zmocnilo oko, negativ, prázdná významová forma na pozadí mlčení [...]" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 187). Jak parafrázuje Konrad P. Liessmann (2000, s. 170), "moderna přestává být výrazovým uměním, je uměním sebezrcadlení a ironického rušení." Zároveň se usazují okolo obrazů "jako druhý rám" komentáře.<sup>5</sup> Ovšem "heroická doba moderny, v níž tyto procesy měly smysl jako získávání estetické suverenity, byla však již i pro Gehlena minulostí."* 

Gehlen v Zeit-Bilder předpokládá, že dědictvím avantgard je nadále konceptuální povaha výtvarnictví a potřeba komentářů. Zatímco u velkých událostí moderního malířství, jako je kubismus či obrazy Kleeho a Kandinského, patřila do procesu vzniku obrazu jaksi bezprostředně i systematická teoretická reflexe (odtud Gehlenův a Kahnweilerův pojem "peinture conceptuelle"), v dalším vývoji si umění s otázkou, co je legitimuje jako umění, pohrává; fascinuje, irituje, ale hra se také balancuje na hraně frašky; do této souvislosti patří i mlhavý lyrismus či rétorický patos komentářů, které ovšem posilují komunikativní moment uměleckého dění, jakési produktivní nedorozumění. Gehlen se v Zeit-Bilder snaží analyzovat "velmi jemný problém" umění po avantgardách, že totiž toto reflexivní umění, žijící bytostně v "médiu dvojznačnosti", takový vývoj samo provokuje (srv. Megerski, 2018, s. 42).

Modům dvojznačnosti, pohybu mezi abstrakcí a figurací, fenoménům jako zrakový klam, kryptogram, stopa, hyperrealismus a jiné jsou v Zeit-Bilder věnovány četné rozbory. Gehlen se také ptá, kdo vlastně o záhadné obrazy provázené rétorikou komentářů stojí – a mluví o "*stesku po mystériu v realitě, která se stává velmi přehlednou.*" Jemu vychází vstříc dílo a jeho záhada, kterou nelze úplně rozluštit. Publikum a komentátory spojuje přesvědčení, že obrazy – i nepředmětné – nesou výpověď, poselství; umění pak funguje jako "fascinace a prostor touhy, svobody, nadechnutí" či "útočiště pro exkurze vědomí" (Megerski, 2018, s. 42). V posledních slovech zaznívá echo úvah z *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter* o tom, že funkcí umění v industriální společnosti je vytvářet "prostor úlevy od objektivních služebností, funkčností, požadavků průmyslové civilizace", vytvářet "oázu subjektivní svobody" – jak dodává Jan Patočka, "*za tu cenu, že člověk přijme za své a promění v subjektivní hru formy, normy a požadavky této civilizace. Neboť splnění těchto požadavků je právě 'metoda' moderního umění: experimentace, zdařilé nálezy proměněné v principy [...]" (Patočka – Vojtěch, Chvatík, 2004, s. 212).* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> srv. Gehlen, 1986, s. 54. K tématu srv. i Gehlen, 1986, s. 54: "Komentáře, které se máme v již nepřehlédnutelných manifestech, kritikách, knihách, brožurách, textech k výstavám, přednáškách atd. je třeba chápat jako zásadní součást moderního umění samého. Toto umění běží nadále takříkajíc ve dvou proudech, optickém a rétorickém – jedinečný fenomén. Ovšemže vždy existovala literatura o umění jako filozofie umění, estetika, didaktika či kánon, jako dějepis umění atd., ale ještě nikdy v dnešním smyslu, jako verbální výklad smyslu malířství vůbec, jako legitimování obrazu, který o sobě nic nevypovídá, legitimování jeho bytí a jeho bytí tak a tak."

#### Přirozenost a proti-příroda

Experiment jako umělecký postup a jako symptom duchovního ovzduší průmyslové éry – toto téma opírá Gehlen v Zeit-Bilder mimo jiné o pohled na kulturní "impregnaci" a historickou proměnlivost vnímání přirozenosti: normy přirozena a normálna jsou při vyšší stabilitě společenských institucí prostě "tady", jako něco, "čehož jinakost si ani není možno představit". Již od osvícenství probíhá ovšem destabilizace tradičních institucí (stát, morálka, náboženství), do 1. světové války jaksi zevnitř kultury, ve 20. století se přidávají kolektivní otřesy, které společnost zasahují i zvnějšku. Rozpad konvencí a dosavadních "normalit", s jehož vyciťováním a artikulací souvisí také průkopnické počiny umění od 2. poloviny 19. století, však Gehlen vysvětluje ještě déle působícím procesem. Výše zmíněnou představu změny vztažného systému umění (od přírody k subjektivitě) sleduje sice od impresionistických experimentů, ty však přirovnává ke "karteziánskému obratu" - jako se už Descartem filozofie obrátila k "idées simple", k elementárním datům vědomí, na ně rozebrala starou myšlenkovou tradici a začala stavět novou. Osvobozování se od daných praktických a morálních účelů i světonázorových rámců trvalo v přírodovědách a v technice velmi dlouho, umění se s tím vypořádalo později, ale rychleji. Ve všech oblastech však postupně dominuje metoda, myšlenkový model a experimentální přístup. Trend k proveditelnosti dovoluje chování, aby se emancipovalo od zaměřenosti k cíli, a dává prostor konstruktivním, bezpředpokladovým a antinaturalistickým funkcím ducha. Společným rysem všech modernismů je podle Gehlena důraz na "jak" se chováme, na experimentální podněty myšlení a jednání. S tím souvisí např. zhodnocení náhody, ale i opouštění představy obrazu jako uzavřeného systému, užití kalkulovatelných forem technické dovednosti jaksi nerozlišitelně od inspirace, konstruktivní pozitivismus, kterému se smývá rozdíl mezi uměním a vědou (obojí je umění). Vědec i umělec tak mají co činit s estetikou "nové reality", nové skutečnosti, která je vlastně "mezisvětem kulturního milieu, které nám dnes zastupuje přírodu". Nikoli vedle ní, ale vedle "nesčetných aktivit industriální kultury" dnes stojí umění jako "Kleinsymbol dieses Systems" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 190–192).

Umění tedy – a Gehlen se neustále obrací konkrétně k malířství a výtvarné oblasti – přebírá hlavní znak vědecko-technického procesu, sám procesuální charakter: ne-hotovost díla, kruhový proces, malování jako akce ("pointa slavné 'action-art' není v tom, že 'píše obrazy celým tělem' [...] Ve skutečnosti se jedná o zavedení kruhového procesu i sem" [Gehlen, 1986, s. 192]). Vznikají série, obraz přechází ve stěnu, model začíná fungovat a je podrobován zkušenostní kontrole, přičemž se sám za pochodu obměňuje a takříkajíc se obehrává jeho základní forma. "Lepší efekt vytlačuje slabší, vhodnější materiál obvyklý, elegantnější metoda těžkopádnější [...]. Umění nabrala týž styl a neměli bychom se nechat mýlit pojmem 'vývoj', už rovněž zastaralým, že umělecky vyřízené stupně se stávají 'historickými' – spíše zastarávajť (Gehlen, 1986, s. 193).

Odklon od "přírody z první ruky", proměnu kvality vnímání, nepřímé vztahy a přece takřka "stenografický realismus" umění ve vztahu k duchu technické éry lze dle Gehlena registrovat např. na uměleckém užití umělých a nových materiálů a efektů neomateriálna. Dochází k "obohacení senzibility obrazem, který již 'neznamená' předmět, nutí [...] k interpretaci látkovosti, která je ale také neudržitelná: obraz pak přece zase něco 'znamená', jako by v sobě tajil realismus, představuje 'imaginární substanci' s přesností, která má příchuť satiry. Zvyšuje se také cit umění pro nekontrolovatelné, jež nabývá kouzla přírodnosti (vadnutí, odkvétání, korodování, tlení, zabarvování...). Tvorba některých umělců vede k naturalismu druhého řádu, tj. zájmu o náhodu, hru a zhodnocování různých procesů ,zvnějšku' (zvětrávání, mikroskopie) např. ve ,strukturách' a sugerovaných imaginárně-technických souvislostech. Technický duch se ovšem projevuje také v tom, že efekt legitimuje příčiny: "Máme-li opsané, precizní, nesporné působení, nikdo už se neptá, proč jsme toto dříve nepotřebovali. Nevzniká ,otázka smyslu'" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 201).



#### Post-histoire a konec umění?

V posledních kapitolách knihy Zeit-Bilder nacházíme reflexe uměleckého dění začátkem 60. let (1. vydání), v polovině 60. letech (2. vydání) a ještě začátkem 70. let (3. vydání). Arnold Gehlen registroval reprízování témat a stylů a mediální tematizaci únavy z abstrakce – a sice dál se zájmem uvažoval o dílech autorů jako Francis Bacon, André Masson, Antoni Tàpies či Joseph Albers, zaznamenával energii amerického pop artu, happening, přesun obrazů ze zdí a rámů do veřejného prostoru, dematerializaci umění s nástupem nových médií – ale sledování aktuálních uměleckých projektů ho v interpretaci celkové situace navracelo k pojmům a tónu svých kulturně-kritických úvah: krystalizace, ritualizace (proměna avantgardismu v establishment), institucionalizace (svět umění).6 Jak připomíná Christine Magerski, "krystalizaci" Gehlen již dříve definoval jako stav, nastupující v nějaké oblasti kultury tehdy, když jí 'dané možnosti jsou v zásadě již všechny rozvinuty'. Pro oblast umění to znamená od avantgard. Vývoj od 30. let 20. století nahlížel Gehlen jako rozvádění, obohacování, experimentování, svobodu pohybu jako program, který je však právě dán či dovolen. Přesun zájmu na metodu, techniku, na výběr prostředků a efektů i logika vývoje v antitezích a zrychlujících se proměnách až k permanenci revoluce nesou "řešení", pohyb vynucují i znemožňují. Ve 12. kapitole Zeit-Bilder Gehlen prohlašuje: "Od nynějška už není imanentního uměleckého vývoje. Nějaké smysluplné, logické dějiny umění jsou pryč, i s konsekvencí absurdna, vývoj je za námi a co teď bude přicházet, už tu máme: synkretismus, směs stylů a možností, post-histoire" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 206).7

Ke společenské situaci umění "mezi včerejškem a zítřkem" patří jak svoboda věnovat se nadále čistě uměleckým problémům v určité izolaci, tak tlak kulturního průmyslu. Patří k ní pokračující chronická sebereflexe umění, které již nenastolí velký styl, "*protože subjektivita* [...] *nemá auctoritas, je z podstaty nestabilní* [...], *nemůže sama ze sebe prosadit žádnou kvalitativní převahu, i kdyby ji měla*" (Gehlen, 1986, s. 209). Ale zároveň umění získává nové zaštítění – "sekundární institucionalizování". Gehlen také naráží na fakt, že umění podléhá obecnějšímu společenskému trendu demokratizace ve smyslu odbourávání privilegií a nároků; zároveň však společnost nemá zájem, aby se umění vytratilo, definitivně umlklo nebo se rozplynulo v šumu masmediálního konzumu a kutilství.<sup>8</sup> A tak situaci označuje jaksi zároveň za pohyb i stav: "Unaufhörlichkeit" – nekončení, protože nechceme.

Gehlen se zájmem pohlížel na proces "sekundární institucionalizace" umění, jak ukazuje např. Günter Seubold: k fungování společnosti už umění nepotřebujeme, máme lepší možnosti, jak ozřejmit to, co je, lepší možnosti jak socializovat, integrovat, koordinovat jednání. V sociologickém ohledu slouží umění spíše "sebenalézání" v distanci k masovým, unifikujícím tendencím každodennosti. V této roli je atraktivní, zároveň by se však nedokázalo udržet. Tím, že došlo k vytvoření relativně pevné sítě obchodníků, muzeí, sběratelů, kritiků, knižního trhu, přežilo umění zánik tradičních zadavatelů. Gehlen tuto situaci neztotožňoval jen s kapitalizací uměleckého provozu, v zásadě ji nezavrhoval.<sup>9</sup> Ovšem konkrétní projekty "světa umění", jmenovitě např. německá *Documenta 3* (1964) a *Documenta 5* (1972) ho závěrem života

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Klíčový význam těchto pojmů pro Gehlenovo pozdní myšlení o umění dokládá v *Theorien der Avantgarde* Christine Magerski (2018), s. 32-37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Srv. Magerski (2018), s. 32–34. Post-histoire mimochodem Gehlenovi neznamená, že se neobjeví žádná výrazná nová cesta, ale Gehlen si ji představuje jako něco možného, ale jaksi mimo proud, z celkového kontextu nepravděpodobného.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> K tématu demokratizace kultury u Gehlena srv. Magerski (2018, s. 144–146), která odkazuje na parlamentní iniciativy a veřejné diskuse pojmu "kultura" v Německu 70. let.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Seubold (nedat.), s. 12. Podobně zdůrazňuje Magerski (2011, s. 36–37), že Gehlen narozdíl nepohlížel na propojení umění s trhem a médii jako ohrožení jeho autonomie a vlastně existence (jako po něm např. P. Bürger, P. Bourdieu, N. Luhmann), ale spatřoval v něm právě ukotvení, zajištění dalšího trvání umění (byť se musí jinak klást otázka jeho autonomie).

utvrzovaly v pesimismu. V Zeit-Bilder, které naposled aktualizoval právě r. 1972, píše: "Bohužel nelze potlačit myšlenku, že doslova a radikálně demokratizovatelné je výhradně umění neodadaismu, ideologie odpadků a harampádí. Zde už opravdu není potřeba nic, jen začít" (Gehler, 1986, s. 232). A článek Das Knäckebrot aus Eisenguss (1972) končí větami: "Je to ještě umění?" –"Ano, protože tradiční pojem umění se rozpadl; ne, odmítáme-li prostě jen absurdnost. Dál už bude uměním to, o čem obchod s uměním prohlásí, že je (Gehlen – Rehberg, 2017, s. 492)."<sup>10</sup>

Post-histoire v Gehlenově pojetí je tedy krystalizace moderní, technické, avangardou vyznačené kultury, synkretismus stylů a neustálost tvůrčí produkce. Jak připomíná Seubold, vyznění Zeit-Bilder nelze redukovat na diagnózu post-histoire, Gehlen byl přesvědčen o aktualitě tázání po hranicích umění a doufal nadále v umění reflexe ("peinture conceptuelle"), umění schopné "dialektiky estetické hranice", aniž by se vzdávalo subtilního přístupu (srv. Seubold, nedat., s. 13-14). Experimentovat na hraně obrazu a neobrazu, znepokojovat "pouze v exkurzích vědomí" - kritizovatelná a kritizovaná pozice. Gehlen závěrem života registroval "nový kolektivismus" umění, které odchází ze soukromých prostor a obrací se na anonymní masy diváků (inscenuje se jako součást architektury, jako veřejná akce, zážitková záležitost), státní subvencování uměleckých projektů, vliv vzdělávacích a politických institucí na obsah pojmu kultura... Ale museli po něm přijít jiní, aby situaci interpretovali ve smyslu nového, otevírajícího se horizontu, a ještě jiní, aby přitom rovněž nově a bez negativních konotací uplatnili i představu posthistoričnosti umění. Gehlenovo myšlení 2. poloviny 20. století přitom na desetiletí vypadlo ze hry např. Hans Belting sice v r. 1995 konstatoval, že se "posthistoire dotýká mého tématu tak bezprostředně, že je až s podivem, jak málo se filozofové dějin a umělci, popř. odborníci na umění brali v této tematice na vědomí", zároveň však podle něho u "konzervativního myslitele Arnolda Gehlena [...] souvislost s uměním jen sporadicky zableskne" (Belting, 2000, s. 204). Snad i proto jsme se zde za Gehlenovým uvažováním ohlédli dnes, kdy vyšla většina jeho sebraných spisů a začíná být do "příběhu" našeho uvažování o koncích (umění či jeho dějin) znovu zařazován - byť měl Belting pravdu, když gehlenovské post-histoire označoval za eurocentrické a "naplněné tichým nářkem nad ztrátou zamilovaného ideálu" (Belting, 2000, s. 205).

#### Závěr

Dnešní užívání termínu posthistorické umění není z perspektivy Gehlenova odkazu prosto ironie. Arnold Gehlen se snažil o teorii umění takříkajíc navzdory své diagnóze post-histoire. Ta následně nedošla přijetí – zatímco posthistoričnost ožívá jako neutrální či dokonce pozitivně konotovaná charakteristika umění, které se s teoriemi rozešlo. Podobný je osud mnoha pojmů, kterých užíváme. Sledované téma zde zároveň dovolilo připomenout, že při četbě *Zeit-Bilder* a Gehlenových drobných textů ze 60. a 70. let narážíme na kulturpesimismus i na vášnivý zájem o výtvarné umění, o porozumění jeho situaci: jemné analýzy, mířící k otázkám tvorby, distribuce a recepce zejména výtvarného umění v mnohém nakročily k dnešku (Hans Belting zmiňoval např. v 90. letech víceméně v Gehlenově smyslu, že "*umění do sebe zahrnuje styl světa, jenž se mu stal tématem, a obsazuje periferie svých dosavadních úkolů, aniž tím řeší své problémy*" [Belting, 2000, s. 86]). Slovník prognóz, které Gehlen adresoval technické civilizaci i situaci umění do budoucna – post-histoire, obliba metafor jako "die Gleise sind gelegt" či v oblasti umění dokladů, že umělecké postupy dovolují ve zdánlivé svobodě rozvádět a experimentálně se rozbíhat do všech stran, ale překročení nosné struktury se nekoná, že v umění nabyla vrchu hra uvolněné subjektivity, funkce úlevy, odlehčení v systému, pod jehož tlakem žijeme – sice má poněkud paušalizující nádech, Gehlenovo dílo dnes nicméně zaslouží pozornost

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Srv. také výrok v Zeit-Bilder (Gehlen, 1986, s. 227): "Od nynějška je umělcem, kdokoli chce a tudíž vše je umění – anebo nic není umění, jak říkal Duchamp. Nikdo, kdo má nápad [...] není vyloučen, žádné dílo není zásadnější než jiné."



vedle "ikon teorie konce umění" (Makky, 2018, s. 38). Zní v něm echo hegelovské představy umění, které již "netvoří bohy" a je jednou (nikoli dominantní) oblastí ducha v prostředí, jehož ústřední diskurz se odehrává v živlu nenázornosti, abstrakce; zároveň se analýza situace pojí se snahou překročit klasické humanitněvědné perspektivy (kunsthistorické, filozofické, estetické) a metodologicky být práv změněné době (empirická báze, interdisciplinarita, sociologií podepřené studium kultury, kreativní pojmový aparát, otázky směřované k tomu, co se před námi otevírá). V roce 2011 konstatuje Christina Magerski, že k naší době převládajících kulturovědných přístupů patří i určitý deficit, co se týče teorií současného umění. Otázky, "*jaké principy umělecké kritiky a jaké struktury vyprávění jsou po konci moderny možné*", jsou nadále otevřené. Kulturně-sociologické přístupy, které v její *Teorii avantgard* uvozuje právě pohled na Gehlenovo dílo, mohou mít dosud nevyčerpaný potenciál k vyjasnění některých z nich (Megerski, 2011, s. 10–11).

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Mgr. Daniela Blahutková, Ph.D. Západočeská univerzita v Plzni Filozofická fakulta Katedra filozofie Plzeň/Česká republika dblah@kfi.zcu.cz

https://espes.ff.unipo.sk/



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Slávka Kopčáková; slavka.kopcakova@unipo.sk, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3632467



Around 1800, anthropological aesthetics gradually established itself as a scholarly discipline uniting cross-field research in the human sciences ("Wissenschaft vom Menschen") the predominant concern of which was self-constitution and self-improvement of man that was seen as a part of nature (in both physical and spiritual senses). In the concepts, communication approached through the medium of a human language was considered a central methodological tool. The concept of anthropological aesthetics first emerged in relation to works on Friedrich Schiller and presented a set of disciplines that, as of now, may well be considered established and relatively distant from each other; however, at that time they were in close proximity or even closely tied (especially aesthetics, medicine, biology, psychology, and linguistics).

Between 1750 and 1850, the set of disciplines related to man gradually

deduced their problem areas from philosophical systems; the core ones are presently dealt with within philosophical anthropology (using completely different rhetoric and drawing on different scholarly disciplines, though). The proceedings edited by Piroska Balogh – Gergely Fórizs, Budapest-based academics and organizers of international scholarly events, capture the first centuries of aesthetics as a separate scholarly discipline. They do not aim to give a comprehensive historical picture or overview of the results through telling a "great story", rather to bring different perspectives through specific concepts of contemporary anthropological aesthetics as a new humanistic discipline spreading in Central Europe.

The themed volume covers the following perspectives: institutional (introduction of aesthetics as an academic discipline), Central-European (the expansion of aesthetics into the Habsburg monarchy), and linguistic (the transfer of conceptual adaptation from Latin to German, later also to other languages); it also takes into account adaptation mechanisms (translations, possibly also compilation and interpretative practices) sometimes leading to eclectic concepts. The proceedings are divided into three chapters. The first chapter (*Deutsche Ästhetik*) presents papers dealing with the works of contemporary German aestheticians, such as Heinrich Zschokke (Carsten Zelle), Friedrich Bouterwerk (Sandra Richter), Karl Heindrich Heydenreich (Antonín Policar) and Wilhelm Traugott Krug (Gergely Fórizs). Fórizs analyzes the reception of the philosophy and aesthetics of one of the most influential contemporary German post-

Kantian philosophers of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wilhelm Traugott Krug. He does so through assessment of translations and works by Hungarian philosophers, while focusing on translations and related works by István Márton. In his study, he notes that the eclectic anthropological aesthetics of the epoch represents a more or less uniform rhetoric that develops according to the laws of inner experience, but which is not closed to the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

The second chapter (Universitätsästhetik der Donaumonarchie) deals with aesthetics at the universities of the Habsburg Monarchy. Around 1800, the new discipline began to play an increasingly important role in humanities education in the cultural milieu of Central Europe, enjoying state support in relation to building its institutional base (study plans, university aesthetics departments, and demanding auditions for uncensored book publishing). In its development, the encounter of aesthetics as education of taste and state interests (Hlobil, 2012) strengthened the role of the school system of the monarchy. Tomáš Hlobil evaluates thematic treatments of aesthetics in the philosophy textbooks of German-speaking countries with regard to the reception of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. Other authors subsequently raise problem areas connected with aesthetics in the Hungarian part of the monarchy. In this context, the most important contributions are original aesthetics typologies in the works of Hungarian aestheticians, such as Lajos Schedius (Piroska Balogh, Dezső Gurka) and György Szerdahely (Botond Csuka). From the point of view of contemporary research, Balogh Piroska notes that the texts are unavailable to the public and to researchers because of their Latin (and not yet translated) versions. The author sees the possibilities of revitalizing anthropological aesthetics for the 21st century in three steps: "to translate and publish the works of these aestheticians", "to explore the contexts and connections of their approaches", and "to make them part of current scholarly discourses" (Balogh, 2019, p. 152).

The third chapter (*Gymnasial und Zeitschriftenästhetik in Ungarn*) is devoted to aesthetics as an academic discipline taught at Hungarian lyceums and to the methods of making it more scientific in contemporary periodicals in Hungary. The following writings were analyzed: synthesizing works focusing on reception and criticism of Kantian aesthetics written by authors like Józef Rozgony (Béla Mester), aesthetics handbooks in the Hungarian language, namely that by Ferenc Verseghy (Réka Lengyel), pieces in newspapers and reviews of important aestheticians by Karl Georg Rumy (Ferenc Máté Bodrogi). The reception of works by philosophers such as Friedrich Schiller, namely in the creative and scholarly output of Hungarian authors like József Benke (Ágnes Simon-Szabó), played an important role in the spreading of the ideas found humanities and in the education of holistic man in the contemporary anthropological aesthetics circles. Even the Scottish school of taste of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was tackled; namely, a qualitative analysis of two translations of Hugh Blair's textbook by Kis János and Count Aurél Dessewffy (a translator of several aesthetics published by other Scottish school authors by reflecting on them in contemporary literary journals or in correspondence with other scholars (Ferenc Hörcher – Kálmán Tóth).

Anthropological aesthetics is currently in a phase of renewed interest from historians of, among others, philosophy, aesthetics, linguistics or classical philology. Several newer publications by prominent authors or editors like Stöckmann (2009), Borchers (2011), Gurka (2019), Herrmann (2019) and others evidence the importance of this field. The peer-reviewed publication can be added to a series of those that notice

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Fórizs (2018, p. 96) concludes: "Insgesamt drängt sich die Hypothese auf, dass die eklektisch eingestellten anthropologischen Ästhetiken der Epoche eo ipso einen mehr oder weniger einheitlichen, sich nach inneren Erfahrungsgesetzen entwickelnden, aber nicht nach Außen geschlossenen Diskurs darstellen."



changes in the perception of man since the Age of Enlightenment (in contemporary systems of philosophy, literature, linguistics, but also physical anthropology in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). Today's understanding of anthropological aesthetics, as a study of aesthetic and artistic phenomena, sign and meaning structures in "natural" nations and communities, is far from the original perception of "human science". Therefore, the editors of the volume very productively define anthropological aesthetics over time, eliminating thus the possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of their intention.

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Doc. PeadDr. Slávka Kopčáková, PhD. University of Presov in Presov Faculty of Arts Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture Presov/ Slovakia slavka.kopcakova@unipo.sk

MAKKY, Lukáš (2019): Od začiatku po koniec a ešte ďalej: umenie v definičných súradniciach. [From the Beginning til the End and Beyond: The Art in Definitional Coordinates]. Prešov: Filozofická fakulta, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, Opera Philosophica. 256 pp.

Peter Gurský; Peter.Gursky@smail.unipo.sk, Jana Migašová; jana.migasova@unipo.sk, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3633264



The second original monograph by Lukáš Makky brings the results of a research focused on the variable and unstable field of definition and definability of art, which in its practice and development is constantly trying to escape from safe definitional boundaries. The text is a logical continuation, a deepening and a contextualization of Makky's first monograph (2017), in which he explored the circumstances of the emergence of art forms in its primeval beginnings. In seeking answers about the end or the ends of art, the author starts by reflecting on the beginning of art and its elastic boundaries in the 20th and 21th century. For his analysis and problematization, the author chooses an impressive theoretical platform, including structuralism, analytic and evolutionist aesthetics, institutional theory, and positions that have anticipated or commented on the end of art (from Hegel to Belting and Danto). The author, however, states that "it is

surprising to what extent the problem of the origin of art is absent in discussions about the end of art" (Makky, 2019, p. 12).

In the chapter about the first art (WHEN, HOW AND WHY IT ALL STARTED) he distinguishes two 'lines' of thinking about art within its historical framework. The first line presents an approach in which the history of art is seen as starting already with pre-historical graphic art. This was made possible by the first archeological excavations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which expanded the history of art to a period preceding antiquity. In this way, the identity of the so-called Western art as the sole heir to antiquity is questioned. The second line of thinking about primordial art is based on artifactuality. The author sets out and presents, in a rather generous space, two conceptions that supports his attempts at definition. The first comes from Ellen Dissanayake, who, in an evolutionary perspective, sees art as a specifically behaviour of human beings as a species, one that has evolved from other activities and that "*must have had some internal motivation or adaptational justification*! (Makky, 2019, p. 27). Moreover, iit seems to us that the qualitative



differentiation between art and non-art as two modes of human activity, as well as the ritualization and artification from an ethological-evolutionist point of view are, for the purposes of the book, extremely important and also appealing for the reader. definitely yes

As his second key source for defining art through the prism of primordial art, the author draws on Stephen Davies. Like Dissanayake and Jerrold Levinson, Davies is an aesthetician who features in many texts of the author of this book. Together with the structuralists, Davies' and Dissanayake's ideas form the theoretical ground for Makky's thinking about the origins and ends of art. In particular, the author stresses the differences and similarities between Dissanayake's and Davies' approaches in order to obtain a fruitful platform to problematize the definition of the origin of art.

"Despite the similarities and simultaneously theoretical competition between Ellen Dissanayake and Stephen Davies, they seem ideal to illustrate the possible origins of art. In his examination, Stephen Davies is aware of a number of facts, he is perhaps intuitively even suspicious of the limits of focusing on the material artefacts of the past, and also because of this he combines this object of investigation with artistic experience and human behaviour. What he actually pursues is the way art was created, whereas Ellen Dissanayake concentrated on its circumstances" (Makky, 2019, p. 41).

The theoretical introduction which investigates the beginnings of art is followed by the chapter ART AND NON-ART OR HOW TO DISTINGUISH THE CHAIR FROM THE "CHAIR". The title of the chapter already hints that the discussion will be pursued on a 'battlefield' in which artistic practice always wins (since Manet – if we agree with Bourdieu), which constantly strives for its own transgression and 'escape' from the safe settlements provided by art theories. This chapter highlights the difficulty of defining art by showcasing examples of provocative, transgressive works, as well as by considering some theoretical approaches that tried to account for the situation of art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Goodman, Kesner, Aldrich, Chalumeau and others). The author dedicates a separate chapter to the examination of art's contextual framework, in which he investigates how artworks' purposes and functions change in different historical periods and social settings. The author chooses some notions from Jan Mukařovský and Nelson Goodman as the key concepts for problematizing the function of art.

"On the one hand, each work of art has a stable place that determines the context, on the other hand it can be flexible and adapt to the nature of the general structure of which it is only a small part. It is as if the contextually determined moment of the past had different 'physical laws' than the overall structure. Two parallel worlds interconnected, operating on a different principle" (Makky, 2019, pp. 53–54).

The author then addresses the problems raised by institutional theories, as well as the issues we face when we want to define art as a term. This problem is illustrated by the experiments of Morris Weitz, Berys Gaut and others. Perhaps the most important obstacle for the task of defining art is its historical character, and any examination of past phenomena, according to Makky (2019, p. 108), manifests itself "*in the presentpast dialectics (one or more), the present and the past human*". Finally, the author gives space to Gaut's cluster definition and concludes that both traditional and recent attempts at defining art by setting criteria must be captured in principle, and – with this we fully agree – it is necessary to "adjust the rules according to which an object with certain properties can begin to be understood as art" (Makky, 2019, p. 112). According to the author, the advantage represented by the cluster definition is the fact that we can operate with multiple criteria, which is more appropriate to capture the complexity, dynamics and geographical-cultural diversity of the use and understanding of the concept of art. To present his own attempt to define art, Makky goes back to his recent publications and uses a cluster definition of prehistoric art (Makky, 2017, pp. 100–101). He

criticizes this definition and considers its weaknesses when applied to contemporary art, thus arriving at a revised version. The author argues for the individual points of this cluster through reference to concrete artworks (by Duchamp, Hirst, Šille and others), thus avoiding speculative theoretical reduction of the issue. The author also demonstrates his efforts to correct his own ideas and to contextually incorporate his own definition in the chapter that precedes the final words and summary: *Alternatives to the definition (or another perspective)*. In the division of modern art definitions into "*a) linguistic (discursive) and b) definitional*", he places himself within the second group, in the attempts to establish criteria for a definition. The reader is thus lead to criticize the relationship between the two groups, as the attempts at definition are also present in the focus of the first, discursive position. Attempts at definitions play a 'game', to use Danto's words: a game of 'world of art' and become part of an institutional tissue in which art transforms and reformulates itself as a result of this game.

However, setting some definitional criteria is absolutely necessary for the existence of (art) criticism. When we discuss the 'ends', like the end of the criticism that has been announced so many times, and we look at the current situation of journalism, we can conclude that the evaluation aspect of the criticism has disappeared entirely. However, the need to distinguish art from non-art, like the need to distinguish the good from the bad, what is true from pretentious, what is prime from what is trash, is gradually felt on the basis of our talking about art. An effort to differentiate and identify quality seems thus to be the basic driving force of this book, which ultimately represents a rare attempt to intertwine broadly designed theoretical resources, not only because of the use it makes of diverse and recent concepts, but also because of the interconnections it draws between Slovak, Czech and foreign literature, by which there are also traced international lines of reflection on art, in other words, about its ends. The book also represents an outcome of the number of activities that in recent years have been developed and presented in Prešov's aesthetic milieu, giving rise to journal and anthological studies, as well as to conferences aimed at providing a platform for (international and interdisciplinary) professional discussions.

However, we would like to criticize here the author of the book:

"The unflattering situation in which contemporary art is found is caused by the fact that it was not only preceded by an artistically dynamic period and that it came after Modernism and Postmodernism and is basically in a state of hiata and search for itself, which came with Impressionism, but somehow it can never stabilize to the extent that both the lay and professional public are sufficiently convinced and satisfied. It may seem to the current recipient that such an artistic turbulent period has never existed before" (Makky, 2019, p. 134).

We do not think that art really finds itself in an unflattering situation, today. Rather, it is art theory and art history, as part of the humanities, that seem to experience this unflattering situation. What contemporary art demonstrates, as the *enfant terrible* of contemporary culture is an ironic and often mocking finger, which points at the impotence of the 'theoretical tools' by which we 'care' of art. That is why the self-reflective nature of this book is so important and necessary in our cultural and academic context. The final part (THE END OF ART AS THE MILESTONE OF ART HISTORY) represents an ambitious attempt that perhaps is not fulfilled to the extent promised. The author often reiterates his positivist approach to the problem, thus avoiding unilateral criticism of the concept in question and arriving to a consideration of the possible consequences of the existence but also the absence of the end of art. On the one hand, it must be recognised, to avoid unjustified criticism, that the author 'plays' with multiple, even contradictory, options. In the end he writes: "[...] *when I decided to adopt and accept the concept of the end of art for research purposes (I was not inclined to criticize or defend)* [...], *I knew that I had to reconsider the history and overall concept of art history*.



That is why in the perspective of the end of art one can understand its history in the three great stages, while the end of (certain) art is here viewed as a historical milestone" (Makky, 2019, pp. 213–214).

He refers to (a) art before art, (b) art before the end of art, and (c) art after the end of art. For the sake of this classification, he attempts to define 'the last end of art,' namely, when 'art before the end of art' was substituted/replaced/superimposed by 'art after the end of art'. Makky's theoretical approach involves the normative assessment or determination of the exact moment in which we can talk about the end of art, a moment that could be the subject of discussion, or even sharp criticism. However, the author avoids the normative solution when he writes:

"So the end of art was not a matter of hours or days, but years, and I am convinced that, as in 1872 [explaining on the example of Claude Manet's painting Impression – authors' note], the art world began to collapse definitively, and nothing could save it, so equally in 1895 [the invention of film – authors' note] it comes to a purification of old art. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least the European scene was ready to build new art and art history could start again (Didi-Huberman, 2006). Adding Benjamin's reproducibility, by year 1900 we can define the beginning of art after the end of art" (Makky, 2019, p. 180).

By the end, one has the impression that the author is eventually arguing for the reality of the end of art, a conclusion with which, on the basis of the problems discussed before in the text, it is not possible to agree. This may lead one to question the whole logic of the findings and even the legitimacy of the conclusions. However, the entire final part of the publication is merely a working hypothesis, one that leads the author concludes that there is a kind of dualist opposition of opinions, so that either "(1) The end of art never occurred, and if so, we do not know about it. [or - authors' note] (2) The end of art has come so many times that we have become accustomed to it: smaller ends are at the same time new beginnings that create (or are initiated by) new styles and artistic trends; the bigger ones (ends of art) are true historical milestones" (Makky, 2019, p. 217).

Mgr. Peter Gurský (external PhD. student) Faculty of Arts Institute of Ethics and Bioethics Presov/Slovakia Peter.Gursky@smail.unipo.sk

Mgr. Jana Migašová, PhD. University of Presov in Presov Faculty of Arts Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture Presov/Slovakia jana.migasova@unipo.sk

www.espes.ff.unipo.sk

# KVOKAČKA, Adrián – MIGAŠOVÁ, Jana (2019): Súradnice estetiky, umenia a kultúry IV: Študovať estetiku: koncepcie, stratégie a súvislosti štúdia estetiky na Slovensku a v zahraničí. Prešov: FF PU v Prešove, 198 s.

Sandra Zákutná; sandra.zakutna@unipo.sk, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3633264



Zborník štúdií Súradnice estetiky, umenia a kultúry IV: Študovať estetiku: koncepcie, stratégie a súvislosti štúdia estetiky na Slovensku a v zahraničí editorov Mgr. Adriána Kvokačku, PhD. a Mgr. Jany Migašovej, PhD. svojou témou, ktorá by sa venuje problematike a súčasným výzvam vyučovania a štúdia estetiky, otvára veľmi podnetnú oblasť, o ktorej je potrebné diskutovať. Miesto humanitných vied v pedagogickom, vedeckom i verejnom priestore je dnes problematické a tieto vedy musia každodenne obhajovať svoje opodstatnenie. Oblasť estetiky nie je výnimkou a problematika jej štúdia a vyučovania si zasluhuje pozornosť. Michaela Malíčková, jedna z autoriek v tomto zborníku, vo svojom príspevku explicitne predkladá jeden z aktuálnych problémov, ktorým katedry estetiky na Slovensku i v zahraničí čelia, keď píše, že aktuálna podoba vyučovania estetiky a estetickej výchovy má "množstvo metodologických aj tematických benefitov, ktoré však momentálne nie sú dostatočne silnými argumentmi a motiváciami pre

vysokoškolské štúdium, ktoré sa 'pragmatizuje' v inej perspektíve, než v akej ju zamýšľal pôvodný koncept vyučovania estetickej výchory. Štúdium estetiky vždy kládlo a naďalej bude klásť dôraz na celostnú kultiváciu osobnosti, táto devíza sa však záujemcom o vysokoškolské štúdium nezdá byť aktuálne dostatočne silnou zárukou uplatnenia v praxi<sup>\*</sup> (s. 39). Z uvedených dôvodov vítam počin editorov tohto zborníka, ktorí sa rozhodli pozvať zainteresovaných odborníkov na rovnomennú konferenciu (8. – 9. novembra 2018) a z prezentovaných príspevkov zostaviť publikáciu mapujúcu stav problematiky a ponúkajúcu východiská i inšpirácie do budúcnosti.

Jana Migašová a Adrián Kvokačka v príspevku Otváranie diskusie o aktuálnych problémoch vyučovania a štúdia estetiky (s. 9–16) predkladajú popis súčasného stavu a predstavujú jednotlivé štúdie. Adrián Kvokačka v esejistickom príspevku Mobilis in mobile: štúdium estetiky v Prešove (s. 17–26) ukazuje minulosť i súčasnosť Inštitútu estetiky a umeleckej kultúry FF PU v Prešove, ktoré sa v súčasnosti venuje aj vysoko aktuálnym otázkam estetiky a umenia. Michal Babiak v príspevku Štúdium estetiky na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave (s. 27–32) poskytuje pohľad na skladbu jednotlivých programov odboru a zároveň kriticky reflektuje situáciu. Michaela Malíčková pokračuje v téme predstavovania modelov vyučovania



estetiky a v príspevku *Vysokoškolská estetika v kontexte metodológie nitrianskej školy* (s. 33–40) poukazuje na dedičstvo Ľubomíra Plesníka postaveného na pragmatickej estetike a kriticky hodnotí celospoločenskú dehonestáciu kultivácie. Tuťan Acil v príspevku *Problem of Boundaries in Aesthetic Research* (s. 41–52) pracuje s problematikou ohraničenia v estetike historickým exkurzom, pričom zdôrazňuje úlohu estetickej výchovy, ktorá má byť založená na prienikoch. Hana Zeleňáková v štúdii *Nitrianska praktická estetika: Princípy, súčasný stav a perspektíny* (s. 53–61) na základe odkazu Marty Žilkovej predstavuje konkrétny metodický postup kolektívnej reflexie diela na výučbe estetických disciplín v Nitre.

Renáta Beličová sa v príspevku *Hudobné kompetencie a štúdium estetiky* (s. 62–72) zameriava na nedostatočnú dotáciu hodín hudobného vzdelávania v nižších stupňoch vzdelávania a s tým súvisiace problémy pri štúdiu hudobno-estetických predmetov na univerzitách a zároveň ponúka konkrétne riešenie tohto problému. David Kozel svojím príspevkom *Hudební estetika jako součást studia učitelství hudební výchovy na Pedagogické fakultě Ostravské univerzity* (s. 73–78) rovnako poukazuje na nedostatky v kompetenciách univerzitných študentov, ktorých príčiny je možné hľadať už v skorších stupňoch vzdelávania a poukazuje aj na nedostatky v skladbe predmetov na vysokých školách. Juraj Malíček a Martin Boszorád v príspevku *Študovať popkultúru? Koncepčno-strategické, metodologické a kontextuálne poznámky k popkultúrnym štúdiám* (s. 79–86) poukazujú na ciele, ktoré sledujú vo vyučovaní popkultúry, aby pomohli študentom na ich ceste k sebapoznaniu a pochopeniu vnútorných kvalít človeka.

Slávka Kopčáková v príspevku Tvorba učebných materiálov na Inštitúte estetiky a umeleckej kultúry Filozofickej fakulty v Prešove za uplynulú dekádu 2007 – 2017 (s. 87–98) predstavuje zhrnutie učebných textov a učebníc na IEUK FF PU v súvislosti s vývinom učebných materiálov na Slovensku. Miron Pukan sa v štúdii Divadelný vorkshop v interferencii medzi kognitívno-didaktickým a estetickým aspektom (s. 99–112) sústredí na špecifikum prešovského akademického života, ktorým je študentský divadelný festival Akademický Prešov, a pozornosť upriamuje na divadelné workshopy na tomto podujatí. Eva Kušnírová z rovnakého pracoviska v príspevku Tvorivá dramatika ako súčasť skladby disciplín študijného programu estetika (s. 113–122) ukazuje predmet Tvorivá dramatika ako príklad konkrétnej stratégie vyučovania, ktorý dokladuje aj na príklade interpretácie hry Pygmalion G. B. Shawa.

Eva Pariláková sa v štúdii Estetická skúsenosť a veterné mlyny postmediálnej a postfaktuálnej spoločnosti: Diagnóza a vízia zmyslu estetiky v kontexte nitrianskej recepčnej školy (s. 123–136) zameriava na zaujímavý koncept estetiky "offline", ktorá sa javí ako veľmi potrebná v dnešnej uponáhľanej dobe, ktorá nepraje premýšľaniu v pokoji či pozastaveniu sa nad niečím. Prínosom štúdie je aj navrhnutie postupov ako tento koncept využiť na niektorých vyučovacích predmetoch. Alexandra Hudáčová v príspevku Umenie edukácie Johna Deweyho (s. 137–144) rozoberá Deweyho filozofiu výchovy a poukazuje na jej aktuálny potenciál v edukácii. Michaela Pašteková sa v štúdii Pozícia estetiky na akadémiách umenia (s. 145–150) venuje kritickému rozboru tohto problému, pričom poukazuje na nefunkčnosť diachrónneho modelu výučby estetických koncepcií.

Lisa Giombini a jej príspevok Authenticity Lies in the Eye of Beholder: Aesthetics and the Principles of Art Restoration (s. 151–162) predkladá problém autenticity umeleckého diela a skúma ho v kontexte reštaurátorstva umeleckých diel. Štefan Haško v prakticky ladenom príspevku K interpretácii a obhajobe umeleckého diela (s. 163–178) kriticky hodnotí prax, keď študenti umeleckých odborov majú "obhajovat" svoje umelecké diela. Tento stav hodnotí ako nevhodný, keďže umelecké dielo by, z jeho pohľadu a odvolávajúc sa na Kanta, Schopenhauera a Wittgensteina, nemalo byť vysvetľované. Lukáš Makky sa v príspevku Úvaha nad miestom prehistórie v štúdiu estetiky (s. 179–188) venuje opodstatnenosti zaradenia pravekého umenia medzi predmety, ktoré sú súčasťou štúdia estetiky a prináša hodnoverné odôvodnenie. Jana Migašová v príspevku *Súčasné význy pre učenie dejín výtvarného umenia* (s. 189–198) ponúka podložené vysvetlenie toho, prečo je nutné disciplínu Dejiny výtvarného umenia považovať za nevyhnutnú súčasť kurikula, ktorá však nemá byť iba "povinnosťou", ale má skutočný potenciál získavania schopností a zručností študentov ako aj potenciál pomôcť pri chápaní a reflektovaní vlastnej identity.

Konferenčný zborník *Súradnice estetiky, umenia a kultúry IV: Študovať estetiku: koncepcie, stratégie a súvislosti štúdia estetiky na Slovensku a v zabraničí* je podnetným čítaním. Ponúka komplexný pohľad na problematiku vyučovania a štúdia estetiky na všetkých slovenských pracoviskách a ponúka aj pohľad na situáciu v zahraničí. Autori sa od zhodnotenia situácie a predstavenia problémov, ktorým v edukačnom procese čelia, snažia dostať aj k návrhom riešení problémov, ktoré so sebou štúdium a výučba estetiky prináša. Nie sú nekritickí voči súčasnosti, sú si vedomí prekážok, ktoré im dnešná doba zameraná na výkon a úspech prináša, no napriek tomu z ich príspevkov necítiť ani náznak rezignácie. Predkladaný zborník je nepochybne jedným z prvých krokov pri tak veľmi potrebnej diskusii o štúdiu humanitných predmetov – jeho analýze, kritike, víziách či stratégiách a vnímam ho ako veľmi dobrý signál do budúcnosti.

doc. Mgr. Sandra Zákutná, PhD. Prešovská univerzita v Prešove Filozofická fakulta Inštitút filozofie Prešov/ Slovenská republika sandra.zakutna@unipo.sk

www.espes.ff.unipo.sk